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## Houston, Wichita Among Districts Winning Lawsuits



A state judge in early February ruled in favor of the Houston Independent School District and other Texas school systems

that joined a lawsuit challenging the state's school finance system by finding the current funding system unconstitutional.

Texas District Court Judge John Dietz ruled that the school finance system is not fair and efficient, declaring that funding is inadequate and that there are "wide discrepancies in state support received by school districts in wealthy parts of Texas versus those in poorer areas," the *Houston Chronicle* reported.

Some 600 school districts across Texas sued the state following the Texas Legislature's decision in 2011 to slash \$5.4 billion from K-12 education funding. The state's largest school system, Houston, has lost more than \$120 million in state funding over the past two years, resulting in teacher layoffs and larger class sizes, according to the district.

"It is time for the Texas Legislature to restore the funding cuts and come up with a fair public school finance system that is easy to understand and gives kids' schools the money they need to provide the education they deserve," says Houston Board of Education President Anna Eastman in a news release.

**Winning Lawsuits** continued on page 8

## Long Beach School District Ranks Among World's Best, Says Study

Finland and Singapore often stand out as having the best school systems in the world.

So, it's not unusual for the two countries to be included in a new international study ranking five of the world's highest-performing school systems. The other three: Hong Kong, Ontario, Canada, and one U.S. school system – California's Long Beach Unified School District.

The five were chosen from 12 high-

nounced recently.

Honored to be in the company of the world's top school systems, Long Beach Schools Superintendent Christopher Steinhauser noted, "As this study explains, we work hard to provide all students a good education regardless of the hurdles they face. We accomplish this work through a collaborative effort involving our employees, parents, higher education partners and



performing school systems ranked as "sustained improvers" in a "Global Education Study" (<http://www.battelleforkids.org>) conducted by Battelle for Kids, a national nonprofit group that provides school improvement services.

"We define a high-performing system as one in which low-performing students perform not much differently than top-performing students, and where a family socioeconomic status is not a significant driver of student performance," says the study. "High-performing systems are in the top ranks on quality, equity, and productivity and recognize the importance of international benchmarking.

"Ultimately, we choose Finland, Hong Kong, Long Beach, California, Ontario, Canada, and Singapore from a larger list of high-performing systems," the study an-

the larger community"

Although all five recognized school systems differ in various ways, the study cited six "common drivers" leading to student success among them: early learning; personalization and pathways for success; teacher selectivity, quality and growth; focus on learning; education linked to economic development; and cultural expectation of value.

The report points out common threads of success in Long Beach and Ontario, Canada, in measuring what it calls cultural expectation of value. "Ontario and Long Beach face a more turbulent financial climate. But they have kept mission over money as the driving force behind most of their decisions," it explains.

The study also praised the quality of **Long Beach** continued on page 12

## Five Urban Educators Receive \$25,000 Milken Awards

Jackie Bonilla, a third-grade teacher at Clover Avenue Elementary in Los Angeles, has created a culture museum in her classroom, where students learn writing, social studies, technology and oral language skills through the study of eight cultures.

And last year 87 of her students scored proficient or above in English Language Arts on the California Standards Test and 97 percent scored proficient or above in math.

Bonilla is also a leader outside of the classroom, hosting parent workshops, writing a weekly parent newsletter, establishing science family evenings, mentoring beginning teachers, and applying for grants that send students on field trips or bring new resources to campus.

For her efforts, she was recently named a recipient of the 2012-2013 Milken Educator Award. Hailed as the "Oscars of Teaching" by *Teacher Magazine*, the Milken Educator Awards are presented to outstanding elementary and secondary teachers, principals and other educators across the nation who are advancing excellence in education.



Jackie Bonilla is mobbed by her students as she is interviewed by the news media for winning a \$25,000 Milken Educator Award.

Recipients also receive a cash award of \$25,000.

Bonilla is not the only big-city school teacher honored. Also receiving a Milken Educator Award was Stephen Abenth, a teacher in St. Paul Public Schools; Barth

Quenzer, a teacher in Denver Public Schools; Kevin Williams, a principal in Miami-Dade County Public Schools; and Jacqueline Simms, a teacher in the District of Columbia Public Schools in

**Milken Awards** continued on page 3



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## Five Urban School Leaders Profiled in Newspaper Security Magazine

## Ranks L.A. District No. 1 in Providing School Safety



Valeria Silva

Minnesota's St. Paul Public Schools Superintendent Valeria Silva and Ohio's Cincinnati Public Schools Superintendent Mary Ronan have something in common. Yes, both are urban school leaders.

What's new is that Silva and Ronan were recently profiled in *Education Week's* special report on "Leaders to Learn from," two of 16 leaders nationwide to be profiled in the newspaper's Feb. 6 edition and on its web site.

Billed as "Lessons from District Lead-

### Milken Awards *continued from page 2*

Washington, D.C.

Sponsored by the Milken Family Foundation, the awards were first presented in 1987 and more than 2,500 educators have received more than \$63 million in cash awards. This year the award was presented to elementary educators.

Candidates are recommended for the award by an independent blue ribbon committee appointed by every participating state's department of education, with the Milken Family Foundation making the final selections.

In order to be eligible for the award, recipients must demonstrate exceptional education talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student learning results, have educational accomplishments beyond the classroom, and have an engaging and inspiring practice that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

In addition to the \$25,000 award, recipients of the Milken Educator Award are invited to join the Milken Educator Network, a group of more than 2,500 distinguished educators.

ers," the front-page report is the first of what is planned to become an annual report as *Education Week* spotlights district-level leaders around the nation who have "seized on creative but practical approaches to improving their school systems..."

The two superintendents were among five leaders from urban school systems of the 16 chosen from nominees submitted by readers, education reporters, school administrator groups, and experts in specific areas of education.

"Minnesota Superintendent Pioneered ELL Reforms" was the headline for the article on Superintendent Silva. "An immigrant herself, Valeria Silva led by example a nationwide push to teach English-learners in mainstream classes," says the newspaper.

In the profile of Superintendent Ronan, the headline read: "Veteran Educator Turns Around Cincinnati Schools."



Mary Ronan

The "Leaders to Learn from" report also profiled Boston Public Schools' Michele Brooks, assistant superintendent, Office of Family and Student Engagement, in a headline "Boston Leader Connects Parents to

Learning."

"Baltimore Leader Helps District Cut Suspensions" was the headline for a profile on Jonathan Brice, officer of school support networks, Baltimore City Schools. "Jonathan Brice rewrote the district's code of conduct to give principals alternatives to out-of-school suspensions," says the newspaper.

In a profile of the director of transportation for Ohio's Columbus Public Schools, Steve Simmons III, headlined "In Ohio, Ex-Mechanic Keeps School Buses in Gear," the *Education Week* article noted, "Steve A. Simmons III brought cheaper bus routes, GPS technology, and student-tracking tags to Columbus, Ohio, schools."

In the aftermath of the deadly December shooting at a school in Newtown, Conn., the issue of school safety has taken center stage. But when it comes to school safety, the nation's second largest school district recently received some good news when a magazine selected its police department as the top school police department in the nation.

In its November issue, *Security* magazine named the Los Angeles School Police Department (LASPD) the best department for maintaining security at a school system. Each year, the magazine publishes a top 500 list of public and private companies, as well as governments, that provide the best security. The rankings are divided into different categories such as K-12 education, finance, hospitality and retail.

This is the third consecutive year the LASPD has finished first on the "Security 500" list in K-12 education.

According to district officials, the LASPD is the largest independent school police department in the nation with more than 500 employees, including more than 350 sworn police officers and 126 non-sworn school safety officers.

"I'm very proud of all the men and women of the LASPD, both sworn and non-sworn, who have worked hard year after year to keep our students, staff, parents, community and our physical plant assets protected," said Steve Zipperman, LASPD police chief.

The LASPD was not the only urban school district police department that made the "Security 500" list. Las Vegas' Clark County School District ranked fifth; Broward County School District in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., placed sixth; San Diego Unified School District ranked eighth; and Ohio's Toledo Public Schools placed ninth.

## A King Honors Palm Beach School Official

The King of Spain, Juan Carlos, recently bestowed upon Margarita Pinkos, the multicultural education director of Florida's School District of Palm Beach County, the nation's Royal Order, the Order of Isabella the Catholic, the highest civil honor awarded by the government of Spain.

The king and Spain's Minister of Foreign Affairs Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo ordered the Officer's Cross to be given to Pinkos because she has been a long-standing advocate for global education, promoting multilingualism and equity education for all students.

Women awarded the Officer's Cross are referred to as *Dames (Cruz de Damas)* and are considered to be the equivalent of knights.

Pinkos traveled to Washington, D.C., recently to receive the honor at a ceremony hosted at the residence of the ambassador of Spain and was officially inducted into the Royal Order, created in 1815 by King Ferdinand VII of Spain in honor of Queen Isabella I of Castile.

The former principal and classroom teacher initiated a partnership with the Kingdom of Spain and Palm Beach County Schools in 2005 to improve educational op-

portunities for students. Pinkos launched dual language education in district schools, which now includes a cluster called The International Spanish Academy comprised of two elementary schools, a middle school and high school. The language, history and culture of Spanish-speaking countries are an integral part of the curriculum focus for these schools, according to the district.



Ambassador from Spain Don Ramon Gil-Casares, left, and honoree Margarita Pinkos listen to Counselor of Education Gisbert da Cruz Xavier, center, read the official scroll.

## D.C. District Launches Internship Program For Students with Disabilities

The District of Columbia Public Schools in Washington, D.C., recently launched a career-focused mentoring program to give high school students with disabilities a competitive edge.

The Competitive Employment Opportunities (CEO) program aims to provide students with career exploration, job skills training, goal-setting support as well as paid internships.

Approximately 20 students will participate in the program, which includes weekly professional development classes, guided email correspondence with mentors

and a career-focused final project. When students finish the program, they are given the opportunity to obtain summer internships at their assigned mentor agency such as NASA and Northrop Grumman.

The district will evaluate the success of the program based on increased student confidence and increased ability for students to display skills such as professionalism, communication, time management, budgeting and problem-solving. Higher rates of student employment and ability to define postsecondary goals and next steps will also be used to gauge the program.

## Baltimore School Board Member Honored

Jerrelle Francois has served eight years on the Board of School Commissioners for the Baltimore City Public Schools, where she has focused on closing the achievement gap by improving early childhood education and education in middle schools.

Her efforts have resulted in her being selected as the 2012 School Board Member of the Year by the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE). The award recognizes a local school board member for his or her demonstrated unswerving commitment to representing and facilitating the educational needs of school children of African descent.

A veteran educator, Francois began her career with the Baltimore school district as a math teacher. She has held various positions throughout the system, including assistant superintendent for secondary education, before joining the school board in 2004, where she served as vice chair and chair of the board's Teaching and Learning Committee. Francois is also a member of the Council of the Great City Schools' Executive Committee.

"I cannot imagine anyone more deserving of this honor than Jerrelle Francois," wrote Baltimore Schools CEO Andres Alonso in a letter nominating her for the NABSE award. "Her entire career—indeed, her entire life—is one of selfless dedication to the wellbeing of the students and families of Baltimore."



Board member Jerrelle Francois at work with CEO Andres Alonso.

## San Francisco's 'Mr. Superintendent' Adjusting to Title in the Classroom

Richard Carranza has been the superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District since July 2012, but he still sees himself as a social studies teacher from the neighborhood.

"When I walk into a classroom and people refer to me as Mr. Superintendent and there's a deference that comes when they say that, it just feels odd," said Carranza in an interview with the *Urban Educator*. "I'm just Richard."

So while he is still taken aback from people's reactions when they meet him, if nothing else, it makes him work even harder. "I never want to make people not proud of the fact that I'm their superintendent," said Carranza.

Leading the 55,000-student system in San Francisco is the first superintendency for Carranza, who is 46-years-old and previously served as the district's deputy superintendent in charge of instruction, innovation and social justice.

And he has found that one of the biggest differences between his new job and his old job is that as deputy superintendent he was the nuts-and-bolts guy, involved very deeply in issues. But as superintendent, he has had to learn how to take a step back, and so hiring capable people has been critical for him. "I need people who can give me really good advice as well as push back on me," said Carranza.

People often say that running an urban public school system is one of the most demanding jobs in the nation and Carranza's schedule is a prime example of this. A typical day for him begins at 4 a.m. and rarely is he home before 11 p.m. He does paperwork in the early morning and late evening, so the rest of his day he can devote to "people work," which is actually one of the most enjoyable things about his job.

"Being able to interact with different people is what really makes the job invigorating," said Carranza, who is married and has two daughters who are students in the district.

Having children in the district not only provides him with direct feedback about the school system, but has given him even



more incentive to work hard and lead the district to success.

"Every day when I get up and come to work, I truly live by the motto, 'Is it good enough for my kids?'" he said in an interview with the *San Francisco Examiner* shortly after being named superintendent. "And if it's not, then we have work to do."

### The Biggest Challenge

Carranza believes the toughest challenge facing the school system is access and equity. "You can draw a direct line or correlation between equity of outcome and equity of funding," said Carranza. "Any issue that you can identify comes back to equity of outcomes for kids."

The superintendent has found that the issue of equity is not only a challenge facing the seventh largest school system in California, but his urban colleagues across the country as well. "It's this whole notion of how do you provide for the needs of students wherever they may be," said Carranza, who has made achieving equitable outcomes for students the nexus of the district's strategic plan.

The son of a hairdresser and sheet metal worker who entered school in Tucson speaking no English, the superintendent knows firsthand how critical it is to provide students with the necessary resources. But

his experience is one of the reasons he is so optimistic about urban public education.

"I had teachers that never saw me as an English Language Learner student, but saw me as Richard who we were going to teach English to but make sure he remains bilingual," recalled Carranza. "People didn't have lowered expectations for me."

The first in his family to graduate from college, Carranza laments that educators often fail to listen carefully to what students say, instead thinking only adults know what's best.

However, he believes the introduction of Common Core State Standards into the classroom is helping educators change their ways.

"Common Core requires us to have multiple ways of assessing student learning, and student learning isn't just how you

do on a standardized test, but how you present, how you speak, how you work in groups," said Carranza. "And those are real-world skills."

He said that if you follow any 10-year-old student on a daily basis, one would see his or her

interaction with technology, an interaction not found in many of the nation's schools.

"The reality is technology permeates every facet of young peoples lives," said the superintendent, "so we as school systems have to take our lens off and say 'well there is a whole new world that's changing at light speed and we have to understand how we integrate that into learning.'"

And what would people be surprised to know about the veteran educator? Carranza is an identical twin, four minutes older than his brother. He is also a lifelong mariachi musician, having played since the age of 9, recorded albums and created an award-winning high school mariachi program at his high school alma mater in Tucson.



San Francisco Schools Superintendent Richard Carranza shows off his guitar-playing skills to students.

## Nashville School Opens Environmental Engineering Lab

With the support of industry and environmentalists, Tennessee's Metro Nashville Public Schools recently opened a new environmental engineering lab at its Whites Creek High School (WCHS) campus.

The facility includes advanced technology for design, simulation and evaluative testing, and provides space for advanced environmental testing and for students to build robots to address real-world problems as they pursue design, construction, automation, systems control and manufacturing efficiency.

"This leap forward was made possible by dedicated engineers and scientists from LP Building Products, Brown & Caldwell, EMIT Inc., Lipscomb University and the Sierra Club in addition to engineers from several technologically advanced companies who volunteered their time as individuals," says Cliff Cockerham, who teaches Advanced Placement environmental science and Foundations of Technology. "Together, they have played a central role in this expansion by providing guidance as well as the generous donation of supplies, new tools, valuable new equipment and technical support."

Metro Nashville's zoned high schools have small learning communities, or academies, that provide students a theme for their state-required electives as well as a consistent peer group and teachers during their high school years.

The Whites Creek "Academy of Public Service" is comprised of four programs designed to prepare students for post-secondary school and work: Alternative Energy, Logistics and Sustainability (AELS); Automotive Technology; Law & Law Enforcement; and Teacher Training. They are four pathways offered within the Academy of Public Service. Another Whites Creek academy focuses on Community Health.

The new environmental engineering lab allows students to interact regularly with sophisticated monitoring and research technology. Students who take biodiesel biotechnology class take samples to the environmental engineering lab for analysis

and collect follow-up data. Students who run alternative fuels through test engines in automotive technology class take exhaust filters to the engineering lab for analysis as well.

### *Ecosystem Research*

The lab is also set up to environmentally assess ecosystems. In addition to comparisons with exemplars, there are lab stations for digital analysis of conductivity, pH, dissolved oxygen, oxygen gas content, carbon dioxide content, specific ion content, infiltration rates, particle size, various contaminants, gas chromatography and more. Overall water ecosystem health may also be assessed.

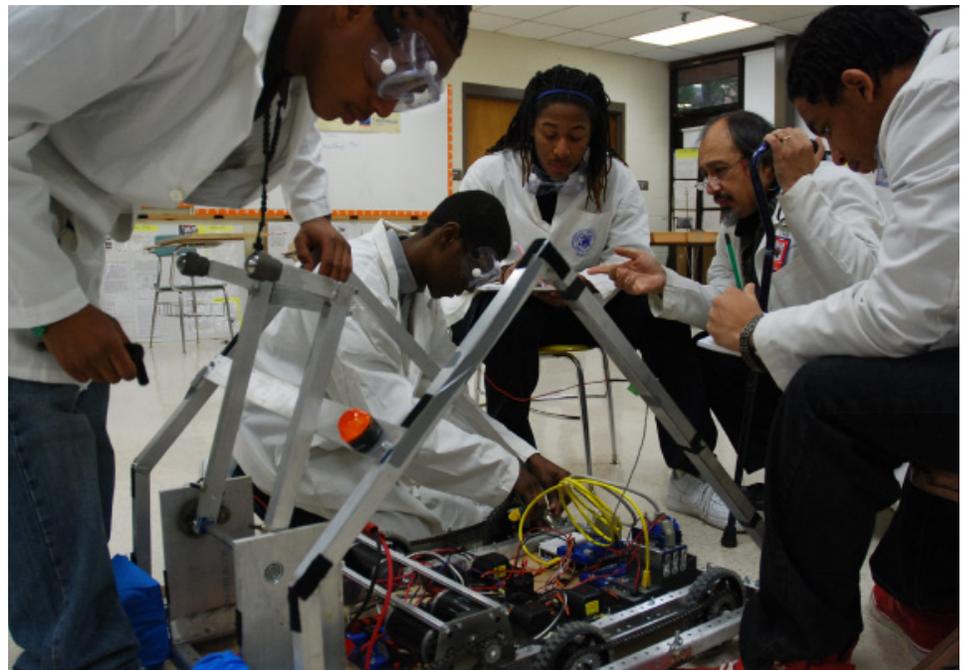
After learning the basics of hands-on technical drawing through a module developed by Sierra Club volunteers, students can now move into CAD (computer-aided design) work on laptop and notebook computers purchased by donors from the Sierra Club and the Sierra Club's environmental education committee. Generous discounts

from local store managers at Wal-Mart and Best Buy stretched the dollars further.

Several CAD programs were donated and installed with the help of engineering faculty at Lipscomb University and companies associated with FIRST Robotics. Contributions from scientific, environmental and community donors, along with J.C. Penney and FIRST Robotics, allowed a student team to participate in engineering competitions.

With materials and supplies donated by the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club of Middle Tennessee's education chair, Joy Mayfield, students in the environmental engineering lab collect habitat characterization data in a "Citizen Science" collaboration with Cornell University's Laboratory of Ornithology.

Randall Tidwell, a social science teacher, received a Service Award for Outstanding Achievement from the Sierra Club acknowledging the political science and economic perspectives he has brought to Alternative Energy, Logistics and Sustainability (AELS) students.



Students work on robot under the direction of instructor Cliff Cockerham in new lab.

## Miami-Dade Superintendent Receives City and Mexican Honors

Alberto Carvalho has been superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools since 2008, and under his leadership the nation's fourth largest school district was the winner of the prestigious 2012 Broad Prize for Urban Education for making the greatest progress in the nation in raising student achievement. And last year the district posted its highest high school graduation rate.

These achievements have not gone unnoticed. The Mexican government recently awarded Carvalho The Ohtli Award, the highest honor for any non-citizen of Mexico who has contributed to the improvement of Mexican communities abroad.

Carvalho indicated it was a great honor to be recognized and said, "Having come to this county as an immigrant, I know there are challenges as well as opportunities, and I choose to support those who come here to search for a better life, which serves to improve our community and make our nation stronger."

Carvalho, who is the president of the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents, received the award last month at the National Association for Bilingual Education conference.

The Ohtli Award was not the only award Carvalho has recently received. He is also a recipient of the 2013 Best Public Servant Miami Life Award for his love and concern for the Miami community. The popular award program generally honors people in entertainment but was expanded this year to include the superintendent.

And Carvalho, along with the Miami-Dade County school board, were recipients of the Beacon Council Judges' Special Award for their vision and leadership. The Beacon Council is Miami-Dade County's official economic development partnership focusing on job creation and economic growth.

Last year, the Council of the Great City Schools presented the Award for Excellence in Financial Management to the Miami-Dade County school system.



Miami Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho displays The Ohtli Award he received from the Mexican government for helping Mexican communities abroad.

## Distinguished Title I Schools Named

Fourteen big-city schools have been named National Title I Distinguished Schools for outstanding academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students.

The urban schools, represented by the Council of the Great City Schools, are among the 67 schools across the nation recognized by the National Title I Association, which along with individual states select the Title I schools that have demonstrated exceptional student performance or closed the achievement gap between student groups.

The fourteen big-city schools named National Title I Distinguished Schools are in Orlando and Jacksonville, Fla., Atlanta (two); Chicago, Baltimore, Jackson, Miss., Omaha, Las Vegas, Newark, N.J., New York City (two), Charleston, S.C., and Houston.

## Baltimore Uses Debate To Train Teachers On Common Core

What do debating skills and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have in common?

Debate involves students reading complex texts, listening critically and writing and presenting reasoned arguments, all skills the CCSS have found students need for college and career success. And argumentation is in several of the standards as students are no longer being asked to just provide an opinion, but to create an argument and support with text.

As a result, Baltimore City Public Schools has turned to the Baltimore Urban Debate League (BUDL) to develop a professional development program for teachers to help them utilize debate skills.

The It's Debatable: Structured Argumentation Skills and Strategies (SASS) program teaches educators debate argumentation skills that can be incorporated into their teaching practice, such as making a basic argument and using text as evidence. And teachers receive access to prepared lesson plans they can use throughout the school year.

More than 1,200 teachers have participated in the program and results from a recent survey of participants found that 100 percent agree that the program is connected to CCSS. In addition, more than 90 percent of teachers found that students who use SASS have improved in their ability to analyze a text and more than 90 percent of teachers said the professional development program improved their teaching practice.

"The It's Debatable: Structured Argumentation Skills and Strategies professional development is particularly effective because it is an ongoing experience," said Coleen Reyes, BUDL's director of programs. "Not only do teachers gather new information and new collaborating colleagues, they are engaged in ongoing relationships and collaboration with BUDL and teachers all over the city."

## Albuquerque and Seattle Districts Win Ballot Measures

Seattle Public Schools has seen a rise in student enrollment and school officials predict during the next decade that an additional 7,000 students will enter the district. So in an effort to meet the needs of the district's growing enrollment, the school board voted in November to ask citizens to renew a \$694.9-million capital levy as well as a \$551.9-million operations levy on the February ballot.

Voters showed their support for education by approving both of the ballot measures by more than 70 percent. According to the *Seattle Times*, the two levies will raise \$1.25 billion for the school district, the largest public-school request in city history.

The \$694.9-million Building Excellence IV Capitol Levy was a replacement for an expiring capital levy, while the operations levy replaced the expiring operations levy voters approved in 2010.

Funds from the capital levy will be used to replace, modernize and expand 17 schools as well as provide all schools with wireless Internet. In addition, 37 schools will receive earthquake-safety upgrades and 19 schools will have integrated security camera systems installed.

The operations levy will provide more than 25 percent of the district's operating revenue and will help pay for additional teachers, textbooks, transportation and student activities such as athletics and music and educational programs not fully funded by the state.

In a letter posted on the district's web site, Seattle Schools Superintendent José Banda thanked Seattle voters for approving the two measures on behalf of the district's 50,000 students.

"This is an amazing city, and I'm proud to be part of this community," wrote Banda. "I look forward to our continued work together in support of all students."

Also expressing support for their urban school district was voters in Albuquerque, N.M., who overwhelmingly approved a \$368 million bond and mill levy to renovate facilities in Albuquerque Public Schools.



**Anna Cole (left) of T.A. Cole & Sons Construction joins Albuquerque Schools Superintendent Winston Brooks at a press conference thanking the community for supporting the schools in the recent bond/mil levy election.**

The \$200-million bond measure passed with 78.8 percent of the voters, while the \$168-million mill levy was approved by 71.6 percent.

Funds will be used to renovate, restore and renew schools and other district buildings as well as make technology upgrades in classrooms. The average age of a district school is about 45 years.

"We are pleased and grateful that voters came out to overwhelmingly support their schools," said Albuquerque Schools Superintendent Winston Brooks.

### Winning Lawsuits *continued from page 1*

An appeal of the ruling is expected to reach the Texas Supreme Court.

In January, a three-judge panel in a Kansas district court ruled that the state must boost its spending for education following a lawsuit brought against the state by 54 school districts, including Wichita Public Schools.

"By declaring that school funding is unconstitutionally low, the judges reached the same conclusion that the Kansas Supreme Court had in 2005," says a *Wichita Eagle* editorial. "Then, state legislative leaders

## Cleveland Bond Measure Opens Door For Longer School Day

Last spring, the Cleveland Municipal School District had to shorten the school day by 50 minutes for kindergarten through eighth grade students in order to balance the district budget.

Those 50 minutes were recently restored, because voters went to the polls in November and approved the passage of a four-year operating levy that will generate \$67 million annually over four years for the district.

During the levy campaign, the district had promised to use funds from the levy to restore the full day and the school board made good on its promise, voting 9-0 at a recent board meeting to restore the 50 minutes.

"I believe it shows our first step in honoring our commitment and showing action on Day One," Cleveland Schools CEO Eric Gordon told the board, according to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

Approximately \$6.8-million was used to restore the lost instructional time. The district is also working to restore art, music and gym classes that were cut due to budget woes. District officials also plan to use funds from the levy to add programs in reading, mathematics and science.

reluctantly agreed to a significant funding increase over several years. But when the recession hit, the state began abandoning the promise and cutting spending, to the point where per-pupil base aid is now lower than it was in 2005."

"This is a win for Kansas students," said Wichita Board of Education President Lynn Rogers in the school system's newsletter. "The lawsuit is about our children and the Kansas of tomorrow, so we can prepare Wichita students for the high-wage, high-skill jobs of the future."

## Dallas Approves New Evaluation System For School Principals

The Dallas Independent School District believes that principals are the key to reform and that in order to turn around a struggling school, an effective principal is needed to coach teachers, provide useful instructional feedback, monitor the system for continuous improvement and build a culture of excellence.

As a result, the district recently approved a new evaluation system for principals called the Effectiveness = Performance and Achievement Plan (EPA). The system will be implemented this school year.

Under the plan, evaluations of principals will be based on specific performance and student achievement metrics. Performance measures include the ability to lead transformation, improve student enrollment or student attendance, develop a positive school culture and improve the effectiveness of the teaching staff. Sixty percent of a principal's effectiveness score will be based on these metrics.

Student achievement will count for 40 percent of a principal's effectiveness score and will be tied to multiple measures of student achievement, including state and district assessment results, achievement gap data, and college and career readiness for high schools.

District officials believe the plan is designed to assess principal effectiveness, provide feedback and develop capacity, and make decisions related to who will lead schools and raise student achievement.

"Every child deserves a principal who has a laser-like focus on the quality of instruction in their school," said Dallas Schools Superintendent Mike Miles. "... This is a significant step forward in the transformation of our school district."

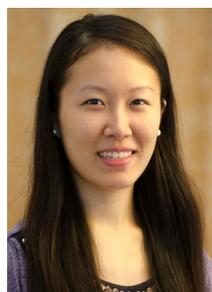
The principal evaluation system is part of the school system's Destination 2020, a district improvement plan to prepare students for post-secondary education and the Year 2020 workplace.



## Education Secretary Visits Houston

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, center, listens to a student in a recent visit to Lee High School to learn about the Houston Independent School District's Apollo 20 school turnaround program. The school system partnered with Harvard University's Education Innovation Laboratory in efforts to develop a model aimed at turning around chronically failing schools. Looking on are Houston Schools Superintendent Terry Grier, left, school board member Harvin Moore and James Callaway of the HISD Foundation, far right.

## Urban Students Recognized for AP Courses



Emily Chen

Emily Chen is a student at Benjamin Franklin High School in New Orleans, who has taken 14 Advanced Placement (AP) courses and is a national merit semifinalist.



Xinyu Liang

Xinyu Liang is a student at Louisiana's Baton Rouge Magnet High School, who has taken 10 Advanced Placement courses and mentors students in math, physics and chemistry.

And Bennett Amodio is a student at Alaska's West Anchorage High School who has taken 11 AP courses and plays piano and cello in the Anchorage Youth Symphony.

These students not only completed several AP courses, but performed so well in them that they were named winners of the 2012-2013 Siemens Awards for Advanced Placement.

The award, along with a \$2,000 college scholarship, was presented to one male and one female student in each state for earning the highest scores in AP science, technology, engineering and mathematics courses.

This year, 101 high school students in all 50 states were honored. The awards were established in 1998 and are sponsored by the Siemens Foundation.

## Multiple Voices Complicate the ESEA Reauthorization

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

After eight major revisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) since its inception in 1965, the reauthorization process and the Act itself have become more complicated and layered.

From the rather simple initial concept of providing federal aid to help school districts finance supplemental services for disadvantaged students, ESEA has expanded into dozens of programs with varying purposes and corresponding constituencies.

These constituencies—some with a membership and many without—have now proliferated into scores of interest groups seeking special consideration in the crafting of the reauthorization. High-poverty schools and disadvantaged children are no longer the sole focus of the Act, as school groups of all kinds have splintered into competing factions pushing very specialized demands that they can't satisfy through other parts of the Act or in other ways.

High schools, middle schools, charter schools, private schools, virtual schools, and others now seek special provisions and set asides. Rural schools vie for priority against urban and suburban schools. Sun Belt interests compete with Rust Belt needs. Multiple school employee groups—principals, teachers, counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses, and paraprofessionals—lobby for consideration. Reading teachers, math teachers, science teachers, music teachers, art teachers, physical education teachers, and others voice divergent interests in federal policy.

Disparate programs ranging from pre-school and after-school efforts, literacy and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programs, and professional development and behavioral programs strive for recognition. Elementary and secondary schools fight with higher educa-



tion; states battle against local school interests; and community-based groups struggle with for-profit groups. Research entities are in a constant tug-of-war with operational interests. And now more than ever formula grants contend with the desire for competitive grant initiatives.

Non-school organizations have increasingly weighed-in on education legislation and policy, as well. Civil rights and other advocacy groups have historically been active in this arena, but there are many more such groups than 30 years ago. And, an increasing number of foundations and think tanks, who typically have no membership or who do not actually work in or with schools, now dot the landscape with a relentless stream of policy papers, studies, forums, retreats, and meetings—some well-informed and thoughtful and others that work on the brink of incompetence.

Whether left-leaning or right-leaning, think tanks are often relied upon by Congress and staff alike through legislative proposals or testimony as objective brokers of reality.

With some \$38 billion in federal aid for elementary and secondary education (\$24 billion in ESEA alone) and the presumed interest and future of the nation at stake, those who actually lead, govern, and run public schools are now only one of many voices shaping education policy and legislation—and, increasingly, in fact, are among the weakest voices in the cacophony of interests that Congress hears.

This proliferation of interest groups is not necessarily a bad thing in its own right, but it complicates and sometimes dilutes the voices of educators in Congress's consideration of federal elementary and secondary education legislation. And, it raises the question of just what or who your congressional delegation is championing.

## NYC and Chicago Districts Launch Partnerships to Help Students Excel

Students in the nation's largest school district can find all the information they need to apply to colleges in New York City in one place due to a partnership between the district and the City University of New York.

The NYC College Line is a free web resource that will enable students to find city-specific information regarding the college process. Students who have questions ranging from financial aid to admissions and application procedures can receive answers from college counselors and professionals.

Users at [NYCCollegeLine.org](http://NYCCollegeLine.org) can visit, join or open an online forum and utilize the "Ask an Advisor" service to receive live support from professionals. The web site will also feature guides and video tutorials from educators as well as research on best practices and information on upcoming workshops.

District officials believe NYC College Line is the first-of-its-kind web resource and has the ability to increase college readiness, improve access and raise graduation rates.

"We want students not just to get into college, but to be successful there," said New York City Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott. "NYC College Line will help us achieve both of those goals. It's a win-win – for students, educators and this city."

### Chicago Partnership

And a partnership between Chicago Public Schools and a Chicago-based start-up group is designed to help students find jobs in the growing information technology field.

Students at the district's five Early College STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) high schools as well as the district's technology magnet high schools will have the opportunity to enroll in new web development courses, beginning next school year.

The courses are being developed with the help of The Starter League, a developer and designer teaching hub that teaches beginners how to design web applications. The organization will also create a training program specifically designed for teachers and will train 10 teachers this summer. Those teachers will also have access to an online tool featuring continuously updated resources that they can utilize in their classrooms.

Chicago Public Schools CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett praised the partnership with the Starter League as a way to expand high-quality instructional opportunities to students.

"With this partnership, we can support our teachers in the expanding and ever-changing technology field, and also ensure that students are getting the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in college, career and life," said Byrd-Bennett.

District officials plan to evaluate the academic impact of the web development course over the next school year and if results are positive, plan to offer the course to all high school students in the coming years.

## Boston Official Wins Council Award

Ann Chan, the assistant superintendent of human resources at Boston Public Schools, recently received The Great Cities Human Resource Director's Award at the Council of the Great City Schools' HRD/Personnel Directors Annual Meeting in Orlando, Fla.

The annual award recognized Chan for her innovative leadership in the field of human resources and personnel management and her dedication to urban education.



Ann Chan holds her Human Resource Director's Award.

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## Three Florida Superintendents Address Lawmakers

The superintendents of schools in Florida's Duval County in Jacksonville, Miami-Dade County and Hillsborough

**Long Beach** *continued from page 1*

teachers and the professional development they receive, noting that the district "relies heavily on 'in-house' rather than vendor professional development, with highly skilled instructional coaches assessing and informing the classroom instruction of peers."

The school system's teacher professional development program was recently the focus of an NBC News story. An excerpt of the story noted, "For years, the Long Beach Unified School District has had one of the nation's best-regarded professional development programs for new and veteran teachers, according to Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward, a national nonprofit organization focused on teacher education."

County in Tampa recently addressed the state's House K-12 Education Committee about different ways students can earn high school diplomas.

Duval's Superintendent Nikolai Vitti, Miami's Superintendent Alberto Carvalho and Hillsborough's MaryEllen Elia were invited to Florida's capital in Tallahassee to discuss various pathways to earning a high school diploma.

"We support the legislature's emphasis on the need for students to demonstrate the acquisition of college-ready skills before receiving a high school diploma; yet, we recognize that postsecondary success will look differently for each student," said Superintendent Vitti in a press statement.

He explained that multiple pathways must be offered and tailored to students' individual talents and interests to achieve a 100 percent graduation rate.

"Life after high school looks differently for every child, and our diplomas must reflect that or we will lose their interest," he stressed.

## Great City Grads



**Wendy Chung**

**Molecular geneticist**

**directs the clinical genetics program at  
Columbia University**

**1986 graduate**

**Miami Killian**

**Senior High School**

**Miami-Dade County Public Schools**