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Richard R. Green

## Award Honoring Urban School Reformer Celebrates 20th Year

*"If you believe it, you can achieve it. If it is to be, it's up to me."*

Those were the words Richard R. Green fondly had children recite when the urban school reformer had been the first African-American chancellor of the New York City public school system and superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools in the 1980s.

His efforts to encourage schoolchildren to achieve to their full potential led the *Washington Post* to publish an editorial memorializing the urban educator after his death in May 1989.

"Dr. Green arrived from Minneapolis as a proven reformer who had come up the hard way – growing up poor, even doing a stint in reform school – and took over the largest and by most measures

**School Reformer** continued on page 4

## Journalists Hear Stimulus Concerns In Meeting to Track Education Aid

News reporters covering education heard concerns about the distribution of economic stimulus funds to local school districts at the Education Writers Association conference held recently in the nation's capital.

It's not clear how much of the \$40 billion education portion of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund of the federal stimulus package will be diverted by the states to fill their own budget gaps, Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, told the education journalists.

"State after state have been lowering their overall spending levels down to the Fiscal Year '06 levels based on the amounts of resources they expect to get from the stimulus," he stressed.

Casserly maintained that some states are indicating they will use the stabilization dollars to backfill their own budget deficits, replenish state pension systems – or even provide tax cuts to their citizenry.

"It is not clear that this is illegal, but it is clearly not consistent with the spirit of the law," he emphasized, noting that the U.S. Department of Education's threats to with-

hold the second half of the stimulus money are probably not enforceable.

As a result, most city school districts are now assuming that they won't receive much stabilization dollars, he contends.

Casserly was one of three panelists to discuss "Tracking the Stimulus," a conference session moderated by *USA TODAY* education reporter Greg Toppo. Education writers from across the nation packed the room to learn more about how to monitor the distribution and use of the \$100 billion

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## Students at School of Excellence



Students from the World of Inquiry School in Rochester, N.Y., are all smiles. The school was recently recognized for its academic excellence. See story on page 6.

# Urban Teachers Win MetLife Community Partnership Awards

Constance Borab, a teacher in Boston, founded a unique program that pairs teachers and students at her big-city school with their counterparts from a suburban high school. And Joseph Chisholm, a teacher in Washington, D.C., created a band program that has been so successful that Chisholm now leads a traveling show of musicians who have visited dozens of schools, community centers and professional showcases.

These two teachers are among the 25 public school educators from across the nation who were recently selected to receive the 2009 MetLife Foundation Ambassadors in Education Award. Presented by the National Civic League, the award honors teachers for their leadership in building bridges between schools and the local community.

In addition to teachers from Boston and Washington, D.C., educators in Atlanta, Baltimore, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Dayton, Denver, Des Moines, Detroit, Fort Worth, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York City, Philadelphia, Providence, San Francisco, St. Louis and Tampa also received an award. Out of the 25 teachers who were presented with




Teacher Constance Borab congratulates Boston Day and Evening Academy graduate Tiffany Figueroa.

an Ambassadors in Education award, 21 were from school districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools.

“These teachers are leaders and innovators, who inspire students, peers and neighbors to make schools and communities strong,” said MetLife Foundation President and CEO Dennis White.

The Ambassadors in Education award was created in 2003, after MetLife conducted its annual survey of teachers and found a growing gap between public schools and their communities. Middle and high school teachers in public school districts are

**Partnership Awards** *continued on page 3*



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## Cincinnati Names New Superintendent; St. Paul Appoints Interim Chief



Mary Ronan

Mary Ronan began her career in Cincinnati Public Schools as a middle school math and science teacher in 1976. Since that time, she has served in a variety of positions throughout the district, including interim superintendent.

Recently, she was appointed to the top position: superintendent of the 34,000-student school system.

Ronan, a 32-year veteran of the district and a Cincinnati native, had served as interim superintendent since August 1, 2008, succeeding Rosa Blackwell. Prior to being named interim superintendent, Ronan was director of schools, where she supervised the school system's principals.

When she was principal of the district's Kilgour School in 2001-02, the school received a National Blue Ribbon award for excellence from the U.S. Department of Education.

She has set "Building a Collaborative Culture" as one of her priorities for the 2008-09 school year and looks forward to working as a partner with the school board, parents, community members and staff to

accelerate progress in the Cincinnati school district.

"I believe national prominence is within our grasp, and pulling together, I have no doubt we will achieve it," said Ronan.

### St. Paul Selects Interim

Minnesota's Saint Paul Public Schools recently selected the district's chief of staff to serve as its interim superintendent. Suzanne Kelly will succeed Meria Carstarphen, who will take the reins of Texas' Austin Independent School District this summer.

Kelly has served as chief of staff since 2007, where she was in charge of supporting day-to-day operations of the district. Prior to the position, she had served as chief of staff for Memphis City Schools and as executive director of public affairs for Minneapolis Public Schools.

## Oakland School Named Barack Obama Academy

A middle school in Oakland, Calif., was recently renamed the Barack Obama Academy for the 44th president of the United States.

The Alternative Learning Community is a school designed to help students who have struggled in mainstream educational environments. The movement to rename the school after the first African-American president was led by students at the school.

In March, the Oakland school board approved the new name after hearing impassioned testimony from students as well as administrators.

"To graduate from Barack Obama Academy means I am part of history in the making, and I want to be a part of history," said eighth grader Mikela Mosely. "This is an inspiration to me and for many generations to come."

## After Closing Schools, Fort Worth Resumes Classes Following Flu Policy Shift

The Fort Worth Independent School District in Texas captured national attention when it announced that it would temporarily close all schools, beginning April 30, for some 10 days in response to a confirmed swine flu case at one campus and three probable cases at three other schools.

By early May, more than 700 schools nationwide were reportedly shuttered as education and health officials took precautions to prevent the spread of the H1N1 flu virus. Urban school districts closing individual schools included San Diego, Dallas and Broward County in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., to name a few.

Then, in a policy shift, federal health officials on May 5 revised their swine flu guidance, announcing that all schools can reopen and that children and employees who are ill should stay home.

Subsequently, the Fort Worth school system announced that it would reopen schools to students on May 8 after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determined that the virus was milder than initially feared. "We are not seeing the rates of severe disease that had been reported initially out of Mexico," said the center's acting director, Richard Besser, in the *Washington Post*.

To reopen Fort Worth schools, district spokeswoman Barbara Griffith said in the city's *Star-Telegram* newspaper, "It takes two days to get a district our size ready for school, with 11,000 employees, 80,000 students and 150 buildings. We have food and milk we need to order to get schools all stocked up."

As the school system prepared to resume classes, the county health authority reported 14 confirmed and 17 probable cases of the H1N1 influenza virus in the district.

### Partnership Awards *continued from page 2*

eligible for the award and are nominated by peers, parents, students or community members. The winners are chosen by a national panel of education and civic experts.

The winning teachers will receive \$5,000 grants for their schools. Since its creation, the program has recognized 140 Ambassadors in Education with \$700,000 in grants.

**School Reformer** continued from page 1

the most troubled school system in the country," said the *Post*.

Shortly after he died at the age of 52, the Council of the Great City Schools launched the Richard R. Green Award program to recognize urban school leaders who demonstrated Green's ideals and commitments. Green had served as president of the Council from 1987 to 1988.

### Highest Honor

The Richard R. Green Award, considered the nation's highest honor for urban school leadership, is given annually to a superintendent or board member of a big-city public school system. The award program is sponsored by the Council, ARAMARK Education and Voyager Expanded Learning.

Last year's winner was Superintendent Pascal Forgione of the Austin Independent School District in Texas. Other recent winners since the inception of the award program in 1989 include longtime Boston school board member Elizabeth Reilinger and Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Beverly Hall.

Winners of the Green Award receive a \$10,000 college scholarship to be given to a high school senior in the recipient's school district.

### Student Beneficiaries

Green scholarships have helped a number of students turn the reformer's fond words of "*If you can believe it, you can achieve it*" into reality.

One such scholarship recipient, Basheer Jones, who had lived in a homeless shelter for a while with his family in Cleveland, now hosts his own radio talk show. Jones was able to attend Morehouse College in Atlanta as a result of a scholarship he received from Barbara Byrd-Bennett, who had won the Green

Award in 2001 as the superintendent of the Cleveland school system.

At the Council's Richard Green Award banquet last year in Houston, Jones urged urban school leaders to not give up on children who may seem hopeless. "I could've been placed in a special education class, but educators around me gave me the opportunity to be myself," he stressed.



Basheer Jones addresses urban educators at the 2008 Richard Green Award ceremony as Boston Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson looks on.

### 20<sup>TH</sup> Annual Award

The Council of the Great City Schools is currently accepting nominations for the 2009 Richard R. Green Award. School board members are sought for the nation's top urban leadership award, which is given in alternating years to a board member and superintendent in a big-city school district represented by the Council.

"School board members who will be nominated will have helped spearhead the comeback and progress of the nation's urban schools," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly and Chair of the Board William Isler in a message to prospective candidates.

Deadline for nominations is July 20. The winner will be announced Oct. 29 at the Council's Fall Conference in Portland, Ore.

The 2009 Richard Green Award application for school board members can be accessed on the Council web site at [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org).

## Richard R. Green Award Winners

- 1989 **W. Harry Davis**, Retired Member  
Minneapolis School Board
- 1990 **James Griffin**, Retired Member  
St. Paul School Board  
**Timothy Dyer**, Executive Director  
National Association of Secondary  
School Principals
- 1991 **Paul Houston**, Executive Director  
American Association of School  
Administrators
- 1992 **Richard Wallace Jr.**, Superintendent  
Emeritus, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- 1993 **Constance Clayton**, Superintendent  
School District of Philadelphia
- 1994 **Holmes Braddock**, Board Member  
Miami-Dade County Public Schools
- 1995 **Curman Gaines**, Superintendent  
St. Paul Public Schools
- 1996 **James Williams**, Superintendent  
Dayton Public Schools
- 1997 **Maxine Smith**, Retired Member  
Memphis City School Board
- 1998 **Gerry House**, Superintendent  
Memphis City Public Schools
- 1999 **Rod Paige**, Superintendent  
Houston Independent School District  
**Judy Farmer**, Board Member  
Minneapolis Public Schools
- 2000 **Eric Smith**, Superintendent  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- 2001 **Barbara Byrd-Bennett**, Superintendent  
Cleveland Municipal School District
- 2002 **John Simpson**, Superintendent  
Norfolk Public Schools
- 2003 **Arthur Griffin**, Board Member  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools  
**Franklin Till**, Superintendent  
Broward County Public Schools
- 2004 **Thomas Payzant**, Superintendent  
Boston Public Schools
- 2005 **Anna Dodson**, Board Member  
Norfolk Public Schools
- 2006 **Beverly Hall**, Superintendent  
Atlanta Public Schools
- 2007 **Elizabeth Reilinger**, Board Member  
Boston Public Schools
- 2008 **Pascal Forgione**, Superintendent  
Austin Independent School District

## Urban School Debaters Compete in National Contest

At the inaugural Chase Urban Debate National Championship held last year, a team from Chicago's Lane Tech High School came in first place.

The tournament was recently held for a second year and another team from Chicago captured the first place trophy.

Two students from Walter Payton College Preparatory High School—Halle Apy and Jeremiah Pickert—were crowned the winners of this year's competition hosted by the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues (NAUDL).

The three-day tournament was held at Northwestern University in Chicago and brought together the top two teams from each of 19 urban debate leagues across the nation. Approximately 80 debaters participated in the tournament, sponsored by the JP Morgan Chase Foundation.

Teams from high schools in Atlanta, Boston, Oakland, Dallas, Kansas City, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Newark, Los Angeles, Memphis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Seattle, St. Louis and Washington,

D.C., competed against each other in a style called policy debate, in which teams of two students debate one current event topic.

The team from Walter Payton was crowned the winner after defeating another team from Chicago, Whitney Young Magnet High School, in the final round.

A \$2,000 college scholarship was given to each of the winners on the winning team, with students from the second place team receiving a \$1,000 college scholarship.

Awards and scholarships were also presented to the best individual debaters, with Cole Austin, a student from Garfield High School in Seattle, winning the Top Speaker Award and a \$2,000 college scholarship. The scholarships were provided through a grant from Holland & Knight LLP.

The NAUDL has recently launched seven new urban debate leagues, adding more than 100 schools to the Urban Debate Network. Independent evaluations have found that students who participate in urban debate leagues achieve increases in literacy,

grade point averages, college readiness and attendance, and assume leadership roles in their schools and communities.



Julio Lanzo, a student at the Academy of Public Service in Boston, participates in the Chase Urban Debate National Championship.

### Stimulus Concerns *continued from page 1*

in federal stimulus money for elementary, secondary and higher education.

### Other Issues



Michael Casserly

Of the other funds to be distributed under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act signed into law in February, Casserly pointed out that the city school districts will probably receive most of the stimulus funds through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Although Title I and IDEA programs are highly regulated, there are some at-

tempts by states to cut funds in the amounts of those allocations, said Casserly.

"Ultimately, most of these funds should make it to the local level, but neither Congress nor the [Obama] Administration has been very eager to grant flexibility in their use," he continued, indicating the highly restrictive provisions on the use of Title I and IDEA funds.

Moreover, Casserly said that many local school districts are confused by how to use the stimulus funds.

"Frankly, the Administration has not always been clear enough or vocal enough about whether their priority was jobs and economic stimulus or reform and improvement [in school districts]," he argued. "And no one has clearly said what they expect schools to accomplish with the funds after two years."

But Casserly noted that at least the dollar amounts are clearer under Title I and

IDEA than most parts of the stimulus bill passed by Congress.

He said that many of the big-city school districts are planning expenditures using stimulus funds within the "narrow confines" of the Title I and IDEA provisions to build capacity, institute one-time activities and reform practices.

The Council of the Great City Schools is collecting data on stimulus money being received and how funds will be used, and advising and counseling its member districts on how to best use the funds effectively, wisely and transparently.

Casserly said that he knows urban school districts are building some of their planned Title I and IDEA expenditures around early childhood education, extended day, weekend and summer programs, and teacher incentives to work in hard-to-staff schools among a host of other activities to boost student achievement and reform efforts.



Students at James B. Bonham Elementary School in Dallas participate in the school's annual Field Day event. The school was one of 12 across the nation selected to receive a 2009 National Excellence in Urban Education Award.

## Urban Districts Recognized For Academic Excellence

At James B. Bonham Elementary School in Dallas, 91 percent of the students are eligible for free/reduced price lunch and 61 percent are limited English proficient.

Yet the school has been recognized by the Texas Education Agency for Distinguished Performance, with 70 percent of students scoring at grade level in math and 71 percent scoring at grade level in reading.

As a result, Bonham recently received a 2009 National Excellence in Urban Education Award presented by the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) at San Diego State University.

The award was presented to 12 schools across the nation for achieving academic excellence.

In addition to the Dallas school, three other districts in the Council of the Great City Schools also had schools that were honored: Golden Empire Elementary School in Sacramento, Kearny International Business High School in San Diego and World of Inquiry in Rochester, N.Y.

"These schools represent America's best hope for a strong future," said Joseph Johnson, executive director of NCUST. "These schools prove that achievement gaps can be eradicated and that children in urban cen-

ters can achieve academic excellence."

To be eligible for the award, urban elementary, middle and high schools had to meet 11 rigorous criteria, including the attainment of federal adequate yearly progress targets, low suspension, high attendance rates, and proficiency rates on state assessments that exceeded state averages as well as exceeded the average for 90 percent of schools with similar demographics.

The school also had to have a majority of students meet low-income criteria and have non-selective admission policies.

Twenty-five finalists were selected from 42 applicants and received on-site visits from teams of researchers and educators. At the winning schools, researchers found a high level of learning, challenging academic content and engaging and committed teachers.

Many of the winning schools also provided students with noteworthy programs in art, music and foreign language that helped students become enthusiastic about school.

Each of the winning schools will receive \$1,000 and an opportunity to present and discuss their strategies for success at the NCUST High Performing Urban Schools Symposium this month in San Diego.

## San Diego District Receives Federal Food Service Award

In an effort to provide students nutritious meals last summer, the San Diego Unified School District held 17 barbecue events where children were able to receive free healthy meals.

As a result, the district was one of eight winners of the Summer Food Service Program Sunshine Award, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The award recognizes outstanding achievement of individuals and groups who provide healthy meals to children during the summer months.

The district won in the category of Integrating Nutrition Education and Physical Activities at Sites. The school system integrated nutrition education and physical activities and brought together a broad group of partners to hold events throughout San Diego County. In addition to children receiving free meals, adults were able to buy meals so entire families could eat, learn and exercise together.

"In these dire economic times, low-income children are affected the most, especially when school is out during the summer," said Jack O'Connell, California's state superintendent of public instruction. "...Thanks to the incredible efforts of San Diego Unified School District, 61 percent more meals were served to low-income children last summer."



Students in the San Diego Unified School District eat lunch through the district's free lunch program.

## CNN Anchor and Gates Foundation Official To Address Urban Educators



Soledad O'Brien

Soledad O'Brien, an anchor and special correspondent for CNN Worldwide, will address urban school leaders at the Council of the Great City Schools' 53<sup>rd</sup> annual Fall Conference, Oct. 28-Nov. 1, in

Portland, Ore.

O'Brien has produced several award-winning documentaries, including *CNN Presents: Black in America*, a groundbreaking initiative that focused on the state of Black America 40 years after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

A recipient of the NAACP President's Award for her humanitarian efforts and journalistic excellence, O'Brien will be the Council's lunch speaker and moderator of its National Town Hall Meeting on Oct. 30.

The conference will also feature Vicki Phillips, the director of education for the

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Phillips oversees work to ensure U.S. high school students graduate ready for success in college, career, and life; and to improve access to college.

She is no stranger to the Council, having served as the superintendent of Oregon's Portland Public Schools before joining the Gates Foundation.



Vicki Phillips

More than 800 big-city school superintendents, board members, senior administrators and deans of colleges of education will convene at the Hilton Portland Hotel under the banner "Education: Bridge to the Future" to discuss initiatives to improve the quality of education for children in the nation's urban school systems.

To register for the conference, access the Council's web site at <http://www.cgcs.org/conferences/fall.aspx>.

## NASA Grant to Launch Space Science Program In Chicago Schools

Chicago Public Schools recently received a \$1.4 million grant from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to develop a space science course for high school students that will utilize research from space missions.

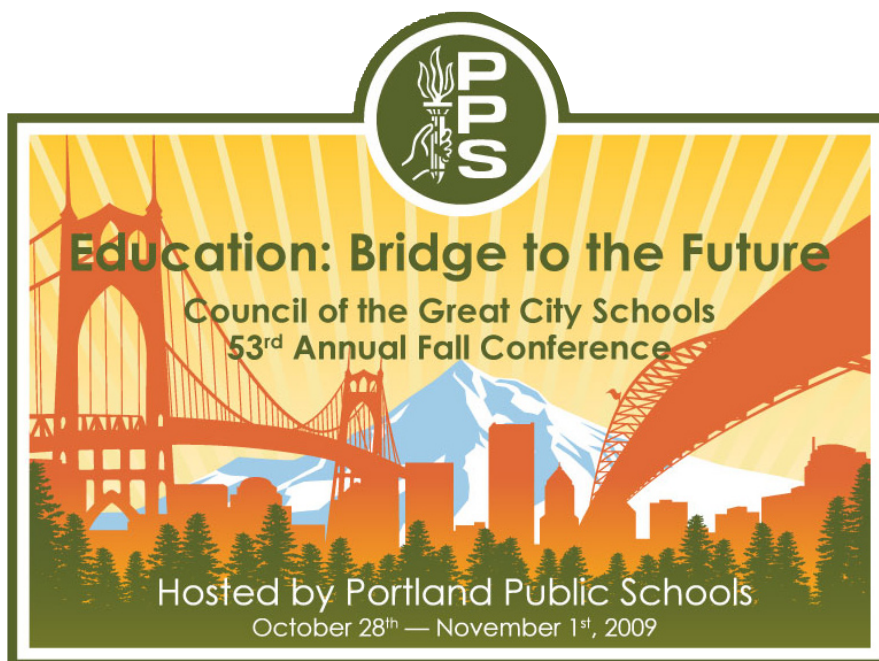
The "Capstone Course for Space Science" will use NASA mission data to increase student knowledge and develop classroom content and activities that center on space science.

The nation's third largest school district is partnering with four local universities--DePaul, the University of Chicago, Northwestern and Loyola--as well as the Adler Planetarium to develop and implement the curriculum, which has a two-year roll-out.

The first phase of the program will begin this summer and involve up to 80 students who will participate in month-long workshops to develop and execute a research study using NASA content for the annual school district's student science fair. The students will work with teachers from their own schools as well as experienced scientists, who will provide advice and mentoring.

With the workshops as a foundation, the district and its partners will craft the content and activities they develop into a single course, to be offered in the second year of the project. Students will conduct experiments and analyze NASA data and teachers will be given 60 hours of professional development spread throughout the year.

Chicago Schools Chief Executive Officer Ron Huberman believes the curriculum the district is offering will create a new air of excitement around space science. "We are grateful that NASA has chosen CPS to be a part of this special opportunity to make the space program come alive for our students," said Huberman.



## Grant Creates D.C. Schools-Smithsonian Science Partnership

Science education in the District of Columbia Public Schools recently received a boost, as a result of a two-year, \$384,000 grant awarded to the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum.

Presented by the PNC Foundation, the *Grow Up Great with Science* grant will go toward improving science instruction in pre-kindergarten classrooms in the nation's capital by providing targeted and high-quality professional development and support for pre-kindergarten teachers.

The National Air and Space Museum will work closely with district officials to design a professional development program, composed of pre-kindergarten science literacy courses and grounded in research-based best practices. The partnership will be phased in over a two-year period and include program and curriculum development. At the end of the program, approximately 600 students and 40 educators will have participated.

The grant will also help support the museum's early-childhood education program, which uses children's interest in aviation and space flight to encourage them to explore science and technology.

D.C. Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee said the district is working to increase its early-childhood offerings and is pleased the grant will help the district provide students with a broader-based curriculum.



Children from the Peabody Early Childhood Center greet Elmo in his astronaut costume at a press conference announcing the PNC grant awarded to the National Air and Space Museum and the District of Columbia Public Schools. Photo Credit: Mark Avino/NASM

"It is our responsibility to introduce students to science at an earlier age and hopefully encourage them to explore all of their options," said Rhee.

## Therapy Dogs Help Children with Autism in Broward County

The Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., enlists the aid of therapy dogs to increase the verbal skills of students with autism.

The therapy dogs are participants in the Humane Society of Broward County's Animal Assisted Therapy Program, in which animals help people just by visiting with them.

Therapy dog Jasper, a Shetland sheepdog, is a big hit with the students at Pembroke Pines Elementary School, where he visits students with autism every other Friday. Jasper spends 15 minutes in each classroom, composed of four to 10 students.

The dog has made a big impact on the students, according to Susan Schwartz, an autism coach at the school. Children's verbal skills have improved and one student even spoke his first word in school: "dog."

The school system not only uses therapy dogs to visit students with autism but also students with physical or learning disabilities. For the past two years, the district has partnered with the Humane Society for its Wag & Tales Reading Program. The initiative offers children between the ages of 5-12 who are reluctant to read or who have literacy deficiencies the chance to read to a pet therapy dog at one of nine libraries in Broward County.

The goal of the program is to make reading fun for students while improving their literacy skills and boosting their confidence in reading out loud.

Broward County has used therapy dog programs for more than 12 years in its schools. Studies of animal therapy have shown that repeated exposure to animals helps improve morale and communication, bolster self-esteem and calm anxiety.



Broward County Public Schools student Jacklyn Kopec greets Jasper, a therapy dog.



## Newark Schools and Rutgers University Create Research Collaborative

Newark Public Schools has gained a partner in Rutgers University in Newark to conduct research aimed at improving student achievement in the New Jersey district.

The school system and university have formed what is called the Newark Schools Research Collaborative (NSRC), designed to provide independent research on what works within the school district and public charter schools, as well as provide data to track and boost student achievement.

“The NSRC will bring together the experts and research data the Newark Public Schools needs to address the formula for consistent academic performance,” said Superintendent Clifford Janey in a press release, emphasizing that the collaborative will contribute to school reform.

The chancellor of Rutgers University in Newark, Steven Diner, praised Janey for opening the doors to his school system for

independent research, according to Newark’s *Star-Ledger*.

“In Newark ...there has been a reluctance to look beneath the numbers,” said Professor Alan Sadovnik in the newspaper. He and Professor Paul Tractenberg are the co-directors of the new collaborative, which will be housed on the Newark campus of Rutgers.

NSRC is modeled after the collaborative between the Chicago Public Schools and the University of Chicago, known as the Consortium on Chicago School Research, created in 1990.

Officials of the Newark Schools Research Collaborative believe one of the greatest benefits of NSRC will be to track student progress through elementary, middle and high school regardless of whether they move from one neighborhood to another or transfer to a Newark charter school, or vice versa.

## It’s ‘Cool to Be in School,’ Boston Tells Students

In an effort to promote student attendance and reduce dropout and truancy rates, Boston Public Schools recently launched a pilot truancy education program called “Cool to Be in School.”



The program includes both prevention and intervention components in the elementary and middle

grades in three schools, supported by John Hancock Financial and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

“Improving graduation rates, which is one of our key goals, starts by keeping

students in school, and developing good habits at a young age,” said Superintendent Carol Johnson.

The prevention pilot component began in mid-March for approximately 850 students, and includes monthly workshops conducted by Hancock Financial volunteers and developed by the JFK Library on the importance of staying in school.

At the end of the program in June, students with perfect attendance rates will have an opportunity to participate in a special field trip celebration at the JFK Library.

The intervention component helps get students who are not attending school back into the classroom by identifying and developing options for the students.



Wichita firefighter Ryan Armstrong shows his equipment to Northeast Magnet students. Photo Credit: Susan Arensman

## Wichita, Broward To Prepare Students For Emergency Aid Careers

Alize Presley, a student in Wichita, Kansas, may become a firefighter one day, as a result of a program offered at her high school.

Northeast Magnet High School recently partnered with the Wichita Fire Department and a local community college to offer students a four-year fire science curriculum. The classes will be taught by instructors from the fire department and Hutchinson Community College’s Fire Science Department. The firefighters will also serve as mentors to the students.

In the first year of the program, students will learn about fire science, law and public service careers, and during their sophomore and junior years, they will take Firefighter I and Firefighter II classes. During their senior year, students will enroll in courses to be certified as an emergency medical technician (EMT).

Upon graduation, students who successfully complete the program will be eligible to be in the pool of recruits for the Wichita Fire Department.

Wichita, Broward continued on page 12

## Stifling the Stimulus

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

If “too many cooks will spoil the broth,” then maybe “too many government officials can stifle the stimulus.” After winding its way through Congress and the federal executive branch; funneling through the states; and trickling down to the local level (something that still has not happened yet), the actual assistance provided by the education stimulus package appears less sizable or flexible than what many local school officials originally anticipated.

Topping the list of local school frustrations is the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, the largest single source of federal education aid in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Big-city school officials are reporting that some states are lowering state education aid beyond what is necessary in anticipation of replacing these state funds with federal stabilization aid. The “supplanted” state education funds are then slated for other purposes, including state pension systems or even the state “rainy day” fund. Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of Education has yet to prohibit such “Bait and Switch” tactics regarding the State Stabilization Fund, a situation that could result in many local school systems effectively getting no additional funds at all.

To cope with losses in state and local revenue, school districts are particularly eager to have maximum flexibility in the use of remaining dollars to push their reforms forward. With the “gaming” of the \$40 billion Education Stabilization Fund in some states, school districts have turned their attention to the flexibility provided under the 2004 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The amendments



allowed school districts to use half of their annual IDEA funding increases to supplant local efforts. This would free up some \$11 billion to be used more flexibly. Thousands of school districts—including the majority of school districts in some states—may be precluded from using this provision, however, by the Department of Education because of how it is being interpreted by agency staff.

Finally, even the most savvy local school officials are perplexed by mixed messages from federal and state levels on how the stimulus money can be used. Over \$25 billion of the education stimulus funds are categorical in nature—Title I and IDEA—and retain most of their current requirements and regulations. Unfortunately, these stimulus funds are being subjected to the same type of inconsistent, restrictive, and questionable state guidance that typically frustrates local officials in dealing with any federal aid. Local plans to extend the school day in certain Title I low-performing schools, for example, have been stifled by state directives.

Local school districts are also getting mixed messages about whether they should be using the funds to promote school reforms or save jobs and stimulate the economy. It is possible to do some of both, of course, but the task is made more difficult without the flexibility.

Everyone is watching closely to see how the ARRA funds will be used in the nation’s schools, but the ultimate impact of the stimulus initiative may be affected as much by state and federal regulators as it will by local level educators.

## New School Rises from Ashes in Guilford County, North Carolina

A fire started in an empty classroom burned down Eastern High School in 2006 in the Guilford County school system in Greensboro, N.C., believed to be the largest school fire in the state’s history. No students or employees were injured.

Last month, a new, state-of-the-art building rose from the ashes to welcome students back to Eastern High after students had been split up to attend classes at other schools, including the campus of a community college.

“For the last two and a half years, we have been eagerly awaiting this day,” said Eastern Principal Travis Reeves in a press release.

The Guilford County Schools received immediate support from the community after the original Eastern High facility, built in 1974, had been totally destroyed. Citizens donated money and provided musical instruments for the band, uniforms for athletic teams, furniture for classrooms and library books.

Large companies gave substantial contributions, including computers and hundreds of thousands of dollars. In total, the district received more than \$675,000 in donations from about 1,000 donors.

“The outpouring of support we received shows that when there is a need, this com-

munity steps up to the plate,” said Reeves. “Our school family is overwhelmed by the kindness.”

The new Eastern High facility incorporates “green” building features to conserve energy and to reduce operating costs. A sky-lighted atrium in the center of the school serves as a crossroads for student traffic through the building.

“It means a lot to finally be here,” said sophomore Kristin Payne. “Everyone lost a little bit in the past since friends and family went to Eastern, but now we’re finally all together again.”



Houston teacher Luis Saenz talks to students in his fourth-grade bilingual class at Crespo Elementary School. Saenz was a participant in the Houston magnet teaching program when he was a high school student.

## Houston District Produces Home-Grown Teachers

When Luis Sáenz was a student at Austin High School in Houston in 1999, he participated in an educational internship class in which he worked as a teaching intern. Ten years later, he is now a teacher himself at Houston's Manual Crespo Elementary School.

Sáenz is a bilingual fourth-grade teacher and attributes his career in teaching to his experience as a participant in Austin's magnet teaching program. Students are matched with master teachers and work two hours a day, three days a week as teaching interns at a local school.

Says Houston magnet specialist Kathy Koch, "There is nowhere, outside of university teaching programs, where students can get this kind of hands-on teaching experience to prepare them to take charge of their own classrooms."

Sáenz, who has been nominated for the district's Teacher of the Year as well as Bilingual Teacher of the Year honors, says being a high school intern at Cage Elementary was an eye-opening experience of the extraordinary role teachers play every day in the classroom.

"...I would observe my mentor teacher, Mrs. Ebel, implement consistent classroom management techniques, higher-think-

ing skills and excellent methods of organization to facilitate her instruction," said Sáenz. "Now, as a bilingual fourth-grade teacher, I continue to use those techniques to provide a successful learning environment for my students."

## Buffalo Administrator Wins Council Award



John Fahey

John Fahey, the assistant superintendent for service center operations in New York's Buffalo Public Schools, was recently presented the Distinguished Service Award at the Council of the Great City Schools' Chief Operating Officers Conference in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Sponsored by the Council and Chartwells/Thompson Hospitality, the award honors business officials who exemplify

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## Media Promotes Scholarship 'Promise' To Pittsburgh Students

Described as an "unprecedented television event," all four major TV stations in the Pittsburgh market on April 14 participated in a half-hour simulcast to promote community support for *The Pittsburgh Promise* scholarship program.

The stations broadcast simultaneously a program called "Keeping the Promise," advocating the need for the Pittsburgh community to provide college scholarships to Pittsburgh public school students as an investment in the city's economic transformation.

"This is a common cause that all of us feel a need to get behind if we are to help improve the outlook for our children, our businesses and the region as a destination for business and visitors," said Rick Henry, president and general manager of WTAE-TV and one of the organizers of the simulcast.

In 2007, the Pittsburgh Public Schools and the city came together to launch a college access program with a \$100-million commitment from the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center to support the creation of *The Pittsburgh Promise*. Part of the commitment is to challenge the community to raise \$15 million annually over a period of time.

Television stations were joined by other Pittsburgh media organizations to drum up support for the program, which provides eligible Pittsburgh graduates with scholarships of up to \$5,000 annually for four years -- increasing in 2012 to a maximum of \$10,000 a year -- to attend universities and colleges in Pennsylvania.

"*The Promise* is about the future of Pittsburgh and the region, and a demonstration of how an entire community can find a reason to participate in a socioeconomic effort that can have a far-reaching impact," stressed Diana Block, co-publisher and president of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.



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According to Wichita Fire Chief Ronald Blackwell, one of the requirements for firefighters in the department is to be certified as an EMT. “Northeast’s students will already have that certification before they come to us,” said Blackwell in an interview with the district’s newsletter, the *Express*. “We are excited about the opportunity to partner with Northeast Magnet and to have applicants who have had previous experience.”

The firefighting program will be offered to freshman students at Northeast in the fall of 2009.

“I would look into this as an option for my future,” said Presley, a freshman at Northeast, in the *Express*.

Also offering students the opportunity to pursue an emergency aid career is Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

A program at the district’s Fort Lauderdale High is training students to be 911 dispatchers. The program is a result of a partnership with the Broward Sheriff’s Office (BSO).

Deputies from the BSO come to the school everyday to teach a course in con-

junction with a teacher.

The 13 seniors enrolled in the course are currently preparing to take the Emergency Medical Communications certification. In order to pass the exam, students need to learn how to talk to callers through emergencies that require CPR or basic first aid, while callers wait for the first responders to arrive.

“We are very proud of these seniors who will be certified with the state for employment as 911 dispatchers,” said Marie Wright, the interim principal of Fort Lauderdale High School. “This is the true meaning of school to work transitions.”

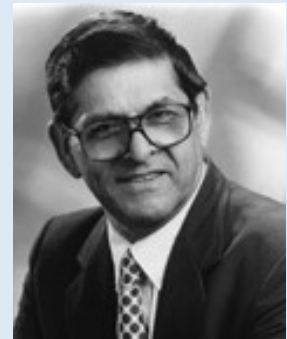
**Buffalo Administrator** *continued from page 11*

leadership, innovation, commitment and professionalism in urban education.

Fahey is responsible for leading the district’s transportation services and overseeing its safety/emergency response plan.

In a letter praising Fahey, Buffalo Schools Superintendent James Williams wrote, “[Fahey] is a consummate professional, totally dedicated and focused. He always has his priorities in order and I can always rely on him to get the job done and done right.”

## Great City Grads



### Julian Nava

**First Hispanic to serve on the Los Angeles school board**

**Former ambassador to Mexico**

**1945 graduate**

**Theodore Roosevelt High School  
 Los Angeles Unified School District**