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New Superintendents Named to Seven Districts



Mike Miles in Dallas

As the 2011-2012 school year draws to a close, several big-city school districts have made changes at the helm, or will be making changes.

There will be new leaders in school districts in Dallas, Charlotte, San Francisco, Seattle, Baton Rouge, Rochester and Providence.

Mike Miles is a West Point graduate and former Army Ranger, who served in the Army's elite Ranger Battalion and commanded an Infantry Rifle Company.

He will now be leading more than 157,000 students and 20,000 employees as the new superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District. He succeeds interim superintendent Alan King.

After serving in the Army, Miles worked as a diplomat in Moscow and Warsaw at the end of the Cold War. In 1995, he began his career in education as a high school teacher at a school district in Colorado and rose through the ranks, holding positions such as assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

For six years, he was the superintendent of Colorado's Harrison School District Two, where under his leadership, academic achievement improved and graduation rates increased.

New Superintendents continued on page 4

U.S. News Ranks Top High Schools

Seven schools in districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools rank in the top 25 of 500 of the leading public high schools in the nation, the *Urban Educator* found in a review of the recent *U.S. News*' fourth edition of America's "Best High Schools."

On May 8, the newsmagazine, also known as *U.S. News & World Report*, released its 2012 edition of the top-performing high schools after evaluating nearly 22,000 public high schools in 49 states and the District of Columbia.

In the national rankings, two urban schools ranked first and third, respectively, in the same city.

The School for the Talented and Gifted in the Dallas Independent School District received the highest ranking among the *U.S. News* "Best High Schools," followed by Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Virginia's Fairfax County Public Schools and the School of Science and Engineering Magnet in Dallas.

Ranked fifth in 2009, when *U.S. News* published its last rankings, Dallas' School for the Talented and Gifted this year topped Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Virginia's Washington, D.C. suburbs, which had ranked first in the

publication's last three editions.

Other urban schools in the Council that ranked in the top 25 of the 500 schools awarded gold medals are:

- Green Valley High Schools in the Clark County School District in Las Vegas, No. 13;
- Design & Architecture Senior High School in Miami, No. 16;
- The Baccalaureate School for Global Education in New York City, No. 21;
- City Honors School at Fosdick-Masten Park in Buffalo, No. 23; and
- High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies in New York City, No. 25.

U.S. News teamed up with the American Institutes for Research to establish the methodology for ranking the schools. "Schools were awarded gold, silver or bronze medals based on state proficiency standards, how well they prepare students for college, and other factors," the newsmagazine pointed out.

A number of urban school districts won medals in the *U.S. News* national rankings.

'Influential' Leader

Newark Public Schools Superintendent Cami Anderson has been named one of *TIME* magazine's 100 most influential people in the world. See story on page 5.



NYC Middle School Wins High School Chess Championship

Winning tournaments is nothing new for the chess team at Intermediate School 318 Eugenio Maria De Hostos in Brooklyn, N.Y. In fact, they have won so many championships that their coach can't even remember how many.

But it is pretty much guaranteed that the team's most recent championship will not be forgotten. They placed first at the United States Chess Federation's National High School Chess Championships, becoming the first middle school to win the first-place trophy.

"This is the greatest achievement we've ever had and probably ever will have," said one of their coaches, John Galvin, in the *New York Times*.

The nation's best scholastic chess team is composed of mostly eighth-graders, including two students, Justus Williams and James Black, who are certified chess masters at only 13-years-old.

According to the *New York Times*, more than 60 percent of the students at I.S. 318 come from families with incomes below the federal poverty level. Yet, its students routinely win chess tournaments against students from some of the most exclusive



Justin Williams, James Black, Isaac Barayev and Matthew Kluska, members of the chess team at I.S. School 318 in Brooklyn, hold the first-place trophy they won at the United States Chess Federation's National High School Chess Championship. They were the first middle school students to win the competition. Photo Credit: I.S. School 318

schools in the country. Last year, the team placed second in the high school championships.

Chess is ingrained in the school's culture, with approximately half of the school's 1,600 students participating in

chess classes. In addition, all sixth-graders take weekly chess classes and are able to continue taking chess as an elective for the next two years. The school also has a

Chess Championship *continued on page 3*



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White House Selects Urban Schools for New Arts Program

At Roosevelt School in Bridgeport, Conn., a band program was recently started for the first time in 17 years. And at Orchard Gardens K-8 School in Boston, first-graders traveled to the White House to recite Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech for President Barack Obama earlier this spring.

Research has found that art education opportunities such as these are critically important for students, yet many school districts lack the resources to implement these programs.

In an effort to fulfill that need, the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, an advisory committee to the White House on cultural issues, recently selected eight public elementary and middle schools to participate in its new Turnaround Arts Initiative. The aim of the program is to narrow the achievement gap and improve student engagement through the arts.

In addition to Roosevelt and Orchard Gardens, Findley Elementary School in Des Moines, Iowa; Noel Community Arts School in Denver; Savoy Elementary School in Washington, D.C.; and Martin

Luther King, Jr. School in Portland, Ore., were selected to participate in the initiative among districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools.

The schools were chosen through a highly competitive national selection process and had to demonstrate need and opportunity, strong school leadership and a commitment to arts education.

Selected schools also had to rank among the lowest-achieving 5 percent of schools in their state and qualify for School Improvement Grants given by the U.S. Department of Education to low-performing schools.

As part of the program, schools will receive professional development; arts supplies, musical instruments and programs; and have opportunities to partner with community arts education and cultural organizations.

In addition, each of the schools will be adopted by a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. They include actors Kerry Washington, Sarah Jessica Parker, Alfre Woodard and Forest Whitaker; dancer Damian Woetzel; and cellist Yo-Yo Ma; who will work with the schools and communities to highlight the success of the program.

"Working with Findley Elementary School over the next two years will be an honor," said Academy Award-winning actor Whitaker. "... Findley's education program resonates very much with my commitment and I look forward to contributing to this remarkable initiative."

And Yo-Yo Ma, who along with Woetzel, will be working with Boston's Orchard Gardens, said they are honored to be working with the school for the next two years. "...Having worked separately and together, in arts education for many years, we believe deeply in the kind of passion-driven learning nurtured by the arts."

An external evaluation will measure the impact and effectiveness of using rigorous and integrated arts education together with other educational reform efforts in high-poverty, low-performing schools.



Students at Findley Elementary in Des Moines paint in art class. The school was selected to participate in a new White House arts initiative. Photo Credit: Des Moines Public Schools

Recent studies by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Arts have found that access to arts education increases students' academic improvement and leads to higher graduation and college enrollment rates.

Memphis Launches Career Program For Disabled Students

Memphis City Schools, along with the University of Memphis Institute of Disability, recently launched a program to aid high school seniors with mild to moderate learning disabilities in their transition from students into the career of their choice.

The College Campus Transition Program will give high school seniors the opportunity to gain skills related to post graduation employment.

Students will participate in peer-led campus activities and attend college courses with mentors. As students near graduation, program coordinators will assist students with resumes, letters of recommendations and job leads.

Work-based learning activities for students will focus on marketable career paths in Memphis service industries such as food service, clerical services, child care and hospitality services. Students will also have the chance to continue employment in positions held while working during the program.

Chess Championship *continued from page 2*

full-time chess teacher.

The chess program at the school has been so successful that it is the focus of a documentary called *Brooklyn Castle*, which follows the lives of five members of the school's champion chess team. The documentary recently had its world premiere at the South by Southwest music and film festival in Austin, Texas, where it won the audience award.

"I want to congratulate the chess team at I.S. 318 Eugenio Maria De Hostos in Williamsburg for winning the National High School Chess Championships," said New York City schools chancellor Dennis Walcott. "As the first-ever middle team to win this tournament, we should all be proud of these students and teachers for their historic win."

New Superintendents *continued from page 1*

Miles' first official day as superintendent will be July 1; however, he has signed an agreement with the board of trustees that will allow him to begin work immediately.

"...I'm looking forward to working with the dedicated people here in Dallas ISD, the staff, parents and the community," said Miles in a news statement. "I know great things are ahead for us as we move forward for the good of our students."



Heath Morrison

Also selecting a new superintendent recently was North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, which named Heath Morrison. He is superintendent of schools in Washoe County School District, the second largest school system in Nevada, with approximately 63,000 students.

Morrison has led the Washoe school system since 2009, and during his tenure the district saw increased graduation rates, and a narrowing of the achievement gap. In 2012, he was named the National Superintendent of the Year by the American Association of School Administrators.



Richard Carranza

Morrison will replace interim superintendent Hugh Hattabaugh.

Richard Carranza was recently selected as the next superintendent for the San Francisco Unified School District. He will succeed Carlos Garcia, who is retiring from the district in July after serving since 2007.

Carranza has served as the district's deputy superintendent of instruction, innovation and social justice since 2009.

"Hiring the superintendent is the most important decision we can make as a school board," said San Francisco school

board president Norman Yee. "Deputy Superintendent Carranza has already brought much to our district as an instructional leader, community builder, and father of two SFUSD students. We are confident that he will continue the progress of the past five years without breaking stride."



José Banda

Seattle Public Schools moved one step closer to naming a superintendent, when it recently offered the position to José Banda, the superintendent of California's Anaheim City Schools.

Banda has been the superintendent of the 20,000-school system in Anaheim for four years and under his leadership, the district experienced an increase in student academic attainment, including English Language Learners.

If a contract for Banda is approved by the Seattle school board, he will become the next superintendent of the 47,000-school system after July 1, succeeding interim superintendent Susan Enfield.



Bernard Taylor

Louisiana's East Baton Rouge Parish School System recently named Bernard Taylor to lead the 42,850-student school district. Taylor was the superintendent of Michigan's Grand Rapids Public Schools.

"I come to Baton Rouge with a willingness to learn about the issues here and ready to serve the community's most precious resource – its youth," said Taylor in a press release. "...The best decision of my career was to come to Baton Rouge, and I hope to bring about positive change for our students."

Taylor replaces interim superintendent Carlos Sams.

In May of last year, Bolgen Vargas was named the interim superintendent of New York's Rochester City School District,



Bolgen Vargas

succeeding Jean-Claude Brizard who left to become superintendent of Chicago Public Schools.

A year later, the district is negotiating with Vargas to take over the position on a permanent basis.

Vargas is no stranger to the 32,000-school system, having served on the Rochester school board for seven years, including four years as board president.

Rhode Island's Providence Public School District also turned to an interim superintendent to take the reins of the 23,561-student school district.



Susan Lusi

Susan Lusi has served as the district's interim leader this school year after leading Rhode Island's Portsmouth

school district for seven years. She is familiar with the Providence school system, having served as chief of staff from 2001 to 2003.

Providence Mayor Angel Taveras praised Lusi for her steady and inspiring leadership. "Her honest and forthright approach to working with principals, teachers, the school board and other partners has created an atmosphere of trust and respect that is vital to our efforts to improve education in Providence."

Stepping Down

After serving six years as the superintendent of the Orleans Parish School Board, Darryl C. Kilbert recently announced his retirement, effective June 30.

Kilbert is credited with restoring the district's academic integrity and financial stability after Hurricane Katrina devastated the school system in 2005. The district has reduced teacher-pupil ratios and increased graduation rates.

Cincinnati Superintendent to Retire, Return at Half of Salary



Mary Ronan

Cincinnati Public Schools is facing a budget gap of \$43 million due to a loss of federal, state and local funding. As a result, Cincinnati Schools Superintendent Mary Ronan and the school board have closed schools, eliminated more than 1,300 positions and reorganized services.

And while other districts across the nation have taken the same steps, not too many superintendents have agreed to cut their salary almost in half in an effort to save money as Ronan recently agreed to do.

The school board recently approved a resolution outlining an agreement in which Ronan will retire when her current contract expires at the end of July. She then will be re-employed at approximately half of her salary for another three years. The board believes the agreement will

enable the district to keep someone with proven leadership and experience at the helm of the district, while saving teacher positions.

“To our knowledge, Mary is the only superintendent willing to return for half her salary,” said school board president Eve Bolton. “This shows her commitment to our children and the future of this district.”

Ronan, who has spent her entire career as a teacher, principal and administrator for the Cincinnati school system, has served as superintendent since 2009.

Under her tenure, the district has become the highest rated major urban district

TIME Releases 100 ‘Most Influential’ List

TIME magazine recently named Superintendent Cami Anderson of New Jersey’s Newark Public Schools to the *TIME 100*, the publication’s list of the 100 most influential people in the world.

She is one of 38 women on the 2012 *TIME 100* list, the most ever. The ninth-annual list also includes 54 international figures from 37 countries, the first time that there are more international names on the list than American.

Superintendent Anderson joins such notables as President Barack Obama, billionaire Warren Buffet, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel. Others on the list include IBM CEO Virginia Rometty, actor Viola Davis and educator Freeman Hrabowski, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

“The *TIME 100* list is about the infinite possibilities of influence and the power of influence to change the world,” said the magazine’s managing editor, Rick Stengel.

In the magazine, Newark Mayor Cory Booker wrote about the superintendent, “Cami Anderson is a modern-day freedom fighter, investing her life’s work in the educational trenches and working to liberate our country from the destructive delusion that children can’t achieve at the highest levels just because they were born into tough circumstances.”

In March, Anderson delivered on her promise to expand school options to students in Newark and their families. She announced a five-point plan that includes investment in early childhood education, expansion of magnet schools and partnerships with high-performing charter schools among other initiatives.

Obama Administration Honors First-Ever ‘Green Schools’

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and two other Obama Administration officials converged last month at a public school in the District of Columbia to make a major announcement: 78 schools in 29 states and D.C. have been chosen as the first-ever U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools.

“Science, environmental and outdoor education play a central role in providing children with a well-rounded education...,” said Duncan. “U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools demonstrate compelling examples of the ways schools can help children build real-world skillsets, cut school costs and provide healthy learning environments.”

The 78 “Green Schools” were named winners from among nearly 100 nominees submitted by 30 state education agencies, which had received applications from more than 350 schools. Schools receiving the honor exercise a comprehensive approach to creating “green” environments, such as reducing environmental impact, promoting health and ensuring quality environmental and outdoor education.

Sixty-six public schools won the Green Ribbon award, many of them in the nation’s major cities. They include schools in Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Des Moines, Detroit, District of Columbia, Long Beach, Miami, Omaha, Portland, Ore., Providence, St. Louis and West Palm Beach

“These Green Ribbon School award winners are taking outstanding steps to educate tomorrow’s environmental leaders, and demonstrating how sustainability and environmental awareness make sense for the health of our students and our country,” said Nancy Sutley, chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson also noted, “Today’s winners are protecting our children’s health and opening up environmental education opportunities for students.”

Atlanta School Wins Debate Championship

Two students from Atlanta's Henry W. Grady High School competed against the best urban debate teams from across the nation to capture first place at the 2012 Urban Debate National Championship.

Holden Choi and Benjamin Dean were the winners of the three-day competition hosted by the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues (NAUDL). A team from Baltimore City Public Schools' Baltimore City College placed second.

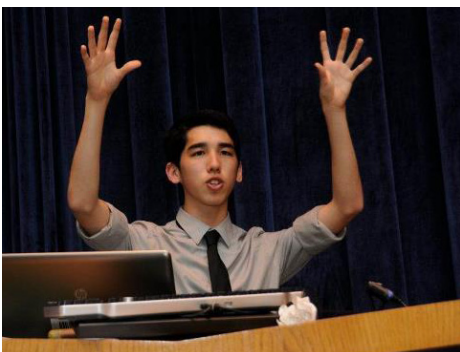
The competition was held at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and featured high school debate teams from 20 cities. Teams qualified for the national championship by winning first or second place at their league's qualifying tournament.

Choi and Dean are seniors and both have been named National Merit Scholars. In the fall, Choi will attend Georgetown University, while Dean will attend Emory University.

Awards were also presented to the best individual debaters, with Owen Jones, a senior at Lane Tech College High School in Chicago, winning the Top Speaker Award.

Urban debate teams debate in a style called policy debate, in which teams of two students debate one current event topic. It is considered the most academically rigorous form of debate, and dates back to 1928.

Debate Championship *continued on page 7*



Atlanta student Holden Choi participates in the Urban Debate National Championship. His team won first place at the competition. Photo Credit: NAUDL



Urban Students Named Presidential Scholars



Rissan Walker



Taylor Rodman

Rissan Walker is a student at DuPont Manual Magnet High in Louisville, Ky., who has been accepted to Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and intends to become a computer scientist and develop technology to help children learn.

And Taylor Rodman is a dance student at Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing & Visual Arts in Dallas, who will attend the Boston Conservatory in the fall on a \$25,000-a-year scholarship.

The two seniors were among 141 high school students across the nation selected

as 2012 U.S. Presidential Scholars for their accomplishments in academics or the arts.

The White House Commission on Presidential Scholars, appointed by President Obama, selected the scholars based on their academic success, artistic excellence, essays, school evaluations and transcripts, community service, leadership and demonstrated commitment to high ideals.

Created in 1964, the program honors one male and one female from each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and U.S. students living abroad. In addition, 35 Presidential Scholars in the Arts were selected who demonstrate exceptional talent in the visual, literacy and performing arts.

Walker and Rodman were not the only big-city school students to receive this prestigious honor. Students in San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Miami, Baton Rouge, Santa Ana, Calif., and New York City were also named U.S. Presidential Scholars.

The scholars will be honored at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., accompanied by their most inspiring teacher.

Bridgeport School Recognized for Change

Beardsley School in Bridgeport, Conn., a preK-Grade 6 school serving more than 400 students, recently received some good news. It is a recipient of the 2012 National School Change Award.

Sponsored by the National Principals Leadership Institute, the award annually recognizes six schools across the nation that have shown significant school improvement. Beardsley is the only winner from a district represented by the Council

of the Great City Schools.

Schools are nominated for the award or may nominate themselves and are measured against 16 specific criteria to determine how they have improved, grown and significantly changed.

The criteria includes implementing innovative teaching practices; aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment; and an increase in academic achievement among all students as well as a narrowing of the achievement gap.

Palm Beach School Board Wins Kennedy Center Award

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in the nation's capital recently selected the school board of Florida's School District of Palm Beach County to receive the 24th annual Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network and National School Boards Association Award.

The district was chosen from nominees around the nation for their outstanding support of high-quality arts education. State alliances for arts education and state school board associations nominated the candidates.

The Palm Beach school board was among eight finalists for the award, which includes a \$10,000 prize.

Selected by a national review panel, school districts considered for the national honor must demonstrate support for all four disciplines in arts education programs



Darrell Ayers, vice president of education for the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, presents an award to Palm Beach school board member Marcia Andrews and Palm Beach arts education administrator Tom Pearson.

— visual arts, music, theater and dance.

Recognized as a leader in arts education, the school board established an Arts Education Task Force in 2005 to create an arts business plan, aimed at developing

partnerships that combine cultural organizations with arts education. The district has also added new arts programming and expanded the number of teaching positions in the fine arts.

Debate Championship *continued from page 6*

The tournament kicked off with an address by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. He recalled that during his tenure as CEO of Chicago Public Schools he expanded the district's debate league and approved the first rigorous study of the impact of urban debate leagues on student performance.

"Urban debate teams make it cool to be smart and work hard in the inner-city," said Duncan. "And they are a fantastic outlet for harnessing the competitive instincts of young teens—and channeling them into building the skills they need to succeed in a knowledge-based, global economy."

Urban debate leagues currently operate in 24 of the nation's largest cities and more than 500 urban high schools participate.

Research has shown that urban debate leagues narrow the academic achievement gap, encourage college attendance and increase students research and literacy skills.

The 2012 Urban Debate National Championship, in its fifth year, was sponsored by the Boeing Company.

Urban Schools Take Top Spots in Jazz Contest

The best high school jazz bands in the nation recently competed against each other with the top three winners hailing from big-city school districts.

Dillard Center for the Arts in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., placed first in the 17th Annual *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival, presented by Jazz at Lincoln Center. This is not the first time the school has taken home the first-place trophy, along with an award of \$5,000. The school also placed first in last year's competition.

Roosevelt High School in Seattle came in second and received an award of \$2,500, while the New World School of the Arts in Miami came in third and received an award of \$1,000. All of the cash awards will go toward improving the schools' jazz programs.

The top three bands were selected from a field of 15 finalist bands that participated in the three-day competition. The bands were chosen by a panel of judges composed of distinguished jazz musicians and historians, including trumpeter Wynton Marsalis.

"This is possibly the strongest competition we've had in 17 years," said Jazz at Lincoln Center Director of Education Todd Stoll. "... This Festival is a testament to the importance of music and arts education in America."

Two Districts Recognized For Music Education

The Clark County School District in Las Vegas and Memphis City Schools have been selected among the "Best Communities for Music Education in America" by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM).

Each year, NAMM recognizes school districts and schools across the nation for their support of music education programs for students. This year, 166 school districts and 10 schools made the list.

This is the 11th consecutive year in a row the Clark County school system has been selected.



Broward High School Receives College Board Inspiration Award

At Florida's Fort Lauderdale High School, 67 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and many students arrive from South America and Caribbean countries with limited knowledge of English and require significant academic support.

Yet, the school's Class of 2011 had an 82 percent graduation rate and 94 percent of its graduates went on to attend postsecondary school.

As a result, the Broward County school was one of three in the nation to be selected by the College Board to receive a 2012 Gaston Caperton Inspiration Award. The

award, named for College Board President Gaston Caperton, is presented to three high schools in the nation for improving their academic environments and helping underserved students achieve equitable access to higher education.

Each winning school, including a high school in rural Texas and a small high school in New Jersey, receives a \$25,000 award.

The inspiration awards were created in 2001 to celebrate schools for their college-preparation programs and partnerships among teachers, parents and community organizations.

Portland School Wins U.S. Constitution Contest

Lincoln High School in Portland, Ore., recently placed first in the 2012 "*We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution*" competition.

The event was held in congressional hearing rooms on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Students were quizzed on their knowledge on the content, history, influence and flexibility of the Constitution by a panel of state and federal judges, constitutional scholars and other civic leaders.



Students from Lincoln High School in Portland, Ore., wear the first-place medals they won at the 2012 *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* competition.

Open to upper elementary, middle and high school students, the competition is designed to increase knowledge of American democracy.

At the 25th anniversary of the competition, Lincoln High School was joined by two other big-city schools, who placed in the top 10. They were East High School in Denver, which placed sixth; and Northwest Guilford High School in Greensboro, N.C., which placed ninth.

L.A. School Wins Academic Decathlon Again

The 2012 U.S. Academic Decathlon was held last month in Albuquerque, N.M., where two-time repeat champion Granada Hills Charter High School in Los Angeles scored the highest points in the competition's history.

Scoring 54,081 points out of a possible 60,000, Granada broke the previous high score set in 2008. The nine-member academic decathlon team beat out 30 teams nationwide and one from London to win the national title.

The Academic Decathlon is a two-day event in which high school students are tested in 10 categories: art, economics, essay, interview, language and literature, mathematics, music, social science, speech and "Super Quiz" written and oral relay. This year's study subject was "The Age of Empire."

Each high school team is made up of nine students: three "A" students, three "B" students and three "C" students.

This win marks the 13th time a school from the Los Angeles Unified School District has won the national title. The district boasts more championships than any other school system in the country.

According to Cliff Ker, coordinator of the district's decathlon team, personal goal setting pushed the students to perform well. Coaches also used the opportunity to break the 2008 record as motivation.

"Congratulations to Granada Hills Charter High School's academic decathlon team and coaches on capturing the national title," said Los Angeles Schools Superintendent John Deasy in a written statement. "Their incredible commitment, discipline, and hard work have resulted in another decathlon win..."

Second place in the decathlon was awarded to Whitney Young Magnet High School in Chicago.

Literacy Specialists Meet to Prepare For New Standards

More than 80 literacy educators from around the nation converged in Baltimore recently to prepare for the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and literacy, one of two major components of the new academic standards adopted by 46 states and the District of Columbia.

The new standards in English-language arts and literacy will require students to read and respond to more informational texts, or nonfiction, a departure from current practice in which literature dominates.

The two-day workshop focused on aligning current curriculum materials for teaching reading to the Common Core Standards, and was sponsored by the Council of the Great City Schools and Student Achievement Partners, a nonprofit organization that was instrumental in writing the English language arts standards.

“Indeed, 80 to 90 percent of the reading standards in each grade require text-dependent analysis {of students gathering evidence, knowledge and insight from what they read},” says Robin Hall, the Council’s director of English language arts and literacy. “Accordingly, aligned curriculum materials should have a similar percentage of text-dependent questions.”

Hall points out that many school districts are using textbooks that were published before the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, and do not provide the percentage of text-dependent questions required.

The Council is working with big-city school districts to help them implement the new Common Core Standards, designed to provide students in kindergarten through 12th grade a consistent and clear understanding of what they are expected to learn in reading, language arts and mathematics.

The recent professional development program, called the Basil Alignment Project, allowed educators to align and write questions for curriculum materials.

Albuquerque Elementary School to Transform Into Common Core Standards School

New Mexico’s Albuquerque Public Schools has collaborated with the Albuquerque Teachers Federation to transform an elementary school into a Common Core State Standards demonstration magnet school for the upcoming 2012-13 academic year.

The effort to redesign Emerson Elementary is to improve student achievement at a school that has a history of low test scores.

“The school has a substantial number of English language learners, and we’re going to use the Common Core State Standards and teachers’ strengths to create a whole new learning environment for our students,” said Albuquerque Schools Superintendent Winston Brooks in a press release.

Brooks, chair of the Council of the Great City Schools’ board of directors, has worked closely with the national organization to help big-city public school systems implement the new academic standards nationwide.

New Mexico is one of 46 states that have adopted the Common Core State Standards, designed to help provide students in kindergarten through 12th grade with the knowledge and skills they will need for success in college and careers in the global marketplace.

The standards are reportedly expected to be implemented in all kindergarten through third-grade classes in New Mexico this fall, and all other grades in 2013-14.

Tampa Student Receives Surprise

Candy Olson, chair of Florida’s Hillsborough County school board in Tampa, recently made a surprise visit to a student at Middleton High School in the city.

She and another board member as well as the principal entered the band-practice room at the school to make an announcement that senior Abraham Tejada, head drum major of the Tampa school’s marching band, has won a \$10,000 college scholarship while his classmates looked on.

He was one of 44 students selected by their principals and guidance counselors to compete for the scholarship, which Olson received last year to give to a student after winning the nation’s top urban education leadership prize – the Richard R. Green Award – from the Council of the Great City Schools.

Tejada is Middleton High’s salutatorian and hopes to study music education at Miles College in Birmingham, Ala. He will be the first in his family to attend college, according to the school district.

“I want to teach high school band and orchestra,” he said in the *Tampa Tribune*. He credits band director Leon Carson for developing his interest in music education and teaching him leadership skills.



Tampa student Abraham Tejada holds his Richard Green scholarship and is congratulated by, left to right, school board member Candy Olson, principal Owen Young and school board member Doretha W. Edgecomb.

Nominations Sought For Top Superintendent

The Council of the Great City Schools is currently accepting nominations for the 2012 Richard R. Green Award, the nation’s highest honor for urban education leadership.

Sponsored by ARAMARK and Cambium Learning, the 23rd annual award is named in honor of the first African-American chan-

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Flexibility with Supplemental Education Services (SES) Funds Needed as Title I Allocations for Most School Districts Decline

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

As the economy has worsened over the years and more children fall into poverty, more than half of the nation's school districts will see their Title I allocations decline for the upcoming school year. And funding losses for individual Great City School districts will be in excess of one million dollars and in some instances tens of millions of dollars.

The drop in Title I funding among the largest urban districts is largely the result of poverty rates that have increased faster outside the major cities because of faltering economic conditions nationwide. Unfortunately, the declines in Title I and other federal funding for cities and other school districts come on top of substantial drop-offs of both state and local revenues over the years.

Absent stimulus dollars, funding for the Title I Program for Disadvantaged Students has been essentially frozen since FY 2009. In just the past year, approximately 10 percent more poor children have been added to the national Title I poverty rolls, meaning that the same dollars are now being spread across more eligible students nationwide. And not only has Congress provided little increased support for the Title I program, but the U.S. Department of Education has not requested any increased funding for the regular Title I formula grants to school districts since before the recession.

In short, the majority of school districts across the nation, including 80 percent of the Great City School districts, will have fewer Title I funds in the upcoming school year to serve their disadvantaged students.

On top of this, conflicting partisan budget priorities and deficit-reduction plans offer little hope of resolving the Title I funding problem prior to the November election.



Even worse, the specter of “sequestration” or automatic across-the-board cuts in most domestic and defense programs on January 2, 2013 hangs ominously over school district officials as they plan for the 2012-2013 school year.

And, despite the prospect of district-level “Race-To-The-Top” competitive grants being awarded late in 2012, there is little replacement for the loss of Title I funds.

The last best hope for school districts in the upcoming school year is to allow them to reprogram their NCLB-mandated 20 percent Title I set-aside now reserved primarily for supplemental education services (SES). The waiver of this provision, which has proven largely ineffectual over the years, could free up a significant amount of Title I funding for more effective instructional uses.

The potential waiver of these expenditures as part of the Obama Administration's *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Flexibility Initiative offers some hope, but the Department continues to move slowly on the issue. The Council of the Great City Schools continues to encourage the U.S. Department of Education to ensure maximum local flexibility in the waiver of this key NCLB mandate for all school districts in the 27 states slated to participate in the State Waiver/Flexibility Initiative, as well as for school districts in states that are not participating in the waivers.

Moving forward, however, a greater investment in the Title I program is the main solution to this problem to ensure that there is no erosion of services to disadvantaged students.

Chicago Unveils Online System To Boost Arts Programs

In an effort to provide access to quality arts programs for all students, Chicago Public Schools recently launched a new interactive online mapping program to boost arts programming throughout the district.

ArtLook is the result of a partnership between the Chicago school system and Ingenuity Incorporated, an arts and advocacy organization, and provides information on the different arts programs available in each school.

In addition to seeing what art resources currently exist at each school, the mapping system also provides information on the number of certified art teachers a school has on staff, as well as partnerships it has with local arts organizations.

District officials believe that ArtLook, by identifying those schools most in need of additional arts education, will help organizations target their resources where they

can have the greatest impact.

“In this economic climate, when we are doing all we can to drive resources to the classroom, this is a great way to help us maximize our own arts resources, as well as enable schools to take advantage of partnerships that will benefit students,” said Chicago Chief Executive Officer Jean-Claude Brizard.

In addition to being used by arts organizations to identify schools that need their help and expertise, ArtLook may be used by schools to find potential art partners that can enhance their current school offerings. School administrators can also use the tool to identify those schools that have been successful in implementing robust arts education programs and duplicate their success.

ArtLook can be found at <http://www.ingenuity-inc.org/research/aboutartlook>.

Detroit Kicks Off School Garden Initiative

To show students how fresh food, gardens and classroom science can be both healthy and fun, Detroit Public Schools recently kicked off its Farm-to-School initiative.

Called the Detroit School Garden Collaborative, the initiative will create real-life “living laboratories” for teachers to encourage healthy eating, nutrition, and concepts about the importance of growing fresh fruits and vegetables.

A recent ceremony held at Detroit’s William Beckham Academy unveiled the first of 45 gardens at schools throughout the district. Each school site will have raised beds made of recycled materials, compost bins and Farm-to-School Learning centers. The centers are designed to increase student’s scientific understanding of sustainability, a cornerstone of the program.

According to district officials, the school

system is one of a select few where food services, site management and curriculum work together to bring scientific learning outside of the classroom in a real-world context through gardens.

The fruits and vegetables grown in the school garden will also be served in the school cafeterias.

In addition to the garden installed on school grounds, schools will also have membership in a Garden Resource Program. This program provides all the essentials such as seeds, plants, soil testing and other support. And each school will create a school garden team that will take the lead on the project.

The districtwide program is being funded by Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, which provides funding for federal school meals and child nutrition programs for students from economically disadvantaged families.



San Diego Schools Superintendent Bill Kowba looks on as Tom Torlakson, California's state superintendent of public instruction, congratulates the district on its successful efforts to reduce student absenteeism.

State Recognizes San Diego for Reduced Student Absences

In an effort to reduce student absenteeism, San Diego Unified School District created a credit recovery program that provides instruction and support to low-performing students, implemented a new computer software to track absenteeism, and offers parent university classes.

As a result, the district was one of 11 school districts in California, and the only big-city school district, designated as models of attendance improvement and dropout prevention by the State School Attendance Review Board. The district has achieved its third year of attendance gains, with more than 96 percent of students in school or on excused absences every day.

“We can’t teach students if they’re not in class,” said San Diego Schools Superintendent Bill Kowba. “This has been a total effort among staff and the community to do everything possible to make sure kids are in school.”

Research has found that districts with model attendance improvement programs have taken positive approaches to helping students and families improve attendance, rather than just seeking to punish offenders.



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St. Louis Student Appointed To U.S. Naval Academy

Devin Owens, a senior at Cleveland Naval Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps High School in St. Louis, has earned a coveted appointment to the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md.

Established in 1845, it is the second-oldest of the five United States service academies and educates officers for commissioning into the Navy and Marine Corps.

Owens is class valedictorian and has a 3.82 grade-point average. His senior course load includes physics, advanced placement calculus, advanced placement English and advanced Spanish.

A leader inside and out of the classroom, Owens serves as the Cadet Lieutenant Commander and Battalion Executive Officer at his school while competing in varsity football, wrestling and track.

The naval academy has one of the lowest college acceptance rates in the nation, accepting only 7 percent of its applicants last year, primarily due to its arduous admission process.



St. Louis student Devin Owens was recently awarded an appointment to the United States Naval Academy.

In order to be admitted, Owens had to meet eligibility requirements, exhibit good moral character, undergo personality and standardized testing, complete a physical exam and obtain a nomination from a state legislator, U.S. senator or other officeholders.

By earning an appointment to the United States Naval Academy, Owens' tuition will be provided for.

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cellor of the New York City school system.

The award is open to all past and current superintendents of Council member districts. The winner of the award will be announced at the Council's annual Fall Conference in Indianapolis on October 18. The recipient will receive a \$10,000 college scholarship to present to a high school senior from his or her school system or from the the high school from which the winner graduated.

The Richard R. Green application can be found on the Council's web site at www.cgcs.org/Awards. The deadline for nominations is July 16.

