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Urban Schools Earn High Marks In Rankings

Big-city schools ranked No. 1 in the *Washington Post's* "America's Most Challenging High Schools" analysis and *U.S. News & World Report's* "2013 Best High Schools" rankings, according to the two news organizations in published reports in April.

More than 1,900 public high schools nationwide received rankings in the *Post*, with 10 of the top 20 schools located in districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools.

An Oakland Unified School District charter school in California, the American Indian Public Charter, ranked No. 1, followed by two Dallas Independent School District schools – Science and Engineering Magnet and Talented and Gifted – ranked No. 2 and No. 3, respectively.

And another Dallas school, Rangel Young Women's Leadership, ranked No. 5. "These schools continue to be a model of excellence, not just in Dallas ISD, but across the nation," said Dallas Schools Superintendent Mike Miles.

The *Post* rankings are based on a formula called the Challenge Index, which ranks schools on the number of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Advanced International Certificate of Education tests given at a school each year and divided by the number of graduating seniors.

Other urban high schools in Council districts ranked in the top 20 are:

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Council Leads Delegation to China

In a whirlwind seven-day visit to China, a delegation of urban-school leaders recently observed a laser-like Chinese focus on education with high expectations for its students.

"We saw strong school, family and peer pressure for Chinese children to succeed," says Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, who led a delegation of five big-city school chiefs from Cleveland, Orlando, Saint Paul, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

During the week-long trip, the delegation of Cleveland Schools CEO Eric Gordon, Florida's Orange County Schools Superintendent Barbara Jenkins, Minnesota's St. Paul Schools Superintendent Valeria Silva, San Francisco's Superintendent Richard Carranza and Washington, D.C.'s Chancellor Kaya Henderson visited schools and met school officials in Shanghai, Ningbo, Suzhou and Nanjing, along with visiting Beijing.

China Delegation continued on page 4



Receiving a warm welcome at Shanghai's Xiangming Middle School are, left to right, Orange County (Orlando) Schools Superintendent Barbara Jenkins, San Francisco Schools Superintendent Richard Carranza, District of Columbia Schools Chancellor Kaya Henderson, Cleveland Schools CEO Eric Gordon, St. Paul Schools Superintendent Valeria Silva and Council of the Great City Schools' Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Charlotte NBA Team Partners with School System

North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' partnership with the Y Achievers, a national YMCA program to help students set college and career goals, recently received a boost from former basketball star and current owner of the NBA Charlotte Bobcats basketball team Michael Jordan.

The team, along with its broadcast partner FOX Sports Carolinas/Sport South, donated \$200,000 to the Y Achievers, which currently serves students at three high schools in Charlotte. Y Achievers helps students set and reach post-secondary education goals and is working to increase the graduation rate in the district from 73 percent to 90 percent by 2014.

Students in the program take part in weekly sessions and quarterly summits where they receive mentoring from business professionals as well as academic tutoring. During the school year, students also participate in job shadowing opportunities, college tours and are considered for paid internships in the summer. This year, six students in the program will receive paid sum-



Michael Jordan receives a hug from West Charlotte High senior Jewel Jefferies after she was announced the winner of a \$5,000 college scholarship.

mer internships with the Charlotte Bobcats basketball team.

According to wsoctv.com, during Jordan's visit to three schools to announce the donation, he told the students, "I'm

from North Carolina and I've seen the warmth within our communities. I grew up in it, so I feel obligated to give back to it."

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Three Council Leaders Stepping Down From Superintendent Posts



Carol Johnson

Boston Public Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson, a former chair of the Council of the Great City Schools' Board of Directors, plans to retire in July after leading

Boston's 57,000-student school district since 2007.

Also stepping down this summer will be Virginia's Richmond Public Schools Superintendent Yvonne Brandon and California's Santa Ana Unified School District Superintendent Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana, both members of the Council's elected Executive Committee.

When Boston's Superintendent Johnson announced her retirement on April 24, national, state and local leaders reflected on her years of leadership.

"A former teacher, Carol Johnson understands that strong school systems are built classroom by classroom," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in a

press statement. "She has done extraordinary work for Boston's students and families."

Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick also commented, "Her commitment to the children of Boston has never wavered, and she can be proud to leave behind a school system that is stronger and more robust than the one she found."

"Dr. Johnson is one of the most compassionate, caring and talented superintendents in the United States," said Boston Mayor Thomas Menino.

Superintendent Johnson won the nation's highest honor in urban-school leadership last year when she received the Council's Richard R. Green Award.

"On behalf of the Council of the Great City Schools and its member urban public school systems, I am profoundly grateful for the enormous contributions that Carol Johnson has made to both Boston and to the nation's big-city schools," said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "Few school leaders in the last four decades have left such a lasting and positive mark on public education and its efforts to improve the academic attainment of our urban schoolchildren."

Before taking the helm of the Boston Public Schools, Johnson had also served as superintendent of the Memphis and Minneapolis school systems.

After informing families, teachers and staff of her decision to retire through a letter and video message, Superintendent Johnson noted, "I am proud of what we have accomplished together. We have improved our high school graduation rates and MCAS [Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System] performance; we have brought hundreds of students back who had dropped out of school, and are closing achievement gaps."

She continued, "We have expanded academic support for our English language learners and students with disabilities, and we have increased the number of quality school choices through our turnaround, in-district charter and innovation schools."

Long Years in Richmond

Also in April, Superintendent Yvonne Brandon, who has led Richmond's 24,000-student school district since 2009, announced that she was stepping down, effective June 30.

Brandon has been with the Richmond school district since 1977, serving as a teacher, guidance counselor, assistant principal, principal, director of instruction, assistant superintendent and deputy superintendent.



Yvonne Brandon

In 2011, under her leadership, the district reached 100 percent state accreditation for the first time since the creation of statewide benchmarks.

"I want to thank Dr. Yvonne Brandon for the many years of service to Richmond," said Council Executive Director Casserly. "She did a spectacular job in that district and nationally."

Brandon has often traveled from Virginia's capital city to the nation's capital to testify on Capitol Hill and participate – sometimes bringing students – in national press events.

Retiring in Santa Ana

Another announcement last month came from Santa Ana's Superintendent Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana, who is retiring after 30 years as an educator. Her career spans from classroom teacher to a top national educator adviser to President Obama, and subsequently as the leader of the 56,000-student school district in California's Orange County.

Charlotte NBA *continued from page 2*

Along with the \$200,000 donation, the Charlotte Bobcats and FOX Sports also presented \$5,000 scholarships to three high school students, which will be awarded on a yearly basis.

"I am shocked and excited that I won this scholarship," said one of the recipients, Selina Cortez, a junior at West Mecklenburg High School. "I still can't believe it."

Cortez plans to use the scholarship to study nursing at UNC Charlotte or Winston Salem State University.

Council Leaders *continued on page 4*

Little Rock District Names New Leader; Oakland Superintendent Departing



Dexter Suggs

Arkansas' Little Rock School District recently turned to another big-city school district to find a leader for its 26,000-student school system.

Dexter Suggs, chief of schools for the Indianapolis Public Schools, was

named superintendent of Arkansas' largest school district. Suggs, who has been Indianapolis' chief of staff since 2012, has held various positions in the 29,938-student school system, including assistant principal, principal and chief information officer.

He is also a recipient of the Milken National Educator Award, presented to him when he was a principal for turning around a low-performing middle school.

In a news statement, Little Rock School Board President Diane Curry welcomed Suggs to the district. "We believe he has the talent, experience and commitment necessary to help our students achieve their full potential and to help us fulfill our mission of creating excellence for tomorrow."

Suggs, who will take the district's reins this summer, will replace interim superintendent Marvin Burton.

Stepping Down in Oakland

After serving nearly four years as superintendent of California's Oakland Public Schools, Tony Smith recently announced he will resign from the district, effective June 30. Smith is departing from the district he has led since 2009 because of family medical issues.

In a press release, the Oakland school board credited Smith with providing the district with "stable leadership, committed families, new partnerships with commu-

nity leaders, strong philanthropic support and nationally recognized initiatives in service of student learning."

Gary Yee, an Oakland school board member since 2003, was recently named the district's acting superintendent. A graduate of the Oakland school district, Yee served as an assistant to the superintendent of the school system before becoming a college administrator.

Council Leaders continued from page 3

In the nearly two years she has been at the helm, Meléndez has spearheaded the school district's implementation of the Common Core State Standards to increase academic rigor in the Santa Ana public schools. Increasing parental and community involvement for the success of students has also been a major focus in her tenure.

"Dr. Thelma Meléndez has played a major role in getting the Santa Ana school district to join our coalition of great city schools in our collective effort to advance the education of inner-city students," said Casserly.

Bond Passes in Anchorage

At Girdwood K-8 School in Anchorage, Alaska, the population of the school has grown so much that there are not enough teaching spaces, forcing some students to receive services in storage rooms and closets. But the school will soon undergo \$23 million in new construction, as a result of the passage of a school bond proposition.

Anchorage Bond continued on page 12

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They also participated in a U.S.-Sino Regional Education Exchange and Cooperation Roundtable in Ningbo. Shen Jianguang, director of the Ningbo Education Bureau, and D.C. Schools Chancellor Henderson delivered keynote addresses on talent development and innovation.

On March 31, Casserly met with Sean Zhang, executive vice-chairman of the Ameson Education and Cultural Exchange Foundation, in Shanghai, where the two organizations signed an agreement of "mutual understanding, friendship and cooperation."

A Learning Experience

The Council delegation had the opportunity to observe classrooms in China's national educational system, which operates under individual "education bureaus" – roughly equivalent to school districts in America.

The urban educators learned about Chinese teacher evaluations and career ladders, turnaround schools, use of technology, teacher workload, academic assessment systems, key schools, class sizes, special education systems, and language acquisition issues.

The U.S. delegation and school officials in China spent considerable time discussing American notions of innovation and creativity. The group emerged with a number of lessons related to standards, school culture, and school turn-around efforts.

After gaining an understanding of the critical role that instructional focus and high expectations play in the Chinese system, the American delegation departed China with optimism that the United States is on the right track in implementing the Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted in 45 states and the District of Columbia.

"The consensus of the group: If we implement the Common Core successfully and over an extended period of time, the U.S. could compete quite well with China and other countries across the globe," stresses the Council's Casserly.

Pictorial of Urban Educators in China



Cleveland Schools CEO Eric Gordon observes a student during a poetry lesson at Suzhou's No. 10 High School.



District of Columbia Schools Chancellor Kaya Henderson gives keynote address on innovation at the U.S.-Sino Regional Education Exchange and Cooperation Roundtable at Ningbo's Foreign Affairs High School.



U.S. urban school delegation meets with officials from the Suzhou educational bureau.



San Francisco Schools Superintendent Richard Carranza, right, congratulates his counterpart after signing a Letter of Mutual Understanding with the Hangzhou educational bureau.



Urban school leaders Richard Carranza, Kaya Henderson, Eric Gordon, Barbara Jenkins and Valeria Silva receive briefing during a weekend tour of Beijing's Forbidden City.

Cincinnati District Teams With Local College To Launch Program

Many urban school districts have implemented dual enrollment plans with local colleges in which high school students at certain schools take college courses. Cincinnati Public Schools recently expanded its dual enrollment program to include all of its 15 high schools.

Cincinnati Schools Superintendent Mary Ronan has signed an agreement with Cincinnati State Technical and Community College President O'dell Owens that will enable students at any of the district's 15 high schools to earn at least six credit hours at Cincinnati State by the time they graduate from high school. Currently, the district has dual enrollment agreements with Cincinnati State at two high schools.

The courses will be taught by high school teachers who will be designated as Cincinnati State adjunct instructors. The teachers will collaborate with college faculty on course content as well as grading standards.

All of the dual enrollment courses will be offered to students at no cost. Cincinnati State and the Cincinnati school system will team together to establish a process to ensure that students who enroll in dual enrollment courses are ready to complete



Cincinnati Schools Superintendent Mary Ronan shakes hands with Cincinnati State President O'dell Owens after signing a dual enrollment agreement as college administrators and Cincinnati school board members look on.

college-level work.

"There's nothing more powerful in helping students set their sights on college than enabling them to get a foot in the door while they are still in high school," said Cincinnati Schools Superintendent Mary Ronan. "This dual enrollment agreement with Cincinnati State—which is being provided tuition-free to all CPS students—will provide early access to college, building students' confidence that higher education is attainable."

Des Moines and Palm Beach Win 'Green' Award

The School District of Palm Beach County in Florida was one of the first in the nation to hire a full-time sustainability coordinator to develop and oversee conservation initiatives, while Iowa's Des Moines Public Schools has made large scale energy improvements in its schools, saving \$2.4 million in energy costs since 2007.

As a result of their efforts, the two districts were among 14 school systems and 64 schools to receive the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Award to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, promote better health and

implement effective environmental education programs.

This is the second year the awards have been presented to individual schools, but the first year the award has recognized school districts.

Urban schools in Long Beach, Calif., Louisville, Jackson, Miss., New York City, Philadelphia, Omaha, Providence, R.I. and Washington, D.C., were honored.

The winning schools were selected from a pool of candidates nominated by 32 state education agencies.

San Diego, Houston Nominated For Broad Prize

San Diego Unified School District has been named a finalist for the first time since the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation began awarding its million-dollar prize more than a decade ago.

Four urban school districts have been nominated for the 2013 Broad Prize for Urban Education for making substantial progress in raising student achievement, particularly for traditionally disadvantaged students.

The finalists for the prize also include the inaugural Broad Prize winner, the Houston Independent School District, which won in 2002; as well as first-time finalists North Carolina's Cumberland County Schools; and California's Corona-Norco Unified School District.

The winner of the 2013 prize, to be announced on Sept. 25, will receive \$550,000 in college scholarships for high school seniors who will graduate in 2014, while each of the three finalist school districts will receive \$150,000 in scholarships, totaling \$1 million.

"We recognize these four districts for the progress they have made in improving student achievement," said foundation founder Eli Broad. "But even while these finalist districts are moving in the right direction, there is still a long road ahead before we can truly celebrate high levels of academic success."

Approximately 75 of the nation's largest school districts were eligible for the Broad Prize. The four finalists were selected by a review board of 17 education researchers, policymakers, civil rights advocates and executives from universities, education associations, think tanks and foundations.

The Broad Prize for Urban Education has been awarded annually since 2002. The winner of last year's award was Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

St. Paul Superintendent Named Chair of Council Board



Valeria Silva

Superintendent Valeria Silva of the Saint Paul Public Schools in Minnesota has been elected chair of the Council of the Great City Schools' Board of Directors.

She will preside over the national urban education policy and research organization that represents 67 big-city school systems for a one-year term, effective July 1. The Council's 134-member board is composed of the superintendent and a school board member from each of the districts represented.

"Superintendent Silva has emerged as a recognized national leader in education,



Eileen Cooper Reed

especially in pioneering English-language learner reforms," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "She will lead our efforts to improve student achievement as we are implementing higher academic standards in big-city schools."

Silva was recently profiled in *Education Week's* special report on "Leaders to Learn from." "An immigrant herself, Valeria Silva led by example a nationwide push to teach English learners in mainstream classes," the newspaper said.

Superintendent Silva will succeed Council Chair Candy Olson, a school



Richard Carranza

board member in Florida's Hillsborough County Schools in Tampa, who has led the Council since last July.

Moving up to chair-elect is Eileen Cooper Reed, a school board member in Ohio's Cincinnati Public Schools, who currently serves as secretary-treasurer of the Council.

San Francisco Public Schools Superintendent Richard Carranza has been elected to the secretary-treasurer post to round out the Council's new leadership team for the upcoming 2013-14 school year.

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- Darnell-Cookman School of the Medical Arts in Jacksonville, Fla., No. 7;
- Stanton College Prep in Jacksonville, No. 11;
- Carnegie Vanguard in Houston, No. 13;
- Young Women's Prep in Miami-Dade County, No. 14;
- Suncoast Community in Palm Beach County, No. 16; and
- Paxon School for Advanced Studies in Jacksonville; No. 17.

A number of other urban schools made the grade in the *Post* rankings. The Houston Independent School District had a record 33 schools in the rankings -- almost a quarter of all the top Texas high schools on the *Post* list.

"Students and teachers in high school classrooms across Houston are proving

they are more than capable of rising to meet higher expectations when we give them the tools they need," said Superintendent Terry Grier.

U.S. News Rankings

The No. 1 high school of the *U.S. News & World Report's* "Best High Schools" rankings is the School for the Talented and Gifted in Dallas, the *Post's* third best high school in the nation.

This is the second consecutive year that the Dallas school has ranked at the top of the *U.S. News* national rankings.

Six big-city schools in Council districts ranked in the top 20 of the more than 21,000 public high schools in 49 states and the District of Columbia that were awarded gold, silver or bronze medals.

U.S. News teamed up with the American Institutes for Research to evaluate student performance on state-mandated assessments, and how effectively schools educate minority students, as well as how

they educate college-bound students based on Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams.

Other urban schools in Council districts that ranked in the top 20 and awarded gold medals are:

- Academic Magnet High in North Charleston, S.C., No. 10;
- International Studies Charter High in Miami-Dade County, No. 15;
- Carnegie Vanguard in Houston, No. 17;
- Stanton College Prep in Jacksonville, Fla., No. 19; and
- Design & Architecture Senior High in Miami-Dade County, No. 20.

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

Baltimore School Wins Urban Debate Championship

Two seniors from Baltimore City College, a college preparatory high school, competed against the best urban debate teams from across the nation to capture first place at the 2013 Urban Debate National Championship.

Dikshant Malla and Sophie Bauerschmidt-Sweeney were the winners of the three-day competition hosted by the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues. The students won all nine of their debates. A team from Chicago's Whitney Young Magnet High School placed second, reaching the finals for the second year in a row.

The competition was held at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and featured high school debate teams in 19 cities. Teams qualified for the national championship by winning first or second place at their league's qualifying tournament.

Urban debate teams debate in a style called policy debate, in which teams of two students debate one current event topic. This year's topic was on whether the United States federal government should substantially increase its investment in transportation infrastructure.

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

In addition to winning this year's Urban Debate National Championship, Malla and Bauerschmidt-Sweeney, along with their team, qualified to participate in the Tournament of Champions in Lexington,

Ky., the premier championship for high school debate.

In the fall, Malla will attend Johns Hopkins University on a full academic scholarship, which he credits receiving to his active involvement in the Baltimore Urban Debate League.

In addition to Johns Hopkins, Bauerschmidt-Sweeney has been accepted to Barnard College and Georgetown University.

While research has shown that urban debate leagues narrow the academic achievement gap, encourage college attendance and increase student research and literacy skills, Malla and Bauerschmidt-Sweeney highlight how debate can be personal as well.

As an immigrant who moved to America when he was 10 and did not fluently speak English, Malla told the *Urban Educator* that "debate really has been a safe space where I have been able to meet the most congenial, intelligent and caring individuals. I hope that our win can encourage other students to join debate and find their voice like I have found mine."

And Bauerschmidt-Sweeney believes her debate experiences have taught her more about research and constructing an argument than any class. "These skills have helped me achieve academically and fight for what I believe in through political activism," said Bauerschmidt-Sweeney in an e-mail to the *Urban Educator*.

This is the sixth year the Urban Debate National Championship has been held.



Linda Listrom, executive director of the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues, congratulates Baltimore students Dikshant Malla and Sophie Bauerschmidt-Sweeney for winning the 2013 Urban Debate competition.

L.A. School Board Aims To Provide All Students With Computer Devices

The Common Core Technology Project Plan is an effort by the nation's second largest school district to provide every student with a computing device by 2014 to help them better master the Common Core State Standards.

The plan is one step closer to becoming a reality after the Los Angeles school board recently approved a measure to spend \$50 million to purchase computer devices for every student at 47 schools.

The \$50 million will go toward purchasing computer tablets such as iPads, installing wireless networks and providing teacher training on the computer devices.



This is the first phase of the Los Angeles Unified School District's \$500-million Common Core Technology Project Plan to support Common Core State Standards by providing all students the opportunity to engage with digital curriculum.

According to Jaime Aquino, the district's deputy superintendent of instruction, when the plan is completed the Los Angeles school system will become the largest school district in the nation to provide each of its students with technology.

"Support for the Common Core Technology Project is our commitment to transform teaching and learning in the classroom," said Los Angeles School Board President Monica Garcia. "It means support to close the digital divide, to close the achievement gap and move us closer to 100 percent graduation."

The devices will be made available to students at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year.

Boston School Board Member Juggles Dual Roles

When Gregory Groover was part of a small group of black students who integrated an all-white elementary school in Freeport, N.Y., during the 1970s, he was placed in advanced classes.

He credits these classes with preparing him for honor courses in junior high, Advanced Placement classes in high school and ultimately leading to his graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Morehouse College in Atlanta.

The son of a sanitation worker, Groover's desire to ensure low-income children of color have the same access he had to a high quality education is one of the reasons he serves on the school committee, the policymaking board, for the 57,000-student Boston Public Schools (BPS).

Groover has served since 2007, with four of those years leading the committee until stepping down as chair in January.

And in addition to his duties on the Boston School Committee, Groover is pastor of the Charles Street African Methodist Episcopal Church, a historic 194-year-old church with more than 1,000 members.

The ability to juggle the two demanding positions has not been easy. "It's a balancing act," said Groover in an interview with the *Urban Educator*. "Particularly when I was chair, there were days when I did not even go into my church; the entire day was filled with attending to the concerns of Boston Public Schools."

Being a board member of a big-city school district can often feel like a full-time job and when Groover served as chair, he spent 30-35 hours a week on school committee business, ranging from visiting schools to meeting with the mayor, parents, community groups and other stakeholders.

"But there are some days when I just have to totally take off my school board hat and just be pastor, like on Sundays," said the 52-year-old Groover, a father of two and a former BPS parent. In his spare time, he likes to write songs on the piano but he is modest about his ability. "Some of the worship songs in my church were written by me," said Groover.



Galvanized Around Education

The Boston school district is the oldest school system in the nation and education plays a prominent role in the city.

"It's a plum because there is a huge and phenomenally strong constituency galvanized around public education," said Groover. But at the same time, everyone wants to play a role in reforming the school system, which can sometimes be challenging, he admits.

A prime example of this is the new school assignment plan, which will enable more students to attend schools closer to home next year.

The Rev. Groover noted that because of the district's history, there were people who saw the plan, and still see it, as an effort to resegregate schools.

But he believes the process, in which the mayor appointed a community advisory group who worked for an entire year to develop the plan, ultimately worked.

"It's not the silver bullet to all our problems," said Groover, "but it's a better assignment plan than the one we have now."

Having served as a school committee member for six years, Groover believes it's important that members leave the day-to-day operations to the superintendent and

focus intently on creating policies that give the superintendent the support needed to implement reform. "Having an appreciation for sitting through and processing policies that affect children in urban school districts is an utmost skill," said Groover.

Before being appointed to the school committee by Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, Groover chaired the education committee of the Black Ministerial Alliance of Boston, a coalition of approximately 90 congregations that advocates on behalf of African American children and children of color who attend BPS.

So one of the things he most enjoys about serving on the school committee is seeing an increasing number of students, particularly students of color, not only graduate but go on to college and ultimately come back to the district with bachelor degrees.

"Seeing that number increase tells me that BPS is doing a better job, in helping our students not only enter, but graduate from college," said Groover.

His second term on the school committee ends in January 2015 and when it is over he would love for the district to have

experienced a significant decrease in the achievement gap as well as an increase in high quality performing schools in neighborhoods that traditionally have had a disproportionate share of underperforming schools.

"[These would be] neighborhoods such as the one I live in and in which my church resides in," said Groover. "I'd love to see schools in those neighborhoods turn around, because when those schools turn around, neighborhoods turn around."

Groover also has a desire by the end of his term to visit all of BPS' 125 schools. He is well on his way, having visited 85 schools so far. "I will complete my goal within the next two years," said Groover.



Boston Schools Committee member Gregory Groover meets with children during his visit to a Boston school.

Priorities in the Obama Administration's FY 2014 Federal Budget Proposal: Early Education and Higher Education

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

The Obama Administration released its FY 2014 federal budget proposal on April 10, some two months later than the traditional February transmittal. The proposal calls for an additional \$3.1 billion for U.S. Department of Education discretionary program funds or a 4.5 percent increase. Of particular note is a proposal to restore discretionary education funding to the appropriations levels that existed before the 5 percent sequestration cut.



The Administration's proposed budget highlights a critical new priority for President Obama: early learning. Beginning with the FY 2014 budget and continuing over a 10-year period, \$75 billion in mandatory funding is requested for a Pre-school-for-All program that would be paid for with a 94 cents per pack increase in the federal cigarette tax. The initiative is built on a proposed federal-state partnership that would involve cost-sharing with states in serving all 4-year-old children from low and moderate income families. Incentives would also expand access for other families as well as increase access to full-day kindergarten. Additionally, another \$750 million in Preschool Development Grants would be provided through competitive funding to states in order to build their preschool capacity. Moreover, investments are requested through the Department of Health and Human Services for a new \$1.4-billion Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership for infants and toddlers, as well as for maintaining and expanding child-care subsidies and voluntary home visits at \$7 billion and \$15 billion, respectively, over the next 10 years.

The Administration also proposes to redirect its Race-To-The-Top program to spur college access, affordability, quality, and completion with a \$1-billion funding request for a new state-grant competition. The proposed budget also proposes \$4 billion in mandatory funds beginning in FY 2015 for a Community College to Career Fund, along with a similar amount from the Department of Labor.

On the other hand, the Administration requests static funding for key elementary and secondary education formula grant programs at the FY 2012 levels, including \$14.5 billion for Title I, \$11.6 billion for IDEA, \$732 million for Title III (ELLs), \$1.1 billion for Perkins Career and Tech Education, and \$2.5 billion for Title II (although consolidated under a new name with 25 percent set-aside for competitive grants).

New education funding initiatives in the FY 2014 budget over and above the early learning proposal include \$300 million in new High School Redesign partnership grants, an additional \$265 million in STEM programs, an additional \$125 million in new competitive School Turnaround Grants, a \$66 million increase for Investing in Innovation, an additional \$240 million for Promise Neighborhood funds, and an additional \$110 million in school safety programs (apparently through the Justice Department and Health and Human Services Department).

The budget proposal also renews a request for additional mandatory spending of \$12.5 billion in FY 2013 dollars for Teacher Jobs Stabilization (previously proposed at some \$20 billion in the American Jobs Act) and \$5 billion for Improving the Teaching Profession. Additionally, the Treasury Department has requested America Fast Forward Bonds for School Construction to provide a temporary 50 percent rebate on interest costs for taxable school construction bonds issued in 2014 and 2015, and a permanent 28 percent rebate on interest costs thereafter, similar to the Build America Bonds in the 2009 stimulus bill.

These Administration funding requests will require Congressional action and are likely to be ensnared in the never-ending battle over the federal budget. Another series of short-term continuing resolutions beginning this October is anticipated for FY 2014.

Urban Districts Named Best Communities For Music Education

In Miami-Dade County Public Schools, music education is part of the total instructional program for all elementary school students. As students transition to secondary schools, access to music programs is available for all grades with dedicated time for instruction during the school day.

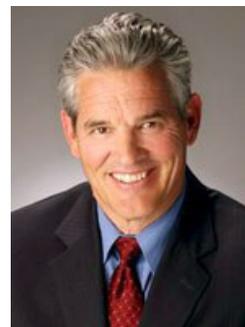
As a result, Miami Dade has been selected among the "Best Communities for Music Education in America" by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM).

In addition to Miami, the Houston In-

dependent School District, Memphis City Schools, Kansas' Wichita Public Schools, Tampa's Hillsborough County Schools, San Diego Unified School District and Las Vegas' Clark County School District were recognized. This is the 12th consecutive year in a row the Clark County school system has been selected.

Each year, NAMM recognizes school districts and schools across the nation for their support of music education programs for students. This year, 307 school districts and 66 schools made the list.

Albuquerque COO Wins Council Award



Brad Winter

Brad Winter, chief operations officer for Albuquerque Public Schools, was recently presented with the Distinguished Service Award at the Council of the Great City Schools' Chief

Operating Officers Conference in Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

Sponsored by the Council and Chartwells/Thompson Hospitality, the award honors business officials who exemplify leadership, innovation, commitment and professionalism in urban education.

Winter oversees the non-academic operations of the district, including facilities design, construction and maintenance; capital master plan; food services; school police and transportation. He previously served as director of the Albuquerque Public Schools Capital Master Plan Office and was an assistant principal in the district.

Charlotte School Recognized

Devonshire Elementary School in Charlotte, N.C., is one of five schools nationwide to earn national recognition for educating boys and young men of color.

The Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color recently gave the COSE-BOC School Award to schools that have proven track records of effective pre-kindergarten to 12th grade education of male students of color.

The other winners are Best Academy in Minneapolis, Thurgood Marshall Academy in Washington, D.C., and Indiana's Merrillville High School and Salk Elementary.



Orlando Jr. ROTC Cadet Saves Life

Fred Morrow, a retired lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve, left, presents Ciro Canales, a student at Cypress Creek High School in Orlando, with the Meritorious Achievement Award from the U.S. Navy. Canales, a third-year Naval Junior ROTC cadet, received the award for saving a woman's life. Canales was running an obstacle race in Georgia, when he witnessed a race participant in trouble and discovered the woman had no pulse. The day before the race Canales had finished his CPR compression training, so he put his skills to use and administered chest compressions while the course medic went to find an automated external defibrillator to use on the woman. The dual effort was successful and the woman recovered.



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L.A. School Wins Grammy Award



John Marshall High School in Los Angeles was the only big-city school selected as a 2013 GRAMMY Signature School for its outstanding

commitment to music education.

Awarded a cash prize of \$5,500 to improve its music department, John Marshall was one of 10 schools across the nation

selected as a 2013 GRAMMY Signature School.

The high school received the “Grammy Signature Schools Enterprise Award,” which recognizes efforts made by schools that are economically underserved.

Established in 1998 by the GRAMMY Foundation, the award program honors exceptional public high school music programs across the nation. Schools are selected for the award by an independent blue ribbon committee of top music educators and professionals.

Anchorage Bond *continued from page 4*

Citizens in Anchorage went to the polls on April 2, and approved Proposition 1, a \$54.8-million school bond package for the Anchorage school district. The funds will be used to pay for renovation, rebuilding or design projects at 27 school buildings across the 49,000-student school system, including Girdwood. Funds from the bond will also be used to help the district maintain its 93 buildings.

Because the state reimburses 60 to 70 percent of the debt for Anchorage school projects, the bond will cost the average homeowner about \$4.85 for every \$100,000 of assessed property value a year.

“I’m pleased that this proposition was approved,” said Anchorage Schools Superintendent Ed Graff. “These improvements will impact students across our district.”

Great City Grads



Tim Scott

U.S. Senator, South Carolina

1983 graduate

Stall High School

Charleston County School District