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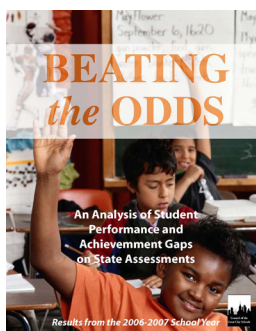


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Big-City Students Post Highest Test Scores Ever



Students in the nation's big-city public schools have posted the highest gains ever on state and federal tests, according to a new study by the Council of the Great City Schools.

In analyzing academic progress in 66 urban school systems in 37 states and the District of Columbia, *Beating the Odds: An Analysis of Student Performance and Achievement Gaps on State Assessments* shows substantially higher test scores in 2007 than in 2003 in fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics and reading on state-mandated tests.

The study compares this past year's state test scores with those reported a year after the federal *No Child Left Behind* law was implemented in 2002, requiring school districts to report performance levels based on state tests and show the percentage of students who score at the "proficient" level.

Findings for the 2006-2007 school year show that 63 percent of urban school students scored at or above the proficient level in fourth-grade math on their respective state assessments, a whopping 14 percentage point gain from 49 percent in 2003. For eighth-graders, the percentage climbed to 55 percent, compared with 42 percent in

2003, a 13 percentage point rise.

In reading, urban schoolchildren also posted gains over the past four years. From 2003 to 2007, the percentage of fourth-graders scoring at or above the proficient level in reading on state tests rose to 60 percent from 51 percent – a 9 percentage point hike. For eighth-graders, the percentage increased to 51 percent from 43 percent in 2003, an 8 percentage point gain.

National Test Scores

The eighth annual *Beating the Odds* report indicates that the state gains and federal test scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are at their highest levels since academic proficiency data have been collected for urban schools.

It reveals that the state-test trends parallel NAEP gains by urban students, but with lower percentages of students scoring at or above the proficient level on the federal test, which is generally considered a more rigorous exam than most state tests.

Students in big-city public schools have

Council Frames Challenges In Bilingual Ed.

With some 30 major city school districts represented, 83 urban school leaders converged in Austin, Tex., recently to collaborate on how to improve academic achievement among English-language learners.

"There is little mystery about why meeting the needs of our English-language learners is so critical," said Michael Caserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, which conducted its second annual Bilingual, Immigrant and Refugee Education Directors' Meeting. "All you have to do is look at the demographic trends."

Bilingual Ed. continued on page 6

Urban Debaters Take Center Stage



Two students display their debating skills at the first Chase Urban Debate National Championship. Story on page 5. Photo credit: Jeffrey Newcomer

Test Scores continued on page 4

Broward Teacher Named to Hall of Fame

In 2007, Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., selected David Lazerson as its Arts



David Lazerson

Teacher of the Year. Recently, the 30-year veteran educator received another commendation: induction into the National Teachers Hall of Fame.

Lazerson, who teaches special education, was among five teachers nationwide selected into the National Teachers Hall of Fame, which honors teachers who have demonstrated commitment and dedication to teaching children.

According to district officials, Lazerson is only the second teacher from the Broward County school system to enter the Hall of Fame since the inaugural induction ceremony in 1992. He

currently serves as the director of music therapy at The Quest Center, where he has taught for 22 years.

“Dr. Lazerson is an outstanding teacher who goes above and beyond to meet the needs of our special population,” said Quest Principal Raquel Cobb. “He has a passion and caring for students that gets results despite the limitation of our students’ skills.”

The Hall of Fame is located in Emporia, Kansas, and honors the accomplishments of public or non-public schoolteachers with at least 20 years of experience in teaching grades pre-kindergarten through 12.

Inductees receive \$1,000 in education materials for their school systems as well as a \$1,000 scholarship to present to a student in their respective school district who plans to pursue a degree in education. In addition, the five chosen teachers are invited to Emporia in June for a series of induction events.

Palm Beach Schools Earn ‘A’ Grade; Three Urban Districts Get ‘B’ in Florida

The School District of Palm Beach County has earned an “A” from the Florida Department of Education, making it the only urban district in the state to have a perfect grade.

The Sunshine State issues grades to schools and districts, ranging from “A” to “F”, primarily based on student performance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

The Palm Beach district has now received an “A” for three consecutive years, and has been recommended for full district accreditation by an accrediting authority.

The school system is not the only urban district in Florida to receive good grades. Three districts -- Broward County (Fort Lauderdale), Hillsborough County (Tampa) and Orange County (Orlando) -- earned “B” grades.



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Oakland Names Interim Leader; Jackson Chief to Depart

Roberta Mayor, a veteran educator with 40 years of experience, was recently selected to serve as the interim superintendent of California's Oakland Unified School District. The appointment marks the first time in more than five years the Oakland school board has chosen a person to lead the district.

In 2003, the Oakland school system was taken over by the state after receiving a \$100-million loan. As part of the bailout, an administrator was appointed to run the district with the board serving only in an advisory role.

Since the takeover, the district has been assessed in how well they have made progress in five areas of operation: student achievement, financial management, facilities management, personnel management and community relations and governance. When the state determines that the district has made sufficient progress in a specific area, that area is recommended for return to the school board.

Last month, the Oakland board of education was given control of community relations and governance, personnel management and facilities management. As a result of its new authority, the school board selected Mayor as its interim leader. Mayor is currently the chief management analyst for the organization charged with assessing the performance of school districts under state control. Since 2003, she has led the team reviewing Oakland's financial management operations.

2009 Departure Planned

After serving almost six years as the head of Mississippi's largest school system, Earl Watkins recently announced his plans to leave Jackson Public Schools when his contract expires in 2009.

Leaders continued on page 12

Richmond Schools Chief Named Superintendent of Year in Virginia



Deborah Jewell-Sherman

The leader of the Richmond Public Schools, Deborah Jewell-Sherman, has been named 2009 Superintendent of the Year by the Virginia Association of School Superintendents.

She was one of eight regional superintendents in the state to be considered for the top honor. She will now represent Virginia in the American Association of School Administrators' national competition.

AASA's 2008 Superintendent of the Year honors went to an urban school district leader, Rudy Crew, who heads Florida's Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

At the helm of Richmond city schools for the past six years, Superintendent Jewell-Sherman has amassed quite a track record of academic improvement. As an example, the percentage of city public schools meeting state accreditation has risen to 84 percent from 18 percent.

She recently announced that she will leave the 24,226-student school system when her contract expires in 2009.

New Aid Law Benefits Omaha District

In 2003, Omaha Public Schools and three other Nebraska school systems with large numbers of high-needs students filed a lawsuit against the state, calling for adequate funding to provide an equal opportunity for children to receive a quality education.

Five years later, the four school districts have voluntarily dismissed their lawsuit as a result of a new law recently passed by state legislators that has changed the formula for state aid to schools. The law provides significant new resources specifically directed at programs for students in poverty or students who are English-language learners.

Under the law, changes have been made in how the state figures each school district's financial need. The law includes new calculations for providing aid based on the number of economically disadvantaged students and students with limited English skills in a school district. The law also includes in its calculations the cost school systems face in offering summer school, particularly when

students are taking remedial math or reading or when students participating are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

The state will also provide separate funding for five years specifically to lower class sizes in all K-3 classrooms.

According to the *Omaha World Herald*, under the new law Omaha Public Schools will receive an extra \$21.3 million a year in state aid.

Sandra Jensen, the president of Omaha's school board, said in the *World Herald* that the new law is a "monumental shift in policy" and will ensure that all children are provided with the opportunity to receive a quality education.

This is not the first time a law has been passed by state legislators concerning the Omaha school system. In 2006, the Nebraska legislature passed a bill which divided the Omaha school system into three racially identifiable districts—each serv-

Omaha District continued on page 12

Test Scores *continued from page 1*

made faster math and reading gains than the nation on the NAEP over the past few years, according to *The Nation's Report Card* for 2007, released by the U.S. Department of Education. The report last November marked the first time that the nation could see four- or five-year trends on NAEP for the country's major urban public school systems since a Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) was launched in reading in 2002 and math in 2003.

Some 28 percent of urban fourth-graders scored at or above the proficient level in math in 2007 on NAEP, an 8 percentage point hike from 20 percent in 2003. In reading, 22 percent of urban schoolchildren in fourth grade reached or went beyond the proficient level in 2007, a 5 percentage point increase from 17 percent in 2002.

Perspective on Gains

"Academic gains by urban students on both state and federal tests confirm that city schools are making real progress," says Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools. "These improvements belie the mistaken impression that urban schools aren't working hard to reform."

In a Council national media conference call on the release of *Beating the Odds VIII*, Superintendent Rudy Crew of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools attributed gains in his Florida district to beefed up summer school programs, strong leadership at schools and more professional development. "The integration of all of this is what I think has allowed us to move the needle," he said, as reported in the *Miami Herald*.

The Miami schools chief also noted that the district's School Improvement Zone, a program to help struggling schools, has contributed to the progress.

Crew joined two other big-city school district superintendents --Atlanta's Beverly Hall and San Francisco's Carlos Garcia -- in responding to reporters on the national conference call.

Increases in Percentages of 4th and 8th Grade Urban Students Scoring at or above Proficiency in Reading and Math*

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Change
4th Grade Reading	51%	55%	58%	59%	60%	+9 points
4th Grade Math	49%	55%	56%	60%	63%	+14 points
8th Grade Reading	43%	44%	45%	49%	51%	+8 points
8th Grade Math	42%	48%	49%	51%	55%	+13 points

***Percentages reflect student performance on differing state assessments in cities that administered the same test in each of five consecutive years.**

Although urban schools show gains in math and reading performance, the districts still generally lag behind state and national averages in fourth- and eighth-grade proficiency. But there are exceptions.

In math, school districts with both fourth- and eighth-grade scores equal to or greater than their respective states were

"Academic gains by urban students on both state and federal tests confirm that city schools are making real progress."

—Michael Casserly, Council of the Great City Schools Executive Director

Anchorage, Broward County (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.), Charleston, New Orleans, Palm Beach and Portland, Ore.

In reading, school districts with both fourth- and eighth-grade scores as high or higher than their respective states were Anchorage, Broward County (Fort Lauderdale), Charleston, New Orleans, Portland, Ore., San Diego and San Francisco.

Achievement Gaps

Beating the Odds also indicates that racial achievement gaps in urban schools narrowed in math between 2003 and 2007, although they remain wide. Some 66 percent of big-city school districts narrowed the gap between their fourth-grade African American students and white counterparts statewide in math proficiency – 63 percent in eighth-grade math.

Among Hispanic students, 63 percent of the urban school districts narrowed the gap with white fourth-graders statewide in math proficiency – 58 percent in eighth grade.

In reading proficiency, between 2003 and 2007, 64 percent of major city school systems narrowed the achievement gap between fourth-grade African-American students and their white counterparts statewide – 67 percent at the eighth-grade level.

Among Hispanic students, 57 percent of urban school districts narrowed the gap with white fourth-graders statewide in reading proficiency – 63 percent in eighth grade.

The complete eighth edition of the *Beating the Odds* study, including city-by-city profiles, can be found on the Council's web site at www.cgcs.org.

Chicago School Wins National Debate Championship

Two students from Chicago's Lane Tech High School debated against some of the best high school students in the nation to capture first place at the inaugural Chase Urban Debate National Championship.

Hosted by the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues, the competition featured 33 urban debate teams dueling against each other in a three-day competition held at Northwestern University's law school in Chicago.

The winners were Chicago students Andrew Hobaugh and Nick Locke, with the team from Atlanta's Grady High School placing second and the team from Chicago's Morgan Park High School finishing third.

Also competing were teams from high schools in Baltimore, Boston, Dallas, Detroit, Kansas City, Mo., Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Newark, New York City, Seattle, St. Louis and Washington, D.C.

Of the 33 teams that competed in the debate competition, 26 of the teams were from high schools in member districts of the Council of the Great City Schools, including the three winning teams.

Urban debate leagues currently operate in 18 of the nation's largest cities and approximately 311 urban high schools and 51 urban middle schools participate.

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.

Research has shown that students who participate in urban debate leagues achieve increases in literacy and improve their grade-point averages by 8 to 10 percent. In addition, students who participate in debate achieve high school graduation rates of nearly 100 percent and have college matriculation rates of 71 to 91 percent.

The Chase Urban Debate National Championship was sponsored by J.P. Chase Morgan.



Chicago student Andrew Hobaugh, left, participates in the first Chase Urban Debate National Championship along with his debate team partner Nick Locke, who is seated. The team won the debate competition.

Indy Administrator Wins Council Award

Steven Young, the chief of facilities management for Indianapolis Public Schools, was recently presented the Distinguished Service Award at the Council of the Great City Schools' Chief Operating Officers conference in Indianapolis.

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

Young joined the Indianapolis school system in 1998. Prior to working in Indianapolis, he was a manager of military construction for the Army Corps of Engineers in San Antonio. Young also served for 12 years in the U.S. Air Force as a fighter pilot and flight training instructor.

NYC Student a Winner In Intel Science Competition

Katherine Rose Banks, a student at Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan, was recently awarded a \$25,000 scholarship as one of the winners of the Intel Science Talent Search, the nation's oldest and most prestigious high school science competition.

Banks won the fourth-place prize for her mathematics project on problems in geometry. More than 1,600 high school seniors entered the 2008 Intel Science Talent Search, with 40 finalists chosen to compete for the top 10 awards.

A 17-year-old senior, Banks has perfect SAT scores and is a member of her school's F.I.R.S.T. Robotics team. She enjoys acting and technical theater, as well as rocketry, photography and playing cricket.

In the fall, Banks plans to attend Cornell University or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After completing her studies, she would like to pursue a career teaching math.

Established in 1942, the Intel Science Talent Search is administered by the Society for Science and the Public and sponsored by Intel. This year, more than \$1.25 million in scholarships were awarded to students based on their research ability and scientific originality.



Katherine Rose Banks (center) is congratulated for placing fourth in the Intel Science Talent Search by Elizabeth Marincola, president of the Society for Science and the Public, and Craig Barrett, chairman of the board of Intel Corporation. Photo credit: Intel Corporation

Bilingual Ed. *continued from page 1*

The nation has an estimated 5.1 million English-language learners – 80 percent of whom were actually born in the United States. They consist of nearly 11 percent of the total school-age population in the country, and it is projected to increase to 30 percent by 2015.

A major reason why so many big-city school districts participated in the meeting, with 10 districts



Michael Casserly

sending teams of administrators, is because nearly 30 percent of English-language learners are being educated in the nation's biggest cities.

“Improving the achievement of English-language learners should concern

everyone because it speaks to the long-term prosperity of this nation,” stressed Casserly.

In an opening meeting address to frame the challenges facing urban educators, Casserly reiterated the Council's commitment to meeting the academic needs of students learning English. “Over the last decade, the Council has strengthened its advocacy on behalf of English-language learners, weighing in on the fights that others have shied away from,” he said, giving nine examples of efforts waged.

It has been an uphill battle for the Council in trying to modify the *No Child Left Behind* Act in regard to English-language learners. Casserly cited a flaw in the law on the requirement to test students who are learning English on content material after a single year of being in the United States. “We suspect that few people could learn a new language that fast and then pass a content test in that new language within a year,” he emphasized.

Besides advocacy efforts, the Council is also involved in conducting research in bilingual education. It has launched a new study designed to determine why some urban school districts are showing more

progress with English-language learners than others, analyzing policies and practices to find what contributes to academic gains. Four city school districts – Dallas, New York, St. Paul, Minn., and San Francisco – are the focus of the study.

The analysis is likely to confirm, Casserly maintained from reviewing anecdotal evidence, that “there is no magic bullet that can be used to improve the achievement of English-language learners, no single approach that will work for every student and will work all the time.”

“Improving the achievement of English-language learners should concern everyone because it speaks to the long-term prosperity of this nation.”

—Michael Casserly, Council of the Great City Schools Executive Director

Casserly asked urban school leaders at the meeting to join the Council in:

- Supporting the Dream Act, which would allow any student whose parents are in the United States illegally to gain citizenship rights if and when the student stays in school and earns a high school diploma;
- Exploring possible partnerships with groups, such as the Mexican American Legal and Defense and Education Fund, that are fighting policies that would dampen the chances for immigrant students to learn; and
- Extending the Council's work in providing opportunities to all immigrant children and their families, “so the entire country benefits by their presence and their skills,” said Casserly.

Expressing the need for collaboration to improve academic achievement of English-language learners, Casserly noted, “Together, I am confident that we can make serious headway in responding to the challenges involved.”

Seattle Creates Second International School

In 2000, Seattle Public Schools launched its first international school: the John Stanford International School, offering a dual-language immersion program in Japanese and Spanish. Eight years later, the district is opening the doors to its second international school.

Next fall, Beacon Hill Elementary will be converted into an international school offering students the opportunity to participate in three language immersion programs -- Spanish/English Dual Language Immersion, Chinese Mandarin/English Partial Immersion and an English Language International Program.

Incoming kindergarten students will spend half the school day studying and working in a new language taught by native speakers while also improving their academic skills in reading, writing, math and science.

Students in the international program will study multicultural literature, world economics, global health and arts, music, dance and drama from around the world. In addition, teachers will use an international social studies curriculum that will teach students about different cultures and countries and will explore current challenges and issues facing the world community.

Seattle Superintendent Maria Goodloe-Johnson said the district is very proud to see Beacon Hill Elementary become an international school. “There is great value in educating our students to become global citizens. They have a better understanding of the world around them, language skills to communicate across cultural boundaries and a deeper knowledge of the challenges and connections that link our community to those of the world at large.”

Currently, Beacon Hill Elementary has a population of 379 students speaking over 10 different languages. Students attending grades 1-5 next year will continue taking Chinese Mandarin classes, which are taught a half hour each day.

Florida Student Receives Perfect ACT Score



Ryan Jepson

In the state of Florida, 29,000 students took the college entrance ACT exam, but only one student achieved a perfect score.

Ryan Jepson, a junior at Orange County Public Schools' Winter Park High School, earned a perfect score of 36 on the ACT exam, which assesses high school students' knowledge and ability to complete college-level work.

The 17-year-old is one of only 56 students nationwide who achieved a 36.

When asked how he achieved a perfect score on the college entrance exam, Jepson said, "I think it's by working hard in school for years rather than studying for one single test."

In addition to excelling at academics, Jepson is editor-in-chief of his high school's yearbook, editor-in-chief of the school's literary magazine, a member of the cross country track team and a member of the City of Winter Park Florida Youth Advisory Board.

The list of colleges he would like to attend include Brown University, Yale University, the University of Florida and Dartmouth College. Jepson would like to major in a program that will lead him to a career in journalism.

"Ryan's achievement shows what can happen when you combine native intelligence, a supportive home environment and nurturing teachers," said Orange County Schools Superintendent Ronald Blocker in Orlando. "He is to be commended for working so hard at his studies, and we are proud that he is an OCPS student."



Eager Birmingham students participate in class with new laptop computers.

Birmingham Students Given Laptops by the City

Anyone who looks into classrooms at Birmingham's Glen Iris Elementary School will see hundreds of lime green laptop computers in the hands of students.

The laptops are part of a pilot project that may result in 15,000 Birmingham students being given laptops by the city of Birmingham.

The Birmingham City Council voted earlier this year to spend \$3 million buying the laptops for all Birmingham City School System students in the first through eighth grades.

The laptops belong to the children, who take them home every night and are responsible for bringing them every morning fully charged.

The laptops are designed for use by young children, made by One Laptop Per Child, a non-profit association founded by Nicholas Negroponte, the MIT Media Lab director, professor and author who made \$100 laptops available to children in developing nations.

The laptops, distinguished by the XO on the top of the portable computers, have waterproof child-sized keyboards, and feature built-in digital cameras and video cameras

and are equipped for wireless Internet access.

Within a few minutes of receiving their laptops, the Birmingham students were learning how to use their new technology.

Glen Iris Elementary School is considered the first school in the nation to have all students in five grades, 650 of them, to be given laptops. Teachers at the school trained on the use of the laptops before they were given to students and are concentrating on using them in class for the last few weeks of the school year. Summer programs using the laptops also are planned.

"We want to see how well the laptops work in the classroom," said Interim Superintendent Barbara S. Allen. "Do they help the students learn? Can they be integrated into the curriculum? We need answers before we decide whether to expand them to all of our elementary and middle schools."

The Birmingham Board of Education agreed to the pilot project and will consider accepting the remainder of the laptops after the pilot is completed. Birmingham would be the first American school district to use the XO laptops so widely.



Students at San Francisco's Community School distribute produce at their student-run pantry. Photo credit: Heidi Alletzhauer

San Francisco Middle School Students Operate Neighborhood Food Pantry

The San Francisco Food Bank operates 178 neighborhood food pantries across the city, but only one is run by students.

Twenty-six middle school students at the San Francisco Community School operate Jean's Free Grocery and Pantry from their schoolyard.

The pantry, named in honor of a teacher who passed away, is open once a week and provides fresh, seasonal produce to the surrounding community.

The students who run the pantry are part of the Third Base After School Program, a project of the Cesar Chavez Service Club.

The pantry was the brainchild of Howard Swansey, head counselor and outreach coordinator at the San Francisco Community School.

Approximately 30 San Francisco schools have food pantries and after visiting one at an elementary school that was run by parent volunteers, Swansey was impressed by what he saw. He decided his school should operate a food pantry, but let the students be in charge.

Swansey recalled that a lot of people, including himself, were skeptical that the students could handle it.

"The most surprising thing is that they like doing this," said Swansey in an interview in *Give & Take*, the newsletter of the San Francisco Food Bank. "Every Tuesday they give up their lunch to set up the pantry and now other kids from the school want to join."

The pantry has become more popular in the local neighborhood since it first opened in October. The first week the students served 60 people, but in the second week that number grew to 80 and by the third week more than 100 people were visiting the pantry.

According to Swansey, the neighborhood pantry is part of the community now. "...People are interacting with them as people, not as kids. It's like they're running their own grocery store."

Not only does the community have a place to get free nutritious food, but the students have also benefited from running the pantry.

"I like giving out food," said 13-year-old student Anthony in an interview in *Give & Take*. "I can talk to people and meet people I haven't met before. Then every time they come back, they know my name and I know their name."

Miami School Wins \$25,000 National Prize For International Ed.

Sunset Elementary School in Miami recently won the \$25,000 Goldman Sachs Foundation Prize for Excellence in International Education for engaging its students in learning about other world regions, culture and languages.

Sponsored by the Asia Society and the Goldman Sachs Foundation, the prize was created in 2003 to promote international knowledge and raise American awareness of the world.

The prize is presented annually to one public or private elementary or middle school that offers students a global curriculum that integrates international content across core subject areas and grade levels.

Sunset Elementary offers an International Studies Magnet Program, which features an inquiry-based global curriculum focused on the topics of civic responsibility, cultural and environmental awareness and knowledge of the global economy.

Coursework includes foreign language programs in Spanish, French and German as well as instruction in math, science and social studies in these languages.

Sunset Principal Aline Sarria said global education was a natural progression for the school's already-existing International Studies Program. "Our students are not only biliterate and bicultural, but are now also prepared to compete in and contribute to global society," said Sarria.



Miami's Sunset Elementary School Principal Aline Sarria (center) displays her school's Goldman Sachs Foundation Prize for Excellence.

Summer Camp for 75 Memphis Students Will Mean Cracking the Books at a University

For some 75 Memphis high school students this July, summer camp won't mean exploring nature or improving skills on the basketball court.

They will eat, sleep and breathe college life for two weeks this summer while studying mathematics at the University of Memphis.

This will be the second year of collaboration between the Memphis City Schools and the university, which hosts a program called the Math Academy, funded by a special grant from the Tennessee Board of Regents.

The Math Academy aims to help 10th- and 11th-grade students explore the field of mathematics, focusing on improving algebra skills, while getting a taste of college life.

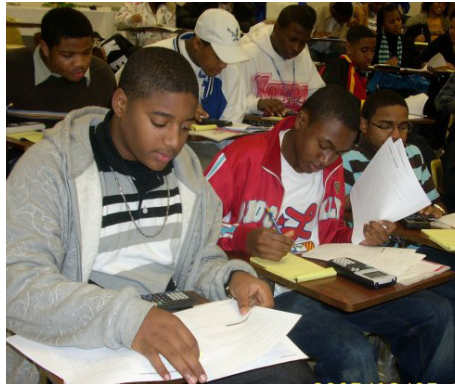
The students live and eat on campus, and are offered a variety of social and enrichment activities, including college entrance preparation and life skills workshops.

"Our students are granted the opportunity to enhance their skills and understanding of algebraic and other mathematics concepts, while also being exposed to what academic life is like on a major college campus," said Chief Academic Officer Alfred Hall of the Memphis City Schools.

Two University of Memphis math professors teach the students. Eight undergraduates at the university serve as "camp guides," participating in social activities with the students and monitoring their progress throughout the program. The guides continue to maintain contact with the students after the summer camp.

"The students in the camp looked up to the guides – and sort of thought of them as older brothers and sisters," said Shawn Anthony Boyd, Math Academy coordinator at the university, referring to last summer's inaugural program.

"Our guides were amazing people," said one of the Memphis students. "I could relate to them in a lot of ways. They truly inspired me."



Students study at Memphis camp last summer.

In addition to the 50 incoming students for the Math Academy this summer, 25 students from the initial 50 who completed the program last year will participate in an advanced camp, totaling 75 Memphis students who will be on the campus, according to Kate Howard, assistant director of recruitment and orientation at the university.

To be selected for the competitive Math Academy, which will be held from July 6 to 19, students must have successfully completed Algebra I, finished ninth grade and have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.80. And two letters of recommendation are required to be considered for the program.

The Math Academy contributes to the Memphis school district's mantra "Every Child. Every Day. College Bound," stressed Memphis City Schools board member Stephanie Gatewood, who is affiliated with the university's Center for Research in Educational Policy.

"The algebra camp in many aspects changed how students viewed math while delivering it in practical application," she said, noting that she has seen firsthand the successes of the participating students and the university partnership.

Urban Teachers Receive Presidential Math, Science Award



Darcy Lynn Hampton

Darcy Lynn Hampton is a biology and physical science teacher in Washington, D.C., who tutors students in the morning, during lunch and after school. Jeffrey Wright is a physics teacher in Louisville, Ky., who offers special sessions for students such as an astronomy project he held at 6 a.m.



Jeffrey Wright

These are two of the 11 big-city teachers recently selected to receive the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching for 2007.

Established in 1983, the award is presented to the nation's best mathematics and science teachers for their contributions in the classroom and to their profession. The competition alternates each year between kindergarten through sixth-grade teachers and seventh- through twelfth-grade teachers.

This year, 99 educators who teach grades 6-12 were recipients of the award, which is administered by the National Science Foundation on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

In addition to teachers in Washington, D.C., and Louisville, urban teachers in Albuquerque, Boston, Oklahoma City, Baton Rouge, Omaha, Las Vegas, Denver and Henderson, Nev., were also honored. Two teachers from the District of Columbia public schools and two from Nevada's Clark County School District were recognized.

Each award recipient will receive a \$10,000 grant.

A Flurry of Pre-Memorial Day Activity

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

In approaching Memorial Day, Congress and the U.S. Department of Education have engaged in a flurry of activity. But, the impact of these activities remains uncertain with policy and politics frequently colliding in this election year.

On the legislative front, Congressman John Dingell, chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, moved H.R. 5613—the Protecting the Medicaid Safety Net Act—through the House on an overwhelming bipartisan passage (349 to 62). The bill places a one-year moratorium on seven sets of restrictive Medicaid regulations issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, including rules cutting school-based Medicaid funding.

On the education front, Congressman George Miller, chair of the House Education and Labor Committee, reported H.R. 3021—the 21st Century High Performing Public School Facilities Act—out of committee on a nearly party line vote. The new facilities bill is unusually free of bureaucracy red tape in authorizing \$6.4 billion for school repair and renovation. Funds would be distributed—without an application—using the Title I formula to every district school in the nation and would require only a final report.

This school modernization and repair initiative is designed to have an economic stimulus effect by getting funds to the local level within 60 days of the appropriation.

Getting the bill enacted and funded, however, will be an uphill battle. At the same time that this bill was moving, the House and Senate education panels continue to finalize the long-delayed Higher Education Act reauthorization. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) reauthorization, however, appears to have fallen off the legislative radar screen.

The U.S. Department of Education, in the meantime, has issued a series of proposed rules over the last few weeks to fill the void from Congressional inaction on NCLB. Substantial regulatory changes have been proposed to fix problems experienced at local and state levels and to brunt the momentum to dismantle the Act.

Three sections of the proposed regulations make positive changes in Department policy – rules on the disaggregation of



data (N size); the disaggregation of graduation rates; and the expansion of the growth model.

However, most of the remaining proposed regulations pile on unnecessary and unauthorized requirements that will add to current NCLB implementation problems and burdens.

Ironically, these new regulatory provisions, particularly those related to supplemental educational services (SES) and public school choice, will probably contribute to the backlash against the Act rather than muting it.

The Department also has issued proposed interpretative rules for the Title III Program for English Language Learners. The proposed rules try to impose some uniformity in the implementation of Title III after admittedly inconsistent Department guidance and advice over the past five years. Some of these interpretations appear to accurately reflect the statute, while others ignore the legislated strictures of Title III.

This backdoor use of interpretative rules – whether or not developed through a comment process – overlooks the continuing problems caused by the lack of Title III regulations at the outset.

Finally, the Department has issued proposed regulatory changes for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The proposed IDEA regulations preclude schools from providing special education to students with disabilities if their parents withdraw their consent for services. The regulations also ironically ensure the availability of IDEA funding allocations to school districts (primarily charter school districts) who do not serve students with disabilities.

The nation's school districts desperately await passage of the moratorium on the Medicaid funding restrictions that will otherwise take effect at the end of June. In addition to House passage of the Medicaid Safety Net bill, there is also an initiative to include the Medicaid moratorium as a rider on the currently pending Iraq War Supplemental Appropriations bill. These new legislative and administrative actions will play out over the next few months, but the Supplemental Appropriations is awaiting immediate House and Senate floor action as this article goes to press.



2008 Instructor of the Year

Army Major (Retired) Frank Branch, a JROTC instructor at Jim Hill High School in Jackson, Miss., has been named the U.S. Army Cadet Command's 2008 Instructor of the Year. He was selected for the prestigious national honor among more than 1,645 senior Army instructors in all 50 states, Guam, Germany, Japan and South Korea. Major Branch was cited for exceptional work that he and other Jim Hill JROTC instructors have performed with cadets in the school and community.

Urban Districts Win Grammy Awards

At Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in Jacksonville, Fla., students receive training in visual arts, performing arts, theatre, film and television production and creative writing. The school has produced three presidential scholars in the arts and more than 96 percent of its graduates attend college, university, or a post-secondary art school.

The school recently received another distinction: being selected as a 2008 GRAMMY Signature School. Established in 1998 by the GRAMMY Foundation, the GRAMMY Signature Schools program recognizes public high schools that maintain high quality music programs.



In addition to Douglas Anderson being honored, urban schools in Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Houston were also among the 14 schools nationwide designated as GRAMMY Signature Schools.

The winning schools are selected by a panel of top music educators and professionals and each school receives a monetary grant to benefit its music program.

Of the 14 GRAMMY Signature Schools selected, three schools were recognized as the top schools and designated as a "Gold" recipient. One big-city school—Douglas Anderson—made this category and received a \$5,000 grant.

Hamilton Academy of Music in Los Angeles was one of three schools presented a \$5,000 grant from the Gibson Foundation to benefit its guitar and/or piano program. And the High School of the Performing and Visual Arts in Houston and the Las Vegas International Academy of Performing and Visual Arts received a \$1,000 grant.

Pupils Support Troops

Students at Benjamin Franklin School in Newark, N.J., have been showing support for an alumnus of their school and his fellow troops.

Ricky Santiago, a 1998 graduate of Newark Public Schools, is a U.S. Marine serving in Iraq who had attended the elementary school.

The Franklin students have been selling T-shirts, emblazoned with the Marine name, logo of Santiago's troop, and the phrase "Franklin School supports U.S. Troops."

Superintendents Sought

For Nation's Top Urban Leadership Award

The Council of the Great City Schools is currently accepting nominations for the 2008 Richard R. Green Award, the nation's highest honor for urban education leadership.

Sponsored by ARAMARK and Voyager Expanded Learning, the award is named in honor of the first African-American chancellor of the New York City school system.

The award is given in alternating years to a school board member and superintendent. This year the award will be presented

to a superintendent from a Council member district.

The winner of the award will be honored at the Council's annual Fall Conference in Houston in October. 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 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/Richard_Green08.pdf. The deadline to apply for the award is July 7, 2008.

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During Watkins' tenure, the 31,000-student school district secured the passage of a \$150 million bond issue in 2006 for school improvements. It was the district's largest school bond in history.

And the Jackson school system recently received district accreditation as a quality school system by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement.

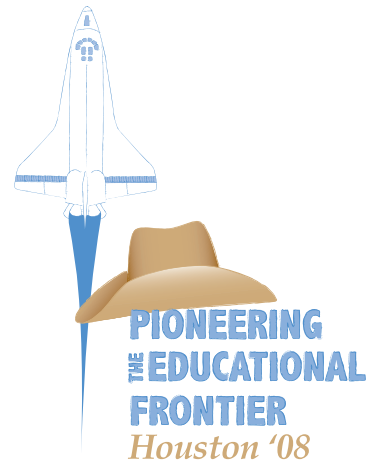
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ing predominantly African American, white and Hispanic students. The bill also changed the finance system for providing state aid to school districts, cutting poverty funding and shifting funds to wealthy districts.

The law was condemned by the Council of the Great City Schools and five national civil rights groups as taking "our nation back to the days before the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision," when the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed racial segregation in public schools. A judge ultimately blocked the Nebraska law from going into effect.

Editor's Note

For many of our readers who receive the *Urban Educator* by mail, we want to know if you would prefer receiving the newsletter via e-mail, discontinuing the mail delivery. If you're interested in changing to electronic delivery, please access the Council web site at www.cgcs.org and click on *Urban Educator*.



Council Fall Conference Registration Begins

Under the banner "Pioneering the Educational Frontier," the Council of the Great City Schools will hold its annual Fall Conference, Oct. 22-26, in Houston.

Registration has now begun. To register, access the Council's web site at www.cgcs.org/conferences/fall.aspx.



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