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The Rev. Jesse Jackson addresses urban school leaders.

Civil Rights Leader, Professor, College President Spotlight Education Issues

NASHVILLE—When the Rev. Jesse Jackson travels around the nation visiting high schools, he is struck by the high expulsion rate of young black males, and notes that in the state of New Jersey blacks are six times more likely to be expelled from school than whites for the same infraction.

“The crisis of young black males is an American crisis,” said Jackson in his keynote address to nearly 900 school superintendents, administrators, board members and deans of colleges of education gathered in Nashville for the Council of the Great City Schools’ 51st Annual Fall Conference. “We must declare a state of national emergency.”

The founder and president of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition said that in many cases black male students are taken from school directly to jail and noted that in America “the prevailing wind is prison over promise.”

Jackson said that in a global economy it is imperative children receive a quality education, but that the issue of public education in America today has been put in the margins and is not being adequately addressed.

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Big-City Schools Show Progress

Students in big-city public schools have made faster math and reading gains than the nation on the rigorous National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) over the last several years, with African-American and poor students showing particularly strong progress.

That’s the conclusion of *The Nation’s Report Card* for 2007, marking the first time that the country has seen four- to five-year trends on NAEP for the major urban public school systems since the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) was launched in reading in 2002 and math in 2003.

“Compared to national averages, these districts have a higher portion of students classified as poor and minority, yet in some cases the academic performance of their students is above the national average for

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Supreme Court Ruling at Issue



San Francisco Superintendent Carlos Garcia and Kansas City Board President David Smith, left, on National Town Hall Meeting panel. Story on page 6.

Boston School Board Chair Wins Highest Honor

NASHVILLE—Elizabeth Reilinger was appointed to the Boston School Committee in 1994 by Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and has been elected chairperson of the school committee every year since 1998.

Last month, she achieved another feat—Reilinger received the 2007 Richard R. Green Award, the nation's highest honor for urban education leadership, at the Council of the Great City Schools' 51st Annual Fall Conference.

Sponsored by the Council, ARAMARK and Voyager Expanded Learning, the award is named in honor of the first African-American chancellor of the New York school system, who had previously led the Minneapolis Public Schools.

"I am particularly honored to receive this award named after a special person," said Reilinger upon accepting the prize. "His legacy is so important. He raised the bar and stepped up to the plate."

As the recipient of the award, Reilinger receives a \$10,000 college scholarship to present to a high school senior of

her choice in the Boston Public Schools or from her high school alma mater.

Beneficiary Gives Thanks

In 2003, Stanley Artis Jr., was a senior in Norfolk Public Schools when he received a \$10,000 Richard R. Green scholarship from John Simpson, who at the time was the superintendent of Norfolk Public Schools. Simpson received the Green Award in 2002 in a ceremony in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Artis used the \$10,000 college scholarship to attend Virginia's Old Dominion University and graduated this year with a bachelor's of science degree in electrical engineering. He is currently an electrical engineer for Northrop Grumman's Submarine Combat and Electrical Systems.

At the 2007 Richard R. Green ceremony, Artis expressed his gratitude for being awarded the scholarship.

"Without it, I do not know how I would have paid for college," Artis told big-city educators. "Receiving the scholarship was a blessing."



Boston School Committee Chair Elizabeth Reilinger displays her Richard R. Green Award and is congratulated by Voyager's Carolyn Gettridge, ARAMARK's Ed Garner and Council Chair-elect William Isler.

Queen Smith Award

Lois Powell Mondesire, principal of Strawberry Mansion High School in Philadelphia, was the recipient of the 10th annual Queen Smith Award for Commitment to Urban Education. The

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like students,” said Darvin Winick, chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board that oversees the NAEP.

While the new federal data were being released in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 15, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings was in Atlanta praising the school district there for its performance on the 2007 NAEP. She reportedly called the Atlanta Public Schools “a model for the country” after the district posted gains in all grades and test areas since 2002.

Math Gains

The new NAEP data show that fourth and eighth graders in large central city schools have made statistically significant increases in math since 2003 and demonstrate that the pace of change in big cities has been faster than nationwide gains by varying margins in each grade.

For example, the percentage of big-city fourth graders scoring at or above basic levels of achievement jumped from 63 to 70 percent between 2003 and 2007; the percent scoring at or above proficient levels increased from 20 to 28 percent; and the percentage scoring at the advanced level went from 2 to 4 percent—gains that equaled or exceeded nationwide increases in each case. Conversely, the percentage of urban fourth graders scoring *below* basic levels in math decreased from 37 to 30 percent between 2003 and 2007—a faster drop than seen nationally.

Math scores among fourth graders improved significantly in eight of 10 TUDA districts participating since 2003—Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, the District of Columbia, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, and San Diego.

The new report also shows that the percentage of urban eighth graders scoring at or above basic achievement levels in math increased from 50 to 57 percent; the percentage scoring at or above proficient increased from 16 to 22 percent; and the percentage scoring at the advanced level increased from 3 to 5 percent—again, gains



Education Secretary Spellings praises Atlanta academic performance. (Photo by Scott King)

that exceeded nationwide improvements in each case. Conversely, the percentage of urban eighth graders scoring *below* basic levels of attainment dropped from 50 to 43 percent.

Math scores among eighth graders in Atlanta, Boston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Chicago, the District of Columbia, Houston, Los Angeles, and San Diego—or eight of 10 TUDA districts participating since 2003—showed significant gains.

Reading Improvements

The new NAEP report also shows significant improvements in the reading performance of urban fourth graders since 2002. The data show that the percentage of urban fourth graders reading at or above basic achievement levels jumped from 44 to 53 percent since 2002; the percent reading at or above proficient levels increased from 17 percent to 22 percent; and the percentage reading at the advanced level went from 3 to 5 percent—gains that outpace national improvements in each instance. Conversely, the percentage of urban students reading *below* basic levels of performance decreased from 56 percent in 2002 to 47 percent in 2007—a faster drop than that seen nationwide.

Reading scores among fourth graders in Atlanta, Chicago, the District of Columbia, and New York City showed significant gains from their first year in TUDA.

Eighth-grade reading remained steady in large central city schools overall since 2002, although scores in Atlanta, Cleveland, and Los Angeles increased over the testing peri-

od. NAEP performance nationwide among eighth graders decreased.

“We are very encouraged that the urban public schools are advancing in reading and mathematics on the nation’s toughest test,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools.

Minority, Poor Students Advance

The new NAEP data also reveal significant academic progress among African-American and poor students in the big cities. The percentage of African-American fourth graders in large central city public schools scoring at or above basic in reading, for instance, increased from 33 percent in 2002 to 41 percent in 2007. The percent of African-American fourth graders scoring at or above basic in math jumped from 47 percent in 2003 to 58 percent in 2007. Eighth grade African-American students posted similar math gains.

Large central city school students who were eligible for the National School Lunch program also improved their reading and math scores.

Casserly pointed out at the Washington press conference releasing the 2007 *Report Card* that the NAEP data “give us the tools we need to ask hard questions about our instructional practices,” noting that the Council has launched a project to study the urban districts that volunteered to participate in NAEP.

Performance Pay for Principals Approved

Last year, the Houston Independent School District launched a performance pay program for teachers. This year the district is launching a performance pay program to benefit principals.

As part of the ASPIRE Award plan, principals, like teachers, will be able to

Performance Pay continued on page 12

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He observed that prison guards are paid more than the nation's teachers and indicated that in South Carolina there are 35 state prisons but only 10 state colleges.

The civil rights leader recalled his visit to an inner-city high school in Chicago in which 97 percent of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The school had 1,400 students, but only four computers. In addition, books in the library dated back to 1945, the swimming pool had not been opened in 10 years and lights in the gymnasium did not work.

He contrasted those conditions to a high school only 30 minutes away in the suburbs, which contained an Olympic-size swimming pool, numerous computers and modern science labs.

"Our struggle is about leveling the playing field," stressed Jackson. "There is a correlation between schools and resources. We have lost the dream of learning."

The former Democratic presidential candidate urged big-city school leaders to organize mass rallies and mass marches and become more vocal about anti-educational activity.

"We never lost a battle that we fought and we never won a battle unless we fought," said Jackson. "In our schools, we must fight for equal adequate funding to even the playing field."

During a question-and-answer-session, the winner of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, was asked his opinion on the *No Child Left Behind* law. "The fact is, it is underfunded and doesn't take into account an uneven floor," said Jackson. "We are now building jails based on third graders' test scores."

Jackson, who worked closely with the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., was also asked to give his views on the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision striking down student assignment plans in Louisville and Seattle designed to promote racial diversity in their public schools.

He said that the government has supported the premise of segregation and does not see the value of desegregation, but



Professor Michael Eric Dyson

noted that Americans need to learn to live together.

"Our dream is multicultural, multi-racial," said Jackson. "It's a dream worth fighting for."

A Professor Speaks

Also addressing the conference was Michael Eric Dyson, a professor at Georgetown University, who gave an inspiring luncheon address to urban school leaders.

According to Dyson, the nation lives in a gap between idealism and reality where leaders speak about leaving no child behind, but the reality is that "the urban education system finds itself working against the juggernaut of radical indifference and benign neglect."

Dyson said that many policymakers have a negative view of poor black and Latino children and tend to demonize them for their taste in clothing and hip hop music.

"Every generation has things about them that adults don't like," said Dyson, who recalled that when he was growing up adults didn't like his big afro hairdo.

But the professor, who teaches theology, English and African-American studies, said the nation must resist the urge to criticize these children. "Don't worry about sagging pants," Dyson stressed, "worry about sagging dreams."

He said that educators should discipline students with compassion.

"Don't be afraid of our children; a lot of kids want to know someone loves them,"

stressed Dyson. "They want to know that you care."

The author of the book *Debating Race* told conferees that they are on the frontlines of defending the nation's urban centers. "You are heroic figures trying to stand up and help our children to make mental and intellectual rhetorical strides," said Dyson. "What you do is so important."

He informed educators that he wants to issue a call on their behalf to establish a Marshall Plan for education, similar to the plan America created to rebuild Europe after World War II.

"This very government has underfunded and defunded education," said Dyson, who didn't start college until he was 21 but received a Ph.D. from Princeton University.

A teen father in Detroit, Dyson received his diploma at night and fears that those additional services that gave him the opportunity to succeed will no longer be available for the next generation of students because of cuts in education funding.

"I graduated from night school," recalled Dyson. "If it wasn't for night school, I wouldn't be here."

Investing In Education

Urban educators also heard from Julianne Malveaux, the president of Bennett College for Women, a historically black college in Greensboro, N.C., who discussed the need for the nation to invest in education.

She said that Bennett is a place where women are educated, celebrated and turned into leaders. "We have passion and believe that every young person can learn," said Malveaux.

A syndicated columnist whose work regularly appears in *USA Today*, Malveaux told conferees that in addition to being educators, they must also be social workers and deal with students who may come to school hungry or are being raised by teenage parents.

"But despite these conditions, we have to maintain the passion that every young person can make a difference," said Malveaux.

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"We are fighting for America and failing to invest in urban education is failing to invest in America."

Malveaux, who received her Ph.D. in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said that according to the American Council on Education, there are more college graduates who are between the ages of 45-54 than those with a degree who are ages 25-34.

"There is educational erosion that is utterly frightening," said Malveaux. "China, India and Eastern Europe produce more engineers than the USA because they invest in education."

She said that as the nation cuts funding for higher education the average college student graduates with \$20,000 in debt, a black college student graduates with \$26,000 in debt and a student from a historically black college or university graduates with \$28,000 in debt.

Malveaux made the observation that the high cost of a college education is a deterrent for many young people, even though studies have shown that people who earn a college degree earn a million dollars more than people who don't matriculate.

"When we look at our nation, we have shown the world we fail to be passionate about student success," she said.

The college president said that America's failure to invest in urban education will result in a very divided nation similar to South Africa before apartheid, between those who have education and those who do not.

Malveaux also believes that from a policy perspective the nation must ensure states and the federal government treat education as if it is a priority and infuse a core value that every person must learn.

"We don't know who these children are who we ignore; don't know if they will cure cancer, cure our environment," said Malveaux. "If we turn our backs on these young people, we are turning our backs on ourselves."

Conference Sessions

The nation's big-city school leaders attended numerous sessions focused on the challenges and issues facing the nation's urban school districts.



College President Julianne Malveaux

In a session titled "Earning College Credits in Urban High Schools," representatives from the University of Cincinnati discussed its dual enrollment program, which enables students

in Cincinnati Public Schools to enroll in college-level courses. The aim of the program is increase the number of students transitioning from high school to college and to improve their chances of success at the collegiate level.

Most of the students in the program will be the first in their family to attend college and many are students who have the ability to perform college-level work but do not have the confidence or the understanding of how to proceed.

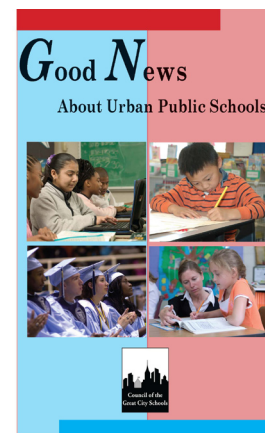
"We are providing access to low-income, high-achieving students," said Gerald Reid, an associate professor at the University of Cincinnati. Reid said that once students begin attending classes on campus, college becomes less of a mystery.

The program is in its seventh year and has been a success. In 2006, 94 percent of the students in the program had been accepted to college; 55 percent to the University of Cincinnati.

Council Publishes First-Ever *Good News* Publication

America's urban public schools face numerous challenges in educating some of the nation's most diverse and neediest children in the inner cities. Yet, despite heavy media scrutiny, progress is being made, but often goes unnoticed.

That's why the Council of the Great City Schools recently unveiled a new publication that aims to create an image of urban education that reflects the hard-won successes of the nation's big-city schools.



Good News About Urban Public Schools focuses on the accomplishments of urban schools in academic achievement, teaching, innovation, as well as leadership and accountability. The booklet also highlights

the nation's leaders who can trace their success to urban schools.

"Urban schools are often seen only through the lens of their challenges, and not for what they accomplish *in spite* of these challenges," stresses Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

"Countless success stories are written each day in our urban schools by visionary leaders, committed teachers, and hard-working students," says *Good News*, citing numerous examples within the more than 65-page booklet.

Not only do urban public schools "lead the pack locally, but many of them have risen to the top of the class nationally. We think that is a story worth telling," the publication emphasizes.

Ramifications of High Court Ruling in Seattle, Louisville Cases Focus of National Town Hall Meeting



Metropolitan Nashville Schools Director Pedro Garcia, Jefferson County Schools (Louisville) Superintendent Sheldon Berman and Seattle Schools Chief Academic Officer Carla Santorno share their views at the Council Town Hall Meeting.

NASHVILLE—In June, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down student assignment plans in Louisville, Ky., and Seattle designed to promote racial diversity in their public schools. But despite the ruling, Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville will continue to create integrated schools.

“We have a deep commitment in the district to diversity,” said Jefferson County Public Schools Superintendent Sheldon Berman. “We will do our best to maintain a diverse community; that’s our prime commitment.”

Berman made these remarks at the recent 90-minute town hall meeting on the “Ramifications of the Supreme Court Decision in Louisville and Seattle Cases.” Moderated by Patricia Williams, a professor of law at Columbia University, the town meeting was held in conjunction with the Council of the Great City Schools’ 51st Annual Fall Conference.

In addition to Berman, the panel also featured Carla Santorno, the chief academic officer for Seattle Public Schools; Pedro Garcia, the director of Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools; David Smith, board president of the Kansas City Missouri School District; and Carlos Garcia, the superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District.

Williams asked the panelists to explain

how their respective districts have been impacted by the U.S. Supreme Court decision.

Santorno said that Seattle Public Schools is racially divided due to housing patterns, with the southern part of the city predominantly minority and the northern part of the city predominantly white and wealthier. The district developed an open choice plan in which children could attend any school in the

district, but is currently developing a new student assignment plan that will “raise the value of all schools,” said Santorno.

According to Smith, Kansas City is no stranger to court-ordered desegregation, having endured a court ruling in 1989 that led the district to lose between 55,000 and 93,000 students, 90 percent of them white.

“Having come from the desegregation experience, we were left without anything to integrate,” said Smith. As a result, the 26,980-student school system has returned to neighborhood-based schools. District officials are trying to produce top quality schools and provide the resources and commitment to every one of our schools and students, said Smith.

Superintendent Garcia said that although San Francisco is the top-performing large urban school district in California, the achievement gap is wide, with Latino and African Americans not improving academically at the same rate as whites and Asians.

He said that in San Francisco 60 percent of schools are segregated and he recently appointed a person to serve as deputy superintendent for instruction, innovation and social justice. “We also created a task force to talk about race,” said Garcia.

Also discussed during the town hall meeting was whether districts can create

diversity by utilizing magnet schools.

Nashville’s Garcia believes that magnet schools were created to attract and keep the middle class and his school system needs to create more choices for parents. “We haven’t done well with low socioeconomic parents to find out about choice,” said Garcia.

He also admitted that because his district does not provide transportation to magnet schools, attending these schools for some lower income students is not an option and limits the number of students who can take advantage of magnet programs.

Seattle’s Santorno said that it is important that districts create equitable access for magnet schools and noted that school administrators do not want to create a situation in which students are not able to get into magnet programs in schools located in their own neighborhoods.

In the wake of the court ruling, Williams asked the panelists how they were going to create diversity in their districts.

Berman said the Jefferson County school system is trying to figure “how can we use the strategies Justice [Anthony] Kennedy gave us to build an integrated system.”

He said that school officials are looking at taking into consideration a student’s economic status and that whatever student assignment plan they devise will produce a better quality system and be used as a vehicle for student improvement.

“The court took away one tool,” said Berman. “We have to maximize the others.”

According to Garcia, some schools in San Francisco have huge waiting lists because of their high academic achievement and the district is looking at duplicating these schools. The school system is also looking at changing attendance zones and using economic factors to assign students to schools because Garcia believes the real segregation of America is economic.

“But I remind people the Supreme Court has been wrong before,” said Garcia. “At one time, they said women couldn’t vote.”

Students Get Lesson from Unlikely Teachers: Supreme Court Justices

In what could be considered an opportunity of a lifetime, 87 students and 40 educators from 34 states and Puerto Rico recently converged in the nation's capital to meet justices of the U.S. Supreme Court in a project designed to expand understanding of the nation's democratic institutions.

Students had the opportunity to discuss and debate issues with Justices Anthony Kennedy, Stephen Breyer, Antonin Scalia and former Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

Tracy Johnson, a student at Martin Luther King Jr. High School in Cleveland, asked a question pertaining to the rights of citizens in the time of war, "If circumstances similar to those during the Japanese internment era were present today, would it be ruled constitutional to intern some group of citizens?"

Justice Breyer responded that it would be difficult to make that case. "In America and most other countries, the law does apply in time of war. You have to decide what will be the right thing to do," he said.

"That's why we have an independent judiciary," former Justice O'Connor chimed in. "That's what we need to hope for always."

The Cleveland senior, who is president of his National Honor Society chapter and aspires to be a lawyer and Supreme Court justice, was among top juniors and seniors from several major city school districts who met justices Nov. 5 and 6 for a firsthand lesson and dialogue with the nation's leading authorities of the Constitution.

The Council of the Great City Schools arranged for their visit to the marble corridors of the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C., through the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, coordinator of the Constitution Project.

The best of the best big-city students were chosen for the project from the Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Cleveland, Christina (Delaware), Detroit,



Students at Supreme Court. (Photo by John Vettese)

Minneapolis, Newark and Richmond, Va., school districts.

"We were very excited that the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court would see the high caliber of students that our city schools are graduating," stressed Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

When students met Justice Kennedy, they had a list of 20 questions for him, based on an 1886 case that raised equal protection issues. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, warned the students that the justice may turn the tables on them.

Sure enough, Justice Kennedy began asking the students questions – for 90 minutes. He engaged the students in their thoughts about the importance of due process and equal protection, making for a lively discussion.

"I loved it," declared Moriah Smith, an 11th-grade honors student at Boston Latin School. "It was very unpredictable but exciting."

"I wish it could have been longer," said Sarah "Torrie" Dominguez of East Mecklenburg High School in Charlotte, N.C. The International Baccalaureate student

Jacksonville, Rochester Name New Leaders

Veteran educator Ed Pratt-Dannals was recently named the superintendent of Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Fla. He succeeds Joseph Wise, who served at the helm of the 124,945-school system for two years.

Pratt-Dannals, the district's deputy superintendent, began his career with the Duval County school system 31 years ago as a high school mathematics teacher.

New York's Rochester City School District also chose a new leader, Jean-Claude Brizard, to serve as superintendent of its 34,000-student school system.

Brizard was senior executive for policy and sustainability in the New York City public school system, where he was responsible for increasing student achievement, overseeing budget and accountability issues and initiating policy.

Guilford Co. Leader Wins Top State Honor

Superintendent Terry Grier of the Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, N.C., has been named the 2008 North Carolina Superintendent of the Year by the North Carolina Association of School Administrators.

He will receive \$5,000 from TE21, Inc. and compete for the National Superintendent of the Year honor, which will be announced by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) at its national conference in February.

Grier has led North Carolina's third largest school district for some eight years, and has achieved a list of accomplishments during his tenure, including the launch of *Mission Possible*, an innovative incentive program designed to attract, retain and reward both teachers and administrators who achieve results in select schools.

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Pictorial of 51st Annual Fall Conference



Council Chair Carol Comeau presents Executive Director Michael Casserly with an award for his 30 years of service with the Council as the organization's treasurer, Carol Johnson, and chair-elect, William Isler, applaud.



Florida's Orange County Schools (Orlando) Superintendent Ronald Blocker, left, facilitates a session on engaging urban high school students with North Carolina's Guilford County Schools (Greensboro) Superintendent Terry Grier serving as one of the presenters.

Photos by Clarence Tabb Jr.



Kansas City Superintendent Anthony Amato shares strategies at a session.



Detroit Superintendent Connie Calloway facilitates a session on developing assessment systems in urban schools.



Fresno board member Manny Nunez focuses on conference session.



Florida's Broward County Schools (Fort Lauderdale) Superintendent James Notter and board member Robert Parks give their undivided attention at a conference session.



Indianapolis Schools Superintendent Eugene White and board member Marianna Zaphiriou attend a conference session together.



Providence School Board President Mary McClure and Providence Schools Superintendent Donnie Evans listen intently during a conference session.



Nashville Schools Director Pedro Garcia welcomes conferees to the Council's conference hosted by his district.



East Baton Rouge Schools Superintendent Charlotte Placide facilitates a session on developing urban school district leaders.



Long Beach Schools Superintendent Christopher Steinhauser shares his views at a session.



The 2007 recipients of Texas Instruments Marcia Page Scholarship, Candice Wilson, left, and Parhys Napier, third from left, are congratulated by scholarship namesake Marcia Page and Texas Instruments' Clara Tolbert.

Government by Veto

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

A year after the 2006 elections shifted the majority control of Congress, President Bush has dusted off his rarely-used “veto pen” to exercise presidential budget and policy prerogatives on a number of pieces of domestic legislation. In only one instance, the Water Resources Development Act supporting hundreds of flood control, navigation, water distribution, and coastal restoration projects, has the 110th Congress overridden the veto by the required two-thirds margin.

The initial veto in this session of Congress occurred in early May on the war-spending supplemental appropriations bill that included a timetable for troop withdrawal from Iraq. The three subsequent presidential vetoes have been on domestic policy bills – the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) reauthorization; the FY2008 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill; and the Water Resources legislation. In each case, the justification for the veto was based primarily on the bills exceeding the President’s proposed budget levels. Congress failed to override the vetoes of the Children’s Health Insurance bill and the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.



Now, funding for key programs such as Medicaid, CHIP, and all federal education programs are in limbo. After two consecutive years of federal education funding cuts and freezes for many of the Great City Schools, the anticipated funding increases for the upcoming year contained in the FY2008 appropriations and CHIP bills represent a welcome change.

But, as this article goes to press, the education and health communities await some resolution to this stand-off between President Bush and Congress. Though the final resolution of the stalemate remains uncertain, one can expect that the federal investment in education will be better than it has been, but still will fail to make “adequate yearly progress.”

The reauthorization of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), in the meantime, remains far behind schedule with little consensus on many key issues. The congressional committees continue to work on the reauthorization, but the specter of two or more years under current law is becoming a real possibility.

Omaha Student Earns Perfect SAT and ACT Scores



Sarah Ferguson

It’s not easy to earn a perfect score on the SAT college entrance exam. But not only did Omaha student Sarah Ferguson achieve that feat, she also scored a perfect score on the ACT test.

Ferguson, a senior at Omaha’s Central High School, scored a perfect 2400 on the SAT as well as a perfect 36 composite score on the ACT.

“I really like to do well,” said Ferguson in an interview with television news station WOWT. “It bugs me when I get scores back and they’re not as good as I know I should be doing.”

Her academic success can also be attributed to a strong work ethic. “You can’t just sit back and think it will come to you, you have to actually try,” said Ferguson.

The graduating senior is active in the academic decathlon and is a member of the National Honor Society, the golf team and the DECA marketing club.

Ferguson enjoys math and science and would like to pursue a career in medical re-

search. She has not chosen a college yet, but is considering several Ivy League schools.

“We are extremely proud of Sarah and know that the academic foundation she has received as a student in the Omaha Public Schools will provide her with the essential skills necessary for success as she pursues her dreams after high school,” said Omaha Schools Superintendent John Mackiel.

Ferguson was among 497 students nationwide who received perfect ACT scores. And of the nearly 1.5 million seniors graduating in 2007 who took the SAT, she was one of only 269 who scored a 2400.

Voters Ok Bond Issues in Houston, Charlotte, Ft. Worth and Okla. City; Levy Fails in Cincinnati

Voters in Houston approved school-construction bond issues in 1998 and 2002 that enabled the Houston Independent School District to spend approximately \$1.5 billion to build 42 new schools and renovate more than 100 others.

The district continued its winning streak with the recent passage of an \$805-million bond issue that will fund the construction of 24 new schools and renovations to 134 schools. In addition, schools will receive \$90 million in safety and security upgrades, including camera systems, fences, lighting and public address systems, as well as \$29.2 million for new science labs in middle and high schools.

In a news release, Houston Schools Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra said the district was grateful for the strong support of the voters of Houston and said the community will play an important role in the planning and designing of the district's new and renovated schools.

Houston was not the only school district in Texas to have success at the polls recently. Citizens in Fort Worth passed a \$593.6 million bond proposal that will result in six new schools, additions to eight existing schools and technology upgrades to all schools in the Fort Worth Independent School District.

"We are extremely grateful for the confidence the voters have expressed in this improvement program," said Fort Worth Schools Superintendent Melody Johnson in a press release.

Charlotte Voters Pass Bond

A \$516 million school-bond referendum was overwhelmingly approved for North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools to provide funds for 40 new proj-

ects, including 12 new schools. Funds from the bond will also add 704 classrooms and relieve overcrowding at 25 schools.

The bond was the largest school construction measure ever approved by voters for the 135,000-student school district.

Charlotte Schools Superintendent Peter Gorman said by passing the bond citizens put students' interest first. "...Our children deserve a setting where they're not eating lunch before 10 a.m. because the cafeteria can't handle the students' lunch needs in a couple of shifts," said Gorman in a press release. "Our children deserve a setting where there are more classrooms than mobiles, not the other way around."

Bond Approved in Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City Public Schools will receive \$212 million for capital improvements as a result of the recent passage of a \$248.3 million bond package by voters. The bond issue will pay for more than 50 new classrooms, technology improvements, upgrades to heating and cooling systems and 47 gymnasiums at elementary schools that currently do not have gymnasiums.

And voters in Washington State passed a resolution that will make it easier for school districts in the state, such as Seattle Public Schools, to pass school levies. Prior to the passage of the resolution, school districts had to get 60 percent of voters to approve property-tax levies.

Levy Fails in Cincinnati

While several big-city school districts received good news on Election Day, the Cincinnati Public Schools did not. A levy that would've generated \$65.3 million annually over five years for the school district failed. The district was going to use the money from the levy to support operational needs, including providing for classroom teachers and textbooks.

Awards continued from page 2



Lois Powell Mondesire

\$1,000 award is named in honor of the late vice president of urban programs for Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.

"Our school is a place where our students succeed because we refuse to let them fail," said Mondesire.

Urban Impact Award

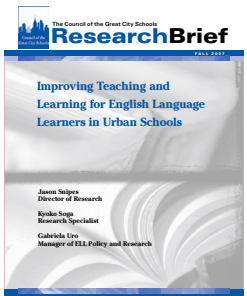
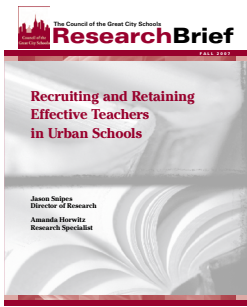


Urban Impact Award winners from the University of Memphis and Memphis City Schools.

The Council of the Great City Colleges of Education, an affiliate group of deans working with urban school leaders, presented its ninth annual Urban Impact Award to the University of Memphis and Memphis City Schools for their Memphis Literacy Academy program, which has led to increased reading and writing levels at the elementary school level for at-risk students.

The award honors an exemplary program between a university and urban school district that has had a positive and significant impact on teaching and learning, with each receiving \$1,000.

Council Launches Research Brief Series



Two of the most important issues facing urban educators are how to attract and retain effective teachers and how to improve the academic achievement of English Language learners (ELLs).

To help big-city school leaders address these challenges, the Council of the Great City Schools has written two research briefs, *Recruiting and Retaining Effective Teachers in Urban Schools* and *Improving Teaching and Learning for English Language Learners in Urban Schools*.

According to the research brief on teaching, teachers represent the single most important investment an urban school district can make in raising student achievement, and effective teachers have the potential to

reduce or even eliminate racial gaps in student achievement.

The brief offers several recommendations on how urban school districts can recruit and retain high quality teachers, including developing policies that combine better teacher pay with more effective teacher supports.

Educating English Language learners is a crucial challenge for the nation, particularly for big-city school systems where these students make up 30 percent of the school-age population.

The Council's ELL research brief identifies the fundamental challenges involved in bringing English Language learners to full academic proficiency and provides several recommendations for educating these students in urban school systems.

"The Council initiated the research briefs as part of its ongoing efforts to provide large urban districts with the best available information regarding how to address their most important challenges, improve teaching and learning, and reduce achievement gaps," said Jason Snipes, the Council's director of research.

The reports can be found on the Council's web site at www.cgcs.org.

Performance Pay *continued from page 3*

earn up to approximately 15 percent of their annual salaries in bonuses, based on how well their students improve academically.

"More money will end up in teachers' and principals' pockets," said Houston Board Member Dianne Johnson in a news release.

According to district officials, most of the \$24 million in performance bonus money this year is reserved for teachers. However, about \$1.3 million will be set aside for high-performing principals.

The ASPIRE Award program is being funded by the district with the help of a \$3.6 million grant by the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation.

Supreme Court *continued from page 7*

had a back-and-forth exchange with Justice Kennedy, and held her own.

The sessions over the two-day event were videotaped for distribution to schools nationwide for use on Constitution Day though the Sunnylands Seminar DVD series, underwritten by the Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands.



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