Football Coach, Military Veteran and Journalist Address Urban School Leaders

ALBUQUERQUE—Tony Dungy is the first African American coach to win a Super Bowl, a bestselling author and a football analyst for NBC. And he also volunteers with the Prison Crusade Ministry in Tampa, speaking to inmates about how to improve their lives. And working at the organization is where he found out that government officials decide how many prisons they are going to build based on the results of third-grade reading tests.

“If young men do not read at grade level in the third grade when they are 8 years old, they have a good chance of ending up in a prison cell at 18,” said Dungy to nearly 1,000 urban school superintendents, senior administrators, board members and deans of colleges of education assembled here for the Council of the Great City Schools’ 57th Annual Fall Conference.

“The success of our country is determined by how well we educate our young people.”

Race, Language, and Culture Focus Of Televised Town Hall Meeting

ALBUQUERQUE—“Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago.” This quote from President Barack Obama after a jury found the man who shot the Florida teen not guilty sparked conversations not only in the White House on the issue of race in America but also across the nation’s urban schools.

In conjunction with the Council of the Great City Schools’ 57th Annual Fall Conference, a lively and introspective national town hall meeting was held that focused on the topic of race in the country but also language and culture. The conversation in the round was moderated by Harvard Law Professor Charles Ogletree Jr., who addressed his questions to the audience, and was televised by New Mexico PBS.

In this very diverse audience, featuring educators from the nation’s largest urban school districts, “why are we talking about this issue of race?” asked Ogletree.

“The fact that we have an African American president who has been elected and reelected has brought the issue back to the surface,” said Felton Williams, school board member of California’s Long Beach Unified School District. “It’s opened up discussions about race again and that has been emphasized with the case of Trayvon Martin that race is back on the national agenda.”

“Is there room for not just race but cul-
Cleveland Board Chair Named Urban Educator of the Year

ALBUQUERQUE — Denise Link was appointed to Cleveland Metropolitan School District’s school board in 2007 and has chaired the school board since 2009. In this role, she has led the policy body’s efforts to transform the school district with academic and fiscal reform plans that have received strong mayoral support and funding from local foundations.

In recognition of her efforts, Link was recently presented with the Green-Garner Award, the nation’s highest honor for urban education leadership, at the Council of the Great City Schools’ 57th Annual Fall Conference.

Sponsored by the Council, ARAMARK Education and Voyager Learning/Sopris Learning, the award is named for Richard Green, the first African American chancellor of the New York City school system, and Edward Garner, a businessman and former school board president of the Denver Public Schools.

Upon accepting her award, Link addressed the crowd of urban educators amid cheers from her district colleagues.

“I am humbled and honored to receive this award and I think as you can see it’s not just me receiving this award, it’s all of Cleveland,” said Link. “We all work so hard for the schoolchildren of Cleveland, and in the past year we have done so many things, such as pass a tax levy, but there is still so much more to do.”

Two other awards were also presented at the Council’s fall conference.

Queen Smith Award

Eric Hines, director of equity and inclusion for Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, N.C., was the recipient of the Queen Smith Award for Urban Education.
Three Superintendents Recognized

Alberto Carvalho, superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, was recently named Florida’s Superintendent of the Year by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents. Carvalho has served as superintendent for five years and under his leadership, the district won the 2012 Broad Prize for Education and dropout rates have decreased while graduation rates have risen.

Another Florida superintendent was also recently honored. Superintendent Barbara Jenkins of the Orange County Public Schools in Orlando received recognition from the Florida Department of Education, which named her 2013 District Data Leader of the Year.

The award recognizes school superintendents in the Sunshine State who are using data to improve student achievement, and communicating the relevance of using data in innovative ways.

Another urban-school district superintendent recently won honors as well. Minneapolis Public Schools Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson received the 2013 Profiles in Courage Award from the Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers for her “courageous leadership in eliminating the achievement gap for minority students in Minneapolis.”

Implementation of New Standards Focus Of New Council Publications

The Council of the Great City Schools recently published a report on the progress of implementing the Common Core State Standards and a guide on how to communicate the academic standards in the nation’s major cities.

In a survey of big-city school districts, results indicate that they are making substantial headway in implementing the Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted in 45 states and the District of Columbia.

The findings of the survey – Implementing the Common Core State Standards: Year Two Progress Report from the Great City Schools – “suggest that the nation’s urban school districts are taking implementation seriously and have devoted significant time and energy to imbed these new expectations into all classrooms for the benefit of all students.”

Public awareness and engagement play a key role in the success of implementing the Common Core. To help urban-school leaders educate families, staff and the public about the sea change in teaching and learning, the Council produced a booklet titled Communicating the Common Core State Standards – A Resource for Superintendents, School Board Members and Public Relations Executives.

Other New Reports

While encouraging awareness and support of the Common Core, the Council continues to monitor the progress of student achievement on state-mandated tests. It has published the 12th edition of Beating the Odds – Analysis of Student Performance on State Assessments, a report aimed at giving the nation an in-depth view at how urban schools are progressing toward the academic goals and standards set by their respective states.

On the business side of the house, the Council has published an update on the progress of its Performance Management and Benchmarking Project, an initiative launched in 2002 to develop performance measures that could be used to improve business operations in urban public school systems.

The report – Managing for Results in America’s Great City Schools 2013 – presents performance indicators in a range of school operations, such as business services, finances, human resources and technology.

The Council has also extended its research on black male achievement. It conducted a survey to capture student perspectives on educational issues, and to find out their views on strategies that would be most helpful in improving their academic success.

It tapped the views of students in Virginia’s Richmond Public Schools, published in a report titled A Call for Change: High School Students’ Perspectives on Educational Issues: Survey Results from Richmond Public Schools, 2011-12 School Year.

All of these new publications can be accessed on the Council’s web site at www.cgcs.org.
He said the lesson for educators is to look at what is creating the circumstances that are holding our children back,” said West. “It’s about what their expectations are for children of color. “The data doesn’t lie,” said Silva. “We have an achievement gap and it’s not about poverty, it’s about race.”

### Valuing Public Schools

Winston Brooks, the superintendent of New Mexico’s Albuquerque Public Schools, admits that while his school system has narrowed the achievement gap between students of different ethnicities, it’s not at the rate it needs to be. But he praised public schools as one way to alleviate racism. “I think the way kids best get exposed to race and gather a better understanding of race is by going to public schools,” said Brooks.

Educators also heard from students and former students from Albuquerque Public Schools who were given the opportunity to share their views. Senior Alexis Gough explained that as someone who comes from a middle class African American family, she believes it’s very important for all races of people to attend public schools because “it not only provides people with a quality education, but an education on how to deal with a mixed community of people.”

Michelle Walker, chief executive officer of St. Paul Public Schools, noted that while she greatly benefited from attending New York City public schools, she says she is fearful of the experience her one-year-old African American son may have when he walks into a school building that may not be ready to receive him.

“Go into any public school across the country and if you are a black male, what you experience daily is not the experience of your average white middle class child,” said Walker. “What does that say about me as a public school educator if I don’t feel confident to put my own son in public school?”

Eileen Cooper Reed, a school board member with Cincinnati Public Schools, says that students of color can receive a good quality education at a public school and it’s a myth that they cannot.

The issue of colorblindness was discussed in regards to how oftentimes many young people say they are blind to a person’s skin color, a contrast to the view of older generations.

“I have a lot of problems with the notion of colorblindness,” said Ogletree. “It seems that people have to be color conscious to see the differences and appreciate that we are a multiethnic and multicultural generation of people.”

He recalled how U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, who lived in the era of segregation, believed not in the melting pot theory where one must lose their cultural identity to assimilate, but instead was a proponent of the salad bowl theory, in which people of different cultures are integrated into the same society.

“We have to start thinking we are a salad bowl generation,” said Ogletree. “That we are a part of the United States and everyone is part of this massive community.”

Angie Estonina, an administrator with the San Francisco Unified School District, said that the nation needs to raise the status of language. “We are a country that doesn’t value multilingualism,” said Estonina. “We
shouldn’t have to struggle to get language materials that represent the students in our schools.”

Frank Conversations

Ogletree asked the audience to address the question of how school systems can create an environment where people can have these very frank conversations.

Oregon’s Portland Public Schools Superintendent Carole Smith said her school district has engaged in courageous conversations about race over the last five years and has adopted a racial educational equity policy with the district doing business differently than in the past, such as allocating resources and hiring differently. “We are still a work in process but we are engaging the entire organization,” said Smith. “How do you change an institution that has learned behaviors that are so entrenched over time? It has to start at the top.”

Michael O’Neill, chairperson of the Boston school committee, noted that the two complaints he hears from students of color the most is the lack of teachers who look like them and that the curriculum is not more culturally representative.

According to Ogletree, if students say the teachers or counselors don’t look like them, that’s a cry for change.

“Think about how to create what young people want; this diverse world,” Ogletree told urban educators. “...I hope we can come back five years and say look what we have done, we’ve transformed our system one step at a time, one individual at a time, one district at a time, one teacher at a time and one child at a time.”

Council Chair Delivers Enlightening Address

ALBUQUERQUE—In a moment of self-revelation, Valeria Silva, chair of the Council of the Great City Schools’ Board of Directors, conceded she enjoyed privilege, as part of the majority, as a lighter brown Latina during her youth in South America’s Chile. Upon her arrival in America in “the very white world of Minnesota,” according to Silva, she lost that privilege and for the very first time in her life understood that race matters.

As she continued her address to her fellow urban educators at the Council’s Fall Conference, she confessed that “on a daily basis, and in countless ways, I quickly learned my place in my new homeland.”

Silva believes her story of lowered expectations for people of color is a common one, which is why in Minnesota’s St. Paul Public Schools where she serves as the superintendent, administrators, teachers and students are having serious conversations about how race matters in education.

“I believe that it is my moral imperative,” Silva said emphatically, “and my professional responsibility to interrupt the forces of systemic racism in education. This means I will leverage my integrity as a human being, and my authority as a superintendent, to act in partnership to meet the needs of our most underserved students: Black males.”

To illustrate her district’s strategic approach to breaking down racial barriers in education, Silva presented a video to conferees detailing the journey taken by teachers and administrators in tackling conversations about race.

According to Silva, the journey toward racial equity began by digging into the educational data of all students to uncover the institutionalized racism veiled as poverty, language barriers, mobility and lack of parental involvement.

Silva noted that the state of Minnesota has the lowest performing scores for African American students in the country and the second highest for white students, while the data for St. Paul Public Schools mirrors the state. “We, as a system, have failed to successfully educate students of color — especially our black males,” said Silva.

She noted that after three years of leading courageous conversations about race in her district, educators are talking about race out loud.

The district has developed a racial equity policy in which all staff share the same mission of creating respectful learning environments where language and culture is an indicator of success, not a predictor of academic failure. And each school has an equity team that addresses issues at the school level.

She acknowledged that the quest for racial equity has not been easy, but it has been intentional.

Silva urged attendees to challenge their deepest personal beliefs about race and academic expectations. She is a proponent of acculturation for students of color and believes this can be achieved through culturally responsive lesson plans where students see themselves in the curriculum.

“They need to see their images, perspectives and experiences in the lessons,” Silva said, “and know that they can bring their authentic selves to the classroom each day.”

At the end of her address, she asked conferees to do three things when they go back to their districts.

“Be courageous, look at data and start the conversation about race,” Silva said.
Dungy recalled that the person who had the biggest practical influence on him was his assistant junior high principal. He said the principal sat down with him and his friends at the lunch table every day because he wanted to be their friend.

Yet Dungy didn’t realize the impact of this friendship until four years later when he was a senior in high school and got in a dispute with his football coach and quit the team. The assistant principal he had befriended called him and asked Dungy why he would let someone take something from him that he enjoyed. After that conversation, Dungy decided to rejoin the football team.

“That conversation would’ve never happened if he hadn’t sat at the lunch table that first day,” said Dungy. “He went above and beyond his job description.”

Dungy also praised another educator: Eugene White, the former superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools, who served with Dungy on a host committee that was bidding for the 2012 Super Bowl to be played in Indianapolis.

Indianapolis was one of the smaller cities in the competition, but during a presentation White explained how a field used during the Super Bowl would be donated to the school district, as well as an after-school center.

“We got Super Bowl 46 because of his passion for his kids,” said Dungy, “that allowed us to overcome the lure of money.”

After winning the Super Bowl, Dungy joined President Bush’s Council on Service and Civic Participation where he learned that one million kids drop out of high school every year and that those who drop out earned $9,200 less than a high school graduate.

“I would tell young people if you drop out you are handing me a half million dollars,” said Dungy. “And you’d be surprised how the light would come on for them.”

The former head coach of two NFL teams is often asked about the differences between coaching now compared to when he started 31 years ago. “The same issues and same answers are there,” said Dungy.

Football Coach continued from page 1

Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch

“Motivating kids is about incentive and opportunity.”

Dungy recalled that both of his parents were teachers and that their job was to help every child they taught earn an “A.” And as a coach, his philosophy was to help every player be the best he can be, and he urged educators to do the same.

“Whatever that student needs, you have to provide, and it starts with building that relationship,” Dungy said. “Keep encouraging kids and giving them the motivation and incentive.”

Overcoming the Odds

Also addressing the conference was military veteran, motivational speaker and leadership expert Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch, who gave a heartfelt address on how she was born in Laredo, Texas, and overcame poverty and discrimination.

She recalled how teachers would hit the back of her hand with a ruler when she spoke Spanish, her first language. But the biggest battle she faced was, as a 6-year-old, a teacher told her to change her name from Consuelo to Connie.

When she refused, she was sent to the principal’s office, who asked her what was wrong with changing her name to Connie, especially because it had less letters than Consuelo.

“My mother’s name is Consuelo, don’t take my name,” she pleaded with the principal. “All I have is my family.”

The principal understood and didn’t make her change her name. But Castillo Kickbusch believes that too many people think that in order for immigrants to assimilate into society they must leave their culture behind and speak only English.

“I’ve been around the world and children in Belgium give me directions in four languages,” said Castillo Kickbusch.

She recalled that many of the teachers she had were indifferent to her and her fellow Hispanic students as well as their parents. When she entered high school, she was poorly prepared until a white teacher from South Boston called Mr. Cooper taught at her high school and told the students they were brilliant.

“Mr. Cooper believed I wasn’t stupid,” said Castillo Kickbusch. “He taught me to read and showed me a library and the librarian taught me to discover a world of knowledge.”

She eventually tested above average and Mr. Cooper convinced her to attend college even though she had to leave behind everything she had known: her parents, her barrio and her culture.

While a student at Hardin Simmons University, a sergeant approached her about joining the university’s ROTC. “I thought of Mr. Cooper who said you can be anything and bring all those skills you learned in the barrio and remind others of their ignorance,” said Castillo Kickbusch. “He told me to use your life with a purpose.”

She became the only female with 400 male cadets, and eventually joined the U.S. Army as an officer, where she became the highest-ranking Hispanic woman in the Combat Support Field of the Army.


So after a 22-year career in the military, she retired and returned to Texas where she became a community leader and mentor.

Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch is also the founder of Educational Achievement Services, Inc., a company that works to prepare tomorrow’s leaders. As founder of the company, she meets with students, teachers, superintendents and school board members and listens to their concerns.

Football Coach continued on page 7
A

And one thing the leadership expert strongly believes is that all children have the potential to learn and that public education can do it best.

“The day we stop believing public ed-

The Harvard professor is an enthu-

He also said that there is a sense that pro-

He also said that there is a sense that pro-

who can compete and who has a real shot in this country,” said Gergen.

And while the former presidential ad-

He told conferees that there are good things occurring in education and the di-

He believes that another sign of opti-

Sacramento Names Interim Leader

When Superintendent Jonathan Ray-

He observed that the younger genera-

Teaching at Harvard University, he has also noticed that the younger generation wants to not only live in urban areas but wants to change America.

“With the younger generation, there is a level of idealism about the country,” said Gergen. “They are looking for something to believe in that’s bigger than them and want to work in the trenches and change American lives.”

As an example, he cited Teach for America, which represents an organization he believes has tapped into the idealism of young Americans who are well educated and aim to make a difference in the world.

“This generation is the answer to a lot of things,” said Gergen.

David Gergen
Twitter Allows School District to ‘Lighten Up’ In Communicating with Students

School districts across the country deal with it every year: the threat of inclement weather leads to a flood of phone calls asking, “Are we having school tomorrow?”

This year, North Carolina’s Guilford County Schools (GCS) in Greensboro turned to social media to manage school delay or cancellation questions – with some significant and entertaining results.

“We’ve been announcing delays and cancellations on Facebook and Twitter for a while, but this year, we wanted to focus on increasing our social media presence,” said Cynthia Robbins Shah-Khan, the district’s director of communications. “We put the word out that we’d share any updates on social media before using our traditional communications channels, and we got a huge response.”

The experiment started with one Tweet directed at students: “Do your homework! No update on #GCS schools yet—.” Followers immediately responded, posting Tweets like, “YOU GUYS HAVE TO PULL THROUGH I NEED MORE TIME TO STUDY FOR A TEST,” and “I’m holding my homework hostage until you declare that there is no school tomorrow.”

Students showed their creativity, posting photos of ten-foot snowdrifts allegedly outside their homes (not true) and asking for schools to close for “safety” reasons. The GCS Twitter account engaged followers, retweeting entertaining posts and responding to others:

@MADDIEE_LEIGH dear @GCSchoolsNC, we would all appreciate a “school is cancelled” tweet, like any minute now. Sincerely, every student in Guilford County

@GCSchoolsNC: @_Maddieee_Leigh Dear students, we appreciate you spending so much time studying Twitter--we’ll let you know! Sincerely, GCS

“When I was younger, I remember being glued to the radio in the morning, just waiting and hoping to hear our school district mentioned,” said Shah-Khan. “Now, students and families can find out this critical information immediately, and can interact with the district and other followers in real time.”

Within just a few hours, GCS’ Twitter followers grew by more than 50 percent, with thousands of people joining the conversation, retweeting and marking favorites. The @GCSchoolsNC account even trended for a while, which means it was one of the most-popular accounts in the area, Shah-Khan pointed out.

The local Fox and CBS television stations did stories on the creative and funny ways students turned to technology to try to convince the district to cancel school.

“Sometimes you just have to lighten up and take a break from those more-formal communication channels, language and tone we are used to,” Shah-Khan stressed. “We had fun interacting with the kids, and it paid off with a successful boost in followers and a new way to reach our students on their terms.”

So, did the North Carolina school district close schools? It decided on a two-hour delay – announced on Twitter.
South Carolina’s Charleston County School District Superintendent Nancy McGinley recently reported progress in the district’s efforts to close the achievement gap, especially for African American students and students eligible for free and reduced price meals.

During the last five years, the graduation rate increased for all students in the school district, with the percentage of African American students rising by 9.3 percent—more than double the 4.1 percent increase for white students.

Based on the 2013 state report card, the graduation rate gap between African American and Caucasian students shrunk to 11.9 percent from 17.6 percent in 2009. The graduation rate also improved for economically disadvantaged students.

“What pleases me the most is that while the Board sets high goals, our teachers and principals are up for the challenge,” Superintendent McGinley says in a press statement after the district’s Board of Trustees voted to accept her evaluation.

McGinley is in her seventh year as superintendent of South Carolina’s second largest school district.

Broward District Aims to Close Schoolhouse-to-Jailhouse Pipeline

In an effort to counter “zero tolerance” discipline measures, Florida’s Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale recently joined forces with local community organizations to approve a new collaborative agreement on school discipline.

The overhaul in disciplinary action comes two years after officials reviewed the number of suspensions, arrests and expulsions, which were mostly for non-violent offenses. Results indicated the district had the highest arrest rate in the state of Florida with minority students—particularly black males—disproportionally affected.

The agreement the district signed with organizations such as the NAACP, local law enforcement and government agencies establishes guidelines and processes for handling non-violent offenses on school campuses to eliminate the schoolhouse to jailhouse pipeline. Guidelines are provided for school personnel when it is necessary to involve law enforcement and when non-violent offenses can be handled through school resources and programs, such as the new PROMISE (preventing recidivism through opportunities, mentoring, interventions, support and education) program.

Under the PROMISE program, incidents such as theft, trespassing, drug and alcohol possession will no longer result in arrests. Instead, students will be referred to an alternative education center where they will receive specific counseling to address their misbehavior. Classes are focused on modifying behavior and conflict resolution.

According to district officials, the re-evaluation of district disciplinary policies has shown immediate results. School-based arrests have dropped by 41 percent, and suspensions, which in 2011 included 87,000 out of 258,000 students, are down 66 percent from the same period in 2012, according to the New York Times.

“We need to take a common sense approach to school discipline,” said Broward Schools Superintendent Robert Runcie, in a press release. “Far too many students are being arrested on our campuses for non-violent misdemeanor offenses. By embracing this collaborative agreement, we have the ability to positively impact students’ lives…”

Other big-city districts reforming their zero tolerance disciplinary policies include Wichita, Kan., Columbus, Ohio, and Birmingham, Ala.

People Magazine Recognizes Milwaukee Teachers

Brenda Martinez, Radarmes Galarza and Elissa Guarnero, teachers and founders of ALBA elementary in Milwaukee, were the first teaching team selected to receive People magazine’s teacher-of-the-year award.

The award was presented to six teachers...
Pictorial of 57th Annual Fall Conference

Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch, second from right, poses with the Council leadership, left to right, Chair-elect Eileen Cooper Reed, Chair Valeria Silva and Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Los Angeles Schools Superintendent John Deasy and District of Columbia Schools Chancellor Kaya Henderson present information at a session.

Chicago Schools Chief Executive Officer Barbara Byrd-Bennett participates in a session.

Milwaukee Schools Superintendent Gregory Thornton lets Minneapolis Schools Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson pick a raffle winner. Next year’s fall conference is in Milwaukee.

Photos by Clarence Tabb Jr.
Anchorage Teacher Wins Big on Jeopardy

Anchorage teacher Mary Beth Hammerstrom, a teacher in Anchorage, Alaska, was one of 15 educators nationwide who recently competed in the Jeopardy! Tournament of Teachers game show.

She placed second in the competition and won $50,000. “I like to think of it as winning the silver medal at the nerd Olympics,” said Hammerstrom in the Anchorage Daily News.

Hammerstrom’s trivia days aren’t over; Anchorage Teacher continued on page 12

Dallas Program Pairs High School Athletes With Elementary Pupils

Once a week, student-athletes at Texas’ North Dallas High School rise early to head to a neighboring elementary school to mentor third-through fifth-grade students. While there, the older students serve breakfast in the classrooms, tutor and chat about life with their young mentees. Then they head back to campus returning just in time for the first period bell.

The newly launched Neighborhood Bulldogs program is an effort to help students at North Dallas build lasting relationships with younger students at nearby Onesimo Hernandez Elementary. It also aims to teach student-athletes role model behavior and accountability to the younger students that look up to them.

“The Neighborhood Bulldogs program puts me in a position to help these kids when they may need extra help in school or just in life,” said Jeffrey Hall, a junior running back on the football team, who participates in the program.

North Dallas principal Dinnah Escanilla hopes that by high school students sharing their stories of trials and triumphs, elementary students will be encouraged to stay in school.

The high school athletes are in the process of extending the program to other elementary schools in the area.

Jakari McClendon, left, a fourth-grade student at Onesimo Hernandez Elementary School spends quality time with his mentor, Jeffrey Hall, a junior at North Dallas High School.

Jakari McClendon, left, a fourth-grade student at Onesimo Hernandez Elementary School spends quality time with his mentor, Jeffrey Hall, a junior at North Dallas High School.
she also received a *Jeopardy!* classroom computer system, so she and her students can play the game.

Hammerstrom teaches criminology and Alaska studies at Dimond High School.

**Super Bowl Coach Motivates Student Team**

As the first African American to lead a professional football team to a Super Bowl victory, former Indianapolis Colts coach Tony Dungy motivates a high school team in Albuquerque at a pep rally before addressing the Council of the Great City Schools. Dungy, an analyst on NBC-TV’s *Football Night in America*, visited the Albuquerque High School Bulldogs, and also represented Comcast’s Internet Essentials program to help low-income families connect their children to the Internet. Photo credit: Joseph Escobedo