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## Congresswoman, City School Leaders And College Dean At Town Hall Meeting

Riding the wave of an upward trend in academic achievement over the past few years, the nation's urban school systems still have a way to go to increase the number of students scoring at proficiency levels on standardized exams. How will gains be sustained?



Rep. Susan Davis

A better question might be: What dynamics are necessary to accelerate student progress?



Carol Johnson

These and other questions will be addressed at the Council of the Great City Schools' National Town Hall Meeting

on "The Future of Urban Education," scheduled Oct. 27 in San Diego as part of the Council's 50th Annual Fall Conference.

Discussing the outlook of the nation's big-city schools will be:

- Rep. Susan A. Davis (D-Calif.), a former San Diego school board member

Town Hall Meeting continued on page 4

## Council Files Supreme Court Brief Citing Achievement Gap Issue

"There's an achievement gap in America that's not good for the future of this country," stressed President Bush at a Washington, D.C., school recently, extolling *No Child Left Behind* and its focus on eliminating what he has often called "the soft bigotry of low expectations."

Yet, the Bush Administration now argues that race is not a "compelling governmental interest" and should be ignored by *de facto* segregated schools in their attempts to close the gaps that *No Child Left Behind* holds them accountable for erasing.

This inconsistency, says the Council of the Great City Schools in an *amicus* brief



that the organization filed on Oct. 10 in the U.S. Supreme Court, is irreconcilable and leaves public education defenseless against the inevitable re-segregation of schools resulting from segregated housing patterns. The brief supports the school diversity programs in Seattle and Jefferson County, KY., (Louisville) that were upheld by the lower courts.

The Supreme Court will hear oral arguments this fall to rule whether race can be a factor in assigning public school students to specific schools in promoting cultural diversity.

America's public school districts have a "compelling interest" in maintaining

**Supreme Court** continued on page 3

## Council Awarded \$2.5 Million to Launch Fellowship in Urban Education Research

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded the Council of the Great City Schools more than \$2.5 million to create a senior fellowship program in urban education research, aimed at building a bridge between seasoned researchers and urban school officials.

The project is intended to help urban school districts find solutions to problems through "a program of scientific inquiry focusing on what works to improve academic outcomes in urban school districts,"

says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

"Solutions to the problems facing large urban school districts are not always obvious, and the existing research base is not yet sufficient to address them," he explains.

The Council's Senior Fellowship in Urban Education Research project will offer \$100,000 awards to experienced researchers who have proven track records of high-quality work.

**Research Fellowship** continued on page 4

# Atlanta Principal Wins McGraw Prize



Grady High School Principal Vincent Murray (right) receives the 2006 Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education from Harold W. McGraw III at an awards dinner.

When Vincent Murray became the principal of Grady High School in Atlanta in 1991, more than a third of all freshman students were failing and had to repeat their freshman year, and the passing rate for Grady students on the Georgia graduation test was far below the statewide average.

Today, four of every five Grady High graduates go directly into colleges or

universities, including Ivy League institutions.

The improvement in academic achievement the school has made under the leadership of Murray is the reason the big-city principal was recently presented with the 2006 Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education. The award

honors outstanding individuals for their commitment to improving education in the nation and whose accomplishments are making a difference today.

Murray was one of three recipients of the award, which was established by the McGraw-Hill Companies in 1988 and is presented annually. Each of the winners receives a gift of \$25,000.

In a press release, Harold McGraw III, chairman, president and chief executive officer of The McGraw-Hill Companies, pointed out that Murray has “led the transformation of an inner-city public school into a higher achieving institution in which graduation and college-going rates have consistently risen above the district and state averages.”

**Dr. Murray has “led the transformation of an inner-city public school into a higher achieving institution...”**

—Harold McGraw III, McGraw-Hill Companies chairman

This year’s winners were selected by a panel of judges from the education community, including Tom Payzant, former superintendent of Boston Public Schools; Richard Wallace, a former superintendent of Pittsburgh Public Schools; and Gerry House, a former superintendent of Memphis City Schools.

Past winners of the McGraw Prize in Education include former U.S. education secretaries Richard Riley and Rod Paige.



**Executive Director**  
Michael Casserly

**Editor**  
Henry Duvall  
hduvall@cgcs.org

**Associate Editor**  
Tonya Harris  
tharris@cgcs.org

**Council officers**

**Chair**

George Thompson III  
Board Member, Nashville

**Chair-elect**

Carol Comeau  
Superintendent, Anchorage

**Secretary-Treasurer**

William Isler  
Board Member, Pittsburgh

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Council of the Great City Schools  
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Suite 702 • Washington, DC 20004  
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racially integrated schools, argues the Council, because further re-segregation of schools undermines the achievement of minority students and exacerbates racially identifiable achievement gaps—both areas of national priority and concern. The brief contains extensive social science research on the negative effects of racial isolation on minority student achievement and the disparate resources that follow.

“The Administration promotes *No Child Left Behind* as the centerpiece of its domestic agenda and a continuation of the *Brown* legacy,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly, referring to the Supreme Court’s landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision outlawing segregation in America’s schools. “It cannot now maintain that race is irrelevant in efforts to close the achievement gaps between white and minority students.”

The Council also argues that the use of race in Seattle and Jefferson County are “narrowly tailored” in pursuit of more equitable educational outcomes and the benefits of a multi-cultural setting. School districts should not be required to rely on inexact proxies for race, according to the Council’s brief, since race is the issue at hand and these race-neutral options do not offer workable alternatives or meet local community needs and priorities to avoid racial segregation.

Finally, the Council argues that the limited use of race to prevent racial isolation within school systems like Seattle and Jefferson County, which have exercised good faith to desegregate, should not be limited to *de jure* cases only. Otherwise, the good faith that is applauded—indeed, demanded—by the courts one day would be transformed into a constitutional violation the day after unitary status is declared.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors, the Public Education Network, the Magnet Schools of America and the San Francisco Unified School District joined the Council’s “friend of the court” brief, asserting that the mission of America’s schools is to overcome, not to reflect and perpetuate, the historical inequities of the nation.

## Rochester Chief to Head Boston Schools; St. Louis, Oakland Leaders No Longer Interim

Manuel Rivera has led New York’s Rochester City School District since 2003 and under his leadership, test scores have risen, the district’s financial management has been strengthened, and in April he was selected as the National Superintendent of the Year by the American Association of School Administrators.

Rivera’s accomplishments in Rochester are the reason he was recently selected to lead the 57,000-student school system in Boston.



Manuel Rivera

When Rivera takes the reins of Boston Public Schools next year, he will become the first Latino to head the district, succeeding Tom Payzant, who retired in June to become a senior lecturer at Harvard University.

In a news statement, the Superintendent Search Committee for the Boston school system said they were impressed with Rivera’s track record of setting high academic standards.

“During his tenure in Rochester, he has combined educational expertise with management skills to take that district to the next level, and we are confident that he will do the same here in Boston,” said Elizabeth Reilinger, chairperson of the Boston School Committee.

Rivera, who began his career as a teacher in Rochester in 1975, will retire from the school system on July 10, 2007.

“Rochester has been my home for more than 25 years and I will always have the greatest love and respect for the children and families of this city,” said Rivera in a press release announcing his retirement.

The Boston school system is currently being led by interim superintendent Michael Contompasis, the district’s former chief operating officer who has agreed to lead the district throughout this school year.

### Interim Leaders Become Permanent

St. Louis Public Schools didn’t go very far to select a superintendent: the district named its interim superintendent.

The St. Louis Board of Education recently dropped the interim title of Diana Bourisaw and made her the school system’s permanent leader.

“After viewing first-hand the abilities of Dr. Bourisaw, the board felt there was no need to look further for a new superintendent,” said board president Veronica O’Brien in a news statement. “We have the perfect leader right in front of us.”

Bourisaw was appointed as the district’s interim leader in July, succeeding Greg Williams, who recently resigned.

Bourisaw has served as a superintendent of a district in Missouri, and as an area superintendent in California’s Sacramento City Unified School District. Before joining St. Louis Public Schools, she served as the president of a consulting firm specializing in financial reviews of high poverty districts.

The interim school leader in California’s Oakland Unified School District will also become the district’s new leader.

Kimberly Statham, who has served as the interim state administrator for the district since August, was recently appointed to take the reins of the 40,000-student school district.

Statham, the district’s chief academic officer, is a veteran educator who has more than 25 years of experience as a teacher and administrator. She succeeds Randolph Ward, who left the district to take the reins of San Diego County schools.

“I am honored to have the opportunity to serve this community as state administrator,” said Statham in a press release. “I see this job as a continuation of the work I have always tried to do, and that we all do every day here in the Oakland schools.”



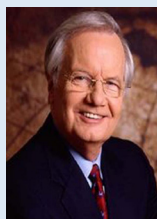
George Thompson



Deborah Shanley



Theresa Pena



Bill Moyers

### Town Hall Meeting *continued from page 1*

- Superintendent Carol Johnson of Memphis City Schools
- Nashville school board member George Thompson III, chair of the Council
- Dean Deborah Shanley of Brooklyn College School of Education

- Denver school board president Theresa Pena

Moderated by award-winning journalist and commentator Bill Moyers, the town hall meeting will likely focus on such issues as the reauthorization of the federal No Child Left Behind law, closing racial and ethnic student achievement gaps, and school desegregation among a host of other topics that may surface during the 90-minute forum.

### Research Fellowship *continued from page 1*

There will be three \$100,000 fellowships to be granted in three rounds of competition for each of the next three years, totaling nine awards over the five-year project period.

"We hope to use these fellowships as leverage to create partnerships between well-established, high quality researchers and the leadership in our districts," says Jason Snipes, the Council's director of research.

A Research Advisory Committee, composed of education scholars and urban school leaders, is being established to work with the Council and the U.S. Institute for Education Sciences to develop criteria for the awards and help with the selection of fellows.

Casserly believes that the fellowship project "is a necessary step in improving both the quality and relevance of research in urban education." The project seeks to:

- Create an ongoing collaboration between established researchers and urban school leaders;
- Produce studies that meet high standards for scientific research;
- Develop policy-relevant research for urban school districts;
- Contribute to ongoing discussion about research priorities in urban education; and
- Demonstrate how collaborations between scholars and urban school districts can generate reliable and useful results for both research and practice.

With nine fellows selected over the next three years, they will be charged with producing nine separate research reports that "will both meet high standards for scientific inquiry and will address key questions facing practitioners in urban school systems," stresses Casserly.

## Drum Roll, Please! One Superintendent Will Win Top Prize Among 11 Nominees

As the suspense builds, the envelope is opened, and the winner is....

No, this is not a drum roll to announce the winner of an Oscar. But to urban school leaders, it might as well be.

Announcement of this year's Richard R. Green Award, the nation's top prize for urban school leadership, will be made at an Oct. 26 awards banquet at the Council of the Great City Schools' 50th Annual Fall Conference in San Diego.

And the superintendent nominees are:

- Arlene Ackerman, formerly of San Francisco Unified School District
- Winston Brooks, Wichita Public Schools
- Carol Comeau, Anchorage Public Schools
- Rudolph Crew, Miami-Dade County Schools
- Pedro Garcia, Nashville Public Schools
- Terry Grier, Guilford County (N.C.) Schools
- Frances Haithcock, formerly of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- Beverly Hall, Atlanta Public Schools
- Arthur Johnson, Palm Beach County Schools
- Deborah Jewell-Sherman, Richmond (Va.) Public Schools
- Paul Vallas, School District of Philadelphia

THE WINNER IS....

The recipient receives the award from the Council and ARAMARK Education, which presents a \$10,000 scholarship for the awardee to give to a student.



Recently retired Boston Superintendent Tom Payzant celebrates with Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and Elizabeth Reilinger, chair of the Boston School Committee, after the school district is announced the winner of the 2006 Broad Prize.

## Boston School District Finally Wins Education's 'Nobel Prize'

Every year since 2002, the million-dollar Broad Prize for Urban Education has been awarded to urban school districts that demonstrated overall improvement and performance in student achievement, especially among poor and minority students.

In each of those years, Boston Public Schools has been a runner-up to the top prize – until now.

Last month, the Boston school system won the 2006 Broad Prize at a ceremony in New York City that featured two former U.S. secretaries of education, Rod Paige and Richard Riley.

“Through winning the Broad Prize, truly the Nobel Prize in education, Boston Public Schools has proven that all students can succeed, regardless of their race, background, or zip code,” said Paige in a statement.

As a finalist in the past four years, the Boston school system has won \$125,000 in scholarships each year for its students. Winning the top honor this year --

\$500,000 -- brings the district's five-year winnings to \$1 million.

“Indeed, the fifth time is the charm, and for that we're grateful,” said recently retired Boston schools superintendent Thomas Payzant in the *New York Times*.

Behind Boston, the other finalists this year – the school systems in Bridgeport, Conn., Jersey City, N.J., Miami-Dade County, Fla., and New York City – each won \$125,000 in student scholarships. This is the second year that New York City's school system has been in the running.

One hundred big-city school districts nationwide were eligible for the Broad Prize this year. The five finalists were selected by a board of prominent education leaders, including former secretaries Paige and Riley.

“...Boston Public Schools has consistently shown that stable leadership in the school district and the city, as well as data-driven teaching, leads to strong student performance,” said Eli Broad, founder of the Broad Foundation.

## Norfolk Awards \$10,000 To 50 'Broad Scholars'

Last year, Norfolk Public Schools was named the winner of the Broad Prize for Urban Education and received a \$500,000 prize to be used for student scholarships.

Those scholarships were recently presented to 50 graduating students from the Class of 2006. Each of the recipients, called 'Broad Scholars,' received a \$10,000 scholarship to the college of their choice.

The scholarship recipients are attending a variety of colleges across the nation, such as Hampton University and James Madison University in Virginia; The Institute of Culinary Education in New York City; the Art Institute of Philadelphia; and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

## Houston Addresses Need For Science Teachers

The Houston Independent School District partnered with Rice University recently to launch a laboratory for science teachers.

Created to address an urgent need for elementary teachers to be better trained in science, the lab will be housed at Sanchez Elementary School in Houston.

“It is critically important that we train our science teachers to be successful with children,” stressed Houston Schools Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra in a news release. “For our children to learn science well, we must teach it well.”

At the new elementary lab, about 90 teacher interns a year will spend one day a week in intensive training throughout the year, according to the district.

“Many elementary teachers shy away from teaching science because they themselves were never exposed to science discovery learning in school..., said Wallace Dominey, director of K-12 outreach for Rice University's Center for Education.

## Eight Council Districts Awarded AP Grants

The U.S. Department of Education recently awarded 33 grants totaling \$17 million to boost the number of economically disadvantaged students taking Advanced Placement courses and tests.

Eight urban school districts in the Council of the Great City Schools received grants in the federal Advanced Placement Incentive Program, which can be applied to teacher training, curriculum development, books and other activities that expand participation of students from low-income families in AP courses and tests.

The grants "...will provide more disadvantaged high school students the opportunity to take challenging courses so that they will enter college or the global marketplace ready to excel," said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings in a statement.

Council districts receiving the AP incentive grants, awarded to states, school systems and national education nonprofits in various dollar amounts, were:

**Birmingham**

**Charleston County, S.C.**

**Chicago**

**Guilford County, N.C. (Greensboro)**

**Memphis**

**Nashville**

**San Diego**

**St. Louis**

"This grant will help to ensure more children take and pass the very rigorous Advanced Placement classes," said Lendozia Edwards, an official with the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, in a press release.

She points out that the district wants to increase pre-AP and AP courses in core subjects, strengthen the rigor in middle school courses, and provide more training for Nashville teachers.

## NCLB Blue Ribbon Schools Named

The No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes schools that have made significant gains in student achievement and for helping close the achievement gap between students of different racial and economic backgrounds.

This year, 16 big-city schools achieved that distinction and were named 2006 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education. The schools were among 250 schools across the nation to be honored.

Big-city schools in Oakland, San Diego, Long Beach, Miami, Washington, D.C., Orlando, Louisville, St. Paul, Omaha, Austin, Richmond and Seattle were recognized for their accomplishments.

In addition, two schools in Milwaukee and two schools in the Los Angeles Unified District were chosen as Blue Ribbon Schools.

"This recent announcement reinforces that our schools are succeeding," said Los Angeles Schools Superintendent Roy Romer, "This is yet another major victory demonstrating that our focus on improv-

ing instruction not only raises test scores but the overall educational programs of our school."

Blue Ribbon schools are selected based on one of two criteria:

- Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that significantly improve student performance to high levels on state exams
- Schools whose students, regardless of background, achieve in the top 10 percent of their state on state tests

Schools are nominated for the award by their state's education commissioner and then must submit an application.

The 2006 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools will be honored at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., next month.

## Orlando School Wins U.S. Navy Recognition

The Navy Junior ROTC unit at Maynard Evans High Schools in Orlando, Fla., demonstrates its crisp military posture after earning two top U.S. Navy honors. The unit is one of 11 of the 619 NJROTC units nationwide to receive the Navy League's 2006 Most Improved Unit Award. And the Navy bestowed upon the NJROTC program at Evans High the Distinguished Unit award, one of the highest NJROTC unit honors.



## Council Testifies Before NCLB Panel

The Council of the Great City Schools recently took the opportunity to give its preliminary position on the reauthorization of the federal No Child Left Behind law, which Congress is scheduled to review next year.

Education leaders and the U.S. Department of Education testified at the final hearing of the Commission on No Child Left Behind, chaired by Tommy Thompson, a former U.S. secretary of Health and Human Services, and Roy Barnes, a former Georgia governor.

The commission is charged with analyzing NCLB and making bipartisan recommendations to improve the law.

"The Council of the Great City Schools suggests that the overall focus and framework of the law be retained in the next reauthorization, but that many of its provisions be redefined in a way that places greater emphasis on good instruction rather than regulatory compliance and sanctions," Council Executive Director Michael Casserly testified.

Casserly proposed changes in five "priority areas," suggesting consideration of:

- Developing and implementing national education standards in reading, math and the sciences;
- Redefining current sanctions in the law to promote instructional intervention to raise student achievement rather than imposing punishments for failure;
- Requiring states to tether their tests to new national standards;
- Permitting the use of academic growth to determine Adequate Yearly Progress; and
- Fully funding No Child Left Behind and its component programs.

The Council will be formulating formal recommendations in the months ahead, Casserly told the panel. "We do believe that these recommendations will help this groundbreaking legislation meet its original promise without creating negative side-effects," he stressed.

## New York School Is 'Best of the Best'

New York's City's Don Pedro Albizu Campos Elementary School has been named the winner of the 2006 Intel and Scholastic Schools of Distinction Award.

Sponsored annually by the Intel Corporation and Scholastic, the program recognized 16 elementary and secondary schools across the nation for implementing innovative programs that raise student achievement.

The New York school was named the "Best of the Best" winner in the elementary school category for encouraging parental involvement and for its use of local and national partnerships to increase academic performance.

The school has created a program called "Learning Leaders" to train parents to become classroom volunteers and provides after-school and evening classes for parents ranging from English language proficiency and technology literacy classes to a GED program.

Another urban school that received an award was the Passages Charter School in Chicago. The school was recognized for its achievements in professional development.

The 16 winning schools receive a \$10,000 grant and prizes, including curriculum materials and computer software. For being the top winner, the Don Pedro Albizu Campos Elementary School received an additional \$15,000 grant.

## Fort Worth Challenge Pays Off In Math and Science Initiative

Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District is teaming with business and community leaders to ensure that district students are excelling in mathematics and science.

The Math and Science Initiative is an effort by the school district to prepare students to compete globally for jobs that demand knowledge of mathematics and science.

A couple of months ago, Fort Worth Schools Superintendent Melody Johnson challenged the local business community to become involved in the program and her

challenge was accepted by 20 businesses and organizations, including IBM, Chase Bank, Lockheed Martin and the United States Army Corps Engineers.

Companies are offering to support the program in a number of ways, such as sponsoring family math nights and math competitions, underwriting the cost of math/science field investigations, providing engineering mentors to high schools and purchasing math or science learning tools for a class.

**Fort Worth** continued on page 8



Representatives of Don Pedro Albizu Campos Elementary School receive a \$15,000 grant

## Pittsburgh Task Force Launches Mission To Observe High-Performing High Schools

The Pittsburgh Public Schools launched a mission in mid-September to visit high-performing high schools in major cities throughout the nation.

A team from the district's High School Reform Task Force set out to observe programs that are proving successful in advancing academic performance to prepare students for post-secondary education and the workplace.

"Reform of our high schools will be this year's top priority," said Pittsburgh Schools Superintendent Mark Roosevelt in a news release. "We are eager to create more choices and rigorous programs for our students."

Pittsburgh's High School Reform Task Force consists of leaders from secondary and higher education, foundations and businesses, as well as workforce experts, parents and community members.

The school district aims to reinvent its high schools as part of its Excellence for All reform plan, designed as a roadmap for improving academic performance for all Pittsburgh public school students.

The task force planned to visit 24 secondary schools in seven urban school districts – Dallas, Detroit, Denver, Boston, Washington, D.C., New York City, and Charlotte, N.C. – in September and October.

One of the first schools it scheduled to visit was Dallas' School for the Talented and Gifted, which ranked No. 1 on *Newsweek* magazine's "2006 America's Best High Schools" list.

The task force is observing high schools with strong university prep, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, as well as single-gender schools and programs that give "real world" experience.

The Pittsburgh task force mission is funded by a \$255,000 grant from The

Fund for Excellence in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, newly established by the local foundation community to support the district's reform agenda.

## Miami-Dade District To Create International Education Group

In an effort to help students become competitive in a global environment, Miami-Dade County Public Schools is bringing together educators, business leaders and mayors from around the world to create a world-class curriculum.

The Education Council of International Cities (ECIC) will work together to develop international achievement standards, best practices in professional development for teachers and educational innovations.

The council will be comprised of chief education officers, national and international business researchers, business leaders and mayors of major urban cities from around the world.

The ECIC will identify international benchmarks for quality education from an academic and economic perspective.

Miami administrators believe that by adopting a global perspective on education the district is taking important steps to provide students an education that will prepare them to be successful in a global economy.

According to district officials, membership of the ECIC will be established by May 2007.

## Council Historic Moments

President George H.W. Bush convened an historic summit in 1989 at the University of Virginia, where six national education goals were formulated in the aftermath of the U.S. Department of Education's 1983 ground-shaking report titled *A Nation at Risk*.

The National Governors Association responded to *A Nation at Risk* with a report called *Time for Results*, which led the first president Bush to call for the summit.

The Council of the Great City Schools attended the historic event in Charlottesville, Va., and subsequently issued its own report, *Results in the Making*, describing efforts by urban schools to meet the national goals.



**Fort Worth** continued from page 7

As part of the initiative, the district's math and science curriculum will be redesigned, teachers will undergo rigorous professional development and a pre-advanced placement and advanced placement strand will be implemented in every middle and high school.

In addition, the district will redesign the math and science curriculum to include real world experiences for students.



## Judge Blocks Nebraska Law Condemned By the Council and Five Civil Rights Groups

A Nebraska law condemned by the Council of the Great City Schools and five national civil rights groups has been blocked.

Douglas County Judge Michael Coffey recently ordered a temporary injunction to the new state law, which would divide Omaha Public Schools into three separate districts – each serving predominantly African American, white and Hispanic students.

The judge imposed the temporary halt to the new law passed in April by the Nebraska legislature in response to a lawsuit by Omaha's Chicano Awareness Center and five parents of Omaha public school

students. The suit alleges that the law, set to take effect in 2008, is unconstitutional.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is also challenging the law, reportedly in federal court.

In a joint statement in May, the Council of the Great City Schools, NAACP, RainbowPUSH, National Urban League, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the National Council of La Raza stressed that the new law “takes our nation back to the days before the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision which outlawed racial segregation in public schools.”

## Newark Receives Master Facility Award

Newark Public Schools was the only big-city school district in the nation to receive the Facilities Master Award from the Association of School Business Officials International.

The Facilities Masters Award Program recognizes school districts for achievements in high standards of school facility best practices. This year, 12 school systems received the award.

Newark Public Schools received the award for its 2005-2006 facilities operations plan.

The Newark school system is the only district in the nation to receive the award twice, according to the association.

## High School in Jackson, Miss., Near University to Benefit From \$100,000 Grant

In Jackson, Miss., five public schools in the neighborhood surrounding Jackson State University receive academic support from the historically black university's Mississippi Learning Institute.

Recently, the BellSouth Foundation awarded a \$100,000 grant to the institute to provide opportunities for students and families at one of the five schools, Jim Hill High, through a new program called “Technology from the Inside Out.”

The program will help students refurbish computers in Jackson State's Computer Refurbishing Program.

“By learning to disassemble and reassemble computers, identify internal parts and diagnose programs, students are becoming better prepared for further study and employment,” said Jackson State President Ronald Mason Jr. in a press release.

The Mississippi Learning Institute is a partnership among the university, the Mississippi Department of Education, the

Jackson Public Schools and another institute, established in 2002. The collaboration targets some 2,200 students in the five schools near Jackson State, providing various academic interventions.

Students and their parents who participate in online activities and academies offered by the Mississippi Learning Institute and Jackson Public Schools will receive refurbished computers. BellSouth donated used computers for the students to refurbish.

“The BellSouth technology project is viewed as an incentive that will further the cause of student achievement,” stressed Jackson Schools Super-

intendent Earl Watkins.

Initially, some 30 students in Jackson's Jim Hill High School will participate in the computer refurbishing class, according to a school district spokeswoman. And the class will be taught at the high school.



Paulette Bridges and Dr. P.C. Yuan of Jackson State University give students an overview of the new “Technology from Inside Out” class.

## Congress Leaves Town Without Finishing Its Work

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

On September 30, both houses of Congress adjourned until after the November 7 elections. Coincidentally, this unusually early pre-election adjournment corresponds with the October 1 start of the 2007 federal-fiscal year, for which only two of 13 annual congressional appropriations bills have been completed.

In fact, the FY2007 education appropriations bills (H.R. 5647, S. 3708) have not even been brought up for House or Senate floor consideration.

Congress appears to have established a pattern over the years of not completing its legislative work on time, particularly in election years. Just like the 106th, 107th, and 108th Congresses, the 109th Congress will follow the election with a lame duck session in which to do the business it should have completed in time for voters to pass judgment on the legislative work.

Or maybe that's the point. Congress has gotten into the bad habit of trying to convince the public that it has done work that it hasn't and that it hasn't done work that it has, on the assumption that Americans won't know the differences.

The result is often the passage of symbolic bills that are designed to send election-year messages to key constituency groups rather than legislation to handle serious national issues.



One of the issues left undone before the adjournment involves the funding of schools. If schools can't get their work done on time or the nature of the work is not up to the standards that Americans expect, the education community certainly hears about it. We hear it all the time, in fact.

Congress, nonetheless, is quick to lecture educators about being accountable for their results, but has a very hard time measuring up to its own rhetoric.

The truth is that Congress doesn't want to face the voters with the dismal record on education that it has amassed in recent years. Congress hasn't just failed to pass its education appropriations bills; it has been cutting education spending in the bills it does pass—something that legislators are not eager for you to hear about.

And when Congress returns for its 2006 lame duck session, it is poised to cut education again.

It might be good for voters to remind Congress as they go to the ballot box this fall that Americans expect that Congress will get its work done on time and that their schools will be adequately funded.

## St. Paul School District Finds New Way to Recycle Waste

Many big-city school districts across the nation recycle waste, but Minnesota's St. Paul Public Schools may be the only urban school district that recycles using an unconventional method—pigs.

In an effort to reduce the tons of garbage thrown out every year, the district will begin feeding food waste to local pigs. The recycling program was piloted at four schools

last year and was so successful that the plan will be implemented districtwide.

Administrators say the benefits of recycling food waste include improving safety because custodians won't have to lift as many heavy garbage bags, increasing cleanliness, and saving money because recycling food waste will reduce the state and local taxes for solid waste the district is required to pay.

The food waste recycling program takes place at schools' breakfast and lunch and basically, if the pigs can eat it, the food goes in a blue bucket; and if they can't, it goes in a gray bucket. A farm then picks up everything in the blue buckets and delivers it to the pigs.

## Students Can Vote in Nationwide Mock Election

Considered the nation's largest voter education program, the National Student/Parent Mock Election, in its 26th year, will hold its 2006 Mock Election on Nov. 2 – five days before the congressional elections.

The *Hartford Courant* newspaper in Hartford, Conn., will serve as Mock Election headquarters, where votes will be counted.

Students and parents cast more than four million votes in the 2004 presidential Mock Election in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and in American schools around the world, according to program officials.

To enroll in the 2006 election, one needs to access the Mock Election web site at [www.nationalmockelection.org](http://www.nationalmockelection.org), or

call (520) 877-VOTE. Free curriculum materials for grades kindergarten through twelve can also be accessed on the web site.



## 'Booking It with the Mayor'

Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin gives her animated rendition of Julia Donaldson's children's classic, *The Gruffalo*, before pupils at the city's Toomer Elementary School as part of her reading initiative, "Booking It with the Mayor." The mayor visits different Atlanta elementary schools each month to read to students, encouraging them to make reading a life-long habit, according to Atlanta Public Schools.

## Sacramento Coffee Mogul Adopts Kindergarten Class

Most kindergarten students spend their first day of school getting adjusted to a new school, new classmates and a new teacher.

But 80 kindergarten students at Sacramento's Earl Warren Elementary School spent their first day learning about a \$1 million program to help them succeed in school and life.

Michael Moser, chief executive officer of the Pacific Roasting Company, recently announced that his company is adopting all of the kindergarteners and is pledging at least \$1 million to keep the students from falling behind academically.

Under the program, the company will provide classroom supplies, tutors for students not performing at grade level, family intervention, scholarships and financial assistance for students attending post-secondary institutions.

"Business has a responsibility to the community it benefits from," said Moser in the Sacramento school district's newsletter *The Connection*. "It is imperative that we step up, especially since education makes sure we are able to survive in the future."

All of the children at Earl Warren are eligible for federal free or reduced lunch programs, so parents of the kindergarteners as well as school officials are grateful for the offer from the coffee company.

"Pacific Roasting Company is going to be one of our assets in providing the opportunity to experience educational and life experiences these students wouldn't necessarily have," said Earl Warren Principal Tu Moua in *The Connection*. "And I think a larger percentage of these students will be able to go to college because they will have some support behind them."

## News Briefs

### ■ Perfect Newark Test Takers...

Newark Public Schools recently honored 21 students who received perfect scores on the New Jersey Assessment Skills (NJ ASK) and Knowledge exam and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). At the elementary level, 16 fifth, sixth and seventh graders received perfect scores in math on NJ ASK and three students earned perfect scores in language arts literary. Two of Newark's high school students received perfect scores in math on the HSPA.

■ **Pittsburgh Peer Review...**After swooping down on Pittsburgh Public Schools last spring, the Council of the Great City Schools recently presented a report to the district that showed financial progress and challenges ahead. Teams of senior professionals from other big-city school systems conducted a review of the district's organizational structure and budget, finance and information technology functions under the Council's *Cities Building Cities* program. Superintendent Mark Roosevelt requested the review.

■ **Richmond's 'Dream' Reality...** "I Have a Dream," a national program that provides long-term academic, cultural and college assistance for children from low-income communities, has become a reality at Broad Rock Elementary Schools in Richmond, Va. It is the first "I Have a Dream" project in metropolitan Richmond, which will provide some 50 second graders with support leading to post-secondary school tuition assistance.

### ■ Birmingham's Torchbearer School...

Steve Brown, principal of Council Elementary School in Birmingham, recently drove back from the Alabama state capital in Montgomery with a big grin – and even a bigger check. The Alabama State Board of Education recognized Council Elementary as one of 22 Torchbearer Schools in the state, which are high-poverty, high achieving schools. The school received \$15,000 for the distinction.

■ **The RAVE in Austin...**Community members in Austin, Tex., are urged to acknowledge public school employees who have exemplified great customer service by nominating them for the school district's RAVE Award.



## Great City Grads



**Quincy Jones**

**Music Impresario**

**All-time most nominated  
Grammy artist**

**1950 graduate**

**Garfield High School**

**Seattle Public Schools**



Council of the Great City Schools  
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