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Facing Racial Barriers 50 Years Ago, A Former Charlotte Student Receives Diploma

In 1957, an African-American teen named Dorothy Counts walked to school amid jeers, taunts and epithets as an angry crowd threw things at her and spat on the new student at Harding High School in Charlotte, N.C.

Photographs from her first day at school ran in newspapers worldwide, revealing that Charlotte still resisted school desegregation three years after the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 landmark *Brown* decision outlawing segregated schools.

On Sept. 4, 1957, Counts broke the color barrier in Charlotte, becoming the first African-American student to integrate Harding High.



Dorothy Counts receives an honorary diploma from Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Superintendent Peter Gorman.

Racial Barriers continued on page 4

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

Urban school leaders will discuss the ramifications of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision in the Seattle and Louisville voluntary desegregation cases at a national town hall meeting on Nov. 2 in conjunction with the Council of the Great City Schools' Fall Conference in Nashville, Tenn.

In a 5-4 decision, the nation's high court in late June struck down student assignment plans in the Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville and the Seattle Public Schools that were designed to promote racial diversity in their public schools.

Town Hall continued on page 4

Civil Rights Leader to Speak

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, president and founder of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, will be the keynote speaker at the Council of the Great City Schools' 51st Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 31-Nov. 4, in Nashville, Tenn.



Rev. Jesse Jackson

He will address the nation's urban school leaders at lunch on Nov. 2 at the Renaissance Nashville Hotel.

In 1998, the Council bestowed upon the civil rights leader its Lifetime Achievement Award for his support of urban education and equity issues. He delivered a rousing address after receiving the award and spoke again the next year at the Council's fall conference.

Urban educators will also hear from:

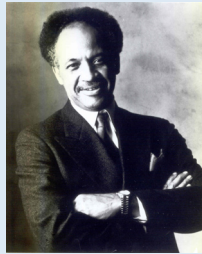
- Author, scholar and cultural critic Michael Eric Dyson of Georgetown University at lunch on Nov. 1 and
- Julianne Malveaux, an economist, author and commentator, at breakfast on Nov. 2.

Leaders of America's big-city public school systems converge every fall to exchange strategies on best practices to improve urban education in America. They also honor one of their own with the nation's highest award for urban education leadership – the Richard R. Green Award.

Top Urban Education Leadership Award To Be Given to School Board Member

Six school board members are competing this year for the nation's top prize in urban school leadership, the Richard R. Green Award. The nominees are:

- Connie Dietz of Wichita Public Schools
- William Graham of Palm Beach County Schools
- H. Ann Jones of Jackson Public Schools
- Jack Lamb of Hillsborough County Schools in Tampa
- Elizabeth Reilinger of Boston Public Schools
- George Thompson III of Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools



Richard R. Green
Namesake of award

And the winner is...

The recipient won't be revealed until the evening of Nov. 1 at the Council of the Great City Schools' Fall Conference in Nashville, Tenn.

The Council and ARAMARK Education will present a \$10,000 scholarship for the awardee to give to a student.

Last year, 11 big-city school superintendents vied for the Green Award, named in honor of the first African-American chancellor of the New York City school system who had also headed Minneapolis Public Schools.

Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Beverly Hall won the 2006 award.

Portland School Wins Richard Riley Award

The Rosa Parks School in Portland, Ore., has won this year's Richard Riley Award, named for the U.S. secretary of education under the Clinton Administration.

The American Architectural Foundation and KnowledgeWorks Foundation recently announced that Rosa Parks School at New Columbia Community Campus in Portland is the winner of the 2007 Richard Riley Award for Schools as Centers of Community.

The two foundations will give a \$10,000 award to the school that will be presented by Riley at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 5.

"This school is a national model for how the creative design of a school can help to revitalize an entire neighborhood," said Ronald Bogle, president and CEO of the American Architectural Foundation, in a news release.

Launched in 2004, the Richard Riley Award is presented each year to a school that exemplifies the growing trend of building schools as centers of community – those that are open to community use and collaborate with community resources supporting student and community success.



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Portland Hires New Leader; Atlanta Superintendent Gets Nod to Stay



Carole Smith

Carole Smith grew up in Portland, Ore., operated a nonprofit education organization in Portland and held several positions in the city's public school system, including most recently chief of staff.

Her 25-year relationship with Portland Public Schools was one of the reasons she was recently selected to lead the 46,300-student school system. She succeeds Vicki Phillips, who left the district to work for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Before coming to work for the Portland school system, Smith was the executive director of Open Meadow Schools, a non-profit organization for Portland middle and high school students who weren't succeeding academically in the traditional school setting.

Smith said that she will use her first 100 days as superintendent to reach out to the district's staff, schools and community so that people have an opportunity to share their ideas about what's important.

"I believe, as a community, we are on the path to creating one of the best urban school districts in the country," said Smith in a news statement.

Contract Renewed



Beverly Hall

Beverly Hall has been superintendent of Atlanta's Public Schools since 1999, and under her leadership academic performance has increased, the achievement gap has narrowed and more students are enrolling in high-level

rigorous courses.

As a result, Hall's contract was recently renewed for another three years. The con-

tract renewal will have her at the helm of the school district through the 2010-2011 school year, making her one of the longest-serving urban school superintendents in the nation.

Last year, Hall received the Richard R. Green Award, presented by the Council of the Great City Schools to the nation's top urban educator.

San Diego Leader to Retire

Carl Cohn came out of retirement in July 2005 to lead California's San Diego Unified School District and after two years at the helm recently announced he is leaving the 133,000-student school system in December.

Cohn previously served as the superintendent of California's Long Beach Unified School District for 10 years. After his retirement from that district, he became a professor of education at the University of Southern California.

"I have often said that I flunked retirement the first time," Cohn wrote in a letter to employees announcing his resignation. "I'm looking forward to getting retirement right this time..."

Changes in Oakland

Another big-city school district in California has also lost its leader. Kimberly Satham, the state administrator of the Oakland Unified School District, recently resigned from the district she has led since 2006.

Satham was recently named the deputy superintendent in the Office of the State Superintendent of Education in Washington, D.C., where she will be responsible for implementing reforms to improve student achievement in the District of Columbia public schools.

Vincent Matthews, an area superintendent for the San Diego school system, was named the school district's interim state administrator.

Council Meets President Bush

President Bush recently invited leaders of civil rights groups and what he called "advocates for minority and disadvantaged students" to the White House for a discussion on the reauthorization of the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

The Council of the Great City Schools was the only national education association represented at the meeting with Bush and U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings.

Council Executive Director Michael Casserly joined leaders such as National Urban League President Marc Morial, National Council of La Raza President Janet Murguia and NAACP Vice Chairwoman Roslyn Brock to focus on closing the racial achievement gap and ensuring a quality education for all students.

Following the meeting, President Bush told reporters in the Rose Garden, "We don't necessarily agree on every issue, but we do agree that education is a basic civil right.... We agree that our nation has reached a defining moment in our struggle to secure a good education for every child."

Wichita Suburb Votes To Join City Schools

For one suburban community in Wichita, Kan., there was a choice of where to send its children to school: a small town or a big city?

The city council of Bel Aire, a suburban community which recently annexed land that was in a neighboring small district, voted to pass a resolution moving its school boundaries completely within the Wichita public school district.

With the annexations, Bel Aire is "geographically divided between the Wichita

Wichita Suburb continued on page 12

Racial Barriers *continued from page 1*

Exactly 50 years later, Counts recently returned to the once all-white school. This time she's greeted with cheers, as the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools awarded her an honorary diploma.

"We can't change the past, but we can learn from it," said Superintendent Peter Gorman in honoring Counts, who is now known as Dot Counts-Scoggins.

She and family members were among hundreds of people who gathered at the Harding building, which is now an elementary school, for the premiere of "9/4/57," a documentary about her Harding experience.

Counts-Scoggins' father withdrew her from Harding in the second week of school, indicating that he no longer wanted to expose his daughter to the danger posed by her classmates' conduct. She was sent to a racially mixed high school in Pennsylvania.

"We are still struggling to make sure every student has an equal opportunity for success."

—Charlotte-Mecklenburg Supt. Peter Gorman

Three other African-American students also entered white schools in Charlotte in 1957, with one graduating, according to the school district.

"The legacy of Dorothy Counts, and her fellow students, is alive today," said Superintendent Gorman at the recent ceremony. "I wish I could tell you that the job they started five decades ago was finished. But it isn't. We are still struggling to make sure every student has an equal opportunity for success," he stressed.

In accepting the honorary diploma, Counts-Scoggins gave an emotional speech about her return to the former Harding High. "Fifty years ago, I didn't feel accepted," she said. "Today, I feel accepted."

Also attending the event was Marty Wilson, another student from Harding 50 years ago. He was one of the students who yelled at Counts. "I was very young and a very foolish boy," he said in the *Charlotte Observer*.



Maria Goodloe-Johnson
Seattle



Sheldon Berman
Louisville



Pedro Garcia
Nashville



David Smith
Kansas City



Carlos Garcia
San Francisco

Town Hall *continued from page 1*

The ruling makes it harder for the two school systems and those in other cities "to maintain an integrated student body, prevent racial resegregation, improve academic performance, and build a more equitable and competitive America," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Discussing how urban school districts can maintain or achieve cultural diversity in their classrooms in the aftermath of what the Council calls a "troubling decision" will be:

■ Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Maria Goodloe-Johnson;

■ Jefferson County (Louisville) Public Schools Superintendent Sheldon Berman;

■ Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Superintendent Pedro Garcia;

■ Kansas City school board president David Smith; and

■ San Francisco Unified School District Superintendent Carlos Garcia

The forum will be moderated by Columbia University professor of law and *Nation* magazine columnist Patricia Williams.

Declining Enrollment Comes To a Halt in San Diego

Declining over the last six years, student enrollment in the San Diego Unified School District unexpectedly increased this fall.

Overall enrollment, including charter schools and preschools, jumped to 135,053 from 133,831 students.

Prekindergarten through 12th grade enrollment, excluding charter schools, rose to 120,136 students from 119,504, running counter to the district's demographic predictions that had forecast further decline of more than 2,000 students in overall enrollment.

District officials attribute the increase to two years of initiatives to attract parents

and students that are apparently paying off.

Superintendent Carl Cohn stressed in a news release, "Instead of saying to parents, 'This is it. Take it or leave it,' we designed innovative programs from the bottom up instead of the top down."

After surveying parents to find out what they wanted for their children, the San Diego school system went to work to meet their needs. Initiatives included transforming elementary schools into K-8 schools; reaching out to families; expanding the magnet schools program; launching a summer enrollment center; and opening five new "state-of-the-art schools."



New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein rises from his seat to accept the Broad Prize as New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Caroline Kennedy, vice chair of the Fund for Public Schools, look on with pleasure.

NYC Wins Broad Prize

The nation's largest school district has narrowed achievement gaps among African American, Hispanic and white students in elementary and high school reading and math, as well as increased the percentage of black and Latino students achieving high levels of proficiency in elementary school math.

As a result, the New York City school district was recently announced the winner of the 2007 Broad Prize for Urban Education at a ceremony held last month in Washington, D.C., featuring U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, a graduate of the New York City school system.

As the winner of the Broad Prize, the largest education prize in the nation, the district will receive \$500,000 in college scholarships. The other finalists in the competition— school systems in Bridgeport Conn., Long Beach, Calif., Miami-Dade County, Fla., and San Antonio, Texas— will receive \$125,000 in college scholarships.

Sponsored by the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, the award is presented to the urban district in the nation that best demonstrates the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while narrowing achievement gaps among poor and minority students.

For the past two years, New York City has been a finalist, but this year was chosen the winner among 100 of the largest urban school districts in the nation eligible for the award.

High Court Deadlocked In Special Ed. Case

The U.S. Supreme Court in a 4-4 decision -- minus Justice Anthony Kennedy, who recused himself -- recently failed to provide a nationwide ruling on whether a child who has never attended public school and received special education and related services may reject a public school offer of a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) and demand private school tuition reimbursement.

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Magnet School Grants Awarded; 15 Council Districts Selected

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings recently announced \$100 million in magnet school grants to be awarded to 41 school districts in 17 states aimed at helping school systems create more school choice and innovative programs as well as promote cultural diversity.

Fifteen of the districts are members of the Council of the Great City Schools.

The grants range from \$1 million to more than \$3 million.

Florida's Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa will expand magnet schools and recruit minority students to become teachers with the \$3.12-million grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

In Greensboro, N.C., the \$1.5-million grant, totaling more than \$8.3 million over three years, will allow the Guilford County Schools to establish an aviation academy and expand the International Baccalaureate, Montessori and science and technology programs.

Other Council urban districts awarded 2007 magnet school grants are:

- Fresno Unified School District
- Long Beach Unified School District
- San Diego Unified School District
- Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Fla.
- School Board of Miami-Dade County
- School District of Palm Beach County
- Chicago Public Schools
- Saint Paul Public Schools
- New York City Department of Education (four grants)
- School District of Philadelphia

The Council initiated the magnet school grant program in 1984.

'Dallas Achieves!' Plan Aims To Transform Education in the Texas City

The Dallas Independent School District wants to ensure that every student graduates from the district college and workforce ready and has implemented a plan called *Dallas Achieves!* to make this happen.

The plan, which aims to improve the academic achievement of all students, was adopted last April and district officials recently listed several steps that have been taken to transform the district's elementary and secondary education.

Under the plan, a rigorous, aligned curriculum was developed with the National Center for Educational Accountability and Institute for Learning that enables parents to track their children's efforts.

In addition, approximately 2,000 principals and teachers attended five summer institutes focused on proven methods for teaching and learning. And teachers have the opportunity to undergo professional development, meet with instructional coaches and access curriculum materials online.

Under *Dallas Achieves*, a new financial incentive program to attract top principals and teachers to low-performing middle and high schools has been created. The program has led to those schools being almost fully staffed at the start of the new school year and the district recently was awarded a Teacher Incentive Fund grant by the federal government to expand its teacher incentive program.

Initiatives have been launched to improve high schools, including decreasing class loads for teachers and reducing student/teacher ratios by 25 percent, which has provided teachers more time for planning.

And a new initiative, the Superintendent's Learning Community, has been developed to provide struggling schools with resources to improve their academic performance.

Students at several district high schools will participate in programs to enhance math, science, engineering and technology

skills as a result of two T-Stem (Texas Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics) state grants the district is receiving.

Plans are also underway for the district to offer college-ready courses of study for all secondary students, and provide students with alternative paths to graduation, including online opportunities.

"Over the course of the last few months, several significant steps have been taken to accomplish the *Dallas Achieves* initiatives," said Dallas Schools Superintendent Michael Hinojosa. "The board of trustees has provided strong leadership, direction and high expectations of their goal to transform the district so that all students are college and workforce ready."

Fresno District Invests In Technology to Create Career-Ready Grads

The board of education of California's Fresno Unified School District has adopted "core beliefs and commitments" to boost student learning through a significant investment in technology to provide teachers with the tools to ensure Fresno students are career ready when they graduate.

With a laser focus on technology, the Fresno school system now has the largest fiber network north of Los Angeles and the district is now Microsoft's second largest partner in California, according to the district.

In addition to the infrastructure enhancements and development of partnerships with key technology companies, the Fresno school system is introducing digital portfolios, small footprint laptops, and a middle school technology competition as part of the comprehensive technology program to engage students in learning.

Houston, Miami Win School Board Award

The Houston Independent School District and Miami-Dade County Public Schools are the winners of the Urban School Board Excellence Award for making progress in educating children.

Sponsored by the National School Boards Association's Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE), the award recognizes big-city districts that have demonstrated excellence in four areas: school board governance, closing the achievement gap, academic excellence and community engagement.

Finalists are then chosen by a panel of distinguished judges based on materials submitted by the school district and independent follow-up research.

Houston's school board was honored for adopting a decentralized approach to management leading to more decision-making authority going into the hands of principals and teachers. And the Miami-Dade school board was recognized for its ability to build public trust and support for the school district, as well as increase parental involvement.

"The leadership established by these outstanding districts highlights the critical connection between urban student academic achievement and successful school board governance," said Steve Corona, CUBE chair.

Each of the award winners will receive a cash prize of \$2,500.



Members of the Houston Board of Education with Houston Schools Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra, third from left.

Tampa District Tops In Talent Search

Schools in Florida's Hillsborough County district, based in Tampa, rank at the top of the state for participation in the Duke University Talent Identification Program, which recognizes academically gifted students in their late elementary and early middle school years.

So reports the *St. Petersburg Times* in its daily "Gradebook" feature on education news.

Under Hillsborough Schools Superintendent MaryEllen Elia, the number of seventh-graders identified as qualified to sit for college entrance exams increased to 4,800 this year compared with 150 in 2005, a recent article points out.

"The parents of these students soon will receive a letter noting that their children are eligible for SAT and ACT tutoring," the *Times* reports.

Charlotte School Turns \$500,000 Into a Million

East Mecklenburg High School in Charlotte, N.C., recently turned a \$500,000 gift from an alumnus into more than a million dollars.

Bob Silver of Montclair, N.J., a 1973 graduate of the high school, told school administrators two years ago that he would donate a half-million dollars for a program to help teachers if the gift is matched.

Recently, fundraising efforts that began last February at a luncheon of parents and graduates yielded \$505,000, turning the \$500,000 gift into more than a million dollars for the All Star Teacher Initiative, a program aimed at helping East Mecklenburg High maintain and attract top teacher talent.

The largest donation reportedly came from a philanthropic group of Charlotte couples to the tune of \$50,000. The remainder came from small donations, including nickels and dimes.



(Left to right) Wichita school board member Kevass Harding, board president Connie Dietz, board member Betty Arnold and Wichita Schools Superintendent Winston Brooks congratulate principal Lichelle Alford and students from Wichita's Buckner Performing Arts Magnet Elementary for being designated a Blue Ribbon School.

NCLB Blue Ribbon Schools Announced

Baltimore's George Washington Elementary School has 89.6 percent of its students receiving free or reduced price meals. Yet, on a state exam, 90 percent of all students scored at the proficient/advanced level in reading.

And at Atlanta's Venetian Hills Elementary, 91 percent of students are eligible to receive free/reduced price lunches. Yet, 98.4 percent of students met or exceeded the state standard in math.

These two schools are just several of the big-city schools that were recently named 2007 No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education.

The award program recognized 287 public and private elementary, middle and high schools across the nation that were either academically superior or that demonstrated significant gains in student achievement to high levels.

Schools were selected for the Blue Ribbon award program based on one of two categories:

- Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds

that dramatically improve student performance to high levels on state tests and

- Schools whose students, regardless of background, achieve in the top 10 percent of their state on state tests.

Big-city schools in Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Newark, Del., West Palm Beach, Miami, Tampa, Chicago, Wichita, Louisville, Baton Rouge, Mount Pleasant, S.C., Riviera Beach, Fla., New York City, Charlotte, Philadelphia, Dallas, Houston, Norfolk, Milwaukee, Newark, N.J., Baltimore and Weston, Fla., were named Blue Ribbon Schools.

Miami, Dallas, New York City, Washington, D.C., the Christina School District in Delaware and the School District of Palm Beach County in Florida each had two schools recognized.

"These schools are proving that when we raise the bar our children will rise to the challenge," said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings in a news statement. "It takes a lot of hard work by teachers and students to become a Blue Ribbon school."

Houston Revamps Teacher Pay Program; Austin Launches Pilot Initiative

A teacher performance pay program was launched last year in the Houston Independent School District to reward teachers for the academic progress their students made, but the program was criticized by many teachers.

After meeting with an advisory panel composed of teachers and national education experts, the district recently unveiled a new and, according to district officials as well as teachers, improved teacher performance pay plan.

The new ASPIRE Award plan will pay up to \$7,300 in bonuses to teachers of academic subjects such as English, language arts, math, science and social studies for helping children improve academically over the course of three years.

Elementary and middle school teachers will be rewarded under the plan if their students make more academic progress than most other students across the school system. A teacher earns up to \$5,000 if the students in his or her classroom outperform students in 75 percent of other teachers' classrooms.

And high school teachers earn money if the students in a teacher's department made more academic progress than students in the same departments at other high schools. As a result, teachers in a math department at a high school could be eligible for a \$5,000 bonus if their students improved more than students in math departments in at least 75 percent of the other high schools in the district.

One of the biggest criticisms of the earlier plan was that it did not fairly consider all of the work done by teachers and instructional staff, and teamwork in the classroom was not rewarded.

As a result, under the ASPIRE award program teachers and staff members can earn bonuses based on how much a school improves overall compared with demographically similar schools in the state. Staff can also receive awards based on how their schools rate under the Texas account-

ability system.

For example, teachers and other instructional staff could earn an extra \$300 if their school is rated by the state as "Exemplary," or an extra \$150 if it is rated as "Recognized."

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.

Houston Schools Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra believes the teacher performance pay program will not only improve academic achievement in the district but also retain and attract new teachers. "The single most important determining factor in the academic success of a child is good teaching, and we must do everything it takes to have good teaching throughout HISD," said Saavedra in a press release.

Austin

Also implementing a new teacher performance pay program is Texas' Austin Independent School District. Nine district schools will pilot the Strategic Compensation Initiative, which will give bonuses to teachers whose schools show academic progress on state achievement tests as well as achieve teacher-developed student learning objectives.

The nine pilot schools were selected because they were representative of the district as a whole, based on characteristics such as student demographics and academic performance. In addition, five of the schools are designated as "highest-needs" schools based on the population of low-income, English Language Learners and special needs students.

Teachers at the schools will participate in a professional development program.

The Strategic Compensation Initiative will be phased in over five years and by 2012 will be implemented at all district schools. The program is being funded through one cent of the district's maintenance and operations tax rate.

State Partnership In Jackson Pays Off

A partnership between the Mississippi Department of Education and Barr Elementary School in Jackson, Miss., has paid off in higher student performance – in just one year.

Just recently, Barr Elementary was rated a Level 4 – Exemplary School, jumping two levels from 2006 when the school was rated a Level 2 – Low Performing designation.

The Mississippi Department of Education adopted Barr Elementary in 2006, and worked with students and staff on a number of projects. Professional development was provided to teachers upon the school principal's request, and tutoring and mentoring were offered to students.

Other support included

providing award incentives and classroom speakers as well as preparing students for the Mississippi Curriculum Test. Department employees even played Santa Claus for children at Christmas.

Other agencies, businesses, churches and colleges also adopted the school.

"Certainly, Dr. [Limmie] Flowers (the principal), the teachers and students at Barr carried the lion's share of the load in bringing the test scores up," says State Superintendent of Education Hank Bounds in a column he released to the press.

"But each of the organizations...reached out a helping hand and made a small difference that created a big change," he added.



State Supt. Hank Bounds talks with students.

D.C. Teacher Wins McGraw Prize

In 1986, Reynauld Smith left his teaching job at a suburban school in Maryland to become a history teacher at Eastern Senior High School in Washington, D.C., because he wanted to expose inner-city students to the world.

He soon took over the school's fledgling Model United Nations program, where he introduced the program as part of his Advanced Placement American History class, and brought in officials from the U.S. State Department to lead discussions on world events.

Since 1999, Smith has worked with 500 students in his Model UN Program, and his strong focus on international learning is the reason he was recently presented with the 2007 Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education.

The award, sponsored by The McGraw Hill Companies, recognizes exceptional individuals who have dedicated themselves to improving learning in the nation and whose accomplishments are making a difference.

As one of three recipients of the award, Smith receives a \$25,000 gift. The award was established in 1988 and is presented annually. A panel of judges from the education community selected this year's winners.

The Model UN Program is a simulation of the United Nations that aims to educate students about civics, effective communication, globalization and diplomacy. Students take on roles as foreign diplomats and investigate international issues, debate and develop solutions to world problems.

As head of Eastern's Model UN Program, Smith has taken students to Ecuador, Portugal, the Dominican Republic and Mexico. His students also frequently participate in international crisis simulation conferences at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies of The Johns Hopkins University in Washington,



Harold McGraw III (left), president of the McGraw-Hill Companies, presents Reynauld Smith with the 2007 Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education.

D.C., as well as citywide Model U.N. Conferences. Last year, Eastern High School teams were picked as "best delegation" at each event.

"Today's students must acquire broader knowledge and deeper understanding of our interdependent world," said Harold McGraw III, chairman, president and chief executive officer of The McGraw-Hill Companies, in a press release. "The three educators we honor this year understand that a well-rounded education is the new currency of today's global economy..."

Before going to Eastern, Smith taught at a school in Montgomery County, Md., where he helped start a diversity club for U.S. and international students. He is also a former professional basketball player.

Wichita District Offers Chinese to Students

For the first time this year, high school students in Wichita, Kan., are learning Chinese from only one of two instructors in the state certified to teach the language, according to the district.

The instructor has 60 students at five high schools, with a class at one school and two at another, while teaching Mandarin Chinese at the other schools through Interactive Distance Learning, allowing the students to participate in the class through a live video feed.

Multi-Language Web Site Launched In Guilford Co. District

In North Carolina's Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, there are more than 70 languages spoken in classrooms throughout the 70,000-student school district.

In an effort to communicate effectively with its diverse population, the school system is creating a new multi-lingual web site.

Major components of the district's web site have been translated into Spanish and Vietnamese, and in the coming months the web site will feature pages in Urdu, Arabic and French.

District officials believe the web site will play a vital role in helping it reach out to all parents, students and community members. "Having the web site translated into five different languages will help contribute to the success of our students," said Mayra Hayes, director of the district's ESOL.

In addition to the web site, the school system has expanded communication efforts to non-English speakers with a monthly Spanish and English language video program on the district's television station and a bi-monthly radio program in Spanish.

"There's a need for knowing how to speak and read Chinese," says instructor Marcus Marshall, who had lived in China for 12 years teaching English. "It's considered one of the critical languages..."

Marshall is working to develop a Mandarin Chinese II class curriculum for next school year. He is also working with a few other districts in Kansas to help them develop a Chinese curriculum and teaching methods.

Toward a Workable NCLB Reauthorization

By Jeff Simering, Director of Legislation

The House Education Committee has gone to unprecedented lengths to seek broad input into the reauthorization of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). The committee has sought comments and recommendations, held hearings, and issued public discussion drafts. This unusual legislative transparency is both warranted and necessary, given the rising discontent across the country with many of the operational details of NCLB. The Council of the Great City Schools and its member urban districts have participated in every hearing conducted by the Committee and have submitted extensive comments and proposals.

Recently, the House Committee held its final hearing and received considerable feedback on the 1,036-page discussion draft. Council Executive Director Michael Casserly testified and the organization submitted 45 pages of comments and suggested revisions.

Casserly underscored the Council's support of *No Child Left Behind* since its passage in 2001, and the organization's strong interest in a more workable law this time around. The Council highlighted improvements in the draft related to accountability, credit for growth, the continued focus on achievement gaps, a better planning process, and increased time to allow interventions to work. In addition, Casserly singled out for praise the draft's efforts to build better data systems and reform secondary schools.

But the Council was also critical of the bill's lack of headway in raising academic standards or overcoming state-to-state inconsistencies in assessments and proficiency benchmarks. Casserly underscored the irony of adding new compliance provi-



sions on comparability and teacher distribution, while refusing to provide school districts with the statutory authority or the financial resources to either re-deploy or encourage effective teachers to serve in the most challenging schools.

Casserly pointedly criticized the discussion draft for applying the law's most serious and costly sanctions disproportionately to urban public schools, leaving other schools to mask their subgroup results behind schoolwide averages. Urban schools, to be sure, serve high concentrations of poor and minority children, but over two-thirds of the nation's African-American, language minority, and low-income children attend schools outside of our central cities – schools that often perform only marginally better than those inside the central cities. The achievement gaps at the heart of NCLB are a national problem, not just an urban one, according to the Council's executive. Finally, Casserly acknowledged the committee's attempt to place more legislative emphasis on instruction, but suggested that the draft bill had missed the mark by adding a litany of new requirements and procedures that required more compliance than student learning.

The Council, nonetheless, shares the Committee's interest in authorizing a more workable and instructionally relevant Act. The Council's detailed recommendations and comments were never publicly released, but were designed to quietly and effectively assist the House Committee in developing a workable and supportable reauthorization. But the discussion draft did not meet that standard. The Council would like to support the next iteration of the bill, like it did in 2001, but the organization is not there yet.

Study Shows Charleston Child Development Program a Success

A study has revealed that pre-kindergarten programs in South Carolina's Charleston County Schools can significantly help children improve their academic achievement.

The study, conducted by the South Carolina Department of Education, tracked 1,283 children who participated in the district's Child Development (CD) program.

Tests were administered to the children before they participated in the program and after they finished the one-year program. The study revealed that on average students who completed the program increased their percentile rank at the end of the school year by 73 percent and significant gains were made in the language, concepts and motor portions of the assessment.

"We know that these significant gains suggest that the CD children are making substantial progress that goes well beyond what would be expected in the absence of CD participation," said Charleston Schools Superintendent Nancy McGinley in a news statement. "As a district, we will continue to support and hopefully expand the CD programs offered each year."



Los Angeles Schools Superintendent David Brewer III talks with former dropout students at Jordan High School who have returned to school to earn their diploma. Photo credit: LAUSD/Rene Macura

L.A. District Launches Dropout Campaign

Students in the nation's second largest school district will receive a text message on their cell phones urging them not to drop out of school as part of an innovative new campaign to reduce the dropout rate.

Called "My Future, My Decision," the campaign is an effort by officials in the Los Angeles Unified School District to reach out to students who have dropped out of school or are at-risk of dropping out and encourage them to earn a high school diploma.

The campaign will use student-friendly communication channels that resonate with students such as text messaging, online social networks and radio programs.

As part of the campaign, students who send a text message with the word "FUTURE" to a designated number will receive instant information about the value of a diploma. And an online social networking campaign will be created, including directed peer-to-peer interaction on MySpace, where students who had dropped out of school but returned will build a network and engage in dialogue with at-risk and recovered students. Student testimonials will

also be posted on YouTube, the popular video-sharing site.

In addition, a web site has been developed that highlights the district's recovery efforts, provides information and resources for students and parents and features content from recovered students and school administrators.

The district is also spreading the word about its dropout campaign through the radio by working with two popular local radio stations. The stations will run advertisements on the stations about the campaign as well as have its on-air DJs promote the message that students should stay in school.

A major component of the school system's effort to reduce the dropout rate is the placement of 80 Diploma Project Advisors (DPAs) and more than 300 attendance counselors at schools with high dropout rates. The specialists work directly with students, parents, teachers and community agencies to ensure every student has the opportunity to earn a high school diploma.

LA District continued on page 12

Small Schools Show Promise in Oakland

California's Oakland Unified School District began creating small schools in the 1990s in hopes that the smaller personalized learning environments would relieve overcrowding and lead to higher academic achievement.

District officials' hopes are being met, according to a recent study of the district's New Small Schools. The study evaluated student and school performance data, interviewed teachers and principals at three new small schools and surveyed 659 teachers at small schools and comparison schools across the district.

The comparison schools consisted of three of the district's remaining large high schools, three middle schools and four elementary schools and were selected based on their similarity to the New Small Schools in terms of academic achievement levels, demographics and the communities they serve.

The study found that the students who attend New Small Schools achieved higher scores on state exams in English-language arts and math than did students at the comparison schools, and that most students at the small schools are achieving scores on state exams that meet or exceed projected average levels.

Results from the study also reveal that graduation rates at the small high schools were higher, ranging from 69 percent to 97 percent, compared to 61 percent to 80 percent at the comparison high schools.

In addition, the New Small Schools achieved higher student, parent and teacher satisfaction ratings on average compared to the comparison schools. Survey data also revealed that staff at the small schools are implementing proposed designs that address school culture, instructional programs, professional learning and community, parent and community engagement.

This fall, the district will conduct a more in-depth study of its small schools that will evaluate how differences at elementary, middle and high school levels impact student achievement.

High Court *continued from page 5*

The deadlocked Supreme Court ruling in the *Tom F.* special education case in New York City allowed the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals decision to stand in which former MTV and Viacom mogul Tom Freston successfully claimed private school tuition reimbursement for his son who had never attended public school.

Now with a split in the decisions among the circuit courts and no Supreme Court precedent to rely on, a new round of special education private school tuition reimbursement cases is anticipated in other circuits across the country.

The Council of the Great City Schools filed a “friend of the court” brief in support of the New York City Department of Education and in support of giving “a free appropriate public education” a chance to work before resorting to private school placement at public expense.

Editor’s Note

Danyell Taylor, a graduate journalism student at Howard University, has returned as an intern, writing for the Urban Educator and contributing to other communication projects.

Wichita Suburb *continued from page 3*

and Circle school districts,” says a *Wichita Eagle* article. The mayor reportedly wanted the children of his town served by one school district.

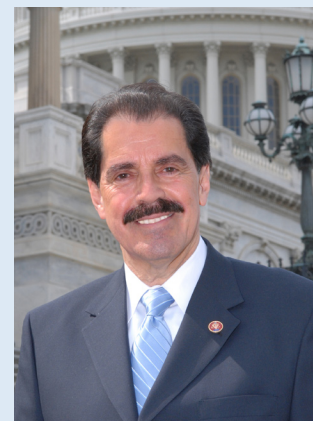
The city council vote was the first step in a process of changing the school boundaries. “This says a lot for our district and our programs to have them choose Wichita Public Schools,” says Wichita Schools Superintendent Winston Brooks.

LA District *continued from page 11*

The district’s dropout program also features a guidebook outlining the options available for students who want to earn their diploma, including adult schools and independent study programs, and a partnership with a local community college to provide community college programs that offer concurrent high school and college credit.

“We are working aggressively to reduce our dropout rate through better data, new dropout prevention counselors and expanded alternative education programs,” said Los Angeles Schools Superintendent David Brewer III.

Great City Grads



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