$50 Million Invested In Cradle-to-Career Partnership in Detroit

Detroit Public Community School District is teaming up with several local organizations to create a cradle-to-career educational partnership that will help more than 1,000 students in northwest Detroit.

The P-20 Partnership, as it’s called, has received a $50-million commitment from The Kresge Foundation, which, according to partnership officials, marks the largest philanthropic investment in history in a Detroit neighborhood.

As part of the partnership, Detroit schools will collaborate with the University of Michigan School of Education to create a new early childhood education center and a new K-12 school that will eventually

$50 Million continued on page 4

2018 Blue Ribbon Schools Named

Nearly 30 urban public schools are among 349 public, private and parochial schools nationwide recently recognized as 2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education.

In announcing the Blue Ribbon Schools in the program’s 36th year, U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos said, “We recognize and honor your important work in preparing students for successful careers and meaningful lives.”

Recognition is based on a school’s overall academic performance or progress in

Blue Ribbon continued on page 6

Students to Speak Out Ahead of Elections At Council Town Hall Meeting

With the rise of the March for Our Lives movement following the 17 students and staff fatally gunned down at school last February in Parkland, Fla., a panel of urban students will discuss a variety of student concerns ahead of the midterm elections at a national town hall meeting on Oct. 26.

The forum is being held in conjunction with the Council of the Great City Schools’ 62nd Annual Fall Conference, hosted by the Baltimore City Public Schools, in Maryland’s largest city.

During the 90-minute, live-streamed national town hall meeting, an all-student panel will focus on civic engagement, get-out-the-vote efforts, social justice and equity, guns, immigration and other student issues and priorities.

Student leaders from seven big-city school districts will be on the panel. One of the students, Fez Zafar, a junior at Roosevelt High School in Des Moines, Iowa, will be moderating discussions and taking questions from urban-school superintendents, board members and senior administrators attending the town hall meeting, the pinnacle event of the conference.

Son of Pakistani immigrants, Zafar is junior class president, serves as a student member of the Iowa Board of Education, met with then-President Obama at

Town Hall continued on page 4
Oprah Winfrey Joins Cincinnati Students in Project

Students at the School for Creative and Performing Arts in Cincinnati were shoulder-to-shoulder recently with media mogul Oprah Winfrey as they packed 2,000 meals at a local food bank. The students and Winfrey were among 100 volunteers who packed meals that were given to Cincinnati schoolchildren as part of the Kroger Co. Zero Hunger-Zero Waste program. "It's an honor to support this initiative in the local Cincinnati community and beyond," said Winfrey. "I am committed to the fight against hunger because I've seen the impact it has on people. That's why I wanted to be here today to help pack food for Cincinnati children facing hunger." Winfrey also announced at the event that her food line O, That's Good! and Kroger would together donate one million meals to Feed America® to help families across the country.
Nine superintendents will be announced on the evening of Oct. 25 as finalists for the nation’s top award in urban-education leadership. One of them will be recognized as Urban Superintendent of the Year.

The winner will be honored by peers at the Council of the Great City Schools’ 62nd Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 24-28, in Baltimore.

Anticipation will be in the air when the envelope is given to announce the winner among the nine superintendents vying for the top prize at the 29th Annual Green-Garner Award Banquet.

The Green-Garner Award recognizes outstanding leadership, and is presented to an urban-school superintendent and board member in alternative years.

The 2018 finalists are superintendents:
- Tom Boasberg of Denver Public Schools;
- Juan Cabrera of the El Paso Independent School District;
- Alberto Carvalho of the Miami-Dade County Schools;
- Kriner Cash of the Buffalo Public Schools;
- Anthony Hamlet of the Pittsburgh Public Schools;
- Michael Hinojosa of the Dallas Independent School District;
- Dorsey Hopson of Shelby County Schools in Memphis;
- Clayton Wilcox of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; and
- Alicja Winnicki of the New York City Department of Education District 14 in Brooklyn.

And now the moment everyone has been waiting for. And the winner is…!

Sponsored by the Council, Aramark K-12 Education, Scholastic, Inc. and Centrergistic, the Green-Garner Award is named in memory of Richard R. Green, the first African American chancellor of the New York City school system, and businessman Edward Garner, who served on the Denver school board.

The winner receives a $10,000 college scholarship to present to a student.

Last year’s winner was school board member Felton Williams of California’s Long Beach Unified School District.
the White House and has been involved in a host of leadership activities. In addition, he is scheduled to host an upcoming gubernatorial town hall meeting.

Scheduled to participate on the panel are:
- Kay Galarza, a student at Baruch College Campus High School in New York City, and a youth leader whose work centers around different forms of advocacy and activism, particularly in dismantling systems of oppression within the school district;
- Nick Paesler, a student in Portland, Ore., who serves on the Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council and as the student representative on the district’s school board. He is one of the original design-team members of Oregon Student Voice;
- Joshua Lynn, a sophomore in the Baltimore City Public Schools, is heavily involved in community advocacy and serves on the district’s Board of School Commissioners;
- Evelyn Reyes, a junior at the John D. O’Bryant School of Math and Science in Boston whose parents come from Honduras, is a member of the National Honor Society and served on her school’s Diversity and Inclusion Council. She embraces the Me Too movement and is concerned about the lack of empathy shown to survivors and victims of sexual assault and abuse.

The Council’s national town hall meeting will be streamed live at $https://live.hosted.events/cgcs/$ on Oct. 26 at 2:30 p.m., EDT. Or, follow the event on Twitter at #StudentVote18.

Detroit Schools Superintendent Nikolai Vitti believes that the P-20 model will demonstrate that the school system can simultaneously rebuild the district, while introducing innovation. “The magnitude of this partnership is priceless in that it expands the city’s portfolio of high-demand, unique traditional public school options and develops a much-needed teacher pipeline with one of the top universities in the country,” said Vitti in a press release.

And he believes that the program preparing newly certified teachers based on residency for medical doctors, as well as the teacher training school, will have the ability to attract college students to the teaching profession. In addition, the innovations developed at the new K-12 school will be shared and replicated across the entire Detroit school district.
Columbus District Names New Leader

Columbus City Schools recently selected Talisa Dixon to lead its school district, the largest in the state of Ohio with 51,000 students.

Dixon is the superintendent of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District in Ohio and will succeed interim leader John Stanford.

Since 2014, Dixon has served as superintendent of the 5,200-student school system. During her tenure, she has launched several initiatives, including developing a Five-Year Strategic Plan to ensure that students are college and career ready.

The veteran educator is no stranger to Columbus, having served in the district as an assistant principal and principal from 2001 to 2010. As a principal at the Columbus Alternative High School, she focused on increasing educational access and achievement, particularly among minority students.

Dixon also served as deputy superintendent for teaching & learning from 2010 to 2014 in Michigan’s Saginaw Public Schools, where she designed and facilitated a comprehensive redesign of the school district as the head of the superintendent’s Academic Task Force.

The Columbus Board of Education unanimously selected Dixon in a 7-0 vote.

“Dixon is an incredibly talented educational leader and we’re excited about the opportunity to have someone like her here in our district,” said Board President Gary Baker in the Columbus Dispatch.

She intends to finish out the school year with her current district before taking the helm in Columbus around January 1, 2019.

Denver and Cleveland Districts Aim to Retain Quality Teachers with New Programs

Denver Public Schools, similar to many urban school districts, has faced difficulty in retaining teachers, especially those in the beginning of their careers.

“DPS is no different than most places nationally where we look at the retention level of early career teachers as being an opportunity for improvement,” said Debbie Hearty, the district’s chief human resource officer in an interview with the Urban Educator.

Led by Hearty, the district is re-envisioning its teacher pathway and support efforts to make them more effective.

Teaching academies have been created at seven of the district’s high poverty schools to serve as talent hubs to train educators who are enrolled in teacher preparation programs. The academies are at four elementary schools and three secondary schools.

Hearty has also pushed the creation of Associate Teachers, which the district is piloting for the very first time in the 2018-2019 school year.

The six Associate Teachers, who are licensed and certified, spend half the day teaching and the other half practicing their skills and receiving coaching and support.

The district will monitor and evaluate the associate teachers to see if their teaching practice has improved over the course of the year. “Ideally, we would like to see all of them step into a full-time teaching role by next fall,” said Hearty, “with the ultimate goal of novice teachers entering DPS ready to meet the needs of our kids and stay longer.”

The district has also developed what it calls a first-of-its-kind teacher leadership model where schools are organized into teams guided by a teacher leader who spends half their time in the classroom teaching and the other half of their time coaching with their team of teachers.

The teacher leadership model has grown from a small pilot of 15 schools to more than 500 teacher leaders this year.

So what advice would Hearty give other districts interested in such programs?

“I don’t think the associate teacher role by itself is a game changer, but I think the role in the context of a teaching academy can become more of a game changer,” said Hearty.

She believes that the district must be able to help its principals and school leadership team think about talent as a multiple-year engagement, not just once a year during hiring season.

“The question that needs to be asked is how do you create opportunities for your great teachers to mentor, grow and develop the next generation of teachers?” said Hearty. “And how do you create structures that make that possible?”

Cleveland Makes Progress

Last year, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District received a $1-million grant to create TEACHing Cleveland, an initiative focusing on teacher recruitment, mentoring and retention.

The initiative proved so successful, with the retention rate of new teachers improving by 3 percent from last year, that the district is continuing the program this year.

As part of the initiative, a new program has been created called the Resident Educator Teacher on Assignment in which three experienced teachers will work full-time as mentors to 10 new teachers. And an online platform has been developed called the Teaching Channel Plus where new teachers can find resources for planning and classroom management.

Veteran teacher Linda Palombo-King serves as a program mentor in TEACHing Cleveland and said it is hard for new teachers, whose only experience may be student teaching when they were in college. “You learn all the theory and practice,” she said, in a story that appeared on the district’s website. “How do you put it into place? Student teaching just gives a very short glimpse.”
closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.

The School District of Philadelphia saw two of its elementary schools – Albert M. Greenfield and William M. Meredith – honored and applauded by Superintendent William Hite, the mayor and other city, school and community officials at press events.

“We’re very proud of the students and staff at Greenfield and Meredith for earning this national distinction and exemplifying the progress that Philadelphia schools are making throughout the city,” said Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney.

In Houston, a principal of a Blue Ribbon School, East Early College, shares what has made her school successful in its mission to graduate all incoming freshmen in four years with up to 60 hours of college credits.

“My advice to other principals is to be inclusive when planning and setting goals,” Principal Stephanie Square stressed in a press release. “Include teachers, students and parents. They will buy into goals they feel they are a part of creating.”

Three schools in the Houston Independent School District were named National Blue Ribbon Schools.

#### Jackson District Strives for 100 Percent Wireless

As part of an ambitious plan to boost educational technology, Jackson Public Schools in Mississippi is aiming to make all its schools 100 percent wireless by 2019.

The plan is being spearheaded by the district’s Information Technology Department, which was recently profiled in Toggle Technical Magazine.

Stephan George, a graduate of Jackson Public Schools, has been the executive director of the IT Department since 2015, and under his leadership the district has been making strides to boost technology for its 25,000 students and 52 schools.

George believes the project to make all of its schools wireless will not only enable teachers to explore innovative teaching methods, but also lessen physical space needs and capacity issues because students will not have to use traditional hard-wired desktop computers.

Other projects the IT department has implemented include creating “power bank” battery-powered devices to keep systems running in case of power outages.

George is quick to give praise to his 20-member IT department, which does not have a large budget and often has to work with old equipment from the early 2000s or even the late 1990s.

“I may have the vision, but I’m not the only one bringing it to fruition,” said George. "It’s everyone working as a team.”

#### Aurora District Breaks Ground with University

Colorado’s Aurora Public Schools and Colorado State University-Global Campus recently broke ground in launching an innovative partnership to help eliminate barriers and increase access to postsecondary opportunities for the school district’s students, graduates and staff.

CSU-Global is a regionally accredited university that is completely online and designed for working adults. The university offers bachelor’s and master’s degrees, as well as certificate and continuing education opportunities.

In 2016, Aurora voters approved a bond measure to help fund construction of a new headquarters for CSU-Global. In turn, the Aurora school district will receive scholarships and significantly discounted tuition rates as in-kind lease payments from CSU-Global. The new headquarters is expected to open in the fall of 2019.

The significantly discounted tuition rate (between 24-33 percent off) are universal and unlimited for graduates and staff members of Aurora Public Schools (APS).

In addition to these discounts, a scholarship program is being developed that could make college free for hundreds of APS students. The scholarship program will launch when the new headquarters opens next year.

This ambitious partnership is part of APS’ commitment to transforming a college and career success culture. In fact, over the past five years, the district has increased graduation rates by 15 percent and cut its dropout rate in half. The district has also made notable gains in student growth and achievement.

“We are a district of momentum, opportunity and impact,” said Superintendent Rico Munn. “As part of our strategic plan, APS 2020, one of our goals is for every student to earn credentials that open doors. This revolutionary partnership will allow more students than ever to earn cre-
When Cheryl Logan became the superintendent of Nebraska’s Omaha Public Schools on July 1 after serving as the chief academic officer in the School District of Philadelphia for five years, she knew there would be some surprises awaiting her in her first job leading a school district in a new city.

But the biggest surprise in her three-month tenure has been the attention she has received wherever she goes in the city. “It’s overwhelming in a positive way,” said Logan in an interview with the Urban Educator. “There is such genuine support and people rooting for me who don’t even know me. It’s been amazing.”

As the first African American and the first female in Omaha to hold the position of superintendent permanently, the reception by women who work in the district, from support staff to teachers and administrators, has also been noteworthy. “They are kind of tickled when they see me and I’m equally feeling that way toward them,” said Logan.

Another surprise for Logan is the city’s philanthropic community and its generosity toward the Omaha school district. Logan recently met with officials from a foundation who wanted to know how much they should give to support the school system since she hasn’t asked them yet. “The level of giving is kind of remarkable,” said Logan. “I feel particularly excited about it.”

The veteran educator was chosen to lead the district in January but did not officially begin until July. She used those months in between to become familiar with the city, while meeting with retiring superintendent Mark Evans as well as staff and community members. Logan believes this process helped pave the way for a smooth transition into the role of superintendent for the 52,000-student district, Nebraska’s largest.

At the first school board meeting she attended in July, she laid out a 90-day entry plan, which included plans to develop a good relationship with the school board, build trust with district stakeholders, take a close look at the district’s finances and review instructional practices.

Logan in an interview with the Urban Educator, board president Marque Snow said that the board unanimously selected Logan because they were looking for a superintendent that understands urban school districts.

“Changing Demographics

Omaha’s student population consists of 35.5 percent Hispanic, 27 percent Caucasian and 25.1 percent African American students. Logan, who started her career as a Spanish teacher and speaks fluent Spanish, believes the district’s biggest challenge, or what she likes to call “opportunity,” is that the demographics are rapidly changing, and the district is becoming more diverse. “The district will look different in five years, especially 10,” said Logan. “We have to address what that will mean for us.”

In an interview with the Urban Educator, board president Marque Snow said that the board unanimously selected Logan because they were looking for a superintendent that understands urban school districts.

“When people talk about how our demographics in the district are changing, Cheryl Logan said to us they already changed,” said Snow. “Because of her previous experience, she was able to really come into Omaha and say ‘hey your demographics have changed, now how do we meet the needs of these kids.’”

Snow has been most impressed by her willingness to listen and noted that she held a student town hall, a first for Omaha, that allowed students to put her in the hot seat with questions, but also listened to what they had to say.

As superintendent, Logan receives numerous emails from high schoolers and recalled how one student wrote that a program she saw in another school district would be good for Omaha. “Honestly, that’s nirvana for a superintendent,” said Logan. “You have reached the pinnacle of influence when children are reaching out to you to share their ideas.”

She is currently working on rewriting the district’s strategic plan, changing it more from strategic planning to strategic foresight. The district is working with an educator, an economist and a futurist in the belief that bringing these three people together will help the district successfully reconfigure its strategic plan to best serve the needs of its diverse student body.

Logan, 55, starts her mornings at 5 a.m. in the gym and if time allows, gets a second workout in the evening. She is a multiple marathoner, having run four 26-mile marathons. She has a 28-year-old daughter who lives in Maryland and followed her footsteps into teaching. And Logan has two dogs named Lola and Coco, who are becoming just as well-known in Omaha as she is.

The veteran educator also is a fan of Hallmark movies. “People see me as serious and an intellectual and they are always surprised to hear how much I like a good Hallmark movie,” said Logan.

And even though there are times when Logan says she feels like a fish out of water, she truly loves being a superintendent because she knows she is making a difference in the lives of Omaha’s children and their families. Logan said that in meetings, she will often ask the staff how a decision that was made will best serve children and families.

“I don’t care how remote an issue may be, there is always some connection to children and families in the work that we do,” said Logan.
Broward Co. District Receives High Honor

Florida’s Broward County Public Schools has been named District of the Year by Cambridge Assessment International, part of the University of Cambridge in England.

The school system headquartered in Fort Lauderdale is reportedly the first district in the United States to receive the Cambridge District of the Year distinction.

The honor recognizes districts that have high academic achievement among students participating in Cambridge programs and for increasing Cambridge opportunities across the district. Broward County Public Schools ranked highest among large school districts for expanding Cambridge access and services and student academic achievements.

“We are honored to be the first school district in the country to earn the Cambridge International District of the Year award,” said Broward Schools Superintendent Robert Runcie in a press release.

“We congratulate the students, teachers and administrators in Broward County on their exceptional level of achievement,” said Mark Cavone, regional director-North America of Cambridge International.

Healthiest Schools Recognized

Four schools in Florida’s Pinellas County Schools near St. Petersburg and one school in Memphis are among America’s Healthiest Schools, according to the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, an organization that helps children develop lifelong, healthy habits.

Northwest Prep Academy in Memphis and four Pinellas schools—Belcher Elementary School, Skycrest Elementary School, Forest Lakes Elementary School and John M. Sexton Elementary School—received the organization’s N

‘Pittsburgh Public Scholars’ Now University of Pittsburgh Freshmen

In an effort to help talented students in the city of Pittsburgh pursue a college education, Pittsburgh Public Schools and the University of Pittsburgh announced the launch of the Pittsburgh Public Scholars program last summer. Under the program, valedictorians and salutatorians from high schools in the Pittsburgh school district were offered guaranteed admission to the university as well as scholarships.

Andrew Knight was the valedictorian of his 2018 senior class at Pittsburgh’s Perry High School and wanted to attend the University of Pittsburgh since he was 8 years old. That dream is now a reality, with him entering the university this fall as a freshman as part of the Pittsburgh Public Scholars program.

Knight is one of 10 freshman students at the university who make up the first cohort of scholars.

Participating students are offered scholarships of at least $2,000 annually for up to four years. In addition, the University of Pittsburgh will meet the full financial need of scholars who are eligible for Federal Pell Grants.

Knight, who plans to become a high school English teacher, is the first in his family to attend college and is one of four students in the program who are first-generation college students. “I hope to make them [my parents] proud by being their first child to complete a four-year education at any university,” said Knight in a story that appeared on the University of Pittsburgh’s website.

Another first generation college student in the program is Noor Nader, a 2018 salutatorian from Brashear High School, who plans to study microbiology and pursue a pre-med track.

At a recent reception held to welcome the scholars, Pittsburgh Public Schools Superintendent Anthony Hamlet said that he was grateful to the university for its continued commitment to the academic success of the district’s students.

“Today we celebrate impressive district graduates who will continue their education due to the generosity of the university through the Pittsburgh Public Scholars Program,” said Hamlet.
Citywide Effort in Nashville Leads to Literacy Gains

When Nashville’s Director of Schools Shawn Joseph took the reins of the district in 2016, the first thing he did was convene a 47-member transition team to assess the state of the district. That assessment revealed one clear challenge: Nashville students were in a literacy crisis.

At the time, Tennessee’s capital city mirrored national averages of 37 percent of fourth-grade students and 36 percent of eighth-grade students scoring at or above proficient in reading on the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The mandate was clear: help more kids read on grade level.

Joseph declared the ability to read as a “civil right” and urged the community to do more for students who faced systemic barriers to learning. Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) set out to change teaching and learning.

At the same time, district leadership partnered with business and government leaders to galvanize the community to support the changes.

“The district’s focus on literacy comes at a critical time in our city,” says Nashville Mayor David Briley, who has been a strong supporter of MNPS’ efforts. “As one of the fastest growing cities in the nation, we are working hard to ensure our students not just learn, but thrive.”

Briley adds, “I am proud to stand with Metro Nashville Public Schools and its director of schools, teachers and staff to ensure students in Nashville receive the literacy tools needed to prepare them for a successful future.”

Changing Instruction

MNPS, in conjunction with the Nashville Public Education Foundation, the Office of the Mayor, and other local organizations, set a lofty goal: to double the number of third-grade students reading on grade level by 2025.

To meet the goal, MNPS intensified professional development for teachers and leaders on three English Language Arts (ELA) Core Actions focusing lessons on quality text, engaging students in rigorous academic discussions about the text, and providing students with meaningful tasks allowing them the opportunity to respond to the text.

Additionally, the 86,000-student district hired a Literacy Teacher Development Specialist for each school and revised the district’s ELA Scope and Sequence to close the implementation space between Tennessee’s rigorous state standards and classroom instruction. MNPS is also diversifying its ELA curricula options and worked with the Council of the Great City Schools and Student Achievement Partners on an innovative early-grades literacy pilot.

Finally, working with local experts, the district developed a comprehensive literacy plan for all educators and parents centered on the concept of “advanced literacy.”

“Metro Nashville Public Schools’ literacy plan is one of the strongest and most modern plans I have seen,” says Emily Pendergrass, director of Reading Education Programs and senior lecturer for Literacy Education in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College of Education. “Nashville is making bold strides in educating today’s students for the progressive workforce of tomorrow.”

Involving the Community

The city of Nashville has mobilized around reading. Some of the collaborative efforts include the publication of a Blueprint for Early Childhood Success, which reflects work from the Nashville Public Education Foundation and local leaders that, among other steps, brings together coaches for literacy from local universities to support schools.

In addition, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation has invested $800,000 to support literacy efforts, and the district has redesigned report cards to keep parents better informed of their students’ progress.

Further, the district coordinated with the Nashville Public Library to address “summer slide” with a Summer Reading Challenge. After reading 20 minutes each day, thousands of children documented their minutes by coloring in pictures of guitars, which were displayed all over the city—and, ultimately, represented more than 11 million minutes of reading in Nashville.

Realizing Results

With these efforts, Tennessee’s state test results have already begun to show some gains. At the end of the 2017-18 school year, Metro Nashville Schools saw a 1.3 percentage point increase from the year prior, compared to a 0.2-point increase statewide, in the number of third- through eighth-grade students scoring “on track” or “mastered” in the English portion of the assessment.

Additionally, the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment showed that second- through eighth-grade students surpassed the national average for growth in reading, except for grade five, according...
On-Time Federal Education Funding Bill
With Disappointing Outcome

By Jeff Simering, Director of Legislation

For the first time in over two decades, the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill has been enacted before the beginning of the federal fiscal year. In fact, five of the twelve annual FY 2019 appropriations bills have been passed under something akin to regular legislative order with committee, floor, and conference committee consideration.

Instead of the frequently used “omnibus” appropriations bill with virtually all government funding bundled into a single legislative package, the FY 2019 bills have been combined into smaller packages or so-called “minibus” bills. The Labor-HHS-Education measure has been merged with the Defense Department appropriations bill and funds these two departments through the end of the fiscal year. However, the bill also contains a short-term continuing resolution (CR) to fund the rest of the government until December 7th (Pearl Harbor Day). Since this interim CR includes only short-term funding for the remaining parts of the government, including the Department of Homeland Security, there is a real possibility of a major budget showdown at the end of the calendar year over items like the proposed border wall.

The full-year education appropriations should allow school districts to plan more effectively for their federal funding allocations in the upcoming school year. Unfortunately, this year’s appropriations bill provides only small increases in major federal elementary and secondary school programs. Previous years’ omnibus-bill negotiations created the political leverage to increase education appropriations in exchange for supporting broader government-wide funding. In fact, past funding levels that were proposed separately by the House or the Senate were often exceeded in the final omnibus appropriations bill.

For school year 2019-2020, however, the ESEA Title I program for disadvantaged students, the ESEA Title IV-A program for support and enrichment activities, and the IDEA Part B program for students with disabilities received increases of only $100 million, $70 million, and $87 million respectively (0.6 percent, 6.4 percent, and 0.7 percent). In the case of Title IV-A, the final funding level dropped below the increase proposed in both the House and Senate versions of the FY 2019 spending bill. And, the ESEA Title II-A program for teacher professional development and the ESEA Title III program for English language learners were frozen again at their previous year’s funding levels. Beyond the educator sector, Head Start increased by $200 million (2 percent) and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) increased by $50 million (1 percent). While there were no cuts to major elementary and secondary education programs, federal funding did not keep pace with inflation.

Getting earlier notification of funding levels is helpful, to be sure, but it does not compensate for inadequate funding levels. Moreover, a budget stalemate over the remaining seven appropriations areas running up to December 7th could still affect already completed spending measures. Federal education funding often does better in an election year – unfortunately, this year it did not.

Stockton and Toronto School Districts Join the Council

Two urban school districts recently joined the Council of the Great City Schools, increasing the organization’s membership to 74 school systems. California’s Stockton Unified School District has 40,000 students and 54 schools and is led by John Deasy, the former superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Prominent graduates of the district include former NASA Astronaut Jose Hernandez and Michael Tubbs, who at the age of 26 was elected in 2016 as the youngest mayor of Stockton and the city’s first African American mayor.

Also joining the Council is the Toronto District School Board, the largest school system in Canada with 246,000 students in 583 schools throughout Toronto. The district is led by the Director of Education John Malloy.
Several Urban School Districts Selected to Gates Foundation Partnerships

At the Council of the Great City Schools’ 61st Annual Fall Conference in Cleveland last year, philanthropist Bill Gates announced that his foundation’s biggest investment in education would be funding a network of public schools to drive student achievement.

That announcement became a reality when the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recently awarded Networks for School Improvement (NSI) grants to 19 organizations across the nation to significantly increase the number of black, Latino, and students from economically disadvantaged families who graduate from high school and enroll in college.

Under the NSI, a group of middle or high schools will partner together with an intermediary organization, which will organize groups of schools, provide space, technical assistance and data support to develop programs that lead to higher academic achievement for minority students.

Baltimore City Public Schools received an $11.2-million grant, which over 48 months will fund onsite literacy coaches at

12-15 middle schools.

Dallas Independent School District received a $7-million grant as part of a partnership with the University of Pittsburgh to increase the reading and writing skills of minority students at 12 secondary schools.

Atlanta Public Schools and Achieve Atlanta will receive more than $600,000 in grants over a 24-month period to develop a digital tool that will match high school students with colleges.

And Shelby County Schools in Memphis and its Seeding Success program received a $560,000 grant to support a network of 15 feeder pattern middle and high schools over a 24-month period to help 8th and 9th graders stay on track toward college and career readiness.

In total, the Gates Foundation awarded $91 million and eventually plans to distribute more than $400 million in grants to support the NSI initiative.

Miami Students Launch ‘Don’t Stall, Just Call’ Campaign to Address Mental Health Issues

The mass school shooting last February by an alleged teenager in Parkland, Fla., hit home with students in nearby Miami-Dade County.

In recognizing the need for student awareness of resources to help youth experience sensitive and mental-health issues, students at Miami’s Design and Architecture Senior High launched a campaign called “Don’t Stall, Just Call.”

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools embraced the initiative and will place posters designed by the students in school bathroom stalls that provide anonymous, toll-free hotline information to assist students with issues they may be facing.

The posters – Don’t Stall, Just Call – NO MORE STALLING – ask questions such as “Struggling with depression or suicidal thoughts? Dealing with an eating disorder? Struggling with sexual harassment and/or abuse?”

Hotline information is given to contact reputable help groups, including the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, the National Eating Disorders Association and the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network.

The student project was the result of this important work that we believe will teach children to successfully manage the personal and emotional challenges they often face,” he adds.

Don’t Stall, Just Call

No More Stalling

Struggling with depression or suicidal thoughts?
800-784-2433

Dealing with an eating disorder?
800-931-2237

Struggling with sexual harassment and/or abuse?
800-656-4673

Questions about sexual health or identity?
617-616-1616

Dealing with any crisis or just need somebody to talk to free of judgment? Text HELLO to 741741

You are never alone. All the above numbers are anonymous and toll-free.
Aurora District continued from page 6

dentials that they may have considered out of reach.”

On average, the annual undergraduate tuition at an accredited four-year university costs more than $13,000 in Colorado. If an APS student uses the discount provided through this partnership and a Federal Pell Grant, annual tuition would cost less than one-fourth of that amount (about $2,800 per year). In addition, with the APS scholarship opportunity, hundreds of students could earn their college degrees for free.

Both APS graduates and staff members are already excitedly taking advantage of the deep discounts and convenient online programs. APS school counselor Erin Graves is pursuing a certificate in Educational Leadership thanks to the affordable option. Graves is the mother of two young children and she said she would have never been able to afford classes or make time without the flexibility of an online option.

“I am so excited to continue my education and expand my professional development thanks to this partnership,” said Graves. “APS is a school district that thinks outside the box and works tirelessly to do what is best for students, staff and families.”

Las Vegas Student Named National Student Poet

Ariana Smith

Ariana Smith is a senior at the Las Vegas Academy of the Arts. As the daughter of an African-American father and a Filipina mother, she used poetry when she was a little girl to connect to her multicultural identity. As a teen, she now uses poetry to discuss modern issues facing black youth.

Smith was recently named to the 2018 class of National Student Poets, the nation’s highest honor for youth poets. The poets represent five geographical regions of the nation and will each receive a $5,000 academic award.

They will spend the year serving as literacy ambassadors and share their passion for poetry and literacy at libraries and museums as well as participate in service projects, workshops and public readings.

The National Student Poets Program was founded in 2011 and is an initiative in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the nonprofit Alliance for Young Artists & Writers.

The program is open to high school sophomores and juniors and more than 23,000 works of poetry were submitted this year, with 35 semi-finalists invited to submit additional poetry and performance videos that were judged by a jury consisting of leaders in education and the arts.

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Healthiest Schools

Ariana Smith

Out of 461 schools in the nation honored by the alliance, only 13 schools received the Gold-level award, its highest honor.

In order to be named one of America’s Healthiest Schools, schools must meet or exceed federal nutrition standards for school meals, offer breakfast daily and provide students with at least 60 minutes of physical education a week.