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SPECIAL EDITION
Back to School



Baltimore City Schools Superintendent Gregory Thornton joins a crowd of students walking to school on the district's first day of classes.

Urban Schools Open With an Emphasis On Technology

Improving students' access to technology is a prime focus of many urban schools as the 2015-2016 school year begins. In addition to helping students become more computer savvy, big-city school districts are also implementing a range of academic and social initiatives. Here's a roundup of what some urban school districts are offering students:

Atlanta

Atlanta Public Schools is partnering with the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning to implement a districtwide social and emotional learning (SEL) initiative that will enhance instructional models, integrate SEL into the core curriculum, and establish an inclusive culture school-wide.

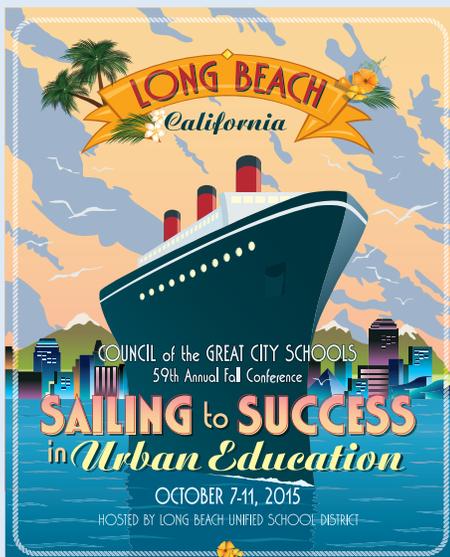
Baltimore

Baltimore City Public Schools is partnering with local universities and holding a series of youth retreats focused on leadership development, advocacy and team-building and designed to give students the skills they need to serve as leaders in their schools. And a new grading scale is being implemented to encourage and reward students who challenge themselves academically in their course selection.

Birmingham

Alabama's Birmingham City Schools is partnering with Microsoft and the City of Birmingham to increase access to digital

Urban Students to Speak Out at Town Meeting



With equity and equality issues sparking unrest in Ferguson, Mo., Baltimore and other cities, the Council of the Great City Schools will feature a panel of urban students at its annual national town hall meeting, scheduled Oct. 9.

Students from New York City, San Francisco and Long Beach, Calif., will speak out on education, race and their futures at the forum moderated by news correspondent and journalist Maria Hinojosa, anchor and executive producer of National Public Radio's long-running weekly program *Latino USA*.

The 90-minute town hall meeting is being held in conjunction with the Coun-

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“Envelope, Please! And the Urban Educator of the Year Is..”



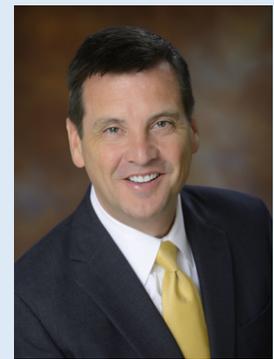
Cindy Elsbernd



Perla Tabares Hantman



William Isler



Bill Sublette

Anticipation will be in the air on the evening of Oct. 8, when the top honor for urban-education leadership will be announced at the Council of the Great City Schools’ 59th Annual Fall Conference in Long Beach, Calif.

Four big-city school board members are finalists for the Green-Garner Award, recognizing outstanding contributions in urban education and 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 finalists for the award are school-board members:

- Cindy Elsbernd of Iowa’s Des Moines Public Schools;
- Perla Tabares Hantman of Miami-Dade County Public Schools;
- William (Bill) Isler of Pittsburgh Public Schools; and
- Bill Sublette of Florida’s Orange County Public Schools in Orlando.

And now the moment everyone has been waiting for. The announcement of the 2015 Urban Educator of the Year will be made at the 26th annual award banquet Oct. 8.

Sponsored by the Council, Aramark K-12 Education and Voyager Sopris Learning, the Green-Garner Award is presented to an urban-school superintendent and board member in alternative years. The winner receives a \$10,000 college scholarship to present to a student.

Last year’s awardee was Superintendent Terry Grier of the Houston Independent School District.



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A newsletter published by the Council of the Great City Schools, representing 68 of the nation’s largest urban public school districts.

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Find the Council on:



New School Chiefs Named in Chicago, Fort Worth, Newark, Charleston, Birmingham and Buffalo; Four Districts Select Interim Leaders



Forrest Claypool

Several urban districts across the nation are starting with new leadership for the 2015-2016 school year.

Forrest Claypool has been selected as the new chief executive officer for Chicago Public Schools, the nation's third largest school district with 400,000 students.

No stranger to large-scale leadership roles, Claypool has worked as a former president of the Chicago Transit Authority. He has also served as the superintendent of the Chicago Park School District, where he reduced costs and spending, while expanding programs for families.

Claypool, who most recently served as Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's chief of staff, has replaced school board vice president Jesse Ruiz, who served as interim CEO after Barbara Byrd-Bennett's resignation.



Kent Paredes Scribner

In Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District, the school board has named Kent Paredes Scribner as superintendent.

Scribner has led Arizona's Phoenix Union High School District, which serves more than 27,000 students, since 2008.

He succeeds Patricia Linares, who has acted as interim superintendent since 2014 in Fort Worth.

And in New Jersey's Newark Public Schools, Christopher Cerf is the new state-appointed superintendent. His arrival could mark the beginning of the end of two decades of state control over New Jersey's largest public school district.

According to *NJ.com.*, Cerf, a former state education commissioner, takes the

helm with a clear directive from the state: guide the school district back to local control.

As superintendent, Cerf will hold one of nine seats on the newly formed Newark Educational Success Board, a panel of community members and educational experts. The board, created by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie and Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, is charged with developing a specific pathway with appropriate timelines and benchmarks for ending the state takeover.

Cerf succeeds Cami Anderson, who resigned in July.

More New Leaders

Gerrita Postlewait was recently named superintendent of South Carolina's



Gerrita Postlewait

Charleston County School District, the second largest district in the state with more than 50,000 students. She assumes the role from acting superintendent duo Michael Bobby, the district's chief financial and operations officer, and

Lisa Herring, deputy superintendent for academics.

Prior to accepting the position, Postlewait served as the assistant vice president for ACT. She also served as the superintendent for South Carolina's Horry County School District for 10 years.



Kelly Castlin-Gacutan

Alabama's Birmingham City Schools has selected a veteran educator to lead its school system. Kelley Castlin-Gacutan, the interim superintendent in Georgia's Bibb County

School District, has taken the helm. She succeeds interim superintendent Spencer Horn.

With more than two decades in education, Castlin-Gacutan has experience as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, district-level administrator and university professor. In her most recent position as interim superintendent in Bibb County, she oversaw 42 schools, approximately 24,000 students and a \$289 million budget.



Kriner Cash

And New York's Buffalo Public Schools named Kriner Cash as its new leader, succeeding interim superintendent Darren Brown.

Cash comes to Buffalo with 20 years of executive leadership experience in education, having served as superintendent in Memphis and Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts.

Contract Extensions

Tom Boasberg, who took the reins of Denver Public Schools in 2009, will remain at the helm through December 2017, as a result of a new contract extension. Under his leadership, district schools have posted record enrollment numbers, improved graduation rates and experienced increases in student achievement.

Also receiving a contract extension in Louisville is Donna Hargens, who took the reins of Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools in 2011. She was recently given a four-year contract extension to continue leading the district.



Donna Hargens

Hargens was com-

School Chiefs continued on page 12

Urban Schools *continued from page 1*

technology with an initiative called the City Next Digital Alliance. The program will help students get comfortable with technology, including learning coding programs, as well as offer computer training for teachers.

Boston

Boston Public Schools is implementing its 100-Day Plan to improve the level of education across all schools, develop high-quality schools close to home for all students and close the achievement gap. As part of the plan, the district is launching a “Culture of We” campaign to identify and publicize “bright spots” across the district.

Broward County

Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., which is celebrating its 100th anniversary, is partnering with the national organization Code.org to offer computer science courses at every district high school. The school system is also implementing a chess curriculum in all second and third grade classrooms.

Charlotte

North Carolina’s Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is collaborating with the city’s library system to enable students at all of the district’s 168 schools to use their school identification number to check out books and use online tools at all library branches and at home. The school system is also expanding the use of digital textbooks, with students in grades three through five using the techbooks for science and middle schoolers using techbooks for math.

Chicago

In an effort to reduce transportation costs, the nation’s third largest school district is changing bell schedules for 82 high schools and elementary schools. District officials expect staggering its elementary and high school start times will save \$13.5 million a year. The school system is also launching the Independent Schools Principal program, offering high-performing principals more autonomy and greater flexibility.



Charlotte Schools Superintendent Ann Clark hands a student a laptop during her visit to Devonshire Elementary School on the first day of school.

Cincinnati

Cincinnati Public Schools is expanding its “My Tomorrow” initiative, designed to improve students’ career readiness, to grades five through 12. The initiative began last school year with 7th and 8th graders. The school system also launched a new publication, *Measuring What Matters*, highlighting the ways the district is going beyond state indicators to challenge students academically.

Clark County

Nevada’s Clark County School District in Las Vegas is increasing the number of year-round schools to 22, to handle an estimated 323,000 students for the 2015-16 school year. And in an effort to provide greater assistance to the district’s lowest performing schools, 22 Victory Schools will open, offering professional development for teachers and wraparound services to help prevent students from falling behind.

Columbus

Ohio’s Columbus Public Schools is opening the Columbus Gift Academy, a self-contained gifted program for grades 3-8, combining specialized instruction in the classroom with interactive and education opportunities in the community.

Dallas

Dallas Independent School District implemented online enrollment for approximately 160,000 students. Using the

slogan “Convenient. Fast. Accurate,” the district piloted the program at 41 schools this past spring before rolling it out to more than 200 schools in August. Launched two weeks before school, the campaign featured an integrated online enrollment marketing effort, and resulted in nearly 10,000 students enrolling online by the end of the first week of classes.

Denver

Students in Denver Public Schools will see fewer and shorter tests with students in grades 11 and 12 no longer required to take a state exam. In addition, the total test time for the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) language arts and math tests will be reduced by about 60 minutes for each grade and PARCC tests will be administered once a year, rather than twice a year.

Des Moines

Iowa’s Des Moines Public Schools has partnered with Drake University to offer a master’s degree for free or reduced cost to teachers in the district. The new master’s program will focus on urban education, cultural competency and instruction for students learning English, with half the classes taught by Drake University professors and half by Des Moines school staff members hired as adjunct professors.

Detroit

Detroit Public Schools restructured the district’s central office operations by creating a new network structure to support schools. Each network is comprised of members whose objective is to improve overall academic achievement by providing more coordinated coaching and development of school leaders and teachers in the schools.

District of Columbia

The District of Columbia Public Schools is launching Cornerstones, an initiative to provide high-quality “lesson experiences” to all students. Students from k-12th grade,

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Urban Schools *continued from page 4*

and across English language arts, math, science, art, music, physical education, health, and world language subjects, will experience Common Core-aligned Cornerstone lessons. Cornerstones are designed to be accessible to all students, including those with specialized instructional needs.

Duval County

Jacksonville’s Duval County Public Schools in Florida is launching the *5000 Role Models of Excellence Project* to improve the achievement levels for minority boys. The district is recruiting 500 local business and community leaders to serve as role models to 500 African American boys in 10 middle and high schools. The school system is also launching the Non-Violence Project, a five-year, \$15 million program that implements strategies such as mentoring sessions and group counseling at 24 middle schools.

El Paso

Texas’ El Paso Independent School District is distributing laptops to every high-school student as part of its PowerUp initiative. In addition, teachers in English language arts, social studies, science and math have created digital Flexbooks that will be available to every student *via* their district-issued laptop.

Fort Worth

As a result of a capital improvement program approved by voters in November 2013, Texas’ Fort Worth Independent School District is opening a \$2-million aviation center at Paul Laurence Dunbar High School. The Aviation Engineering and Technology hangar and classroom will provide students with the opportunity to earn certifications upon completion.

Fresno

California’s Fresno Unified School District is opening a new high school, the Philip J. Patino School of Entrepreneurship, designed to equip young entrepreneurs with skills to launch companies. District officials believe it is the first high school



Hawaii Schools Superintendent Kathryn Matayoshi visits with students at Hilo Union Elementary School. They were given t-shirts indicating their final stop in the K-12 pipeline — Hilo High’s Class of 2028.

in the nation that will enable students to develop their start-up business ideas with local business leaders, pitch their ideas to investors and start their own business.

Guilford County (Greensboro)

North Carolina’s Guilford County Schools’ Parent Academy will offer free one-to-one, online live tutoring and homework help through *Brainfuse HelpNow*, an all-in-one suite of tutoring services offering students on-demand academic help from expert tutors. And the district’s Western High School is one of 100 schools across the nation to offer the College Board’s AP Capstone program, an innovative diploma program.

Hawaii

The Hawaii State Department of Education is expanding the Future Ready Hawaii program to more than three dozen schools for 2015-16. The 1:1 device and digital learning program is centered on teacher professional development and school readiness.

Houston

Houston’s Independent School District is opening a new Arabic Language Immersion Magnet School this fall, serving prekindergarten and kindergarten students, and eventually

expanding to grade 5. The district is also expanding its EMERGE program, which identifies and helps high-potential students from low-income households attend top universities, to all district high schools.

Indianapolis

Indianapolis Public Schools is opening five Innovation Network Schools, as a result of a state law that allows compacts between the district and charter schools or other groups to operate schools inside the district. The schools are run independently but are accountable to the district.

Jackson

Mississippi’s Jackson Public Schools is expanding its Academies of Jackson initiative, where students work in small cohorts, to include tenth grades. And students in the academies will have the opportunity to participate in the Career Exploration Fair, an interactive experience designed to expose students to more than 200 careers.

Jefferson County

In an effort to teach students empathy and improve behavior, Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Ky., is implementing the Compassionate Schools Project at three elementary schools. Through a partnership with the University of Virginia, the project will begin as an integrated health and wellness curriculum.

Los Angeles

The nation’s second largest school district has been reorganized into six smaller districts, each with its own superintendent and an instructional plan tailored to their community’s schools and students. And as part of the district’s Instructional Technology Initiative, more than 70,000



Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Ramon Cortines talks with students at Gault Street Elementary School.

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Urban Schools *continued from page 5*

iPads, laptops and Chromebooks will be given to students at 103 schools piloting the one-to-one device program.

Miami

Miami-Dade County Public Schools is eliminating out-of-school suspensions and will instead send suspended students to Student Success Centers, where they will receive counseling and social services. The nation's fourth largest school district is also providing 32,000 tablets to all middle school 8th-grade U.S. History classrooms as well as 10th-grade high school students enrolled in English as a Second Language.

Nashville

Tennessee's Nashville Metropolitan Public Schools is offering Arabic language classes in grades 7-12 at six schools. The district is also adding fifth and sixth grades to its MNPS Virtual School, offering more than 20 online courses for middle school students.

New York City

The nation's largest school district is allowing 64 schools to become Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence for the 2015-16 school year, enabling them to suspend union rules and implement practices such as longer school days and seminar classes.

Orange County

Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Fla., is expanding its Digital Learning program from seven to 16 elementary, middle and high schools and will provide all students at those schools with laptops. The district is also opening seven new, renovated or replacement elementary schools featuring closed-circuit TV studios and interactive projectors and screens.

Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh Public Schools is implementing a restorative practice program in 23 schools, designed to enhance and build relationships between students, staff and parents, improve student behavior and reduce violence and bullying.

Providence

Rhode Island's Providence Public Schools is opening two new schools, the 360 High School and Evolutions High School, whose creation was supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The schools will promote student-centered learning, with technology supporting students as they accelerate at their own pace.

Richmond

Virginia's Richmond Public Schools has implemented Let's Talk!, a new online communication system designed to provide students, parents and community members with a streamlined process to communicate with district leadership. People can submit ideas or concerns from a computer, tablet or mobile device that are automatically routed to the appropriate department for a response within three business days.

San Francisco

San Francisco Unified School District has developed a partnership with Salesforce Foundation to expand computer science opportunities for its students. As part of the partnership, employees plan to volunteer 10,000 hours and the company will adopt 20 schools.

Santa Ana

California's Santa Ana Unified School District is launching "Read Santa Ana Read," an online tutoring program for 250 first graders, in which volunteers will be able to tutor students in reading remotely from their computers. And for the first time in seven years, the district is opening a new school, the Advanced Learning Academy, a charter school focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) curriculum for elementary and intermediate students.

St. Louis

In an effort to help students who lack self-control, Saint Louis Public Schools has opened the Education and Therapeutic Support Program for students in preK- 8th grade. The school is designed to give students who are defiant or have difficulty

following direction the autonomy to make thoughtful decisions. And the St. Louis Rams football team will fund a program to ensure certified athletic trainers are present at all of this season's district high school football games.

Wichita

Wichita Public Schools is beginning the rollout of the Marzano teacher evaluation model and process, which was selected by a group of district teachers and administrators after an extensive review of teacher evaluation models. The Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model identifies a complete set of practices directly related to improved student performance, organized into four domains that develop teacher expertise.



Toledo Students Get Warm Welcome

More than 50 African American religious, business and education leaders lined the sidewalk in front of Martin Luther King, Jr. Academy for Boys in Toledo, Ohio, to welcome students back to school. They shared handshakes, hugs and words of encouragement to the young men and many have committed to visiting the school throughout the year.

A Superintendent Succeeds in the Career She Always Wanted

When Barbara Jenkins was selected as superintendent of Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Fla., in 2012, she had big shoes to fill. Jenkins was succeeding Ronald Blocker, who had led the school system for 12 years, with the school board even renaming the district's administrative building after Blocker following his retirement.

But Jenkins, who was the district's deputy superintendent, took on the challenge and the results speak for themselves. Last year, the district was the co-winner of the \$1 million Broad Prize for Urban Education.

"Ron had a hand in it and I did as deputy as well, but over a 12-year period we went from a 50 percent graduation rate to an 88 percent graduation rate," said Jenkins, in an interview with the *Urban Educator*. "Earning the Broad Prize sent a clear message we are doing some things right to boost student achievement for all of our children."

In serving at the helm of Orange County schools, Jenkins has come full circle. She is a 1979 graduate of the school system, and when she talks to students, she mentions how when she was a student she never dreamed of having a job at this level.

"[Being a graduate] sort of brings home for them that certain positions don't have to come from only outside our community," said Jenkins.

When she was in the first grade, she had a teacher who she adored and whose footsteps she wanted to follow.

"I wanted to be a teacher from the first grade," she recalled. "My mother would say the same thing 'she never wanted to do anything else than to be a teacher.'"

Despite the many challenges that come with leading the nation's 10th largest school district, such as converting to the new Florida State Standards and grappling with a new state accountability system, Jenkins loves her job as superintendent because of the ability to help students become successful. "Public education is the linchpin of our democracy and critical for our country," stressed the school leader.



Orange County Schools Superintendent Barbara Jenkins talks with students.

Making a Big Impact

Jenkins began her career as a classroom teacher in the Orange County school district and didn't picture a move into administration until her first principal asked her "don't you want to make good things happen to larger groups of children?"

"What I was drawn to, and the only thing that usually entices me, is can I have a positive impact on a larger group of students?" said Jenkins, who has served various positions in Orange County, including senior director for elementary education and chief of staff. "I'm a sucker for that carrot every time."

During her three years at the helm of the 190,000-student school system, one of the most important things she has learned is how critical it is for superintendents to have a good working relationship with the school board.

Jenkins says she is fortunate to have a school board that not only understands governance, but also is co-owner of the vision and mission of the school system.

She also realizes that it is critical to engage the community, especially in a district such as hers, which serves affluent families as well as homeless families. "The district would not be capable of getting all students to success without additional support and community initiatives," said Jenkins.

That strong community support was evident when voters last August passed a renewal of a half-cent sales tax worth approximately \$2.1 billion, and three months later approved the renewal of a one-mill property tax.

Jenkins is also a big believer in having a deliberate data-based process to make sure students are being pushed to higher levels of rigor and achievement. Two years ago, she established the Minority Achievement Office because data indicated that the worst achievement gaps in the district were among black and Hispanic males. The office is creating specific initiatives around engaging and encouraging males of color.

And while the district is making an effort to recruit and retain teachers of color, "whether I have more minority teachers or not, the teachers we have are going to have to get the job done," said Jenkins.

She has been married for 29 years and has two children, a daughter who just completed law school and a son who is pursuing engineering. In her spare time, the 54-year-old likes to read, travel, exercise and refers to herself and a group of colleagues as "Power Shoppers."

Although Jenkins is pursuing the career she wanted since the first grade, in 2013 she was on Florida Gov. Rick Scott's list of candidates for lieutenant governor.

Scott ultimately chose someone else. But Jenkins was flattered, and though she does not rule out a career in politics, right now she is focused on making Orange County Schools the best school system in the nation.

"I go to work very excited because I love the mission," said Jenkins. "The best part is engaging with our students because it gives us a clear hope of our future and reminds us why we are in this business."

Urban School Districts Tackle Student Absenteeism Issue

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District in July launched a citywide campaign – complete with billboards, yard signs, bus placards and radio spots – aimed at raising school attendance.

The “Get to School! You Can Make It!” campaign targets an epidemic: In nearly two-thirds of the district’s schools, more than half of the students are chronically absent – defined as missing 10 days or more a year.

The Cleveland district’s data show the absences lead to a sharp decline in test scores. Missing 10 days or more cuts scores on state reading tests by an average of 12 points and math scores by 15 points; missing those days in ninth or 10th grades can leave a student with a 4-in-10 chance of staying on track to graduation.

“We are making gains under the reforms spelled out in *The Cleveland Plan*, a blueprint for improvement initiated in 2012,” Chief Executive Officer Eric Gordon said. “But we can’t educate children who regularly fail to show up for school. We count on families to help by doing their part.”

Football Team Joins Drive

In August, the Cleveland Browns professional football team’s foundation joined the attendance campaign, planning to provide game incentives and player involvement and school visits to encourage students to attend school.

“We are proud to partner with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District for the “Get to School” campaign as we help prepare our youth and city for success through education,” said Browns owner and Cleveland Browns Foundation President Dee Haslam in a press statement.

“Our kids look up to the Browns, wear their team colors and follow their season,” Gordon pointed out. “We see in the team and players the kind of dedication and hard work it takes to play in the NFL. These



Cleveland schools CEO Eric Gordon, center, joins students and district union and religious leaders in signing a pledge to have or encourage good attendance.

players have to show up every day, just like our kids need to show up every day, to succeed,” the district CEO stressed.

Pro Athletes Step Up

The Milwaukee Public Schools has teamed up with the Milwaukee Bucks pro-



Milwaukee Bucks basketball player Jabari Parker talks with students at the launch of a new attendance initiative.

fessional basketball team and Bucks forward Jabari Parker to launch a new initiative to encourage students to be in school.

The basketball player will appear in a multi-media campaign to urge students to own their futures by being in school all day, every day.

“In every aspect of life, success comes to those who show up every day willing to work hard,” said Parker. “You can’t learn if you aren’t in school. It’s my hope that every MPS {Milwaukee Public Schools} student will realize the importance of making every day count.”

“Students who are in school all day, every day increase their academic success and that’s what we want for all of our young people,” Milwaukee Schools Superintendent Darin Driver emphasized.

Tennessee’s Shelby County Schools in Memphis also recently launched a communitywide campaign to boost awareness of the importance of daily student attendance.

The foundation of the Memphis Grizzlies professional basketball team has signed on as a major sponsor of the “Represent Everyday” campaign, and Grizzlies star Tony Allen has volunteered to be the official face and voice of the citywide drive.

On the first day of September, the Grizzlies player reportedly woke up Shelby County families with a recorded phone call, “Hello everyone. This is the Grindfather, Tony Allen, Memphis Grizzlies. Being successful takes a lot of hard work and dedication and includes going to school every day.”

The robo-call is intended to wake up parents and students to the need for kids to attend classes everyday. “We know that if a child misses more than a few days in a school year, it could be very difficult to get back on track,” said Shelby Schools Superintendent Dorsy Hopson.

Council of the Great City Schools

59TH ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE

“Sailing to Success in Urban Education”

Hosted by the Long Beach Unified School District

October 7 - 11, 2015
 Hyatt Regency Hotel
 Long Beach, CA

Wednesday, October 7

7:00 am-5:00 pm	Conference registration
1:00 pm-5:00 pm	Task Force Meetings
6:30 pm-8:30 pm	Welcome reception at the Aquarium of the Pacific

Thursday, October 8

7:30 am-9:00 am	Breakfast and Welcome	
9:00 am-12:15 pm	Breakout Sessions	
12:30 pm-2:00 pm	Lunch and Speaker: LeVar Burton	
2:15 pm-5:30 pm	Breakout Sessions	
7:00 pm-9:00 pm	26th Annual Green-Garner Awards Banquet: Urban Educator of the Year Announced	

Friday, October 9

7:30 am-9:00 am	Breakfast and Speaker: José Hernandez	
9:00 am-12:30 pm	Breakout Sessions	
12:30 pm-2:00 pm	Lunch and Speaker: Fareed Zakaria	
2:30 pm-4:00 pm	National Town Hall Meeting: Moderated by Maria Hinojosa	
6:30 pm-8:30 pm	Reception on the Queen Mary	

Saturday, October 10

8:00 am-9:00 am	Breakfast
8:30 am-12:00 pm	Board of Directors Meeting
12:00 pm-2:30 pm	Legislative Directors Meeting
6:30 pm-9:00 pm	Farewell Event at Cafe Sevilla

Sunday, October 11

8:00 am- 11:30 am	Breakfast and Closing Session
11:30 am	Adjourn

Town Meeting *continued from page 1*



Maria Hinojosa

cil’s 59th Annual Fall Conference in Long Beach, Calif., hosted by Long Beach Unified School District.

From New York City public schools, two students who serve on the NYC Urban Ambassadors program to help prepare students for college, especially males of color, will participate in the panel discussion.

Ethan Ambrose, a senior at Medgar Evers Preparatory High School in Brooklyn, is also one of only two high school students on the Youth Advisory Board of New York City’s Young Men’s Initiative. Cornelius Ray Jr., a 12th grader



Ethan Ambrose



Cornelius Ray Jr.

at Gotham Professional Arts Academy in Brooklyn, also enjoys helping his peers and younger students in need of assistance.

From the San Francisco Unified School District, 11th-grader Mai Sinada of Raoul Wallenberg High School and 12th-grader Hatim Mansori of Mission High School will address issues facing students at the town meeting.

Sinada is junior class president, captain of both the basketball and volleyball teams, as well as an advocate for Muslim students. Mansori is Black Student Union president, a mayoral appointee to the San Francisco Youth Commission, member of the NAACP Youth Council and served as the co-chairman of a “Black Lives Matter” rally.

The Long Beach Unified School District plans to include three of its students on the town meeting panel.



Mai Sinada



Hatim Mansori

ESEA Reauthorization Heading to Conference Committee

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

Now eight years overdue, an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization bill is finally headed to a House-Senate conference committee to resolve differences between the two new versions of this landmark federal education law. The chances of passage are greater now than at any time in recent years with both chairmen and the Administration signaling a willingness to reach an agreement.

Nonetheless, the challenges in crafting a final bill are significant. Groups on the political left and right have opposed both versions of the bill, either because the bills failed to include enough of No Child Left Behind's (NCLB) accountability requirements or because they failed to further unravel the federal role in education and embrace unfettered school choice.

There are also numerous organizations that have "lauded and applauded" both bills at each stage of the process, because they were desperate to escape NCLB accountability or they were desperate to get out from underneath the state-by-state waiver process and its teacher evaluation requirements. Other groups acted as cheerleaders for little other reason than they were currying political favor for little clear aim. Conference managers will have to navigate through these positions and the legislators that represent them.

One always hopes that a conference committee in this situation will find a solid middle ground or take the best provisions of each bill to produce exemplary legislation. Unfortunately, the opposite is also possible. Conferees could adopt some of the worst provisions from each bill in order to give each house or each party bragging rights on their key political issues. Moreover, provisions that school officials might consider as among the best or worst of the two bills may be viewed differently by other interest groups—all in the name of what's best "for kids."

Typically, the Council of the Great City Schools takes a pragmatic approach to any reauthorization, knowing that our members operate the largest ESEA programs in the nation and must implement all, not just some, of the provisions



in any new legislation. Given that context, the Council tends to focus on improving flaws in each bill.

And, flaws there are. Each bill allows federal funds generated by disadvantaged students to be spent on other students. Each bill has provisions that increase funding for private-school services and charter schools at the expense of traditional public schools.

The Senate bill has a large number of new requirements – many that exceed current NCLB provisions. In our opinion, too many of the wrong things are being required in this bill while too few things that would actually help districts improve academic achievement are included.

Moreover, the House bill includes a "portability" provision allowing states to redistribute Title I funds from higher poverty school districts to more affluent districts and schools. And, the Senate bill changes the Title I funding formula in a manner that would see 70 percent of the nation's school districts ultimately facing cuts to their Title I funding levels. The impact on the Great City Schools is mixed, but we remain opposed to changing formulas in a way that creates financial winners and losers in this cornerstone program for disadvantaged students.

Other provisions in both bills could facilitate cuts in State aid to education by eliminating or revising the ESEA "maintenance of effort" requirement, or create loopholes in the traditional "supplement not supplant" requirements that help ensure that the "value-added" benefits of federal funds accrue to the most at-risk students.

The Council has offered a number of detailed recommendations to the conference managers that would improve, mitigate, or modify the pending bills. There is a window of opportunity through which Congress could produce a good reauthorization bill that actually works. In our opinion, however, it does not take a 1000-plus page Senate bill or a 600-plus page House bill to tell us how flexible and helpful they are trying to be.

‘Latinos in Action’ Program Launched In Broward District-White House Partnership

In an effort to empower Latino students, Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., is partnering with the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics to offer a new high school course for the 2015-16 school year.

“Latinos in Action” is an elective course being piloted at six high schools designed to help Latino students graduate and attend a college or university. The course focuses on leadership, literacy and service and will provide students with increased opportunities for educational and cultural experiences.

In an interview with *NBC 6 South Florida*, Jose Enriquez, the executive director of “Latinos in Action,” said the goal of the course is to not only educate students “but also to educate the populace, help people see the Latino community and La-

tino youth in a whole different light, that they’re serving, they’re leading, they’re college bound.”

Students enrolled in the course will receive high-quality classroom instruction on college readiness, personal development, biculturalism and professionalism; literacy tutoring opportunities at feeder elementary and middle schools; and exploration of cultural heritage through literacy and performing arts.

The “Latinos in Action” initiative is part of the Broward County school district’s ongoing commitment to meet the needs of the area’s growing Latino community. “This initiative empowers students to take an active role in their education and give back to our community through mentorship and service opportunities,” said Broward Schools Superintendent Robert Runcie.

Denver Math Fellows Help Students Succeed

What started out as a fledgling daily math tutoring program in seven low-performing Denver schools in 2011 has morphed into a model of success district-wide.

Today, the Denver Math Fellows program has expanded to more than 50 schools, serving more than 4,500 students. The program’s expansion was made possible by a 2012 ballot measure voters approved, which set aside \$15.5 million to increase the free-of-charge math tutoring program, which showed impressive gains among some of the city’s lowest performing students after its pilot year.

The tutoring is conducted daily among 4th, 6th and 9th grade students and provided by fellows who are recent college graduates, career changers considering teaching, and retired teachers. The fellows support students who are below grade level in math with supplemental daily instruction.

The targeted intervention program also

serves as a successful pipeline for teacher recruitment, with 40 percent of Denver Public Schools’ alternative licensure programs being filled by former Denver Math Fellows.

“We’re attracting candidates for our math fellows program from more than 30 states, and they’re all drawn by a desire to make a difference for kids,” said Timothy Johnson, program director. “Because they want to serve and because they’re seeing results, I’m not surprised our fellows are interested in taking the next step to become teachers.”

Fellows receive weekly professional development and coaching in their year of service. All fellows who serve during the 2015-2016 school year are eligible for a \$5,730 AmeriCorps education award.

Additionally, fellows earn salary and medical benefits, and a potential \$2,000 bonus for the full-time service year.

For the 2015-2016 school year, the district is seeking to hire 200 new fellows.

Council Honored By White House Hispanic Initiative

The Council of the Great City Schools was recently named one of the *Bright Spots in Hispanic Education* by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics in commemoration of the initiative’s 25th anniversary.

More than 230 evidence-based programs, organizations and initiatives were recognized for addressing education priorities for Hispanics and helping close the achievement gap.

The Council was nominated by the Albuquerque Public Schools and won for its work focusing on early learning, K-12 education and college access.

Shelby County District Files Lawsuit Over Lack of State Funding



Shelby County Schools in Memphis recently filed a lawsuit against the state of Tennessee for failing to provide equitable and adequate funding for public school education for all students.

With a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students and an increasing enrollment of non-English-speaking students, the school system believes current state funding provided to the district falls far short of the actual costs of delivering students a quality education.

“Our students deserve fair treatment – access to a quality education and a fair opportunity to lead a successful life,” said Teresa Jones, chairwoman of the Shelby County Board of Education. “In a time when academic and career standards are increasing, our students need more resources.”



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mended by the district's board of education for her efforts to improve student learning for all student groups and increase public transparency and accountability.

Interim Leaders

Two big-city school districts have selected their chief financial officers to serve as interim superintendents. Missouri's Kansas City Public Schools named Allan Tunis, succeeding R. Stephen Green, who recently resigned from the district to head Georgia's DeKalb County Schools. And Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools named Chris Henson as interim leader, succeeding Jesse Register, who retired from the district in June.

Dallas Independent School District recently selected Michael Hinojosa as interim superintendent. Hinojosa will return to the district after serving as the superintendent from 2005-2011. A graduate of the district, he succeeds Mike Miles.

And New Mexico's Albuquerque Public Schools recently named Raquel Reedy, the district's associate superintendent of elementary education, as interim superintendent, succeeding Luis Valentino.

Anchorage Educator Named to Federal Post



Doreen Brown

Doreen Brown, the executive director of Title VII Indian Education program for Alaska's Anchorage Public Schools, was recently appointed by President Barack Obama to the National Advisory Council on Indian Education. The council advises U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan on the funding and administration of federal programs for Indian education.

In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Brown said schools need to engage their Native Alaskan students and that Alaska Native educators have developed standards for schools that embrace Native culture and weave it into their lessons.

"Are districts adhering to that?" asked Brown in the *Washington Post*. "What kind of culturally responsive practices are within the school? Are there traditions and heritage and language embedded into all phases of the curriculum?"



Two Texas Districts Join Council

The Arlington Independent School District near Fort Worth, Tex., and the San Antonio Independent School District recently joined the Council of the Great City Schools, increasing the urban-school coalition's membership to 68 public school systems.

The Arlington school district enrolls more than 64,000 students from diverse backgrounds. The San Antonio school district enrolls nearly 54,000 students.

Both districts join other Texas school systems – Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth and Houston – as members of the Council.