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SPECIAL EDITION
Back to School

Urban Schools Prepare For New Standards

The Council of the Great City Schools has launched a far-reaching initiative to help urban schools implement common core standards with a \$4.6-million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The three-year grant is aimed at promoting and coordinating successful implementation of the new kindergarten to 12th-grade common core standards in English-language arts and mathematics in big-city public school systems nationwide.

Standards continued on page 8



Superintendent Dwight Jones of Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas joins students on a bus ride for the first day of school at Ed W. Clark High School. (Photo by Michele Nelson, Clark County School District photographer)

New School Year Opens with an Eye On Improving Achievement

Urban school districts across the nation are implementing new initiatives to improve academic achievement, offering dual enrollment programs with local colleges, creating new teacher evaluation systems and opening state-of-the-art schools, despite the financial challenges facing them. Here is a roundup of what some big-city districts are doing:

Albuquerque

In an effort to better prepare kindergartners for school this fall, New Mexico's Albuquerque Public Schools participated in a research study that provided students with 25 days of additional instruction in the summer and compensated their par-

ents. The study called StartSmart K-3 Plus was conducted by the University of Utah and provided students at 15 schools that entered kindergarten this fall with summer services and paid their parents up to \$100 for having their children's reading, math, vocabulary and social skills evaluated.

Anchorage

Alaska's Anchorage School District is implementing Response to Instruction, a new system designed to ensure all students receive instruction based on their needs. Under the system, students' reading skills will be assessed three times each year to

New School Year continued on page 4

An Education Revolution



BOSTON | 2011

Fall Conference in Oct.

The Council of the Great City Schools will host the nation's largest conference for urban education leaders Oct. 26-30 in Boston. Details on page 9.

Houston District Tops in Business Management

The Houston Independent School District recently received a top national award for adhering to the highest standards in financial management, accountability and fiscal control.

The Council of the Great City Schools presented the *Award for Excellence in Financial Management* to the nation's seventh largest school district for its financial performance in safeguarding and protecting the financial integrity of a school system.

This is only the second time that the Council has recognized a school district with its highest national award for sound financial management.

"This is a significant achievement by the Houston Board of Education, the superintendent and the entire administrative staff whose efforts demonstrate outstanding stewardship of taxpayer dollars," stresses Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "And ultimately, the schoolchildren are the beneficiaries."

The Council convened a panel composed of respected senior financial executives from major school systems across the nation to conduct the review process, which included an assessment of the dis-

trict's management practices and an extensive site visit.

To receive the award, a district must comply with 94 "mandatory" practices and a minimum of 32 to 42 "recommended" practices of 136 management practices across a broad range of areas -- from management structures to internal and external auditing.



Michael Casserly, right, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, presents Houston Schools Superintendent Terry Grier with the Council's Award for Excellence in Financial Management.

Baltimore Schools CEO Appointed to NAEP Policy Board



Andrés Alonso

Chief Executive Officer Andrés Alonso of the Baltimore City Public Schools has been appointed to the National Assessment Governing Board by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

Alonso and six others, including a state education commissioner, high school teacher, state school board member and university professor, were named or re-appointed to serve four-year terms on the 26-member governing board that sets policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as *The Nation's Report Card*.

"Together, their diverse education experience and leadership will be a valuable resource in identifying where we need dramatic improvement and how we can better provide our children with a 21st century education," said Secretary Duncan.



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Superintendent, Albuquerque

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All news items should be submitted to:
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Cleveland and Louisville Districts Appoint New School Chiefs

When Eugene Sanders, the CEO of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, retired in February, the school system turned to a national search firm to find a new leader. And from a pool of 126 candidates, the decision was narrowed down to three superintendents from Michigan, Ohio and Massachusetts.

So it was a big surprise when on June 7, the Cleveland school board selected one of its own, Eric Gordon, the district's chief academic officer, as its new leader. Gordon

had never led a school district, but as chief academic officer he was the main architect of the district's five-year Academic Transformation Plan. And during his four years in the No. 2 position, test scores and student attendance in the district increased.

"In talking with and interviewing highly qualified candidates from other districts, it made us more aware of how much innovation we've really done in the last five years," said Cleveland school board president Denise Link. "We were looking for someone to take that progress to the next level, and it became more and more clear there was no one better to do it than the one who brought us here."

Also selecting a new superintendent recently was Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Ky., which named Donna Hargens its new leader. She succeeds Sheldon Berman.

Hargens served many years in North Carolina's Wake County Public School System, holding positions



Donna Hargens

as interim superintendent and chief academic officer.

"[Hargens'] experience in raising student achievement, her overall leadership approach, and her commitment to diversity and student assignment make her

the best choice to lead our district," said Jefferson County school board chairman Stephen Imhoff.

Contract Extended

Andrés Alonso was selected as superintendent of Baltimore City Public Schools in 2007, and under his leadership dropout rates decreased, graduation rates increased, and test scores on state exams improved across all categories of students.

As a result, Alonso was recently given a four-year contract extension through June 2015.



Cleveland Schools CEO Eric Gordon joins students at the grand opening of Euclid Park Elementary School.

More Than a Dozen Urban School Districts Begin Year with Interim Leaders

The 2011-2012 school year begins with more than a dozen urban school districts led by newly appointed interim leaders.

The School District of Philadelphia named Leroy Nunery, deputy superintendent, to serve as the district's acting superintendent, succeeding Arlene Ackerman.

Two school districts in Texas are being led by interim leaders. Dallas Independent School District chose Alan King, deputy superintendent of a neighboring school district in Texas, to become interim superintendent, succeeding Michael Hinojosa, who left the district to become superintendent of a school system in Georgia.

And the Fort Worth Independent School District named deputy superintendent Walter Dansby as its interim leader, succeeding Melody Johnson.

Donnie Carter, the chief operations officer for Broward County Public Schools in

Fort Lauderdale, Fla., is the district's new interim superintendent, succeeding James Notter, who retired.

North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools has named chief operating officer Hugh Hattabaugh to serve as interim superintendent, succeeding Peter Gorman.

The Kansas City, Missouri School District recently selected R. Stephen Green, president of a college access program, to become interim superintendent. He succeeds John Covington, who left the district to become the new chancellor of Michigan's Education Achievement System.

Mississippi's Jackson Public Schools has selected a former superintendent, Jayne Sargent, as its interim superintendent to succeed Lonnie Edwards.

New York's Buffalo Public Schools has chosen Amber Dixon, the district's executive director of evaluation, accountability

and project initiatives, as its interim superintendent, succeeding James Williams, who retired from the district.

New York's Rochester City School District is being led by interim superintendent Bolgen Vargas, a former board member. He succeeds Jean-Claude Brizard who heads Chicago Public Schools.

Seattle Public Schools named Susan Enfield, the district's chief academic officer, as its interim leader, while Rhode Island's Providence Schools has appointed Susan Lusi as interim superintendent. She was the superintendent of Rhode Island's Portsmouth Public Schools.

Arkansas' Little Rock School District selected a former superintendent, Morris Holmes, as its interim leader.

And Atlanta Public Schools recently extended interim superintendent Erroll Davis' contract to June 30, 2012.

New School Year *continued from page 1*

help teachers identify their learning needs and guide core instruction.

Atlanta

Students at Atlanta Public Schools' Booker T. Washington Early College High School will be able to enroll in courses at Clark Atlanta University through the new Early College Partnership Program. The program enables students to enroll in two courses at the university a semester and accumulate 24 credit hours to apply to a college program.

Austin

Beginning this fall, Texas' Austin Independent School District will expand from four to six, the number of elementary schools that will offer its Two-Way Dual Language program. The program supports two language groups, English and Spanish, in becoming bilingual in both languages.

Boston

Boston Public Schools is opening two new in-district charter schools this fall. The UP Academy will serve nearly 500 students in grades 6-8 and the Boston Green Academy will serve 340 students in grades 9-12 who have struggled academically. Also, opening is the Roger Clap Innovation School, the district's first innovation school which offers staff increased autonomy and flexibility.

Broward County

Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., is expanding its dual enrollment program with Broward College by offering high school students the opportunity to take five college courses entirely online. And beginning this fall, the district will implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative for kindergarten students across all content areas and CCSS Literacy Standards in grades 1-12.

Charlotte

North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is launching teacher, principal and superintendent portals designed to

provide real time data on an individual student's test scores, attendance, risk factors, schedules, parent information and graduation tracking. Aggregated data at the school level is available to principals and school and district data are available to superintendents.



Columbus Schools Superintendent Gene Harris appears with two students on the first day of school at Columbus City Preparatory School for Boys. On the first day, the school holds a tie-tying ceremony in which male members from the local community teach the boys how to tie a necktie. (Photo by Jacqueline Bryant)

Chicago

Chicago Public Schools is launching the Longer School Day Pioneers Program, which will provide elementary schools with funding and support needed to voluntarily lengthen their school day by 90 minutes this school year. Schools that start in September receive \$150,000 and those that start in January receive \$75,000 and may use the funds to purchase technology or create intervention programs.

Cleveland

Cleveland Metropolitan School District is opening four new schools, including The Mound School, a prek-8 school featuring a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) program.

Cincinnati

Cincinnati Public Schools is opening the Cincinnati Gifted Academy that will serve approximately 100 academically gifted students in grades 3-6. The district is also launching a new online program called the Cincinnati Digital Academy that offers students a web-based college preparatory curriculum for students in grades K-12.

Clark County

In an effort to improve student achievement, Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas has reorganized its schools into 13 new zones based on school performance. Low-achieving schools are grouped into smaller zones and will have academic

managers who will work with principals to increase academic performance. The school district has also collaborated with the Nevada Department of Education to release the state's first growth model, which will provide the yearly growth results for each school in the district as well as the state.

Columbus

Ohio's Columbus City Schools is implementing its STEM program at one high school and its two feeder middle schools. The district is also offering American Sign Language as a foreign language course and is offering students expanded opportunities to take coursework online through its Virtual Credit Advanced Program.

Dallas

Dallas Independent School District begins the 2011-2012 school year with four new elementary schools funded under its 2008 bond program. The district has also opened the Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy, the first all-male public school in Texas, according to district officials. The academy serves male students in grades six through nine.

Dayton

Ohio's Dayton Public Schools is beginning the school year with new curriculum pacing guides for grades K-12 that teachers will use to prepare students for the common core standards. Pacing guides have been developed in science, language arts,

New School Year *continued on page 5*

New School Year *continued from page 4*

math and social studies, indicating what teachers must successfully teach and students must master at each grade level.

Denver

Denver Public Schools is opening two Multiple Pathway schools for students in grades 6-12 who have not succeeded academically in traditional schools. Vista Academy offers students programs in culinary arts and sports medicine and the Denver Center for 21st Century Learning is a technology-based school.

Des Moines

Iowa's Des Moines Public Schools is continuing its Destination Graduation program, an initiative to increase the graduation rate and lower the dropout rate, funded by a \$6 million federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

Detroit

Detroit Public Schools is opening two new high schools for ninth-grade students: the Dr. Benjamin Carson High School of Science and Medicine and Detroit Collegiate Prep. And all students in grades K-12 will receive breakfast, lunch and snacks at no charge regardless of family income.

East Baton Rouge

Louisiana's East Baton Rouge Parish School System has opened the Career Education Center, a charter school to prepare students for college or a career. Before the charter school opened, district administrators met with local business leaders to find out what courses would be most beneficial to students.

Greensboro

Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, N.C., opened the doors to its newest middle college high school, The Middle College at UNCG, a high school for students interested in health sciences on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The district has also opened the Montlieu Academy of Technol-

ogy in which technology will be integrated into teacher instruction.

Fort Worth

Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District has opened four schools under its 2007 Capital Improvement Program, a \$593.6 million dollar bond package.

Houston

The Houston Independent School District is opening six new elementary schools as well as two new single-gender schools: the Young Men's College Preparatory Academy and the Young Women's College Preparatory Academy for grades 6-9. The district is also launching a new teacher appraisal and development system that will factor student academic performance into each teacher's appraisal as well as provide teachers with regular feedback.

Jacksonville

Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Fla., is launching a new reading initiative aimed at improving reading performance for students in grades K-12. The "Read It Forward Jax" campaign will partner local businesses, faith-based and non-profit leaders to share in helping teach children about the importance of reading.

Kansas City

The Kansas City, Missouri School District is launching the "On Time or Fall Behind" initiative that will offer incentives



Miami Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho helps a student get off the bus on the first day of school. (Photo Credit: M-DCPS Office of Public Relations)

to schools and students that demonstrate exceptional attendance rates.

Los Angeles

The Los Angeles Unified School District is launching its "I'M IN" campaign to combat obesity and encourage students to eat healthy. The five-year program will include celebrity-sponsored student and community activities, public service announcements and food-tasting events.

Memphis

Memphis City Schools begins its districtwide rollout of the Green Schools Affiliate program designed to educate students about energy and the importance of energy efficiency. Administered by the Alliance to Save Energy, students in the program are provided the tools and training to conduct an energy audit of their campus and identify efficiency opportunities.

Miami

Miami-Dade County Public Schools has created Peer to Peer, an in-person and online mentoring program for at-risk students. The district is also opening the Teach for America (TFA) Lead School, comprised of TFA teachers who are high-performing college graduates from elite universities.

Milwaukee

Milwaukee Public Schools is implementing a new Comprehensive Mathematics and Science Plan. The district is also opening two College Access Centers



A student at Montlieu Academy of Technology in North Carolina's Guilford County school system sees her image on an iPad 2 tablet donated by local businesses. The district has designated Montlieu as its technology prototype school. (Photo by Evan Brennan)

New School Year *continued on page 6*

New School Year *continued from page 5*



Newark Schools Superintendent Cami Anderson shares a toast with a student at Peshine Avenue School to kick off the new school year. (Photo by Howard Best, Newark Public Schools photographer)

to encourage more students to graduate from high school and succeed in college. The centers will provide free college preparation information and assistance to college-bound students and their families.

Minneapolis

In an effort to get dropouts back in school, the district joined forces with the City of Minneapolis to launch its “We Want You Back” campaign. The campaign recruited volunteers who knocked on doors distributing information and talked with students who had dropped out to encourage them to re-enroll in school.

Nashville

A science partnership between the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools and Vanderbilt University is expanding to another high school this year. The science and research program has been launched at Hillsboro High School and will serve 9th grade students who can earn six or more science credits upon graduation.

Newark

New Jersey’s Newark Public Schools is opening four new high schools this year. The district is also launching a shared campus plan in which 14 district and public charter schools will share space in seven buildings, resulting in savings of approximately \$4.1 million in facility operating costs. And the school system is collaborating with teach-

ers and administrators to launch an Educator Evaluation Pilot to improve teacher evaluation systems.

New York City

A new teacher evaluation system is being implemented in 33 schools in the nation’s largest school system. Teachers will be evaluated based on a four-category rating system: highly effective, effective, developing and ineffective, instead of the current system that gives teachers a rating of either satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Oklahoma City

The Oklahoma City Public Schools is using a districtwide Continuous Learning Calendar in which students go to school the same number of days, but have a shorter summer and longer fall, winter and spring breaks. The district is also adding an additional 20 instructional minutes to each school day. And a partnership between the school system and Teach for America (TFA) has resulted in more than 50 TFA corps members working in district schools this fall.

Omaha

As a result of a \$1-million donation from a local foundation, the Omaha Public Schools will open Wilson Focus School, serving grades 3-6. The school was operated jointly by Omaha Schools and two other districts, but finances had forced the school to close until the Sherwood Foundation led by Susie Buffett pledged funds to help the district keep the school open.

Orlando

Orange County Schools in Orlando, Fla., is transforming one of its high schools into a community hub that will provide students with health and mental health services, after-school enrichment programs and adult education and train-

ing. Evans High School will operate year round, six days a week and is designed to help students improve their academic performance as well as engage parents and local community members.

Philadelphia

In an effort to improve low-performing schools, The School District of Philadelphia is adding three more Promise Academies this year. Promise Academies provide more time for teaching and learning with a longer school day, Saturday classes twice a month for enrichment, and a summer academy.

Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh Public Schools has launched its new Teaching Institute, a teacher academy residency program in which new teachers will work alongside veteran teachers. The school district is also opening its newest 6-12 school, the Academy at Westinghouse, which will offer single-gender and co-educational classes.

Portland

Oregon’s Portland Public Schools is implementing its new teacher evaluation system, developed jointly by teachers and district administrators. The system provides two paths: a direct supervision path for probationary teachers that assesses teacher performance in four key areas and a professional growth project path that contract-level teachers can choose as a way to enhance their teaching skills. The direct supervision path begins this fall as the professional growth project path is phased in.

Sacramento

California’s Sacramento Unified School District is offering a Hmong Dual Language program, becoming the first school district in the state to offer such a program, according to district officials.

San Diego

The San Diego Unified School District has partnered with the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law to pilot the Parental Readiness and Engagement

New School Year *continued on page 7*

New School Year continued from page 6

program, which seeks to increase parental engagement and help parents become successful advocates for their children. The program has trained almost 300 parents about their child's educational rights.

San Francisco

San Francisco Unified School District has merged two schools together to create a new K-8 Spanish Immersion school.

Seattle

Seattle Public Schools has created AGREE: Attacking Gaps/Raising Expectations Everywhere, an initiative to reduce gaps in education and an opportunity to personalize each school's focus to improve teaching and learning. The district is also working with the mayor's office to increase attendance and reduce the dropout rate.

St. Louis

St. Louis Public Schools is opening the Pamoja Preparatory Academy, an African-centered school in which students will learn African values, customs and culture. The school serves students from preschool through seventh grade.

St. Paul

Minnesota's St. Paul Public Schools will begin implementing its strategic plan, *Strong Schools, Strong Communities*. Under the plan, six geographic areas will be established that promote learning close to home and align curriculum across all schools.

Tampa

Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa, Fla., is launching The Advancement Via Individual Determination English Language College Readiness program to put English Language Learners (ELL) on the path

to college. The program will serve 50 ELL students at two middle schools and is designed to accelerate their academic English language skills and prepare them to take advanced courses in high school.

Toledo

Ohio's Toledo Public Schools is turning all elementary and middle schools into K-8 neighborhood schools as part of its new transformation program to ensure all students attend a high-performing school. Under the program, virtual labs will be established in each school to provide students with access to distance and online learning.

Washington, D.C.

The District of Columbia Public Schools in Washington, D.C., has opened 15 new pre-K classrooms with nearly 250 new seats. The district is also rolling out the common core standards.

Wichita

Wichita Public Schools is opening the Dodge Literacy Magnet school, the first new school built as a result of a \$370-million bond issue that voters passed in 2008. The district is also piloting the AVID Program at the elementary level this year at two schools. The program is designed to encourage students to attend college, and fourth- and fifth-grade students will learn organizational skills, note-taking and study skills.



Wichita's Dodge Literacy Magnet School celebrated the opening of its new school with a ribbon-cutting ceremony featuring, left to right, Dodge Principal Janet Jump, Dodge mascot Dodger, two students, Assistant Superintendent Alicia Thompson, Bond Oversight Committee member Randy Thon and Board of Education member Lanora Nolan. (Photo by Susan Arensman)

Albuquerque Superintendent Leads Council



Winston Brooks

Superintendent Winston Brooks of New Mexico's Albuquerque Public Schools has taken the reins of the Council of the Great City Schools as chair of the organization's Board of Directors.

In July, he was elected to a one-year term to lead the Council's policy-making body, a 130-member board composed of the superintendent and a school board member from each of the 65 urban school districts represented in the group.

"Superintendent Winston Brooks brings to the leadership of the urban coalition a proven track record of successfully heading two Great City school districts -- Wichita and Albuquerque," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "He will be a strong and constructive force in leading the improvement of public education in our major cities and educating the nation's most diverse student body to the highest academic standards."

Brooks succeeds Dilafruz Williams, a board member of Oregon's Portland Public Schools, while Candy Olson, a board member of Florida's Hillsborough County School District in Tampa, assumes the position of chair-elect.

Indianapolis Public Schools Superintendent Eugene White has been elected to Olson's secretary-treasurer post to round out the Council's 2011-2012 leadership team.

Boston Public Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson serves as the immediate past chair.

Standards *continued from page 1*

“We’re about to undergo a sea change in instituting new academic standards,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “Common core standards are necessary to make real the promise of American public education to expect the best of all our schoolchildren.”

The grant will contribute to strategic communications, capacity building, curriculum and assessment alignments, professional development, pilot testing and a host of other measures needed to provide strategies, tools, advice and counsel to the nation’s urban school districts as they prepare to implement the state-led common core standards.

The Council wants to make sure that big-city school districts don’t slip through the cracks in a broader state adoption and implementation process. It plans to help the urban districts work together and maintain flexibility to permit coordination with their respective states.

To prepare urban schools to implement the standards, the Council plans to develop a “change management” booklet for school leaders. This will serve as a guide to aid urban educators in incorporating the new academic standards into their instructional programs, including integration of the common core into current district strategic plans and transformation efforts.

Also under the grant, the Council will develop communication tools and strategies to help urban school leaders build both internal and external buy-in of the common core. It will conduct information-sharing activities among its 65 member urban school districts to increase understanding of the standards, provide a forum for sharing materials, and offer technical assistance in the implementation process.

Externally, the Council will also develop materials that will build public awareness to engage communities. This will include development of public service announcements for broadcast, cable and social media outlets to educate the public and communities to the need and importance of common core standards.

“We want to get the message out that high standards that are consistent across states provide teachers, parents and students with a set of clear expectations that everyone can work toward together,” Casserly explains. “This contributes to America maintaining its competitive edge in a growing global marketplace.”

The Council has already convened chief academic officers, curriculum and research directors, reading and math specialists, English-language learner directors and special education leaders from its eight “lead districts” -- New York City, Boston, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Cleveland, St. Paul, Albuquerque and the District of Columbia -- to begin development of the implementation process.

Council districts will serve as test sites for piloting draft instructional tools, assessments and other materials emerging from other organizations. And the Council will help its school systems plan and build capacity in preparation for extensive changes in adoption of the common core.

Merger of City, County Schools in Memphis Takes Next Step

A U.S. district judge in August approved a deal that would create a 23-member unified school board to oversee the merger of the Memphis City Schools with the surrounding Shelby County Schools, according to the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*.

The new board would be responsible for winding down the operations of the two school systems and adopting a transition plan for a consolidated school system that begins in the 2013-14 school year.

If all goes as planned in the merger accord, the new countywide board would take effect Oct. 1. Currently, the Memphis school board has nine members and the Shelby County policy body has seven, leaving seven more positions to be fulfilled on the new 23-member board.

New Education Authority in Detroit Names Chancellor



John Covington

Michigan’s new Education Achievement Authority in late August tapped Superintendent John Covington of the Kansas City, Missouri School District to lead a recently unveiled statewide school system that will operate some 5 percent of the state’s lowest performing schools.

Covington stepped down from the helm of the Kansas City school system to be named the first chancellor of the authority.

In June, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder, Detroit Public Schools Emergency Manager Roy Roberts and state Superintendent of Public Instruction Mike Flanagan announced a plan to redesign public education in the state’s lowest performing schools by creating a new school system. More resources would be pumped into the classrooms of underperforming schools under the new authority, which is designed to offer greater autonomy in helping ensure student achievement increases.

The new statewide school system would first take control of a group of low-performing schools in Detroit in the 2012-2013 school year, then expand to cover the entire state, according to Detroit school district authorities.

When taking the helm of Missouri’s Kansas City school system in 2009, Covington went right to work in instituting major reform efforts, including a right-sizing process to close half-empty schools, financial measures to turn a deficit into a balanced budget, and academic initiatives to improve student achievement.

“Dr. Covington’s record of achievement is just the right fit to ensure that our children get the education they so richly need and deserve,” said Michigan Gov. Snyder, noting that “the future of Detroit and Michigan depends on making our education system a success...”

'Education Revolution' Planned in Boston



Victoria Reggie Kennedy

The nation's urban school leaders will converge in Boston Oct. 26-30 to participate in what is billed as "An Education Revolution - Reforming Our Great City Schools" -- the theme of the Council of the Great City Schools' 55th Annual Fall Conference.



Tony Plana

More than 70 conference sessions will focus on such topics as handling cheating allegations, new teacher evaluation models, how urban school districts are coping with the financial crisis, as well as preparing students for college and the workplace through common core standards.



Wes Moore

Attorney and health advocate Victoria "Vicki" Kennedy, widow of the late U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy, will deliver welcoming remarks to the more than 800 urban school superintendents, board members, senior administrators and college deans of education who will convene.



Robert Kennedy Jr.

Keynote speakers include actor and education advocate Tony Plana, author Wes Moore and activist Robert Kennedy Jr.



Carole Simpson

The pinnacle event of the conference will be the national town hall meeting on a major issue of the day in urban education. Moderating the program will be award-winning journalist Carole Simpson.

Also, the nation's top prize in urban education leadership -- the Richard R. Green Award -- will be presented at the conference.

To register, access the Council web site at www.cgcs.org.

Council of the Great City Schools

55TH ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE

"An Education Revolution"

Hosted by Boston Public Schools

October 26-October 30, 2011

Westin Copley Place Hotel
Boston, MA

Wednesday, October 26

7:00 am-5:00 pm
8:30 am-12:00 pm
1:30 pm-5:00 pm
6:30 pm-8:30 pm

Conference registration
Common Core Pre-Conference Meeting
Task Force Meetings
Welcome reception at the JFK Library & Museum
Remarks by **Victoria Reggie Kennedy**

Thursday, October 27

7:30 am-9:00 am
9:00 am-12:15 pm
12:30 pm-2:00 pm
2:15 pm-5:30 pm
7:00 pm-9:00 pm

Breakfast and Welcome
Breakout Sessions
Lunch and Speaker: **Tony Plana**
Breakout Sessions
22nd Annual Richard R. Green Awards Banquet:
Urban Educator of the Year Announced

Friday, October 28

7:30 am-9:00 am
9:00 am-12:15 pm
12:30 pm-2:00 pm
2:30 pm-4:00 pm
6:30 pm-8:30 pm

Breakfast and Speaker: **Wes Moore**
Breakout Sessions
Lunch and Speaker: **Robert Kennedy, Jr.**
National Town Hall Meeting
Moderated by **Carole Simpson**
Reception at the Top of the Hub Restaurant

Saturday, October 29

8:00 am-9:30 am
8:30 am-12:00 pm
12:00 pm-4:00 pm
6:30 pm-9:00 pm

Breakfast
Board of Directors Meeting
Legislative Directors Meeting
TBD

Sunday, October 30

8:30 am- 11:30 am
11:30 am

Breakfast and Closing Session
Adjourn

Council Supports Teacher Jobs and School Modernization Plan

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

President Obama has proposed a \$447 billion jobs package with \$60 billion in aid to schools, including \$25 billion for K-12 school modernization and \$30 billion for education jobs. The total proposal contains \$245 billion in tax provisions and \$202 billion in new program assistance.

The President’s American Jobs Act has four major components—

• Tax Cuts to Help America’s Small Businesses Hire and Grow	\$70 billion
Cut employer payroll taxes in half & bonus payroll cut for new jobs/wages	65
Extend 100% expensing in 2002	5
• Putting Workers Back on the Job While Rebuilding and Modernizing America	\$140 billion
Teacher rehiring and first responders	35
Modernizing schools	30
Immediate surface transportation	50
Infrastructure bank	10
Rehabilitation/repurposing of vacant property (neighborhood stabilization)	15
National wireless initiative (no cost due to spectrum sales)	0
Veterans hiring initiative	N/A
• Pathways Back to Work for Americans Looking for Jobs	\$62 billion
Unemployment Insurance Reform and Extension	49
Jobs tax credit for long term unemployed	8
Pathways back to work fund	5
• More Money in the Pockets of Every American Worker and Family	\$175 billion
Cutting employee payroll taxes in half in 2012	\$175
TOTAL	\$447 billion

These new education jobs and school facilities initiatives would provide an important financial lifeline for our urban districts that are entering a third consecutive school year of severe budget cuts, educator layoffs, and deferred maintenance.

Formula allocations would be provided through the states to school districts under a new \$30 billion Teacher Jobs Program, and direct formula allocations would be provided from the federal level under a new School Modernization Program to the 100 largest high-need public school districts with 40 percent of the \$25 billion for K-12 education.

The proposed Teacher Jobs Program would support district efforts to retain, rehire, and hire early childhood, elementary, and secondary educators, including teachers, guidance counselors, classroom assistants, afterschool personnel, tutors, and literacy and math coaches. The program is designed flexibly to enable schools to keep teachers in the classroom, preserve or extend the regular-school day and school year, and support after-school activities. In order to make state supplanting of these teacher-jobs funds less likely than in past years, a federally-defined distribution mechanism would be included in federal law, unlike the existing state-aid formulas that were

used in the 2009 ARRA Stabilization and 2010 Education Jobs programs.

Funds under the School Modernization component could be used for a range of emergency repair and renovation projects, greening and energy efficiency upgrades, asbestos abatement and removal, and modernization efforts to build new science and computer labs and to upgrade technology in the schools. A recent survey of the Council of the Great City Schools’ 65 urban school districts estimated that some \$75 billion in school facility needs exist across the Great City Schools. This amount includes some \$44 billion in needed school repair and modernization, \$18 billion in new construction, and \$13 billion in deferred maintenance. The President’s emphasis on the 100 largest high-need school districts is particular welcome, since the nation’s big cities have many of the oldest and most over-crowded school buildings in the country.

Legislative language to implement the President’s American Jobs Program will be forthcoming, and should provide a new opportunity to reach bipartisan consensus on turning around the economy and getting the nation back to work. The Council has called on Congress to pass the Teacher Jobs and School Modernization initiatives this fall.

Council Supports Study Of Education Colleges

The Council of the Great City Schools supports a study of the nation's colleges of education being conducted by the National Council on Teacher Quality.

In a letter last month to NCTQ, the Council noted that its Executive Committee agreed, after much discussion, that additional research is very much needed to assess the quality of pre-service teacher training institutions.

"...too many Colleges of Education are graduating students who are poorly prepared academically..."

—Council of the Great City Schools letter

"Our governing body remains concerned that too many Colleges of Education are graduating students who are poorly prepared academically and not ready to provide quality instruction in our urban classrooms," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

He indicates that urban schools are frequently studied and enormously pressured to improve, and says in the letter that he is "puzzled by the opposition from the higher education community to the examination" that NCTQ is proposing.

Casserly also notes that the study could help advance the national discussion on teacher preparation regarding why some new teachers arrive in urban classrooms better equipped to teach predominantly diverse students than others.

However, the Council has concerns about the study. Although it believes the review's techniques are transparent, the urban-school coalition emphasizes that "we are concerned that your data collection process may make it difficult to get a complete picture of the field, a situation prompted in part by resistance from those being studied."

L.A. Times Study Shows School District Outpaces Reform Groups

Low-performing schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation's second largest school system, often outpaced school reform efforts by outside groups, a recent *Los Angeles Times* analysis of underperforming schools revealed.

The LAUSD in most cases saw test scores in math and English outpace the low-performing schools operated by the mayor, a charter organization and others, the *Times* reported in mid-August.

"The results are eye-opening, that conventional schools display stronger results," said Bruce Fuller, a University of California-Berkeley education professor, in the newspaper.

The study found that LAUSD schools outperformed the group of elementary, middle and high schools controlled by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. New test scores showed the percentage of students in low-performing LAUSD high schools working at a "proficient" level in math increased 116 percent since 2008. In com-

parison, the percentage of students in two high schools under the mayor saw a 57 percent hike.

Surprised by the results, Villaraigosa reportedly complimented the school district's success.

"In percentage point gains, the district outpaced all the outside organizations," the *Times* reported. "Test scores in reading at the district high schools rose 7.8 points; math scores climbed 6.3 points."

Crenshaw High School fared the worst in the analysis. Overseen by the Los Angeles Urban League, the Bradley Foundation and the University of Southern California, the school's reading scores were down 2 percentage points over three years, while math scores rose a mere 0.3 point.

Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent John Deasy noted in the *Times* that both the district and the reform groups could learn from each other, and that LAUSD is ultimately responsible for all students in the sprawling city.

Award Opportunity Available for Urban Schools

The National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) at San Diego State University is accepting applications from outstanding urban schools for its Excellence in Urban Education Award.

A \$2,500 prize will be awarded to one school in each of the four categories: elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and alternative schools.

Schools that are eligible for an award must have non-selective admissions, be located in an urban area, serve students who

are economically disadvantaged and have high attendance rates as well as a low number of suspensions and expulsions.

"The award winners [will] prove that our nation's urban schools can be wonderful centers of learning that change children's lives," said Joseph Johnson, Jr., executive director of the NCUST.

Schools are encouraged to nominate themselves, and districts can nominate one or more schools, as well as provide supporting data for the schools' applications.

Applications can be found at www.schooltransformer.org and the deadline to apply is November 18.

The awards will be presented at the NCUST's 2012 symposium in May in San Diego. Council of the Great City Schools' Executive Director Michael Casserly will give the keynote address.





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Council Gives Top Curriculum and Research Awards

Three urban educators were honored this summer for leadership in their respective fields at the Council of the Great City Schools' Curriculum and Research Directors Meeting in Memphis.

Deborah Lindsey, director of research and evaluation for Milwaukee Public Schools, and Rose-Ann McKernan, director of instruction and accountability for Albuquerque Public Schools, were each presented with the Research and Assessment Leadership Award.

Sponsored by Houghton Mifflin Har-

court and the Council, the award recognizes leadership, innovation, commitment and professionalism in the field of research and assessment.

Also honored was Beth Folger, chief academic officer for Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, N.C. She received the Curriculum Leadership Award, sponsored by the Council and Pearson Education. The award recognizes excellence and leadership in curriculum development and service.

Each of the three award recipients received \$1,000.

Long Beach Ranks No. 1 in High School Sports

California's Long Beach Poly High School has the top sports program in the nation.

The school won the top ranking in ESPN's POWERADE FAB 50 All-Sports ratings of the nation's high schools for the 2010-11 school year.

The school ranked No. 1 in girls track and No. 2. in boys track. In addition, the

high school had three other sports--girls volleyball, girls basketball and boys basketball-- that scored high in the rankings.

According to ESPN, Long Beach Poly has had more NFL football players than any other school in the nation. Famous alumni athletes include tennis player Billie Jean King and baseball player Tony Gwynn.

Former Council Leader and Detroit Schools Chief Die



Joe Rieke

Forrest "Joe" Rieke, chair of the Council of the Great City Schools' Board of Directors from 1992 to 1993, died at age 69 on Aug. 29 of a reported heart attack.

A prominent attorney in Portland, Ore., Mr. Rieke served on the Portland school board for 15 years.

Also this summer, former Detroit Public Schools CEO Kenneth Burnley died July 2 at the age of 69 following complications from knee surgery, according to news reports.

His death came as a shock, as he was serving as superintendent for Alaska's Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District near Anchorage.

Dr. Burnley headed Detroit Public Schools from 2000 to 2005.