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District of Columbia Schools Chancellor Kaya Henderson gives a thumbs up to a student at Oyster-Adams Bilingual School during a visit on the district's first day of school. Photo credit: Andy Le

New Initiatives Mark Beginning Of School Year

The nation's big-city school districts begin the 2012-2013 school year featuring initiatives to implement Common Core State Standards, dual language programs and technological advances, including the opening of state-of-the-art schools. Here is a rundown of what some urban school districts are offering:

Albuquerque

New Mexico's Albuquerque Public Schools has partnered with Discovery Education to provide students with interactive digital textbooks, called "techbooks,"

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Education of Black Males Takes Center Stage at National Summit

In every indicator of educational progress, such as high test scores, enrollment in advanced courses or college enrollment rates, black males are underrepresented. Yet, African American males are often overrepresented when it comes to such negative factors as low reading levels, suspensions and referrals to special education.

To address the educational challenges of black males, the Council of the Great City Schools and the U.S. Department of Education recently held a National Summit on Educational Excellence and Opportunity for African American Males in Washington, D.C. The summit was a robust discussion as well as a passionate conversation on finding strategies and solutions aimed at improving the educational outcomes for young black males.

The issue of educating black boys is personal for John Wilson Jr., executive director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities



Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, Michael Strautmanis, deputy assistant to President Obama, and John Wilson, Jr., executive director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, give opening remarks at the National Summit on Educational Excellence and Opportunity for African American Males in Washington, D.C. Photo credit: Alex Jones

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Early-College Program Grows in North Carolina School District

A new early-college high school kicked off the school year in North Carolina's Guilford County Schools in Greensboro at the historically black North Carolina A&T State University.

This is the school district's ninth early or middle college school, which gives students an opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school, and will focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

Guilford County Schools "now has the largest concentration of early-college programs in the state, which leads the nation with 74 of them," says a recent *Education Week* article headlined "Early-College Model Brings Lessons, Results in N.C."

Academic performance soared in Guilford's early and middle college schools in 2010-2011 – with six of the schools producing 100 percent graduation rates and one 95 percent, according to the district.

In North Carolina's third largest school system, the "early college" program primarily serves academically gifted students, while the "middle college" is mainly designated "for at-risk kids, or kids who are struggling in some way – academically,



Guilford County Schools Superintendent Maurice "Mo" Green and Chancellor Harold Martin of North Carolina A&T State University welcomed a student to the new STEM Early College at N.C. A&T on the first day of school Aug. 7. The school serves high-achieving high school students who are interested in science, technology, engineering and math.

emotionally, socially, financially, etc.," explains the district's chief of staff, Nora Carr, in an e-mail.

"It's interesting that when we push struggling students to do more, and give them a supportive and more personalized environment, they learn more and per-

form better," she emphasizes. "We tend to have more wrap-around support services in place at our middle colleges."

Guilford's first early/middle college opened in the 2001-02 school year on the campus of Greensboro College. "The idea

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New Leaders Named in Philly and New Orleans; Milwaukee Chief to Stay



William Hite

The Philadelphia School Reform Commission this summer named William Hite, superintendent of Maryland's Prince George's County Public Schools, to lead the School District of Philadelphia.

"Dr. Hite is an eminent educator and a proven transformative leader," said Pedro Ramos, who chairs the commission. He takes the helm vacated by Arlene Ackerman, who departed the school system late last summer.

"Philadelphia is one of America's great cities, and I am excited about the op-

Early College *continued from page 2*

of combining secondary and postsecondary coursework was largely untested at that time... But the risk appears to have paid off," says the *Education Week* article.

Since then, eight others have been launched, which includes the Middle College at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro last school year. Most of Guilford's early/middle colleges begin at the ninth-grade level, and students can earn up to two years of college credit.

In August, the new STEM Early College at North Carolina A&T State University opened and welcomed 50 high-achieving ninth-graders interested in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. They will have a choice to focus their studies on three "STEM pathways"—biomedical sciences, renewable energy or engineering.

Guilford County Schools Superintendent Maurice Green indicates that the county plans to consider more of these specialty schools. "I can imagine that having these types of opportunities, as well as other innovative schools, will be on our ledger and in our strategic plan going forward," he said in *Education Week*.

portunities that it offers," said Hite in a news statement.

In New Orleans, Stan Smith, former chief financial officer of the Orleans Parish School Board, is the new interim superintendent of the school system. He took the reins from Darryl Kilbert, who retired in June after six years at the helm of the post-Hurricane Katrina Orleans Parish school district.

In Milwaukee, the Board of School Directors in August decided to extend the contract of Superintendent Gregory Thornton through June 2015.

"I am extremely pleased that Dr. Thornton will remain with the district through 2015," said School Board President Michael Bonds. "Working with the board, Dr. Thornton has made significant progress on development and implementation of a strong academic plan designed to increase student success. His leadership has also allowed us to take critical steps that are stabilizing MPS [Milwaukee Public Schools] financially."

Memphis Leads Tennessee In 'Reward Schools'

Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam and the state's education commissioner recently announced 169 schools as 2011-12 "Reward Schools," the top 5 percent of schools that earned the highest academic achievement and the top 5 percent that have made the largest gains on state-mandated tests.

Twenty Memphis schools were recognized as Reward Schools, the most of any school district in Tennessee.

"Once again, our students have shown that they can meet high expectations," said Memphis City Schools Superintendent Kriner Cash in a press statement. "I am very pleased with their performance...."

Council Launches Commercial Venture

With the success of an operational planning tool fit for the *Fortune 500*, the Council of the Great City Schools has launched a commercial venture to make its automated Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Performance Management System available to public school districts nationwide, especially beneficial during the nation's economic uncertainties.

The Council recently established a business partnership with TransACT Communications, Inc. to make its key performance indicators available to school systems beyond its 67 member urban school districts, which will continue to have access to the KPIs at no cost.

Urban public school districts have pioneered and advanced a data-driven, online performance management system to give non-instructional school executives immediate strategic performance data to improve business operations and efficiencies and save dollars for school systems.

The ActPoint® Performance Management System--<http://www.actpoint.com>--is an outgrowth of the Council's Performance Measurement and Benchmarking Project, launched in 2004 that pioneered the development of key performance indicators to gauge financial, information technology, business services and human resource operations in big-city school districts.

"It has taken two years of negotiations and planning to develop the venture that will provide over 300 key performance indicators to school administrators seeking a business-modeling tool for planning efficiencies and savings in operations," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "It will also produce a modest revenue stream for the Council to upgrade and maintain KPI services to subscribers and our urban-school members."

New Initiatives *continued from page 1*

that will incorporate current issues into the curriculum and provide students with hands-on activities. Science in kindergarten through high school, social studies in middle school and health at all levels will be taught using the techbooks.

Anchorage

Alaska's Anchorage School District recently released *Destination 2020*, a comprehensive, multi-year plan to increase student achievement. The goal of the plan is that by the year 2020, 90 percent of students will be proficient in reading, writing and math and the district will have a 90 percent graduation rate and a 90 percent attendance rate.

Atlanta

Atlanta Public Schools is implementing a district-wide redistricting initiative that reduces the number of under-enrolled schools. And the district's two single-gender schools—Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy and B.E.S.T. Academy—will enroll students districtwide.

Austin

In an effort to improve its customer service, Texas' Austin Independent School District is piloting an online registration and enrollment system for high school students in which parents will be able to register their teens online. The system will operate 24 hours a day and seven days a week and is accessed through the district web site.

Baltimore

Baltimore City Public Schools is launching a new multilingual communications campaign that will distribute the school system's literature in English and Spanish. And operation workers will be evaluated and paid based on their performance in what district officials say is the first-of-its-kind contract for school operations staff in the country.

Boston

Boston Public Schools is in the process of developing a new student assignment plan that will enable students in grades



Albuquerque Schools Superintendent Winston Brooks welcomes a student on the first day of school at Petroglyph Elementary.

K-8 to attend schools closer to home. The district has created an external advisory committee, held more than 25 meetings and created a web site to make it easier for community engagement. A plan will be voted on by the School Committee this winter.

Bridgeport

Connecticut's Bridgeport Public Schools is making college-level courses and programs more accessible by partnering with four local colleges and universities to create the Bridgeport Early College Partnerships program. Students in their junior year who meet the academic requirements will be able to take college classes for credit.

Broward County

Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., is opening the doors to the district's first new military academic program. The Hollywood Hills High School Military Academy will serve up to 400 ninth graders and the district has partnered with the U.S. Army, which has contributed resources, curriculum, training and JROTC faculty members.

Charlotte

In North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 420 teachers began the new school year with new iPads, given to them through a district grant designed to help them improve instruction through the use of technology.

Chicago

In an effort to increase instructional time for students, the nation's third largest

school district has implemented a longer school day for students in elementary and high schools. Elementary students will move from a 5 hour and 45 minute day to a 7 hour day, while high school students will move from a 7 hour day to a 7.5 hour day.

Cincinnati

Cincinnati Public Schools is introducing Capstone Projects, a project-based learning tool for 4th and 5th grades. The Capstone Projects are designed to engage students by using technology that enable them to demonstrate how they have mastered content in core subjects such as English language arts and mathematics.

Clark County

Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas is expanding its "Reclaim Your Future" campaign to encourage students to attend school and graduate. Volunteers will go door to door to meet with students from 16 high schools.

Cleveland

In an effort to promote a school climate that's free of bullying behavior, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District is holding a weeklong summit on bullying called "Not on Our Watch." The summit is for students in grades 7-12 who will attend one-day seminars aimed at decreasing bullying behavior. After the seminar, students will work with school faculty to develop bullying prevention programs in their respective schools.

Columbus

This fall, Ohio's Columbus City Schools is expanding the number of courses offered through its Virtual Credit Advancement Program, which enables students to complete their high school diploma online. The district has also built new state-of-the-art science labs and made security updates at all middle and high schools.

Dallas

Dallas Independent School District is opening the most secondary schools at

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New Initiatives *continued from page 4*

one time in its history this fall, with the opening of three new middle schools. The school system is also opening two new elementary schools and one replacement school to accommodate population growth and ease overcrowding.

Dayton

Ohio's Dayton Public Schools begins the third year of Race to the Top, a four-year federal initiative to develop high academic content standards and hone educators' knowledge and skills. And two of the district's K-8 schools will offer three-year Spanish-English dual language programs.

Denver

Denver Public Schools is launching a pilot principal training program in which assistant principals will serve a one-year residency at local charter schools. Funded by an \$800,000 grant from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, the program was developed to increase cooperation and shared learning between leaders of charters and district-run schools.

Des Moines

In an effort to attract and retain quality educators, Iowa's Des Moines Public Schools has implemented a teacher contract in which new teachers may receive a Master's Degree in Effective Teaching after six years of service as well as incentives for staying with the district.

Detroit

Detroit Public Schools is opening nine "Detroit Rising College Preparatory Schools," in which decisions about hiring, curriculum, and budget will be made at the school level. The schools feature small class sizes and a college prep curriculum. The district is also opening three new schools.

East Baton Rouge

Louisiana's East Baton Rouge Parish School System opened the doors of the newly renovated Baton Rouge Magnet High School. The \$58.2 million school features 49 classrooms and 25 specialty classrooms.



Dallas Schools Superintendent Mike Miles talked with the media during his visit to the new Zan Wesley Holmes Jr. Middle School.

Fort Worth

Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District is opening its first single-gender school for boys: the Paul Laurence Dunbar Young Men's Leadership Academy. The college preparatory school was created to prepare young men to compete in a globally competitive world.

Fresno

California's Fresno Unified School District launched the "I Pledge" back-to-school campaign to urge students to make a commitment to graduate. As part of the campaign, on the first day of school students wore stickers highlighting the year they are to graduate and signed pledge cards committing to graduate from high school.

Greensboro

Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, N.C., is working to increase the academic achievement of black males by implementing pilot programs at nine schools where teachers will introduce cultural relevance and other strategies into their instruction. District officials will evaluate the program and recommend steps for using the strategies in other schools.

Houston

Students at six schools in the Houston Independent School District will have the opportunity to earn associates degrees and career training in high-demand technical fields, as a result of the Houston Innovative Learning Zone program created in partnership with Houston Community College. The district is also opening its first

Mandarin Chinese language immersion school.

Indianapolis

Indianapolis Public Schools has partnered with a local university to create the Pathway to Opportunity program, which enables students who receive a waiver instead of a general high school diploma to attend college. Participants in the program are guaranteed full admission to Martin University.

Jacksonville

An elementary school and a middle school in Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Fla., will offer programs to give students a high-quality international education. The Rufus Payne Elementary School will offer the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme and Jefferson Davis Middle School will offer students the Cambridge Lower Secondary I Program, a talented and gifted program.

Kansas City

For the second consecutive year, Missouri's Kansas City Public Schools has provided backpacks filled with school supplies and a personal hygiene kit to all 10,000 of its students in grades K-6. The effort, dubbed "Back to School, Back to Health," ensures all students begin the year on a level playing field. The backpacks are provided by donors and organizations, who package the items and personally distribute them on the first day of school.

Los Angeles

Los Angeles Unified School District has released its strategic plan to transform teaching and learning to ensure that all students graduate and are college-prepared and career-ready.

Louisville

Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Ky., is implementing a new elementary student assignment plan that will enable more elementary students to be assigned to schools closer to their homes. The district has also added an assistant principal

New Initiatives continued on page 6

New Initiatives continued from page 5

to every elementary school with more than 400 students in an attempt to provide more support for students, teachers and parents.

Miami

Ninth-grade students at Miami-Dade County Schools may buy a new netbook computer for only \$25, as a result of the Learn Ideas, Navigate Knowledge program. Parents of students who receive free or reduced-price lunch can apply to the program online and must attend a mandatory training course. The district is also offering nearly 40 new magnet programs this year, including a program that prepares students for careers as a game programmer.

Milwaukee

Milwaukee Public Schools has launched "Learning Journeys," a new curriculum-based, grade-specific, hands-on learning initiative for all students in grades 4-8. Learning Journeys connect real-world learning experiences directly to what students are learning in their classrooms. The district also launched new Summer Academies this year to give students a head start on the coursework they will be undertaking in the fall, aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

Minneapolis

In an effort to provide students with greater access to school and community resources, Minneapolis Public Schools has partnered with Metro Transit to enable high school students to take buses and light rail to school. The district piloted the program for three years and found it resulted in higher student attendance and retention. The district is also implementing focused instruction that will create planning lessons using high-quality curriculum and engage students in rigorous learning.

Nashville

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools has partnered with the mayor of Nashville and local music industry leaders to launch *Music Makes Us: The Nashville Music Education Project*, an initiative designed to en-



Orange County Schools Superintendent Barbara Jenkins speaks with students in a science class at the district's new SunRidge Middle School on the first day of school. Photo credit: OCPS Media

hance the traditional music curriculum while adding new classes such as rock band and hip-hop performance. The district is also converting to a 5-point grade-point-average to encourage students to enroll in rigorous courses.

New Orleans

Beginning this school year, all students and staff who attend schools in the Orleans Parish School Board school system will receive Internet safety training.

New York City

The nation's largest school district has selected 40 high schools to participate in the Expanded Success Initiative, a program to improve college readiness and career outcomes for black and Latino males. The schools will receive professional learning and resources and the strategies and measures they use will be replicated in schools throughout the school system. The district is also opening 14 newly constructed or renovated school buildings to add 9,453 more student seats.

Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City Public Schools is launching an anonymous bilingual reporting system, 587-STOP, to address and track bullying incidents. The reporting system is available to students, parents and staff and can be accessed online or through the phone, in English and Spanish. Once an incident has been reported, district staff members will be automatically notified.

Orange County

Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Fla., has created the Common Core Standards Black Belt program to develop a cohort group of school-based experts to lead common planning time, professional learning communities and open their classrooms as demonstration sites. The district is also supporting new teachers by providing support from master teachers, who will lead training sessions each month as well as work with second-year teachers through online courses.

Palm Beach

Florida's School District of Palm Beach County is offering students the BEAR Academy, a cross-curricular career academy at Odyssey Middle School that provides students a creative program of study to explore specialized areas in biomedicine, engineering, animation and robotics.

Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh Public Schools is opening a new online academy for students in grades 6-9, who will receive laptops and attend a one-week orientation where they will learn how to use the software and start the coursework. Teachers will work with students individually when they log on and their progress will be monitored.

Providence

Rhode Island's Providence Public Schools has joined forces with the Providence Teacher's Union to create United Providence (UP!), a nonprofit education management organization designed to manage the turnaround process in several low-performing schools.

Richmond

Virginia's Richmond Public Schools is extending its Middle School Renaissance initiative to include students in both the 6th and 7th grades. The district has also created a program called Ready Homes to ensure that the curriculum Pre-K students are learning in the classroom is reinforced with appropriate activities in the home.

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New Initiatives continued from page 6



San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee and Schools Superintendent Richard Carranza listen to a 6th grade student sharing his interests on the first day of school at Everett Middle School. Photo credit: Mike Koozmin

San Diego

California's San Diego Unified School District will continue to implement the "Blueprint to Accelerate the Achievement of African American and African Students," a program to reduce the achievement gap and increase the graduation rate among African American and African students. Under the program, the district will set up specific goals for students at each school and all staff will receive training on recognizing and eliminating institutional racism.

San Francisco

California's San Francisco Unified School District is expanding its *Grab n Go* breakfast program to nine middle schools this fall. The program offers a meal students can pick up as they enter school in the morning and take to their classrooms to eat. And all district ninth-grade students will take an 18-week course called Plan Ahead, in which students assess their skills and learn about different careers.

Santa Ana

Beginning this fall, California's Santa Ana Unified School District kicks off the theme "Getting to the Core...Superior Standards, Supportive School Climate, Successful Students" as the district continues a four-year journey toward implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Teachers in the district will learn about the history, foundational tenets and key instructional shifts of the CCSS and how to apply specific key instructional strategies.

St. Louis

St. Louis Public Schools opened three new schools. The district is also using a grant by the U.S. Department of Education to implement its AIM for Fitness curriculum program at all elementary schools, with a focus on grades 4 and 5. The goal of the program is to increase the overall health and fitness of students.

St. Paul

St. Paul Public Schools is offering a free breakfast program to all schools and programs for the 2012-2013 school year. The *Breakfast to Go* program allows students to choose their breakfast favorites from the cafeteria and bring them to class before the start of the school day.

Tampa

In an effort to provide students with 21st century technology skills, the Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa, Fla., is incorporating the Microsoft IT Academy in each of the district's 27 high schools, as well as 18 middle schools. The college- and career-ready program will offer a STEM-focused elective for students in science, technology, engineering and math.

Washington, DC

The District of Columbia Public Schools is making several updates to its teacher evaluation system, known as IMPACT. Changes include providing teachers who are not meeting expectations three years of professional development as part of a teacher's evaluation. The district is also piloting a gifted and talented school-wide enrichment program. The Schoolwide Enrichment Model will be piloted at two middle schools and is open to all students enrolled in the schools.

Wichita

As a result of a bond issue voters approved in 2008, Wichita Public Schools has opened five schools, including Northeast Magnet, which has a 900-seat auditorium, a fine arts suite, career and technical education classrooms, a 1,800-seat gymnasium with a walking track, a swimming pool and a practice gym, that will also be the school's FEMA storm shelter.

Resource Bank Developed to Help Implement Standards

The Council of the Great City Schools and Student Achievement Partners (SAP) have developed a new online resource aimed at helping school districts nationwide implement the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and literacy, one of two major components of the new academic standards adopted by 46 states and the District of Columbia.

The resource bank includes a compilation of questions and tasks aligned to the new common core standards in English language arts (ELA) and literacy that can be used to help school districts transition to the new standards.

In an initiative called the Basal Alignment Project (BAP), literacy educators from states across the country came together to write the standards-aligned materials and questions that teachers and administrators can use in conjunction with their current curriculum while new instructional products are being developed.

The project was spearheaded by the Council and coordinated by Student Achievement Partners (SAP), a non-profit group whose founders were instrumental in writing the new standards in English language arts.

"Revisions to current ELA curricula to help teachers transition to the Common Core State Standards have been an ongoing, intensive, cooperative effort by dozens of districts, states, and school-district content specialists, and SAP," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "Their work is freely available to all school districts in the nation."

The Council and SAP have also worked with publishers to roll out the first wave of new resources, which focus on grades three, four and five.

The new bank of resources is located at "Basal Alignment Project" on the education site Edmodo -- www.edmodo.com. The group code "etuyrm" must be used to join the Basal Alignment Project.

Black Males continued from page 1



Aisha Ray shares her views as Robert Green, Alfred Tatum and Boston Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson look on.

and the father of black boys. “No matter how much we tighten our social institutions, at the end of the day it’s about fathers and mentors,” said Wilson.

For Michael Strautmanis, the deputy assistant to the president and counselor for strategic engagement to the senior advisor, the issue is close to his heart as well, as he recently dropped his son off for college and leads the mentoring program for boys at the White House.

He said that the goal of this summit is to find solutions to the persistent gaps in education and achievement of African American males, gaps that are persistent regardless of income or neighborhood.

Michael Casserly, the executive director of the Council, noted that while many African American males do well after graduating from big-city schools, “too many African American males do not reach their full potential in our schools, because our schools have not served them well.”

Education and Schooling

At the summit, a session titled “Education and Schooling” featured a panel of education experts and students discussing in-school strategies to improve the educational attainment of black males, and was moderated by Carol Johnson, superintendent of Boston Public Schools.

The panelists placed a particular focus on the importance of literacy, especially in the primary grades.

“The strongest, single predictor of a kid who is going to have difficulty in school is

a kid who can’t read,” said Robert Green, dean and professor emeritus of urban affairs at Michigan State University.

Alfred Tatum, associate professor of curriculum and instruction at the University of Illinois at Chicago, pointed to institutionalized deficiencies in early childhood literacy curriculum as the “epicenter” of negative outcomes for African American males.

“In this nation, we are authorizing practices that give permission to leave our boys underserved,” said Tatum.

To combat these practices, Aisha Ray, senior vice president for academic affairs at Erikson Institute, listed factors that can improve academic outcomes for African American males, such as a well-trained



Gary Callis, a student at Virginia’s Richmond Public Schools, discusses the importance of community organizations as Wilfred Cox, a student at Fayetteville State University, listens.

teacher that understands early childhood development, small classroom size and a comprehensive parent involvement program.

The panelists also agreed that black males need high levels of engagement and expectations.

Nigel Richardson, a student leader at Virginia’s Richmond Public Schools and a member of the Class of 2013, believes that if the importance of school were stressed, African American males would view education more as an opportunity than a burden. “I’ve been pushed and challenged because it was never [asked] are you going to college, but what college are you going to,” said Richardson.

James Moore III, director of the Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center for African American Males at Ohio State University, highlighted how his university

experienced substantial gains in retention and higher achievement for black males. He admits it wasn’t anything “magical” that the university did to achieve this success. “We [simply] changed the way people think about black males,” said Moore.

School and Community

The issue of out-of-school and community links was addressed in a panel moderated by Eileen Cooper-Reed, board member for Cincinnati Public Schools and secretary-treasurer of the Council.

Jeanette Simon, director of volunteer and mentoring services with Concerned Black Men, believes that community-based organizations can bring a wealth of knowledge into the schools and have the staff and expertise to facilitate programs. “We can work outside the system to make a change within,” said Simon.

Ronald Walker, executive director of the Coalition of Schools Educating Black Boys of Color, discussed his organization’s Sankofa Passages Program that 250 low-performing students in six high schools in Philadelphia participate in. The program provides mentors to students at their high schools and has resulted in higher school attendance rates. “Every school district should incorporate a Rights of Passage Program in the fiber and fabric of the district,” urged Walker.

Leticia Smith-Evans is a civil rights and racial justice advocate for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and said that school districts should evaluate their discipline policies, collect data on suspension rates and disaggregate by race, and develop an effective discipline plan, while using out-of-school suspensions as a last resort.

Oscar Barbarin, a professor at Tulane University, lamented that many young African American males come into school with negative emotions they have experienced in life but that school administrators often treat possible mental health problems as discipline issues.

Congressman Speaks

Attendees at the summit heard from Congressman Danny Davis (D-Ill.), who

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Black Males *continued from page 8*

often reads in schools and recalled one visit where a young black boy named Jamal was misbehaving. When it was the congressman's turn to read to the class, he told the boy in a stern voice to sit down and the boy not only sat down, but was well behaved for the rest of the congressman's visit.

Davis told this story to highlight the need for African American males to serve as teachers, especially in the early years.

"Because of the paucity of African American males in the lives of many of our children on a regular and ongoing basis, we must find a way to substitute for that or to supplant it," said Davis.

Town Hall Meeting

When U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan led Chicago Public Schools, he mentored a young black male student. Duncan recently had the opportunity to see the student again when he served as the commencement speaker at the young man's graduation from Howard University.

And while that student is a success story, the pipeline from classroom to prison for too many black males is much bigger than the pipeline from classroom to college.

"What do we have to do differently to get better results for our young black males?" Duncan asked several distinguished panelists at a town hall meeting he moderated on how to foster black male achievement.

Mary Skipper is the headmaster at TechBoston Academy in Boston, a school where 100 percent of the black males graduated on time last year. She credits her school's success to having high expectations and smaller class sizes, as well as having a diverse workforce in the classroom.

"It's very important for my African American young men to see African American men in front of their academic classrooms teaching Advanced Placement classes," said Skipper.

Ronald Mason, president of the Southern University System in Louisiana, noted that when the data on black males is reviewed "either black men



Congressman Danny Davis shares his views on educating black males as Tim King, founder and CEO of Urban Prep Academies in Chicago, looks on.

are born predisposed to make more wrong choices than anybody else...or there's something going wrong in America."

Mason and other presidents of historically black institutions have created an initiative called the Five Fifths Agenda for America that aims to increase the number of black male graduates, black male teachers and establish historically black universities as drivers of long-term systemic change.

Randolph Scott is a freshman education major at North Carolina's Fayetteville State University and member of the BRONCO Male Initiative on Leadership and Excellence, a peer mentoring group for black males developed by the university's department of retention.

Being a part of the mentoring initiative has been a lifesaver to Scott, who is mentored by an upperclassman. "We are a brotherhood," said Scott, who believes that having a peer to talk to is crucial.



Randolph Scott, a student at Fayetteville State University, discusses the importance of mentoring as U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and fellow panelist Ronald Mason listen at town hall discussion.

All of the students at Urban Prep Academies in Chicago are black males, and last year all of its graduates were accepted into postsecondary institutions. Founder and CEO Tim King believes that if there is to be systematic national change that will improve the academic achievement of black males, everyone must embrace their responsibility as role models. "We cannot assume that this is the job of the teachers in the classroom or the leaders in the schools," said King. "This is all of our jobs."

William Hite was recently named the superintendent of The School District of Philadelphia and recalled a conversation he had with a young black male who dropped out of school. The boy told Hite that "there were more individuals in his school who could arrest him than individuals in his school that could help him with a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form."

At the end of the town hall, Duncan told attendees that "our country and young brothers deserve so much better than what we are doing now. It's incumbent upon all of us to take this work to the next level to do it with a real sense of urgency."

Civil Rights Fighter Continues

When Freeman Hrabowski was in the ninth grade, he was jailed in Birmingham, Ala., for marching with Martin Luther King Jr. "It never occurred to me 50 years later that I'd be president of a predominantly white university," said Hrabowski.

But the president of The University of Maryland-Baltimore County also is troubled by the fact that 50 years later the bottom third of black children are unable to read.

"We made a lot of progress in our country," acknowledges Hrabowski. "but the issue is that so many of our children, black boys, cannot read."

Hrabowski was recently selected to chair the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for African Americans. The college president said the commission will explore possible solutions.

Black Males continued on page 11

Fiddling on the Fiscal Cliff

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

The financial condition of school districts has yet to rebound from the recession. And cuts to small education programs funded by the federal budget and the virtual freeze on major formula grant programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) in recent years have exacerbated the problem. The result is larger class sizes and shorter school years, in addition to reductions in service levels, staffing, extracurricular activities, and maintenance and building repairs. In these respects, public school systems have already fallen off the fiscal precipice, but Congress may have more in store.

Public schools across the country face another substantial round of cuts if lawmakers can't reach a budget deal by the end of the year. Yet, the nation's financial and defense industries are screaming the loudest about the plight they face if the Bush-era tax cuts are not extended and defense spending is not exempted.

The bipartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently issued its Mid-Year Budget and Economic Outlook predicting a decline in economic growth and the possibility of a new recession if no Congressional action is taken on federal budget and tax laws. The resulting sequestration of federal discretionary-program appropriations and reduced funding for certain entitlement programs, along with the expiration of portions of the federal tax code, are projected to decrease the gross domestic product by 0.5 percent in 2013 and increase unemployment to 9 percent. An alternative analysis by CBO, using more moderate projections of federal entitlement, budget and tax expenditures, results in estimates of economic growth of 1.7 percent and unemployment of 8 percent in 2013, but the budget group warns of financial and economic unsustainability



over the long run without more drastic action.

Despite the alarming economic predictions from the CBO and the hysterical pronouncements by the financial and defense industries, Congressional leaders have agreed to temporarily put aside the hard work until after the elections, instead passing a six-month Continuing Resolution ("CR") to keep the federal government running through March. This Continuing Resolution removes much of the pressure for any immediate legislative action on the "fiscal cliff" before the election—even though seven temporary CRs nearly shut down the federal government multiple times last year and a stalemate last August on the debt ceiling brought the federal government to the brink of financial default on its debt obligations.

Fortuitously, the U.S. Education Department adopted an alternative interpretation (which had been recommended and promoted by the Council of the Great City Schools) on how the automatic across-the-board cuts/sequestration could be applied to key education programs. The Department announced that currently appropriated federal education funds from the FY 2012 spending bill (for school year 2012-2013) would not be subject to sequestration in January 2013. This alternative precludes mid-year budget cuts in this new school year, but the potential of an 8 to 9 percent sequestration in school year 2013-2014 continues to be a real possibility without Congressional action.

A timely resolution of these critical federal budget and tax issues should not be expected, particularly in the middle of a contentious presidential and congressional election season. But, it is not too soon for educators to join the defense and financial sectors in sounding the alarm bells.

Florida's Broward District Certified by Wildlife Group

When one visits Deerfield Beach Middle School in Florida's Broward County, the butterfly garden that science teacher Suzy Pinnell and her classroom created on site may catch your attention. Then there is the screech owl nest box along with more than 500 plants and flowers decorating the campus—all part of a unique educational experience for students.

Recognized for its exemplary efforts, Broward County Schools in Fort Lauderdale is the first school district in the nation to receive districtwide certification from the National Wildlife Federation for its "comprehensive approach to environmental education and creative use of outdoor learning spaces."

With more than 40 percent of the district's schools certified and 25 percent of its students active in outdoor learning, Broward is going above and beyond simple science lessons. In 2007, the district entered into an environmental partnership with Broward County's NatureScape program to garner districtwide certification.

Black Males continued from page 9



College president Freeman Hrabowski expresses his optimism.

The former child freedom fighter is optimistic about the road ahead because he remembers the words Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke to him and his fellow marchers in 1963 sitting in jail. “What you do this day will have an impact on generations yet unborn,” King told them.

Action Plan Released

When the Council devised the idea of a national summit, the organization did not want to simply have a discussion on the challenges facing black males but to develop a series of action steps. These action steps have been compiled into a document that was released at the summit.

A Call for Change: A Preliminary Blueprint to Improve Educational Excellence and Opportunity for African American Males in Urban Public Schools can be accessed at the Council’s web site at: <http://www.cgcs.org/domain/88>.

And at the end of the summit, Candy Olson, chair of the Council board of directors, challenged attendees with this question. “What are you going to do about this [issue], this week?”

One of the conferees, who is going to heed her challenge, is Derald Davis, vice principal of Lincoln College Preparatory Academy in Kansas City, Mo. An African American male himself, he said that after hearing from the panelists about the need to create higher expectations for young black males, he plans to gather his senior and junior African American males and take them to a nearby elementary school to volunteer as mentors. And Davis has already thought of a name for the group: *Each One, Teach One*. “I want to teach the young men I work with that they have a responsibility to other black males.”

Council of the Great City Schools 56TH ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE “Driving Education Into the Winner’s Circle” Hosted by Indianapolis Public Schools

October 17-October 21, 2012
Indianapolis Marriott Downtown
Indianapolis, IN

Wednesday, October 17

7:00 am-5:00 pm	Conference registration
8:30 am-12:00 pm	Common Core Pre-Conference Meeting
1:30 pm-5:00 pm	Task Force Meetings
6:30 pm-8:30 pm	Welcome reception at the Indiana State Museum

Thursday, October 18

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: Marc Morial
2:15 pm-5:30 pm	Breakout Sessions
7:00 pm-9:00 pm	23rd Annual Richard R. Green Awards Banquet: Urban Educator of the Year Announced



Friday, October 19

7:30 am-9:00 am	Breakfast and Speaker: America Ferrera
9:00 am-12:15 pm	Breakout Sessions
12:30 pm-2:00 pm	Lunch and Speaker: Thomas Friedman
2:30 pm-4:00 pm	National Town Hall Meeting
6:30 pm-8:30 pm	Reception at the NCAA Hall of Champions



Saturday, October 20

8:00 am-9:30 am	Breakfast
8:30 am-12:00 pm	Board of Directors Meeting
12:00 pm-2:30 pm	Legislative Directors Meeting
5:30 pm-8:30 pm	Farewell Event at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway

Sunday, October 21

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



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Perfect Score Earns TV Interview

Ninth-grader Gabrielle Erwin appears on FOX-TV's morning show in Orlando this summer after earning a perfect score on the 2012 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in math, reading and science. She also scored high marks on other exams, and her middle-school principal in the Orange County Public Schools honored her with a "Five Star Award."



Council Gives Curriculum and Research Awards



Brian Pick

Recently retired chief academic officer Linda Sink of Albuquerque Public Schools, and Brian Pick, deputy chief academic officer for curriculum and instruction for the District of Colum-

bia Public Schools, this summer received the nation's top honor in curriculum development and implementation in urban education.

They both received the 2012 Council of the Great City Schools/Pearson Education Curriculum Leadership Award at the Council's annual Curriculum and Research Directors Meeting in Las Vegas mid-July.

Sink and Pick both received the award for exemplifying leadership, innovation and commitment to raising the academic achievement of all students in their respective school districts.

Also at the meeting, Dallas Independent School District's Shane Hall, senior analytics analyst, and Linda Johnson, research consultant, both received the na-

tion's top honor in research and assessment leadership in urban education.

They were each recipients of the 2012 Council of the Great City Schools/Houghton Mifflin, Inc. Research and Assessment Leadership Award.

Hall and Johnson received the award for demonstrating educational excellence in the field of research and assessment that supports teaching and learning.



Shane Hall and Linda Johnson