



- Las Vegas Leader, p.3
- Hispanic Honor, p.9
- LEGISLATIVE**
- Questionable Criticism, p.10

SPECIAL EDITION
Back to School

CNN Analyst to Speak At Council Conference In Albuquerque



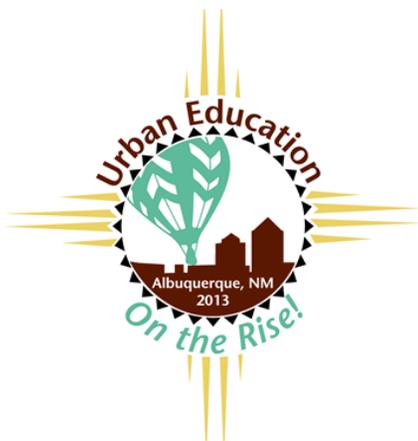
David Gergen

CNN senior political analyst David Gergen will address the nation's urban school leaders Nov. 1 at the Council of the Great City Schools' 57th Annual Fall Conference in Albuquerque, N.M.

Active in politics for many years, Gergen has served as an adviser to four U.S. presidents, and is a professor of public service at the Harvard Kennedy School and the director of its Center for Public Leadership. In 2000, he published the best-selling book *Eyewitness to Power: The Essence of Leadership, Nixon to Clinton*.

Gergen will be among three guest speakers at the five-day conference, Oct.

Council Conference *continued on page 8*



Common Core Standards Take Center Stage As New School Year Begins

Implementing the Common Core State Standards, adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia, will be the focus for many urban school districts in the 2013-2014 school year. Incorporating digital devices and anti-bullying measures in big-city school districts are among other initiatives highlighted in this exclusive city-by-city news package:

Albuquerque

New Mexico's Albuquerque Public Schools begins the new school year with a new dual-credit high school and a new virtual school. The APS College & Career High School will enable 80 sophomores and juniors to earn a high school diploma while also earning college credit toward a two-year associate degree or bachelor's degree. And the virtual high school at APS eCADEMY will offer students online courses as well as in-person instruction.

Anchorage

The Anchorage School District has created a new initiative called BYOD, which stands for Bring Your Own Device. This allows students to bring their own computing devices, such as smartphones, to school during the school day for educational purposes and interactive classroom activities. The initiative is taking place in four secondary schools, aimed at encouraging BYOD in all schools next year.

Austin

Texas' Austin Independent School District is launching the Any Given Child Creative Learning Initiative, a district-



Milwaukee Schools Superintendent Gregory Thornton escorts a student on the first day of school at Hamlin Garland School, which held a bell-ringing ceremony to mark its opening. Photo credit: Milwaukee Public Schools

wide arts equity plan to improve student achievement and strengthen community bonds through arts-rich schools for every student. This summer more than 1,000 teachers received training in arts-based integration strategies.

Baltimore

Baltimore City Public Schools is rolling out a new teacher evaluation system.

School Year *continued on page 4*

Nation's Top City School Leader Awards Scholarship to Student

In 2012, Carol Johnson, who recently retired from heading Boston Public Schools, won the nation's top honor in urban education-- the Richard R. Green Award.

With the award came a \$10,000 scholarship from the Council of the Great City Schools, ARAMARK Education and Cambium Learning Group/Voyager to give to a student of her choice.

Johnson selected Darien Amado, a member of Boston Public Schools' Class of 2013. This fall, Amado used the scholarship to attend Boston College.

A first generation college student, Amado's dream of going to school in a new environment and being able to experience the world did not come without personal hardships.

As a child growing up, he had little verbal contact with his mother and spent the majority of his life with his father and his father's family. When he was in third grade, his father went to jail and he had to live with his aunt and uncle throughout middle school. Eventually, he was able to move back with his dad and enrolled as a student at Boston's New Mission High School.



Carol Johnson, the former Boston Schools superintendent, presents a \$10,000 Richard R. Green college scholarship to Darien Amado, a member of the graduating class of 2013, as his father looks on.

As a student at New Mission High, Amado maintained a 3.82 grade-point-average while taking a full load of Advanced Placement courses. He was a member of the National Honor Society and was one of the top 10 students in his

2013 graduating class.

In addition to excelling at academics, Amado served as the captain of the football team and co-captain of his debate team.

Boston Student continued on page 3



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Several School Districts Begin New Academic Year With New Leaders



Patrick Skorkowsky

In addition to new programs and initiatives designed to increase student achievement, several big-city school districts across the nation are beginning the 2013-2014 school year with new faces at the helm.

Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas has selected Patrick Skorkowsky to take the reins of the nation's fifth largest school system with more than 311,000 students.

Skorkowsky is a 25-year veteran of the school district, having begun his career as a first-grade teacher. He has held roles as a principal, academic manager, associate superintendent and deputy superintendent. And in April, he was named the school system's interim superintendent, succeeding Dwight Jones who resigned from the district in March.

Also selecting a new leader is Nebraska's Omaha Public Schools, tapping Mark Evans to lead the 46,000-student school district.

Before coming to Omaha, Evans was the superintendent for eight years of the Andover Kansas Public Schools, a suburban school district with approximately 5,400 students. He has also served as an administrator at Wichita Public Schools.

Evans, who succeeds interim superintendent Virginia Moon, will become the first permanent superintendent hired from outside the district in 30 years, according to the *Omaha World Herald*.

And Indianapolis Public Schools has named a 16-year educator with experience in improving low-achieving schools to lead its 33,372-school system.



Lewis Ferebee

Lewis Ferebee was named the district's new superintendent, replacing interim superintendent Peggy Hinckley.

Ferebee served three years as the chief of staff for North Carolina's Durham Schools, where he reduced to zero the number of schools labeled by the state as

low performing.

Contract Extensions

Gregory Thornton, the superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools, was recently given a contract extension through June 2016. Thornton has been at the helm of the 78,000-student school district, Wisconsin's largest school system, since 2010.

"Working with the board, Dr. Thornton has made significant progress on development and implementation of a strong academic plan designed to increase student success," said Milwaukee school board president Michael Bonds. "His leadership has also allowed us to take critical steps that are stabilizing MPS financially."

Other Developments

Two urban school districts in Ohio have selected interim superintendents. Columbus Public Schools has named J. Daniel Good, a superintendent of Ohio's Westerville City Schools, as its interim superintendent, succeeding Gene Harris. And Toledo Public Schools has named Romules

New Leaders continued on page 11

Boston Student continued from page 2

An avid debater throughout high school, Amado received numerous awards including the Boston Debate League Speaker of the Year award in 2010. He also was part of the first Boston Public Schools team ever to advance beyond the preliminary rounds at the prestigious Harvard Debate Tournament.

A volunteer with the Urban Debate League Leadership Empowerment and Action Program, it was through debate that Amado polished his public speaking skills and has spurred his desire to pursue journalism as a possible career. However, his ultimate goal is to start a non-profit to expose urban students like him to debate.

Business Journal Honors Boston School Chief



John McDonough

The *Boston Business Journal* recently named Boston Public Schools Interim Superintendent John McDonough CFO of the Year in the nonprofit sector for his achievements as the school system's chief financial officer before he took the helm this summer.

He was honored for multiple accomplishments during his 17 years as CFO of the Boston school district.

An article in the *Boston Business Journal* says that "McDonough seems well-prepared for his new assignment, having

spent his career helping to shape policy and strategy at the state's largest school district – something he said is part of the evolution of the CFO job."

When Boston Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson announced her retirement in the spring, she noted, "I am pleased that John McDonough has been named our interim superintendent. It is rare to find a chief financial officer who combines extraordinary fiscal knowledge and skill with a deep understanding of how resources support the academic work in schools."

In 2005, the Council of the Great City Schools recognized McDonough by bestowing on him the Bill Wise Award as a leading chief financial officer in an urban school district.

School Year *continued from page 1*

Teachers will receive feedback based on evaluation measures and will have significant opportunities for professional development.

Boston

Boston Public Schools is launching its new home-based school choice system in which students can attend schools closer to home. The school system is also expanding its district wellness policy, which covers sexual health counseling, to all of its 32 high schools. And in an effort to improve school bus service and safety, the district has created a 'Where's my School Bus' app to allow parents to track the location and arrival time of their child's bus over the web.

Broward County

Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., is implementing a new initiative, Digital 5: Pathways for Personalized Learning (D5), in 27 elementary schools. As part of the initiative, approximately 3,200 fifth-grade students and their teachers will receive laptops and access to digital resources and online instructional materials.

Charlotte

Four schools in North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools have moved to a continuous learning calendar to decrease summer learning loss. And beginning this fall, the school system will implement the Universal Breakfast program and provide breakfast to all students at no charge.

Chicago

In an effort to increase student instructional time, the nation's third largest school system will require only 10 mandated standardized tests across all grades, a decrease from the 25 tests given last year. District officials believe the new streamlined assessment policy will provide administrators more autonomy in establishing assessments that help teachers develop instructional plans and align assessments with Common Core State Standards. The school system is also implementing full-day kindergarten for all students.



Cleveland Schools CEO Eric Gordon is surrounded by students at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for PreK-8 Paul Dunbar school.

Cincinnati

Cincinnati Public Schools is partnering with healthcare provider Mercy Health to operate health clinics at three schools that will provide health care to students as well as adults.



Fort Worth Schools Superintendent Walter Dansby talks with a student on the first day of school at I.M. Terrell Elementary School.

Clark County

Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas is creating 14 special elementary schools, which will receive \$39.4 million in funding to help English language learners. The schools will have low student-to-teacher ratios and offer prekindergarten and full-day kindergarten classes.

Cleveland

Cleveland Metropolitan School District is using funds from the November passage of a \$67-million school levy to make improvements at 13 low-performing schools, dubbed "Investment Schools." Improve-

ments include special teacher training, extended learning time for students, promoting a more positive school culture as well as social and emotional supports to students.

Columbus

Ohio's Columbus Public Schools is partnering with The Ohio State University in a reading intervention initiative called Reading Recovery to provide one-on-one daily intervention with first-grade students who have low literacy skills.

Dallas

Dallas Independent School District has created a new fiber optic network that district officials believe is the biggest school district digital network in the nation. The new system will increase schools' Internet access speeds and enable teachers to conduct online tests as well as two-way conferences with classrooms in Dallas or throughout the world. And all district schools and facilities will have free Wi-Fi.

Denver

Denver Public Schools is launching an empowerment and entrepreneurship program at five middle and high schools. Students take courses in financial literacy and then are paired with a business role model to develop a business plan and budget. When completed, the students have the opportunity to earn up to \$500 in start-up funding to launch a business.

Des Moines

Iowa's Des Moines Public Schools is opening its first new school since 2007. The \$14-million Edmunds Elementary School features teachers equipped with infrared mics to ensure that students hear them.

Detroit

Detroit Public Schools is providing customer service training to all district em-

School Year continued on page 5

School Year continued from page 4

ployees as part of its new customer service initiative funded by the Target Corporation. The district is also creating a new parent university and converting 21 schools into community schools that offer services such as job skills training and medical care.

Fort Worth

Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District is expanding its successful Code Blue: Citizens on Patrol program to 10 elementary schools this year. The district is also launching a Saturday session initiative at seven schools in which teachers work with low-performing students in math and reading for five hours on Saturdays.

Fresno

California's Fresno Unified School District is launching a series of public service announcements as part of the second phase of a district safety campaign to promote awareness in the community on a variety of issues, including alcohol and driving and cyber bullying.

Greensboro

Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, N.C., is using a \$35.2-million Race to the Top grant to fund its Personalized Achievement, Curriculum and Environment (PACE) project. The initiative will provide computer tablets to more than 17,000 middle school students at 18 middle schools.



Students at Johnson Street Global Studies K-8 in Greensboro's Guilford County Schools work on their tablets as part of the district's PACE project.



Houston Schools Superintendent Terry Grier hands out school supplies on the first day of classes at Marshall Elementary School. Photo credit: Houston Independent School District

Hillsborough County

Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa, Fla., is launching a free mobile app for school menus called School Lunch. The smartphone app shows each day's menu, including pictures and descriptions of the foods and lists nutritional information for each meal. The app also connects to an interactive web site and to digital televisions in the cafeteria.

Houston

Houston Independent School District is launching PowerUp, a new initiative to transform how teachers teach and students learn through technology at 11 pilot high schools. Teachers received training in the summer on how to best incorporate technology into their lessons and were given laptops at the beginning of school. And in January, all students in the 11 pilot schools will receive laptops.

Jackson

Mississippi's Jackson Public Schools has launched a Tip Line where students and employees can anonymously report bullying, suspicious persons, activity or weapons on or around school campuses.

Jacksonville

Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Fla., has created a Parent Academy that will offer workshops, classes and activities designed to help parents improve student achievement. The district is also launching an anti-bullying hotline.

Kansas City

As part of a push toward expanding early childhood, Missouri's Kansas City Public Schools is opening a new school that will serve approximately 260 3- and 4-year-old students. Several community groups will be involved with the school and provide on-site support, including the Kansas City Public Library. The district has also made steady gains in student achievement, nearly doubling its scores in the state's school district accreditation rating system.

Little Rock

Arkansas' Little Rock School District has unveiled its 10 Cultural Imperatives designed to serve as guiding principles to support students and promote academic success. They include holding employees accountable and valuing diversity.

Long Beach

California's Long Beach Unified School District launched a Common Core Standards web site providing resources for parents, teachers and students. And the Ernest McBride High School opened its doors, the first new high school built with funds from a \$1.2-billion school facilities initiative approved by voters in November.

Los Angeles

In an effort to help students stay in school, the Los Angeles Unified School District has adopted a new policy that bans suspensions for non-violent offenses, addressing them through conflict-resolution strategies. The district is also providing an iPad to each student at 47 schools as part of its Common Core Technology Project.

Louisville

To ensure a healthy learning environment, Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Ky., has implemented a new tobacco-free policy that bans smoking cigarettes or use of any other tobacco products on school-district property or vehicles. The policy, which previously only applied to students, now applies to employees and

School Year continued on page 6

School Year continued from page 5

parents.

Miami

Beginning this fall, Miami-Dade County Public Schools launches its iPrep Math program to provide 240 students at 49 middle schools with access to a 21st century learning environment in mathematics. Funded with a \$30-million Race to the Top grant, students work in groups of 60 with a team of three teachers who will teach a mathematics curriculum aligned with the goals of the Common Core State Standards.

Milwaukee

Milwaukee Public Schools is adding 45 additional art, music, physical education teacher and librarian positions. The school system is also expanding use of the Standards-Based Report Card in K-5 and K-8 schools, which helps staff, parents and students identify Common Core learning expectations in each subject.

Minneapolis

Minneapolis Public Schools introduced an enrollment bus that visited locations throughout Minneapolis before the start of school to encourage families to enroll students in school.

Nashville

As part of an effort to improve the enrollment process and avoid long lines on the first day of school, Tennessee's Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools created Enrollment Week, where parents could register their children at their zoned high school before the start of school. The program was successful, with 4,084 students registered before the start of school.

Newark

New Jersey's Newark Public Schools is embarking on an initiative with the Newark Police Department to shift school discipline policies from zero tolerance to youth development. All district high school principals and district school resource officers received training this summer in strategies to reduce incidents of school violence and bullying and the training will continue throughout the school year.



Nashville Schools Superintendent Jesse Register threw out the opening pitch (a strike) at a Nashville Sounds baseball game held on the first day of school. A portion of ticket sales benefited three district high schools. Photo credit : Mike Strasinger / Nashville Sounds

New York City

The nation's largest school district is adding an additional 40 schools this fall to its Middle School Quality Initiative, which focuses on strengthening literacy instruction in 49 middle schools using Common Core-aligned literacy strategies. The district will also open 78 new schools.

Oakland

California's Oakland Unified School District will study three teacher evaluation pilots during the 2013-2014 school year to identify best practices that can improve the teacher evaluation process in the district.

Orlando

Orange County Public Schools in Or-



Pittsburgh Schools Superintendent Linda Lane and the Ready Freddy mascot welcome students on the first day of school.

lando, Fla., is launching an all-digital curriculum at seven schools in which each school will pilot a different digital device. Three elementary schools, three middle schools and one high school will participate in the two-year pilot, and devices being provided range from iPad minis for first graders to laptops or iPads for high school students.

Palm Beach

Florida's School District of Palm Beach County is utilizing a new student application and lottery management system that will enable parents to manage their child's program selections using a mobile app.

Pittsburgh

Teachers in Pittsburgh Public Schools will have access to more than 15 types of professional learning and support opportunities, including professional development courses, workshops led by effective teachers, and opportunities to observe other teachers.

Portland

As a result of voters approving a \$482-million bond in November, Oregon's Portland Public Schools is launching roof replacements and seismic and science lab upgrades at six schools.

Providence

Rhode Island's Providence Public Schools is launching a citywide graduation campaign. Students will receive supports such as online credit recovery and targeted interventions in reading and math as well as develop personalized graduation plans.

Richmond

Virginia's Richmond Public Schools launched the first phase of a new web site to assist teachers and parents in supporting student achievement both in and out of the classroom. The web site is designed to serve as an information-rich resource for teachers and parents to supplement classroom instruction and features mini-lessons for each grade level and in each subject area.

School Year continued on page 7

School Year continued from page 6



Saint Paul Superintendent Valeria Silva gets a hug from a student on the first day of Parkway Montessori school.

Rochester

Beginning this school year, five schools in New York’s Rochester School District will expand their school calendar by more than eight weeks. The schools are part of a collaborative created by the Ford Foundation and the National Center on Time & Learning to develop high quality expanded learning time schools in five states.

Saint Paul

This fall, students at Minnesota’s Saint Paul Public Schools will have opportunities to visit a unique classroom located on a Boeing 727-200F. The “Learning Jet” aircraft was donated by FedEx and will



Seattle Schools Superintendent José Banda, right, participates in a pottery class in the classroom of art teacher Aaron Jefferson at Rainier Beach High School. Photo credit: Robert Teodosio/Seattle Public Schools

be renovated for a hands-on learning experience for students. Also, the district is midway through a five-year effort to ensure that all students – no matter their race or ethnicity – are reaching their full academic potential by helping all staff members examine their personal understanding and awareness of how race affects learning.

San Francisco

A program that transforms gardens into outdoor classrooms in the San Francisco Unified School District is being offered in 22 schools this year. The program focuses on science and sustainability in order to provide hands-on learning for students.

Santa Ana

The police department for California’s Santa Ana Unified School District is embarking on an effort with the Orange County Crime Stoppers to promote an anonymous public crime tip line.

Seattle

Seattle Public Schools is implementing its new five-year *Strategic Plan: Every Student, Every Classroom, Every Day -- Three Goals, 50 Journeys* aimed at ensuring educational excellence and equity. The district is also launching a K-12 Arts Plan at 14 schools which will provide all students with at least two hours of arts instruction each week from a certified arts professional.

Washington D.C.

The District of Columbia Public Schools in Washington, D.C., is expanding the school day at nine schools as well as providing first-year teachers in the 40 lowest performing schools the opportunity to receive weekly coaching and support from a master educator. In addition, every student from kindergarten to fifth grade will have access to a world language, health and physical education, arts and music teacher.

Wichita

Kansas’ Wichita Public Schools is implementing a new bus behavior management practice for students and drivers this fall in an effort to create district-wide behavior management expectations for riding the bus.



Minneapolis Schools Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson announces the district’s Shift campaign to boost student achievement.

Minneapolis Launches ‘Shift’ Campaign

Minneapolis Public Schools’ Bernadeia Johnson has embarked on her fourth year as superintendent by launching a city-wide call to action to close the achievement gap and raise achievement.

The *Shift* campaign calls for a shift in culture, behavior, attitude and service at all levels of the school district to positively impact organizational change.

“It’s time to get off the dime, to stop protecting the status quo, to stop being satisfied with poor performance, to stop blaming others and get focused--with partnership and innovation--to finally solve the riddle of Minneapolis Public Schools,” said Johnson during her announcement of the campaign.

As part of the initiative, a partnership zone will be established this school year in which 20-30 percent of schools will have performance contracts with the school district based on partnership, achievement, autonomy and accountability.

Johnson said that the new approach will require partnership at every level of the school district and community: board and administration, district and union, teachers and principals, schools and families, and business and partners.

“We are committing to a fundamental change in MPS culture, programs, preferences and practices.” said Johnson.



Council Conference continued from page 1



Tony Dungy former professional football player and coach Tony Dungy, author of the best-selling book *Quiet Strength*, will share his experience in working with young athletes.

The noted National Football League coach led the Indianapolis Colts to Super Bowl victory in 2007, the first African American coach to win one of the biggest sports events in the nation. Since retiring from coaching in 2008, Dungy can be seen on NBC's *Football Night in America* as an analyst.

Another conference speaker will be military veteran, author and motivational

30-Nov. 3, at the Hyatt Regency Albuquerque under the banner "Urban Education on the Rise!" and hosted by the Albuquerque Public Schools. On Oct. 31,

speaker Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch, who became an effective leader after being born and raised in a small barrio in Laredo, Tex., where she overcame poverty, discrimination and illiteracy.

When she graduated from college, Kickbusch joined the U.S. Army as an officer, breaking barriers and setting records in the military where she became the highest-ranking Hispanic woman in the Combat Support Field of the Army.

Big-city school superintendents, board members and senior administrators from around the nation will converge in Albuquerque to exchange information and strategies on what is working to improve urban education.



Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch

For conference details and registration, access the

Council web site at www.cgcs.org.

Town Hall Meeting To Focus on Race, Language, Culture



Charles Ogletree

Harvard Law School Professor Charles Ogletree Jr. will moderate a conversation in the round about race, language and culture in America at a national town hall meeting in conjunction with the Council of the Great City Schools' 57th Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 30–Nov. 3, in Albuquerque, N.M.

A prominent legal theorist, Ogletree is the founder and executive director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at the Harvard law school.

In the aftermath of the Trayvon Martin verdict, urban school leaders will have a broad discussion led by Ogletree about the cultural dynamics of stereotyping, profiling and bullying during the 90-minute conversation on Nov. 1 at the Hyatt Regency Albuquerque.

The town hall meeting is the pinnacle event of the conference, hosted by the Albuquerque Public Schools.

Boston School Wins Global 'Green School' Makeover Contest

Boston Latin School recently bested more than 450 schools across the nation to win Global Green USA's second annual Green School Makeover Competition.

As the winner of the contest, the school was awarded a \$75,000 grant to be used to create a sustainable school garden, and reduce energy usage and the number of plastic water bottles on campus.

Schools were required to submit a student-created outline of green initiatives and achievements, along with a proposal of the student body's plans for using the winning grant. A panel of environmental judges reviewed all entries received from K-12 public, private and charter schools.

"We are proud of our school and our district," said Cate Arnold, faculty adviser

for Boston Latin School Youth Climate Action Network. "We hope to continue to instill the importance of youth leadership and green schools in our students."

Global Green USA is a non-profit organization that advocates for solutions to global warming, including green building for affordable housing, schools, cities and communities.

Council of the Great City Schools

57TH ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE

“Urban Education On the Rise”

Hosted by Albuquerque Public Schools

October 30-November 3, 2013

Hyatt Regency Albuquerque
Albuquerque, NM

Wednesday, October 30

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

Thursday, October 31

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: Tony Dungy
2:15 pm-5:30 pm	Breakout Sessions
7:00 pm-9:00 pm	24th Annual Richard R. Green Awards Banquet: Urban Educator of the Year Announced

Friday, November 1

7:30 am-9:00 am	Breakfast and Speaker: Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch
9:00 am-12:30 pm	Breakout Sessions
12:30 pm-2:00 pm	Lunch and Speaker: David Gergen
2:30 pm-4:00 pm	National Town Hall Meeting: Moderated by Charles Ogletree
6:30 pm-8:30 pm	Reception at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center

Saturday, November 2

8:00 am-9:00 am	Breakfast
8:30 am-12:00 pm	Board of Directors Meeting
12:00 pm-2:30 pm	Legislative Directors Meeting
6:30 pm-9:00 pm	Farewell Event at the El Pinto Restaurant

Sunday, November 3

8:00 am- 10:00 am	Breakfast and Closing Session
11:30 am	Adjourn

**Miami Superintendent
Receives Hispanic
Heritage Award**



Alberto Carvalho

Alberto Carvalho, superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, was recently selected as a recipient of the 26th Annual Hispanic Heritage Awards.

Carvalho will receive the Education Award for his contributions to Hispanic cultural pride and accomplishments in the classroom and community.

He will be joined by actress Eva Longoria, chef José Andrés, actor/director Diego Luna and several other Hispanic Heritage Award honorees as they are celebrated during the annual Hispanic Heritage Awards held at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. in September.

Established in 1978, the Hispanic Heritage Awards were created to commemorate Hispanic Heritage Month.

**Urban-School
Communicator Leads
Public Relations Group**



Nora Carr

Urban-school public relations executive Nora Carr, chief of staff of North Carolina’s Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, this summer took the helm of the National School Public Relations

Association.

The nationally known and award-winning communicator was installed as president of NSPRA in July, and is a recognized voice in the Council of the Great City Schools’ Annual Public Relations Executives Meeting.

Communicator Leads continued on page 12

Questionable Criticism of Local School District Waivers

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

The recent approval by the U.S. Department of Education of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) waivers for a consortium of 10 California school districts has sparked harsh yet questionable criticism from a variety of quarters. Governors, state education officials, unions, a local school administrators' organization, and a number of conservative members of Congress have all opposed the waivers. But typical of many Washington policy debates, each of the critics has their own political agenda in arguing against the waivers—little of it having anything to do with what might be good for kids.

Interestingly, much of the criticism of the district waivers has ignored the content of the education plans of the California CORE districts themselves and the reforms they are implementing.

The condemnation has ranged from the philosophical (e.g., local district waivers erode federalism and the state role in education) to the myopic (e.g., no rural schools were mentioned). The only argument that may not be a red herring is the contention that local waivers along with state waivers take the pressure off Congress to reauthorize the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA). However, since Congress has repeatedly missed its own six-year ESEA reauthorization timetable, the Education Department can hardly be blamed for moving on its own. And local school systems can hardly be faulted for wanting to crawl out from under some of NCLB's more onerous provisions.

Without the waivers, school districts have to continue to spend billions of dollars on unproductive federal requirements, particularly Supplemental Education Services (SES), and undertake unnecessary protocols for any school with even one non-proficient student. The criticism of the Education Department for initiating NCLB waivers or the CORE school districts for applying for them disregards where the ultimate responsibility for fixing NCLB rests—Congress.

In fact, federal agencies, including the Education Department, frequently have to fix both conceptual and technical problems with legislation that has already passed using a variety of means, including waivers, creative regulatory interpretations, guidance, delayed implementation timetables, or non-enforcement. This is true of administrations of both parties. In reality, waiver authority, at least in the education area,



is preferable to some other types of agency actions, particularly when it involves making up law where it doesn't otherwise exist.

Moreover, Congress provided the Education Department with explicit waiver authority for most statutory and regulatory provisions in Title IX of ESEA. That waiver authority extends not only to states, but also to local school districts and to Native American tribal entities. With such clear statutory authority, claims that the Department doesn't have the statutory authority to issue these waivers are patently false.

In addition, assertions that local waivers represent an erosion of federalism and state education control ring hollow. School districts must follow state law in every activity as a unit of local government. School district waivers deal only with allowable ESEA activities, and do not waive any state laws. All districts that have received NCLB waivers under the Bush and Obama administrations, including the California CORE districts, continue to follow their individual state laws. Anti-federalism claims, therefore, are questionable at best and appear rooted in an attempt to further devolve federal education responsibilities to the state level, or increase state power, control, and management of federal funds.

Nonetheless, the controversial waiver conditions added by the Education Department to the clear statutory requirements of justifying the instructional and achievement benefits of any waivers have always been an unwelcome prerequisite for securing waiver approval from the both Bush and Obama administrations. The legality of these "conditional" requirements has never been formally challenged, and even the Congressional Research Service has expressed some skepticism as to whether these "conditions" actually exceed the Department's authority.

In short, federal agency waiver authority is a necessary evil in complex federal legislation, where requirements from each reauthorization are layered on top of requirements from prior legislative actions. The criticisms of these local school district waivers ignore both the law and practical considerations in order to highlight each critic's own political agenda. But it's all about the kids, right?

Jackson Grads Write Essay in *New York Times* About Road to Ivy League Schools



Travis Reginal



Justin Porter

Travis Reginal and Justin Porter were friends back in Mississippi's Jackson Public Schools, where both attended William B. Murrah High School.

Porter started a debate team with close friends as a result of his avowed identity as a "classic overachiever."

According to Reginal, it was Porter and the speech and debate club where "I found what I had long hoped for — a black male who could push me intellectually."

Both graduated in 2012. Reginal just completed his first year at Yale and Porter at Harvard.

In a testament to their intellectual prowess, the former urban students and friends recently documented their journey on the road to Ivy League schools in essays featured in the *New York Times* on July 30.

In his essay, Porter recalled his decision before his senior year of high school to attend school in New England. Once the dream of attending Harvard became a reality upon acceptance, Porter concedes there was deep emotional conflict because of how far it was from his mother in Mississippi.

"I felt trapped between the two worlds in front of me. One held seemingly unlimited opportunity — full scholarship, career advancement, travel possibilities. But what would I sacrifice in exchange? My mother and I have never been on firm financial ground, and that was not going to magically change."

As the essay continues, Porter sheds light on the myriad of challenges poor students face when choosing to attend elite colleges such as foreign environments, eco-

nommic pressures and family. He further expounds on this intimate topic as he reveals questions he grappled with while settling into life as a Harvard student.

"I began to think, 'Who am I, anyway, to think I belong at Harvard, the alma mater of the Bushes, the Kennedys and Romneys? Maybe I should have stayed in Mississippi where I belonged,'" he wrote.

To sum up his first year college experience, Porter concludes, "Harvard has forced me to grow and take a candid look at the world, and at myself." He notes that though the road may have been rough at times, he would not trade his Ivy League experience for anything.

With his first year at Yale behind him, Reginal reflects on his anxiety and heightened awareness. As a first-generation college student at an Ivy League university, the stakes were high and the margin for error was small, Reginal admits. His struggle, which is shared by so many young black males from single-parent households, is complex and fraught with expectations. "I am supposed to go to college and excel to provide a better life for everyone back home. And the community back home is desperate for healing," he wrote.

His essay weaves a tale of gaining acceptance at Yale while exploring his deeper self-acceptance. Reginal portrays himself as an ambitious black student not quite prepared for the rigorous academic and real-life realities of life at an Ivy League university.

With his second year in college looming large, Reginal's essay hints at the realization that regardless of his first-year downfalls he does have something to offer to African American youth. "I know from my personal story that many young people living in at-risk neighborhoods have large imaginations, passionate hearts and deep desires to transcend this community," he wrote. His charge to himself is to show other youth how to succeed while on his own road to success.

Urban School Leaders Contribute to Board On Teacher Preparation



Lori Ward



Candy Olson

Lori Ward, superintendent of Ohio's Dayton Public Schools, and Candy Olson, a member of Florida's Hillsborough County school board in Tampa, recently participated in the adoption of the next generation of accreditation standards for educator preparation.

They are on the Board of Directors of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), which in late August

announced the new accreditation standards to ensure quality educator preparation in producing highly effective teachers for today's classroom.

Olson is the past chair of the Council of the Great City Schools' Board of Directors.

New Leaders *continued from page 3*

Durant, the district's assistant superintendent, as its interim superintendent. A graduate of the district, he succeeds Jerome Pecko.

Oklahoma City Public Schools named Dave Lopez, a businessman and Oklahoma's secretary of commerce, as its interim superintendent. Lopez succeeds Karl Springer who retired from the district in August.

And Richmond Public Schools has appointed Jonathan Lewis, a former superintendent of Virginia's Fauquier County Public Schools, as its superintendent. He succeeds Yvonne Brandon, who resigned from the district in June.



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Council Gives Research And Curriculum Awards

Michelle Rodriguez, the chief academic officer for California's Santa Ana Unified School District, recently received the nation's top honor in curriculum development and implementation in urban education.

She was presented with the 2013 Council of the Great City Schools/Pearson Education Curriculum Leadership Award at the Council's annual Curriculum and Research Directors Meeting in Miami in July.

Rodriguez received the award for exemplifying leadership, innovation and commitment to raising the academic achievement of all students in her school district.

And receiving the nation's top honor in research and assessment leadership in urban education was Cinda Christian, senior research associate at Texas' Austin Independent School District. She was the recipient of the 2013 Council of the Great City Schools/Houghton Mifflin Research and Assessment Leadership Award for demonstrating education excellence in the field of research and assessment that supports teaching and learning.

Urban Educator
Council of the Great City Schools

Third News Publication Ranks Urban Schools Among the Best

Dayton Twins Ranked No. 1 and No. 2

Cleveland Poised To Transform Schools

Editor's Note

For many of our readers who receive the *Urban Educator* by mail, we want to know if you would prefer receiving the newsletter via e-mail, discontinuing the mail delivery. If you're interested in changing to electronic delivery, please send an email to: urbanedunsubscribe@cgcs.org. You may also send address changes to this email address.

Communicator Leads continued from page 9

Carr also serves as a contributing editor on communications for the *American School Board Journal* and a columnist on community and stakeholder relations for *eSchool News*.

As chief of staff of North Carolina's third largest school district, Carr oversees governmental relations, internal and external communications, special events, media relations, community relations, the

district's TV station, the parent academy, grant development and other operations.

Before joining the Guilford County school system in 2008, she had served as chief communications officer at the state's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. She has also been an executive with a large public relations firm and, from 1999 to 2002, Carr was assistant superintendent for public information in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system.