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## Bill Gates to Address Council Fall Conference



**Bill Gates**

Business leader, entrepreneur and philanthropist Bill Gates will address the nation's urban-school leaders at the Council of the Great City Schools' 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 18-22, in Cleveland.

As co-founder and former CEO and chairman of the world's largest software business, Microsoft, Gates teamed up with

**Bill Gates** continued on page 3

## City Schools Respond to Hurricanes

Immediately after Hurricane Harvey devastated Houston and the southeastern Texas coast in late August, the Council of the Great City Schools responded to the challenges of the Category 4 storm by mobilizing the coalition's 68 large urban public-school systems to provide assistance to aid the Houston Independent School District.

Many big-city school districts – from Boston Public Schools to Milwaukee Public Schools to Los Angeles Unified – responded to the call to action. And then the Council turned around to help urban school districts in Florida affected by Hurricane Irma.

The nation's largest urban public-school systems launched efforts to donate much-needed children's clothing, toiletries, school uniforms and school supplies, as well as offer other disaster relief and support to the 215,000-student Houston school system.

Moreover, the Dallas and Austin school districts have accepted thousands of displaced Houston students, and urban school districts in El Paso, Fort Worth and San Antonio are welcoming hurricane evacuees and offering other aid.

"Our hearts go out to all the people in the Gulf Coast region who are impacted

**Hurricane Harvey** continued on page 2

## Urban Schools Kick Into High Gear as New School Year Begins

Single-gender schools, high schools that offer college courses and innovative career and technical education offerings for students are just some of the new initiatives in big-city schools for the 2017-2018 school year. Here's a city-by-city roundup of what's new:

### **Albuquerque**

New Mexico's Albuquerque Public Schools is implementing Learning Zones (LZs) designed to combine the advantages of being a large urban school district with a more personalized approach to education. The LZs are four smaller geographic areas comprised of about 21,000 students in 35 schools and are each assigned an associate superintendent along with support staff to help in areas such as training, instruction, technology and testing.

### **Anchorage**

Alaska's Anchorage School District is collaborating with the University of Alaska-Anchorage to create the Alaska Middle College School, which will enable students to earn a high school di-

**Urban Schools** continued on page 4



Oklahoma City Schools Superintendent Aurora Lora talks to Raelysa Fay on the first day of school at Thelma Parks Elementary. Photo credit: Paul Hellstern, *The Oklahoman*

**Hurricane Harvey** *continued from page 1*

by this disaster,” said Dallas Independent School District Superintendent Michael Hinojosa. “...Dallas ISD is committed to doing everything possible to lend a hand during this critical time, including providing clothing and supplies and enrolling students here for as long as needed,” he stressed.

“The response from the Great City Schools to the Houston flooding has been tremendous, and the district is profoundly grateful,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly, pointing out that the Houston school district still needs support.

In addition to offering supplies for schoolchildren and their families, urban schools are also encouraged to help the Houston Independent School District through a donation to the HISD Foundation – <http://www.houstonisd.org/page/164281>.

With a number of big-city school districts, including Atlanta, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Des Moines, Miami-Dade County and San Diego among others, coming to the aid of Houston’s public schools, Casserly noted, “This is yet another example of how the nation’s urban public schools work to support and improve each other.”

The urban schools’ coalition has mobilized big-city school districts in the past



**Houston Independent School District Superintendent Richard Carranza poses with students and parents lining up at 5 a.m. on Sept. 8 for clothes and uniforms in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. The district’s first schools opened Sept. 11.**

to respond to large-scale catastrophes. The Council helped the New Orleans school system in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and provided aid to urban schools recovering from the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Oklahoma City bombing,

and at least two California earthquakes.

It has also worked with FEMA and other federal authorities, including the U.S. Department of Education and Congress, in helping provide disaster relief to urban schools.

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# Hawaii, Portland Name New School Leaders; Richmond Appoints Interim And Clark County and Columbus Superintendents Plan to Retire



**Christina Kishimoto**

As the 2017-2018 school year begins, two big-city school districts are experiencing changes at the helm.

After a search that spanned several months and 92 applicants, the Hawaii State Department of Education recently selected Christina Kishimoto to take the reins of the 175,000-student school district based in Honolulu. She succeeds Keith Hayashi, the district's interim superintendent.

Kishimoto recently served as the superintendent of the 36,500-student Gilbert Public Schools in Arizona, a position she held since 2014.

**Bill Gates** continued from page 1

his wife in 1994 to launch the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support education, world health and investment in low-income communities.

The conference will also feature two other keynote speakers: award-winning actress Rosario Dawson and CNN political commentator Van Jones. Additionally, Jones will moderate a national town hall meeting on equity to be held in conjunction with the convention.

Under the banner "Advancing the State of Urban Education," the conference will give big-city school superintendents, board members, senior administrators and college deans of education a forum to discuss issues and share information and best practices to improve teaching and learning.

Hosted by the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, the five-day conference will be held at the Hilton Cleveland Downtown.

To register for the conference, access the Council's website at [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org). Registration can only be conducted online.

In a press release, Kishimoto said she is excited and honored to accept the superintendency position in Hawaii. "...I look forward to working hand in hand with Hawaii's teachers, leaders, staff, parents, community members and student leaders to execute on this vision of high quality college, career and community readiness."



**Guadalupe Guerrero**

Also selecting a new leader was Oregon's Portland Public Schools, which unanimously named veteran educator Guadalupe Guerrero as the new superintendent of the 49,000-student school district. He succeeds interim superintendent Bob McKean.

Since 2012, Guerrero has served as the Deputy Superintendent for Instruction, Innovation and Social Justice for the San Francisco Unified School District.

And Virginia's Richmond Public Schools welcomed a new school year with a new interim superintendent in Thomas Kranz. His leadership in the district began in 2014 as an assistant superintendent, followed by a stint as chief operating officer. He succeeds Dana Bedden.

## Contract Extended



**Henderson Lewis**

The journey continues for Henderson Lewis, Jr., with his contract to lead the New Orleans Parish School Board recently extended for another four years.

"After serving for over two years as superintendent, Dr. Lewis has proven himself to be an outstanding leader," said school board president John Brown, Sr.

The Orleans Parish School Board currently oversees 41 schools. That number will increase to 79 schools in July 2018, when schools that were taken over by the

Louisiana Recovery School District following Hurricane Katrina return to local oversight.

## Two Leaders to Retire



**Pat Skorkowsky**

Pat Skorkowsky, the superintendent of Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas, recently announced his retirement, effective June 2018.

He has led the nation's fifth largest school district since June 2013. Under his tenure, graduation rates have increased, more students are taking and passing Advanced Placement exams and the district has experienced a 68 percent increase in magnet programs. And in June, he was named the National Magnet Superintendent of the Year by Magnet Schools of America.

Skorkowsky has served his entire 30-year career in the district, beginning as a first-grade teacher.

"When I was going to college 34 years ago, the thought never crossed my mind that I would end up being a superintendent," said Skorkowsky in a statement announcing his retirement. "I just wanted to teach kids."



**Dan Good**

Also stepping down is Dan Good, who has served as superintendent of Ohio's Columbus Public Schools since 2013, after retiring from a neighboring school system. He will retire from the 51,000-student school district in December.

Under his leadership, access to high quality pre-K increased by 22 percent, the district outperformed surrounding school systems in serving students with limited English proficiency and special needs, and the achievement gap decreased between student groups.

**Urban Schools** *continued from page 1*

ploma and an associate's degree at the same time. Approximately 140 juniors and seniors will attend regular university classes taught by college faculty, but will also have access to two high school teachers who will hold support seminars to review material.

**Arlington**

The Arlington Independent School District in Texas is partnering with local health providers to participate in the Asthma 411 program, a three-part initiative that includes access to rescue medication, enhanced school management and support prevention. The district is also opening a new 169,800 square-foot career and technical center offering juniors and seniors from all district high schools 27 programs of study, including automotive, construction and health sciences.

**Atlanta**

Atlanta Public Schools is opening the doors to its newest middle school, the John Lewis Invictus Academy, named for civil rights icon and Georgia congressman John Lewis. The academy will serve 6<sup>th</sup> graders, adding a grade level each year until the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.



**Atlanta Schools Superintendent Meria Carstarphen takes a selfie with Congressman John Lewis on the opening of a school named in his honor.**

**Austin**

Texas' Austin Independent School District is launching its first Montessori program at Winn Elementary School with 96 students in Pre-K and kindergarten. And the district's LBJ Early College High School is implementing a Health Sciences Career Launch program in partnership with a local healthcare provider to give students the opportunity to complete a six-year program to earn both a high school diploma and an associate's degree.



**Texas' Arlington Schools Superintendent Marcelo Cavazos helps direct traffic on the first day of school at Hill Elementary.**

**Baltimore**

In an effort to help students in Baltimore City Public Schools succeed, the school district is implementing a blueprint for success focusing on three areas: student wholeness, literacy and staff leadership. Initiatives include offering free dinners to students who participate in after-school activities and providing literacy coaches at 20 schools.

**Boston**

Boston Public Schools is launching a "Breakfast in the Classroom" initiative to increase the number of schools that serve breakfast to students in their classrooms. The district is also lengthening the school day in 38 schools, adding 120 more hours of learning time—the equivalent of 20 school days—to the school year.

**Broward County**

Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., is launching dual language programs at six schools and implementing debate programs in 21 elementary schools, while middle school students at 24 schools can take a high school-level computer science course through the district's partnership with Code.org. The school district is also increasing the number of students participating in the Global Scholars Program to 19 schools, an increase from 16.

**Buffalo**

Buffalo Public Schools held a two-week My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Summer Academy for approximately 100 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade African-American and Latino male students, who will continue to meet twice monthly during the 2017-18 school year. The school district will also use \$2.4 million in MBK grants to offer student internships, online learning opportunities and access to high school and college courses.

**Charlotte**

In an effort to increase the number of "home-grown" teachers in the district, North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is launching the Charlotte Teacher Early College. The program is on the campus of UNC Charlotte and will enable students to have the opportunity to graduate with a high school diploma and 60 hours of college credit at no cost. The five-year program begins in ninth grade and ends with grade 13 and is open to all students.

**Chicago**

Beginning this fall, Chicago Public Schools is adding Safe Passage routes at three additional schools, bringing the total number of routes to 142. The two elementary schools and one middle school will receive new Safe Passage routes as part of the district's continued investment to help ensure students have a safe journey to and from school. According to district officials, the program has resulted in a 32 percent reduction in crime on Safe Passage routes, since its implementation in the 2012-13 school year.

**Cincinnati**

Cincinnati Public Schools is launching eight new programs, such as global conservation and global environmental literacy, at nine neighborhood schools as part of its Visions 2020 Initiative created last year to strengthen neighborhood schools. The district is also opening two new magnet schools and a new elementary school.

**Urban Schools** *continued on page 5*

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## Clark County

Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas is opening six new schools and three schools are joining the district's Turnaround Zone, which provides additional resources to low-achieving schools. Under the Turnaround Schools model, new principals are selected and have the opportunity to choose their administrative team to assist with the implementation of the school's improvement plan.

## Cleveland

Cleveland Metropolitan School District is opening six new high school models, including the Bard High School operated in conjunction with Bard College of New York. Students will be able to earn both a diploma and an associate's degree. And parents can now sign up for Bus Tracker, an online portal where they can monitor the travel of yellow school buses carrying their children in K-5th grade.

## Dallas

The Dallas Independent School District is opening its newest transformation school, CityLab High School, whose curriculum includes a focus on architecture, urban planning and environmental science. The district is also embarking on a four-year initiative to implement social and emotional learning for students.

## Denver

Denver Public Schools is adding five new early college high schools that will enable students to take free college-level courses, beginning in the ninth grade, and graduate with as many as 60 credits, or an associate's degree, tuition free. And early college students have the option of completing a fifth year of college-only classes.

## Des Moines

Iowa's Des Moines Public Schools is expanding the number of schools implementing the Schools for Rigor curriculum model to 16 schools this year, from six last year. The program is designed to improve the ability of the principal as an instruc-



**Denver Schools Superintendent Thomas Boasberg gives a student a high five on the first day of school.**

tional leader and identify and remove barriers to rigorous classrooms and higher achievement. The district is also offering free breakfast to all elementary students.

## District of Columbia

The District of Columbia Public Schools is increasing the number of schools that will have a college and career coordinator to ensure that students have plans for high school and beyond. The school system is also increasing extracurricular offerings in middle schools, including coding clubs, rugby and archery, as well as wheelchair track and field, to ensure every middle school student has the opportunity to participate in at least one extracurricular program.

## Duval County

Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Fla., is piloting its laptop lockers program at two middle schools, with 1,000 students participating. District officials believe the program will cultivate a sense of personal investment and accountability for the students as they will be responsible for keeping track of their laptop and returning it to their locker at the end of the day.

## El Paso

Texas' El Paso Independent School District is opening the Young Women's STEAM Research & Preparatory Academy for 200 students in sixth and seventh grade, with one grade added each year until the school serves students in grades sixth through 12. It is the district's first single-gender school and will have a Sci-

ence, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) focus.

## Fort Worth

Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District is partnering with several local organizations in a collaboration at 14 schools to build leaders at all levels and strengthen school culture. Teams made up of teachers, administrators, data coaches and principals will focus on instruction, data practice, team effectiveness and school culture.

## Fresno

California's Fresno Unified School District is relaunching the Law and Civil Justice Pathway at Bullard High School with support from members of the Fresno legal community. Originally created in 2006, upon completion of the program and after receiving a high school diploma, students will be qualified to be employed as a legal clerk, social and human service assistant or foster care worker.

## Greensboro

Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, N.C., is implementing a five-year master plan to expand the district's arts education program. Initiatives under the plan include developing a personalized curriculum to meet the needs of students, providing more facilities, instruments and equipment for student performances, and increasing student access to high quality arts education at all grade levels and in all schools.

## Hillsborough County

Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa, Fla., is launching dual language programs at two elementary schools with the goal of producing students who are biliterate in English and Spanish.

## Houston

The Houston Independent School District is launching Achieve 180, a research-based action plan to serve 32 of the district's underperforming schools. As part of the initiative, each school will have a nurse,

**Urban Schools** continued on page 6



**Urban Schools** *continued from page 5*

counselor and a librarian, and teachers will have two hours of additional professional development one day a week to improve their instructional practices.

**Indianapolis**

Indianapolis Public Schools is opening the Ignite Achievement Academy, an accelerated K-6 school, and the Thrival World Academy, where students will spend the second half of the year in Thailand and Laos for a study-abroad program. The district is also partnering with a local health center to open health clinics at 14 schools.

**Jackson**

Jackson Public Schools in Mississippi is improving the district's transportation program by purchasing 44 new school buses that include cameras and GPS technology to improve efficiency and assist with tracking fuel usage and costs, as well help the district prepare routes and schedules.

**Long Beach**

California's Long Beach Unified School District is opening Browning High School, specially designed to provide academic pathways to careers and higher education in culinary arts, hospitality and recreation. The \$71 million, 10-acre campus was funded by Measure K, the \$1.2-billion school bond initiative approved by voters in 2008.

**Los Angeles**

The nation's second largest school district is opening the Boys Academic Leadership Academy of Los Angeles to provide a STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) focused college-prep education for boys of color. Los Angeles Unified is also launching a dual-immersion pilot at 10 early education facilities and strengthening its support of newcomers and immigrant families with resources and toolkits as part of its new 'We Are One' campaign promoting the spirit and message of inclusion.

**Miami**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools is offering 57 new choice/magnet programs, including a certification program in build-



**Los Angeles Schools Superintendent Michelle King gives a hug to a student on the first day of school.**

ing automation systems technology. The district is also implementing the Elementary School Drug Awareness Training to instruct students on the dangers of opioids, and 27 elementary schools will integrate introductory robotics/coding activities into their science curriculum as part of the iBot program.

**Milwaukee**

In an effort to promote a positive school environment, Milwaukee Public Schools is implementing a district-wide uniform policy for students. In addition, high schools, middle schools and some elementary schools will follow an Early Start Calendar, with school beginning earlier to allow more days of instruction.

**Minneapolis**

Minneapolis Public Schools is implementing a new PreK-5 literacy curriculum and literacy campaign, and is putting a new focus on social and emotional learning for students.

**Nashville**

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools is implementing its middle school transformation plan, bringing more advanced academic options into middle school classrooms, such as Honors English/Language Arts classes this school year. The district is also updating the technological infrastructure of middle schools and increasing the number of technology devices available to

middle school students.

**New York City**

The nation's largest school district is expanding its College Access for All program to 175 more high schools. The schools will receive funding, support from a college-planning coach and training for school teams to build a schoolwide college and career culture. The district is also creating 68 new Dual Language and Transitional Bilingual Education programs, including for the first time an Urdu bilingual program, and offering all of its 1.1-million students free lunch.

**Oakland**

California's Oakland Unified School District is opening the Oakland School of Language, a new arts integrated dual-immersion language middle school offering students a Spanish/English immersion model.

**Oklahoma City**

Oklahoma City Public Schools is implementing a pilot program at seven schools aimed at improving college and career readiness. Individualized Career and Academic Plans will help students as they explore career, academic and postsecondary opportunities and create their own pathways to be career and college ready.

**Omaha**

In an effort to boost student achievement, Omaha Public Schools is increasing the oversight of its principals by hiring six executive directors to directly supervise and coach principals as well as develop a stronger principal pipeline for the school system. The school system is also adding 9<sup>th</sup> grade to its Virtual School.

**Orange County**

Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Fla., begins the next phase of its Launched 1:1 Digital Learning Schools

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**Urban Schools** *continued from page 6*

program by distributing more than 100,000 digital learning devices to every student, teacher and administrator at 10 middle schools and one high school. The program was created in 2013 to increase student engagement and achievement through personalized digital content and tools.

## Philadelphia



**Philadelphia Schools Superintendent William Hite meets with students at George Washington High School on the first day of school.**

The School District of Philadelphia is providing social workers for 22 schools in a pilot program designed to improve and expand behavioral health services for students. The school district also launched a recruiting campaign to hire up to 1,000 new teachers for the 2017-2018 school year.

## Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh Public Schools is aiming to create a positive and supportive environment for the 2017-2018 school year by implementing several initiatives, such as having a nurse on every campus, increasing library services at all schools and making guidance counselors and social workers available for small group and 1-on-1 sessions.

## Providence

Rhode Island's Providence Public Schools is placing a strong focus on keeping middle school students engaged academically by adding school culture coordinators at each of the district's seven middle schools.

## Richmond

To meet the needs of English Language Learners, Virginia's Richmond Public Schools is expanding its English as a Second Language program, offering more one-on-one interactions and allowing students to attend schools closer to their homes, reducing the amount of time spent on the school bus each day.

## Sacramento

California's Sacramento City Unified School District is forming a graduation task force led by Superintendent Jorge Aguilar in response to a three-year decline in graduation rates. The Task Force will identify the impacts of low rates and send recommendations for improving graduation rates to the school board.

## San Antonio

The San Antonio Independent School District is expanding the number of schools offering dual-language programs from two to 13 schools. One of the schools—Twain Dual Language Academy—will be the only 100 percent dual-language in the district with Spanish and English embedded in every subject.

## San Diego

San Diego Unified School District is requiring all schools to have their own Wellness Plan, with principals designating coordinators to create healthy initiatives for students and staff members. The district is also implementing student equity ambassadors at each high school focused on improving campus climate.

## Seattle

Seattle Public Schools is opening the doors to five new schools this fall and implementing new school bell schedules that will result in a 20-minute longer school day for students to allow more time for learning and teacher collaboration.

## Shelby County

Shelby County Schools in Memphis is opening its first English language center designed for new immigrant high school students. The Newcomers International Center will teach students English through first hand experiences with instructors who are fluent in multiple languages and receive interactive instruction to improve their math and language skills.

## St. Louis

St. Louis Public Schools is partnering with local health organizations to provide nurses at four elementary schools as part of the district's Healthy Kids-Healthy Minds program designed to increase school nurse staffing in the district and provide health care to students.

## Toledo

A partnership between Ohio's Toledo Public Schools and the University of Toledo will welcome its first cohort of approximately 20 students in Teach Toledo, a program designed to encourage Toledo citizens to become teachers in the Toledo school district. Students will earn an associate's degree and then continue at the university to complete a Bachelor's of Education degree.

## Tulsa

Oklahoma's Tulsa Public Schools is expanding the #TPSRides program, a partnership with the Metro Tulsa Transit Authority, by allowing students in grades 9 through 12 to ride buses seven days a week for school or extracurricular activities.

## Wichita

Kansas' Wichita Public Schools is partnering with Wichita State University for the Teacher Apprentice Program, which allows paraeducators to go back to school to become certified as an elementary or special education teacher. The school district is also launching its Superintendent's Challenge for student-athletes, in which students in 20 sports and activities will compete for the highest grade-point average.

## Five Urban School Districts Win SAT Practice Challenge

Five urban school districts this summer won the 2017 Official SAT Practice All In Challenge, aimed at boosting college and career readiness in the nation's big-city public schools.

The winners – Long Beach, Fresno, Orange County (Orlando), Denver and Chicago – competed among 28 urban school districts that volunteered for the first-ever Official SAT Practice All In Challenge through a Council of the Great City Schools partnership with the College Board and Khan Academy.

“There are many success stories to share about the hard work and incredible growth that our districts and students made through this challenge,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “We’re proud of the 28 school districts that stepped up to the challenge and hope others will follow.”

The Official SAT Practice All In Challenge connects urban students with free, official, and personalized SAT practice on Khan Academy to prepare for the SAT and postsecondary success. Students who’ve taken the SAT or a PSAT-related assessment in the past can unlock a custom practice plan on Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy that identifies strengths and weaknesses.

“The PSAT is now a diagnostic for Khan Academy,” said Khan Academy founder Sal Khan. “If students share their PSAT score, Khan Academy can use that information to provide tailored practice in math, reading and writing.”

The five winning school districts are recognized for their achievement with awards in five categories:

- California’s **Long Beach Unified School District** received the “MVP” prize for having the highest overall percentage of students linking their College Board and Khan Academy accounts to receive free, personalized SAT practice.

- California’s **Fresno Unified School District** received the “Growth” prize for having the highest overall percent increase of students linking their College Board and Khan Academy accounts to receive free, personalized SAT practice.

- Florida’s **Orange County Public Schools** in Orlando received the “Student: Proof of Practice” prize for having the highest average weekly percentage of students with active Official SAT Practice accounts.

- **Denver Public Schools** received the “Time: Proof of Practice” prize with its students logging the most minutes on Official SAT Practice per week.

- **Chicago Public Schools** received the “Problems Completed: Proof of Practice” prize with its students completing the most Official SAT Practice problems per week.

“Our partnership with the Council of the Great City Schools and Khan Academy is helping bring these free, highly personalized practice tools to every corner of the country,” said College Board President and CEO David Coleman. “But make no mistake: behind every story of a student practicing on Khan Academy and succeeding on the SAT is a caring adult...”

Official SAT Practice features video lessons, test-taking tips and strategies, thousands of interactive practice questions and nine full-length, practice tests. There are now more than four million unique users registered for Official SAT Practice.

In May, the College Board and Khan Academy announced research that showed that students who prepared for the SAT using Official SAT Practice have seen substantial score gains.

As a part of their awards, the districts will receive money to put toward initiatives that advance student success and opportunity.

## Milwaukee District Launches Black, Latino Male Program

Milwaukee Public Schools is beginning the 2017-2018 school year focusing on the plight of black and Latino boys with the launch of the district’s Department of

Black and Latino Achievement.

District officials created the new department to support and empower minority students and address the disparities in academic and life outcomes for black



and Latino boys.

“When we examine student achievement data for all of our students, our Black and Latino male students are consistently below their peers,” said Milwaukee Schools Superintendent Darienne Driver. “This is simply unacceptable; we can and will do better.”

The department launches with four key strategies to implement: aligning together programs that effectively support black and Latino young men across the district and the city, developing courses that provide safe places for students to communicate among their peers, analyzing data to take action against disparities in learning, and positively altering the narratives and preconceived notions surrounding males of color.

The department will report directly to the superintendent and is staffed by four male staff members, three of them district alumni. They have held a variety of positions in the school system, including a principal, a culturally responsive teacher leader and a special education teacher.

This past July, the Milwaukee school board unanimously voted to form the Department of Black and Latino Achievement. It will be supported through a partnership by the National Campaign for Black Male Achievement.



# Council of the Great City Schools

## 61ST ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE

*"Advancing the State of Urban Education"*

Hosted by Cleveland Metropolitan School District

**October 18- 22, 2017**

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### Wednesday, October 18

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 7:00 am-5:00 pm | Conference registration                       |
| 1:00 pm-5:00 pm | Task Force Meetings                           |
| 6:30 pm-8:30 pm | Welcome reception at Cleveland History Center |

### Thursday, October 19

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 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: <b>Bill Gates</b>   |
| 2:15 pm-5:30 pm  | Breakout Sessions  |
| 7:00 pm-9:00 pm  | 28th Annual Green-Garner Awards Banquet:<br>Urban Educator of the Year Announced |

### Friday, October 20

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 7:30 am-9:00 am  | Breakfast and Speaker: <b>Rosario Dawson</b>                       |
| 9:00 am-12:30 pm | Breakout Sessions  |
| 12:30 pm-2:00 pm | Lunch and Speaker: <b>Van Jones</b>                                |
| 2:30 pm-4:00 pm  | National Town Hall Meeting: <b>Van Jones</b>                       |
| 6:30 pm-10:00 pm | Dinner and Entertainment at Pickwick & Frolic<br>Restaurant & Club |

### Saturday, October 21

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 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                    |
| 7:30 pm-9:00 pm  | Farewell Party at the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame |

### Sunday, October 22

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

## Council Condemns DACA Rollback

When the Trump Administration on Sept. 5 officially announced that it will repeal the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, the Council of the Great City Schools condemned the action, which would lift protection for an estimated 800,000 immigrants who arrived in the United States illegally as children.

"It should be remembered that Abraham Lincoln, the nation's first Republican president and arguably its best, signed into law the "Act to Encourage Immigration" on July 4, 1864. He argued strenuously in favor of the legislation not only because it appealed to the aspirations of a good many people who wanted a brighter future, but because it was good for the nation, economically and culturally," said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly in a press statement.

### Program Phase-Out

The Trump Administration is phasing out DACA, giving Congress six months to find a legislative solution to prevent the so-called Dreamers, or undocumented young immigrants, from being deported.

"For urban public schools, whose classrooms are filled with students from all over the world, our mission is not to reflect or perpetuate the walls that others would build. Our job is to tear them down, to educate future generations of informed, engaged citizens," said Casserly.

"In the spirit of this mission, we condemn the dissolution of the DACA program—whether now or in six months—by the president, and the value system that led him to conclude that America could only be great again without the patriotism, ingenuity, and voices of these children.

"We now call on Congress to act swiftly to enshrine this protection into law and remove the fear and uncertainty facing so many of our nation's schoolchildren," Casserly emphasized.

## Governing by Extension and Delay

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

As the end of the federal fiscal year approaches and dire warnings of a government shutdown and federal debt default arise yet again, President Trump and the congressional leadership have made a new deal – a three-month extension until December 8. The nation can face these issues not only now but in December as well. In other words, when in doubt, just delay!

This three-month extension of government funding along with an extra three months on the federal debt ceiling has been packaged with initial Hurricane Harvey disaster aid. The specter of squabbling over must-pass fiscal legislation while parts of the country try to recover from an historic disaster and other parts of the country braced for a second storm became unacceptable to key elected officials.

In the interim, each house of Congress continues moving its respective annual appropriations bills even though final funding levels will await an omnibus budget and appropriations agreement—probably in December. While more generous than President Trump's proposed education budget proposals, these new FY 2018 spending bills are not particularly munificent for elementary and secondary education programs in school year 2018-19.

The House bill freezes funding for the \$15 billion Title I program for disadvantaged students at current levels, and the Senate bill adds a meager \$25 million. For the \$12 billion IDEA formula grants, the Senate bill freezes current funding and the House adds a modest \$200 million. Both House and Senate



bills freeze Title III grants for English language learners. And, both houses propose increasing the new Title IV Support and Enrichment Program by \$50 million and \$100 million, respectively. The 21st Century After-School program is frozen in the Senate and cut by \$191 million in the House. The House adopted the Trump administration's request to terminate the Title II program for teacher quality and class size reduction, while the Senate restores funding to the current \$2.1 billion level. Fortunately, new private school voucher programs are not part of any of the pending funding bills.

In any case, all education funding levels will be revisited in an omnibus budget agreement in December or thereafter. Some increases to budget ceilings for defense programs and domestic programs will likely be necessary to secure bipartisan agreement. And other issues -- like funding for a border wall -- will add further controversy and complication to an already heavy fall schedule. In addition, the six-month delay in terminating the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program may also be addressed in a final comprehensive bill. Hurricane aid beyond the initial September down payment will also be required. Finally, a major tax reform bill or another health-care revision could add to the legislative chaos before 2017 ends.

Decisions on these issues really can't be put off much longer. But in Washington, there are always creative ways to kick the can down the road and claim progress. But on many fronts, including education, the status-quo may be preferable to action.

## Guilford County School Addresses Homelessness with Tiny Houses

In an effort to provide affordable housing for the homeless, students at Guilford County Schools' Weaver Academy in Greensboro, N.C., recently completed construction on a tiny house.

Students from the school's career and technical education program built the 250-square-foot house in one semester, using donated materials.

The house will be part of a new housing community that will include five to six tiny homes rented to local homeless people. Each tiny house will have a bedroom, full bathroom, kitchen and living area.

Local nonprofit Tiny Houses Greensboro is partnering with the school to build the houses.

"A lot of times when we work with our children, and we tell them to think about something, it's on paper," said school board member Dianne Bellamy Small at the groundbreaking ceremony for the tiny housing complex. "But the actual seeing of a product that our children put their hands on in their learning mode that will now have a functioning use and someone will have a home...I'm excited."



A tiny house built by students at Weaver Academy in Greensboro, N.C., is unveiled.

# NYC, D.C. and Other Urban School Districts Begin School Year On a High Note

Some big-city school districts are beginning the new school year on an academic high note.

In the nation's largest public-school system, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña recently announced that New York City students saw sustained progress on state English and math exams. Student proficiency in both English and math improved across all ethnic groups.

Since 2013, English proficiency has increased by 54 percent and math proficiency by 27 percent, according to the mayor's office.

"We are focused on building on these gains and others – such as the highest-ever high school graduation rate – to deliver equity and excellence for every public-school student across the city, no matter their zip code," said Mayor de Blasio.

## PARCC Gains in D.C.

The District of Columbia Public Schools kicked off the new school year with significant gains across all grade levels and student groups on the national Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Students in traditional D.C. public schools saw gains of 6.4 percentage points in English language arts and 3.5 percentage points in math in 2017.

"I'm thrilled to say that DCPS students made unprecedented progress on the PARCC," said D.C. Public Schools Chancellor Antwan Wilson.

An editorial in the *Washington Post* headlined "The hard work of school reform is paying off in the District," pointed out, 'RISING STUDENT' test scores. Refurbished schools. That is the backdrop for the start of a new school year for D.C. Public Schools students, and it is a far cry from what existed before school reform. A decade's investment in public education is paying off...."

Also in the *Post* editorial, Great City

Schools' Casserly called the progress "quite remarkable," noting that he hasn't seen such gains on PARCC.

## Progress in Chicago

Record-high reading and math scores on a national exam were recently reported by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Chicago Public Schools CEO Forrest Claypool and Chief Education Officer Janice K. Jackson.

A record 61.4 percent of Chicago public-school students met or exceeded the national testing average in reading, and 55.9 percent of students met or exceeded the average in math on the 2016-17 Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) exam.

"For the fifth year in a row, CPS [Chicago Public Schools] students are meeting or beating the national average in both reading and math," said Mayor Emanuel.

The three school systems are among other big-city school districts nationwide that are starting the 2017-18 school year with measurable student progress.

# Boston Teachers' Agreement Reached

Boston Public Schools and the Boston Teachers Union in August reached an agreement on a two-year teachers contract that would include improvements in wages, parental leave policies, hiring processes, school nurse staffing and restorative justice practices, according to the school system.

"This agreement is a prudent step forward, and a representation of a reasonable meeting of the minds for all parties involved," said Boston School Committee Chairperson Michael O'Neill. "As the school year begins, it is critical that our focus be on teaching and learning, and this agreement makes that possible."

# Two Districts Win Council Awards

Sharyn Guhman, chief information officer for Denver Public Schools, was presented with the Distinguished Service Award from the Council of the Great City Schools during its recent Annual Academic, Information Technology and Research Conference in Palm Beach, Fla.

Sponsored by the Council and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, the award was presented to Guhman for representing the ideals of leadership, innovation, commitment and professionalism.

Also receiving an award at the conference was North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, which won the second annual Making Strides Together Award for Excellence in Urban Education, sponsored by the Council and Curriculum Associates.

The award recognizes Council member districts for successfully implementing cross-functional initiatives to improve student achievement.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg won for its three-year collaborative effort to improve literacy, which resulted in the district performing higher-than-average growth on state assessments in every content area and grade level.

The award comes with a \$4,000 prize that will be used to support literacy in the school system. "It is very gratifying to have our work recognized...", said Brian Schultz, the district's chief academic officer.



Denver chief information officer Sharyn Guhman receives her Distinguished Service Award.





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## Louisville 8-Year-Old Wins National Braille Competition

Septo-optic dysplasia is a medical condition that can include significant visual impairment, and it is this rare syndrome that has left 8-year-old Carmynn Blakely blind since birth.

But Blakely, a student at Breckinridge-Franklin Elementary School in Louisville, Ky., has not let her blindness deter her, recently becoming a National Braille Challenge champion.

Hosted by the Braille Institute, the national competition was recently held in Los Angeles and tested participants in reading comprehension, writing speed and accuracy, proofreading, spelling, and reading tactile charts and graphs in braille. Blakely bested more than 1,200 competitors and won first place in her category, which included first and second graders across the country and Canada.

The National Braille Challenge is designed to motivate all participants to study braille, and honor outstanding achievements.

## A Number of Urban Schools Receive 1st National Magnet School Certification

Douglas L. Jamerson Jr. Elementary Center for Mathematics and Engineering in St. Petersburg, Fla., has a list of accomplishments. The Pinellas County school has been recognized as a National PTA School of Excellence, named the top Elementary STEM program in the nation by the Future of Education Technology Conference, and has earned a School of Excellence Award by Magnet Schools of America (MSA).

The school can now add one more accolade: being selected as part of the first cohort of MSA's nationally certified magnet schools.

Douglas Jamerson was among 55 schools in 12 states to successfully complete a rigorous nine-month evaluation process and demonstrate best practices of the Magnet School Standards of Excellence and the five pillars of magnet schools: diversity, innovative curriculum and professional development, academic excellence, high quality instructional systems, and family and community partnerships.

Douglas Jamerson was not the only school in a district represented by the Council of the Great City Schools to receive this honor.

Six schools in Florida's Broward County Public Schools, Hillsborough County Public Schools and Miami-Dade County Schools were recognized, while six schools in North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools were honored.

In addition, five schools in Nevada's Clark County School District were recognized.

To become nationally certified, MSA member schools had to provide specific examples of how the school was closing the achievement gap, integrating a theme-based curriculum throughout the school and encouraging parent involvement.

The judging process was very strict, with only half of the schools that applied receiving certification. "The certification process is groundbreaking and the first of its kind," said Todd Mann, MSA executive director. "It was created to recognize our most exemplary magnet schools."