

IN THIS ISSUE



- New Miami Chief, **p.3**
- Schools Going 'Green', **p. 6**
- Districts Earn An 'A', **p.9**
- Preventing Obesity, **p.11**

Education Secretary Honors Blue Ribbon Schools

F.L. Stanton Elementary School in Atlanta has improved at each grade level in reading and English/language arts since 2004, and last year was named a 2007 Georgia School of Excellence.

This year, the good news continues for the elementary school as it was recently named a 2008 No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon School, one of 320 schools in the nation to receive the distinction. The honor recognizes schools for helping students achieve at very high levels and for making significant progress in closing racial and ethnic achievement gaps.

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, the program honors public and private elementary middle and high schools that are either academically super-



F.L. Stanton Principal Marlo Barber displays the certificate her school received for being named a Blue Ribbon School as Education Secretary Margaret Spellings applauds. Photo credit: Scott King

rior or that demonstrate impressive gains in student achievement to high levels.

Blue Ribbon continued on page 4

Minneapolis Signs 'Covenant' With Black Community

In an unprecedented partnership, the Minneapolis Public Schools and the local African American community recently agreed to a "covenant" to share responsibility for improving the academic achievement of African American students in Minnesota's largest city.

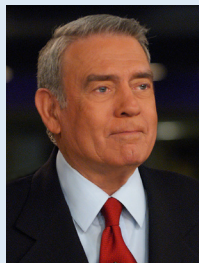
"The covenant is a promise of partnership for the decade ahead," said Superintendent William Green.

The historic agreement was unanimously approved and signed by the school board

Minneapolis Covenant continued on page 4

New President, Immigration to Be Addressed at Conference

The presidential election and immigration highlight the Council of the Great City Schools' 52nd Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 22-26, in Houston.



Dan Rather

Education advisers representing presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain will join urban education leaders in a national town hall meeting on "An Urban Education Agenda for the New President" on Oct. 24.

The 90-minute town meeting will be moderated by longtime journalist Dan Rather, who has interviewed every U.S. president since Dwight D. Eisenhower. Now with HDNet, Rather moderated the Council's national town hall meeting in 1993 when he was with CBS News.

Immigration Forum

A special panel discussion will be held at the conference on "The Impact of Federal Immigration Policy on Urban Public Schools" on the morning of Oct. 24, preceding the afternoon town hall meeting.



Maria Hinojosa

The panel will include San Francisco Unified School District Superintendent Carlos Garcia, Dallas Independent School District Superintendent Michael Hinojosa, Urban Institute scholar Rosa Maria Castaneda, Los Angeles school board vice president Yollie Flores Aguilar and Seattle school board president Cheryl Chow.

New President continued on page 4

One of 11 Superintendents Will Win Urban Education's Top Award



Richard Green

The moment will arrive on the evening of Oct. 23, when the banquet's master of ceremonies asks for the envelope, please.

With much suspense and anticipation, one of 11 superintendents of big-city school districts nominated for the Richard R. Green Award, the nation's top prize for urban school leadership, will hear his or her name announced at the Council of the Great City Schools Fall Conference event.

And the WINNER is....

This year's candidates for the award, named in honor of the first African-American chancellor of the New York

City school system who had headed the Minneapolis school district, are:

- Ronald Blocker, Florida's Orange County Public Schools in Orlando
- Carol Comeau, Anchorage School District
- MaryEllen Elia, Florida's Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa
- Pascal Forgione Jr., Austin Independent School District
- Michael Hanson, Fresno Unified School District
- Gene Harris, Columbus Public Schools
- Arthur Johnson, Palm Beach School District
- John Mackiel, Omaha Public Schools

■ Eugene Saunders, Cleveland Metropolitan School District

■ Christopher Steinhauser, Long Beach Unified School District

■ Eugene White, Indianapolis Public Schools

The winner of the Richard R. Green Award, sponsored by the Council, ARA-MARK and Voyager Expanded Learning, walks away with a \$10,000 scholarship to give to a student.

Last year, Elizabeth Reilinger, chairperson of the Boston School Committee, captured the nation's top honor for urban education leadership.

She presented the Richard R. Green Scholarship to a 2008 Boston graduating senior, who plans to pursue a career as a high school history teacher.

The award alternates each year between an urban school superintendent and board member.



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Miami and St. Louis Name New Superintendents

Alberto Carvalho joined Miami-Dade County Public Schools in 1990 as a physics teacher at Miami Jackson Senior High. Eighteen years later, he is now leading the school district where he began his teaching career.

Carvalho was recently selected as superintendent of the nation's fourth largest school district, succeeding Rudy Crew, who has led the Miami-Dade school system since 2004.

Carvalho has held a number of positions with the 340,000-student school district, such as assistant principal, public information officer and associate superintendent over a variety of areas, including grants, Title I and community services.

He recently served as the district's associate superintendent for governmental affairs, where he was responsible for overseeing the school system's lobbying efforts and helping to shape legislation that impacts students and their families.

In his various positions with the school system, Carvalho has built relationships with local governments, community organizations and parent groups. He is also credited with developing 10 compacts with Miami-Dade County and several municipalities, which have helped strengthen the partnerships between the school district and the cities to benefit students.

Carvalho was also selected to lead Florida's Pinellas County Schools, a position he turned down to head the Miami-Dade school district.

St. Louis Selects Leader



Kelvin Adams

St. Louis Public Schools also selected a familiar face to lead its school district, with its selection of Kelvin Adams as the new superintendent. From 2006-2007, Adams was the ex-



Alberto Carvalho accepts the superintendency of Miami-Dade Public Schools at a press conference.

ecutive director of human resources for the St. Louis school system, where he was responsible for the recruitment, selection and retention of all district employees.

Since 2007, he has held the position of chief of staff for the Recovery School District in New Orleans, which operates 33 schools that serve 12,500 students.

"We can document Dr. Adams' hands-on role in improving student achievement, as well as his commitment to students," said Rick Sullivan, the chief executive officer of the Special Administrative Board of the St. Louis school system. "He has an unblemished record, works hard and is well respected for his work in New Orleans."

Adams succeeds Diana Bourisaw, who led the school district since 2006.

Council Releases Report on Detroit

The Council of the Great City Schools recently released a report titled *Reforming and Improving the Detroit Public Schools*, focusing on curriculum and instruction, finance, procurement, information technology and facilities.

Strategic support teams were dispatched to review and assess the strengths and weaknesses of the components under the Council's "Cities Building Cities" program, which provides technical assistance to member school districts.

D.C. District Launches 'Capital Gains' Incentive Program

Middle school students in the District of Columbia Public Schools will receive money for doing well in school, as a result of a new program launched this fall.

The pilot program, known as *Capital Gains*, will give cash awards of up to \$100 a month to 3,000 students at 14 middle schools based on their attendance, behavior and academic achievement.

The program is a partnership between the school district and the Inequality Lab at Harvard University. It is the brainchild of Harvard Professor Roland Fryer, who has implemented the initiative in other big-city school districts such as Chicago and New York City. An evaluation survey of the pilot program Fryer created in New York City in 62 schools revealed that 91 percent of schools reported increased focus on exams and that 59 percent of schools reported improved classroom performance.

The survey also revealed that students with discipline problems and low-performing as well as high-performing students were motivated by the program.

According to the *Washington Post*, students in grades 6-8 who participate in the *Capital Gains* incentive program will be eligible to earn up to 50 points a month and be paid \$2 a point for attending class regularly, doing homework, displaying manners and earning good grades. Students will deposit the money they receive in bank accounts set up for them.

"The *Capital Gains* initiative is one more tool we can add to our arsenal of programs and initiatives designed to re-engage students and increase their potential to achieve at high levels," said D.C. Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee. "These short-term incentives while impactful are intended to ultimately spark our students' long-term interest in their own education."

If the program is a success, district officials might expand the program to other middle schools as well as high schools.

New President continued from page 1

The forum will be moderated by journalist Maria Hinojosa, a senior correspondent with PBS and formerly with CNN.

Keynote Speakers

Urban school leaders from around the nation will converge at the convention, hosted by the Houston Independent School District under the banner "Pioneering the Educational Frontier." They will hear conference speakers:



Alvin Poussaint

- Dr. Alvin Poussaint, prominent psychiatrist and professor at Harvard Medical School, at lunch on Oct. 23;



Erin Gruwell

- Revolutionary teacher Erin Gruwell, who wrote *The Freedom Writers* book turned movie; at breakfast on Oct. 24; and



Pedro Noguera

- Professor Pedro Noguera, an urban sociologist at New York University, at lunch on Oct. 24.

The annual conference is an opportunity for urban school leaders from around the nation to exchange ideas and strategies on what's working in urban education.

During the conference, the Council convenes its five task forces--School Finance, Achievement Gaps, Leadership and Governance, Professional Development, and English Language Learners and Bilingual Education.

Blue Ribbon continued from page 1

In addition to Stanton Elementary in Atlanta, big-city schools in Sacramento, Los Angeles, Denver, West Palm Beach, Jacksonville, Chicago, Indianapolis, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Baltimore, Kansas City, Mo., St. Louis, Charlotte, Albuquerque, New York City, Philadelphia, Memphis, Houston, Dallas, Richmond, Norfolk and Washington, D.C., were designated as Blue Ribbon Schools.

Also, a school in Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa was designated.

Sacramento, Jacksonville, Chicago, West Palm Beach, Shreveport, Charlotte, Baton Rouge, Philadelphia and St. Louis each had two schools recognized. And Dallas had three schools honored, while New York City and Houston had five.

"It is an honor to have two of our schools recognized as No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools," said Duval County Schools Superintendent Ed Pratt-Dannals in Jacksonville, Fla. "Our schools work hard each year to ensure we are providing the highest level of education to all of our students."

Schools were chosen as Blue Ribbon Schools based on one of two criteria:

- Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that dramatically improve student performance to high levels on state tests and
- Schools whose students, regardless of background, achieve in the top 10 percent of their state on state tests.

"These Blue Ribbon Schools are an example of what teachers and students can achieve," said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings in a press release. "Now our challenge is to help other schools follow their lead by continuing to measure progress through *No Child Left Behind*, and by using the knowledge we've gained to replicate effective strategies and help every student improve."

Minneapolis Covenant continued from page 1

chair, representatives of a coalition of local organizations called the African American Mobilization for Education (AAME), and the local YWCA.

In a "shared responsibility," the covenant points out, "We believe the wisdom and insight of African American educators, parents and community members are needed to assist the district in meeting its responsibility for ensuring the academic success of African American students."

The covenant calls for the:

- Establishment of a joint task force between school district and AAME representatives to monitor progress;

"Minneapolis is breaking new ground..."

—Michael Casserly, Council of the Great City Schools Executive Director

- Creation of model practice sites "with emphasis on academic rigor and cultural competence;" and
- Development of an African American family involvement center among other initiatives.

Following an earlier agreement with the Native American community, Minneapolis Public Schools is believed to be the nation's first big-city school district to officially forge a decade-long community partnership agreement that places an exclusive focus on African American students.

"We've been around a long time and never heard of an agreement like this," said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*. "Minneapolis is breaking new ground."

Austin District Assists Hurricane Ike Evacuees

In 2005, Texas' Austin Independent School District provided much needed assistance to students and their families in the Gulf States who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Three years later, the district is now helping students displaced by another devastating hurricane—Hurricane Ike—that slammed into Texas on Sept. 13.

The district has activated a plan to provide educational services to students and support for parents who are not able to return to their homes right away. At the beginning of October, there were approximately 200 school-aged children housed in shelters in two school district facilities as well as the Austin Convention Center.

Through the Office of Student Support Services, a series of supervised daily activities for evacuee students of all ages has been developed. The activities include reading, theatre, arts, games, and physical exercise.

In addition, the Austin school system is also providing counseling services. And in an effort to help evacuees maintain contact with their families and friends, the district installed computers at the shelter locations so evacuees can access their e-mail.

The city of Galveston was devastated by Hurricane Ike, and Austin officials are working with administrators from the Galveston Independent School District to develop long-term instructional arrangements for evacuee students and their families. Some 67 children from Galveston have enrolled in more than 30 Austin schools.

“Whether these students remain for a few weeks, or remain in Austin permanently, they will find safe, clean schools, and teachers who are dedicated to providing them an exciting, rewarding public education,” said Austin Schools Superintendent Pascal Forgione.

Foster Children Get Helping Hand In Cincinnati

A program to help foster children in Cincinnati Public Schools stay in school and achieve academic success has been created.

The school district, along with several local organizations, has developed the *Kids in School Rule!* initiative, believed to be the first program in the nation that specifically focuses on providing services to at-risk foster children to help them become successful students.

The three-year pilot program is targeting 100 foster children who are at-risk of academic failure. Foster children often must move to different schools, which can negatively impact their academic performance.

In addition to the Cincinnati school district, organizations participating in the program include the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati, the Hamilton County Juvenile Court and the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services.

Cincinnati school system officials are providing progress reports and coordinating educational and case plan services in an effort to improve outcomes and avoid disruptions for students. Each school in the district has appointed a contact person for the Job and Family Services Department, which has assigned a special caseworker to serve as a liaison to the schools.

The Legal Aid Society is developing and leading training on educational law and advocacy and talking to foster parents and the students themselves about the importance of succeeding academically and graduating from high school. Legal Aid is also advocating for interventions and supports that strengthen academic achievement and pushing for transition planning to prepare youth for emancipation and self-sufficiency.

Kids in School Rule! will be evaluated over the next three years, and will be continued and expanded if successful.



Working in the Trenches After Hurricane

Superintendent Charlotte Placide of the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, right, works from a makeshift operation days after Hurricane Gustav hit Baton Rouge, La., Sept. 1. It was the strongest hurricane to hit the Baton Rouge area in more than 40 years, causing an estimated \$8 million in damages to the school district, according to a spokesman. Then, 12 days later, Hurricane Ike made landfall in Texas, causing schools to close in Houston, the state's largest school system, for up to 12 days, primarily because of no electricity.

More Urban Schools Embracing 'Green' Movement

The Los Angeles Unified School District has instituted a program in school cafeterias where students can choose the food items they intend to eat. The "Offer Versus Serve" program has reduced the amount of food wasted and lowered the cost of disposing food waste by more than \$600,000 annually.

The program is just one of the reasons why the nation's second largest school district was recently inducted into the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) WasteWise Hall of Fame. The district was recognized for implementing a comprehensive waste reduction and recycling program, with more than 50 percent of waste from schools and offices diverted from landfills. In 2007, it is estimated that the total disposal cost savings from recycling and waste prevention was \$2.3 million.

And while Los Angeles may be leading the pack in recycling, they are not the only big-city school district to go "green." Urban school districts across the nation are implementing a number of new initiatives to promote a cleaner environment and become more energy efficient.

Orange County Schools in Orlando, Fla., has developed a successful recycling program. As a result, while the school system has grown over the years the amount of solid waste sent to the landfill has significantly decreased. In October 2001, 42,000 cubic yards of solid waste was collected from 118 schools and facilities, compared to May 2007, when only 25,000 cubic yards of solid waste was collected from 190 schools and facilities.

Building 'Green' Schools

In many big-city school districts, "green" building standards are being incorporated in new school construction. The EPA estimates that "green" schools cut energy costs by 30 percent and water costs by 20 percent.

In the fall, Wichita Public Schools in Kansas will open the Earhart Environmental Magnet, which was built with many



Earhart Environmental Magnet in Wichita, Kan., will open to students later this year. The school was built with many "green" features.

"green" features. The school has large windows for natural lighting, a recycling alcove in the school, a neighborhood recycling center, an environmental lab and many outdoor learning sites. The school will also retain rain water on site.

Ramsey Middle School in Louisville, Ky., is a new school in which energy conservation was an important design consideration. The building has solar water heating, additional wall insulation, and motion sensors were installed in all rooms to shut off lights and turn down HVAC when the rooms are not occupied.

The School District of Palm Beach in Florida has taken the "green" effort districtwide, by launching the Green Schools Recognition Program. The initiative recognizes schools that have made the greatest strides in becoming "green." Schools are judged on certain criteria, such as how well they conserve energy and how well students work with administrators to implement environment-friendly initiatives. The top schools receive cash awards and are honored at a recognition ceremony.

Students Become Activists

In an effort to help students become more environmentally aware, the San Francisco Unified School District recently partnered with the city of San Francisco to launch the Environmental Service Learning Initiative in district schools. The initiative was created to encourage students to become engaged in environmental justice issues.

Students will learn about environmental issues through service learning, which is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates community service with instruction. Students will also have the opportunity to attend environment-themed workshops and green-job career fairs that emphasize the importance of careers in the environment.

In addition, the school system recently hired its first director of sustainability, who will develop an environmental master plan for the school district and work closely with the city of San Francisco to help the district become more energy efficient.

'Green' Schools continued on page 7

'Green' Schools *continued from page 6*

And a 10-year-old student recently spurred the Houston Independent School District to take a big step toward protecting the environment.

Austin Fendley, a student at Edgar Lovett Elementary School, addressed the school board about the problem of thousands of styrofoam lunch trays being dumped into the trash every year. The district also heard from other students who were concerned about the issue. As a result, in August the school system started using new biodegradable serving trays in school lunchrooms at more than 190 elementary schools. The nation's seventh largest school district plans to put the biodegradable trays in all 300 school cafeterias in coming years.

District officials estimate that it will cost the district approximately \$160,000 for the switch in elementary schools and about \$300,000 when the switch is made at all schools.

"We are Houston's largest employer, we're the seventh-largest school district in America, and we serve more than 200,000 meals every school day," said Houston Schools Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra. "We have an obligation to our community to do what we can to help protect the environment, and this is an important step in that direction."



Students from the MetroWest Elementary Green Team in Orange County, Fla., collect paper, plastic and aluminum to recycle.

Tampa High School Program Aids Freshmen

Sickles High School in Tampa, Fla., is helping freshmen transition to high school with a peer-mentoring program called the Gryphon Connection.

The new program has welcomed some 650 freshmen to Sickles High School, aiming to make the school's younger students feel comfortable throughout their first year of senior high.

Built on the belief that students can help other students succeed, juniors and seniors, known as Gryphon Leaders, serve as positive role models, motivators, and teachers who guide the freshmen to discover what it takes to be successful during the transition from middle school to high school.

Gryphon Leaders are recommended by their teachers based on their leadership ability, motivation, character, willingness to help others, and other attributes.

Each Gryphon Leader is assigned three to five Gryphons (freshmen) to mentor, and they meet with their Gryphons during their lunch, for a minimum of 30 minutes a week.

Helping Each Other

Gryphon mentees say that their mentors helped them with the transition from middle school, familiarizing them with classroom locations, making them feel at ease and teaching them school rules.

Their mentors note that they are learning leadership skills, feeling a sense of satisfaction being able to help younger students gain confidence, and helping them avoid some of the mistakes they made their first year.

Two Gryphon mentees moved to Tampa shortly before school started. Gryphon Leader Melissa Daigneault was able to help Megan Forde adjust to the culture difference between Rhode Island and Tampa.

"During the first week, I didn't know anyone and I sat by myself at lunch," says Megan. "Then, I got my mentor and she sat with me and made me feel more comfortable."



Gryphon Leader Melissa Daigneault helps freshman Megan Forde adjust to high school.

When asked what she has gotten out of being Megan's mentor, Melissa points out, "I told her which teachers I loved. I've even answered questions about what kind of dress to wear to the Homecoming Dance."

Casey Moore is mentoring a Gryphon who recently moved to Tampa from Israel. Casey has helped Lior Wils understand the dynamics of the American high school, but has also learned about his mentee's culture and religion by serving as a Gryphon Leader.

Sickles High School in Florida's Hillsborough County school system hopes to see the impact of the Gryphon Connection reflected in improved student academic performance, reduced discipline referrals, and increased attendance.

NYC Cracks Down On Harassment, Bullying

The nation's largest school district has implemented a new policy to end bullying and harassment in its schools.

The regulations establish a process for reporting and investigating harassment, intimidation and bullying based on bias. New York City district officials believe that the regulations will make the school system's efforts to prevent bullying and harassment based on ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and disability among the most rigorous in the nation.

Bullying *continued on page 10*

'Learning is Cool' Initiative Supported by Pro Football Coach

Cincinnati Public Schools and the head coach of the Cincinnati Bengals football team have teamed up to create a new incentive program that rewards students for succeeding academically in school.

The "Learning is Cool" initiative is a partnership between the Cincinnati school system and the Marvin Lewis Community Fund (MCLF), designed to encourage K-8 students to make the "A" honor roll each quarter.

Students who make the "A" honor roll two quarters of the year will be invited to an academic achievement party at Paul Brown Stadium in May. Students at the party will receive a medal from Marvin Lewis, the coach of the Bengals, as well as several of the professional football team players.

The goal of the program is to double the amount of students making the honor roll in the 2008-2009 school year and triple the amount in 2009-2010. In the 2007-2008 school year, only 38 percent of students

in the Cincinnati school system made the honor roll.

"This partnership with Cincinnati Public Schools is about helping students achieve their dreams and that starts in the classroom," said Coach Lewis. "Our hope is that we can inspire them [students] to work harder and earn the 'A' honor roll."

"Our hope is that we can inspire them [students] to work harder and earn the 'A' honor roll."

—Cincinnati Bengals coach Marvin Lewis

Students will receive "Learning is Cool" packs that include letters to every parent, posters, pencils, notebooks, and other school supplies. Quarterly incentives will be issued for students, teachers, principals and schools that include buttons, gift certificates and other classroom learning activities.

Approximately 22,600 students will participate in the program at 48 schools.

The MLCF was created in 2003 by Coach Lewis and has donated more than \$2.4 million to local non-profit organizations.

Pittsburgh District Offering Students Free Meals

In an effort to help families deal with the downturn in the economy, Pittsburgh Public Schools is offering free breakfast and lunches to students.

The district is offering free breakfast to students at all schools and free lunches at 41 schools where the percentage of students in poverty is at least 80 percent.

According to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the district decided to provide more free meals this school year after observing an increase in the number of students who qualified for the program.

The school system's director of food service, Michael Peck, said that last year 66 percent of students in grades K-12 were eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches, but by the end of the school year 68 percent were eligible. Peck attributes the increase to the economic troubles occurring in the nation and said that the percentage of students eligible for the program may be higher. "We still feel there's a small group we're not reaching," said Peck in the *Post-Gazette*.

The cost of providing the additional free meals will be funded with money from the state and the federal government.



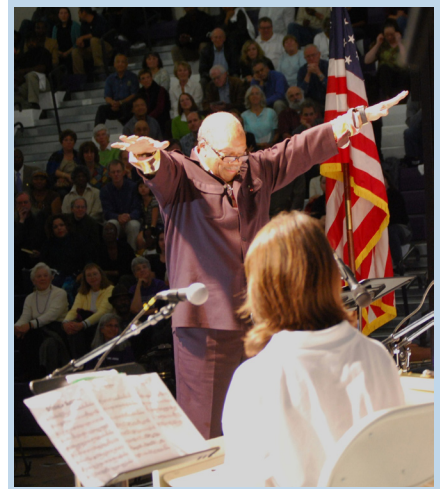
Photo Credit: Robert Teodosio

Alma Mater Honors Quincy Jones

Graduating from Seattle's Garfield High School in 1950, Quincy Jones, the renowned musical artist, recently returned to his old alma mater (above) to attend the dedication of Garfield's new Quincy Jones Performance Center.

The state-of-the-art performance center seats 592 and is part of the school's two-year \$107.4 million renovation.

During the dedication ceremony, Jones, who has won 27 Grammy awards, took to the stage to serve as the conductor of the Garfield High Jazz Ensemble (below).



Two Low-Performing Schools Rise to the Top In Palm Beach County

A low-performing school in Palm Beach County made a remarkable turnaround when the Florida Department of Education recently released its 2008 report card.

Lincoln Elementary School defied the odds, rocketing to an "A" grade from "F" last year based on the state-mandated assessment. And the school with a number of poor students also met the adequate yearly progress (AYP) standards of the federal *No Child Left Behind* law.



Jo Anne Rogers

How did Lincoln soar to a perfect grade?

Led by Principal Jo Anne Rogers, the school focused on upgrading teachers and students. Teachers reportedly worked through the summer last year, training and planning lessons.

Part of student success was tied to teacher performance, as Rogers would meet weekly with teachers to review students' progress.

"If you teach something right the first time, you're not having to re-teach it," she said in the *Palm Beach Post*. "It's really the what and the how. You have to know what to teach and how to teach it."

Superintendent Art Johnson believes that training teachers is important in improving student achievement in low-performing schools. "The biggest challenge in public education is teaching the teachers how to teach the student," he stressed in the *Post*.

Sustained Gains

Lincoln Elementary School follows another school in Palm Beach County that saw its grade leap to an "A" last year from a "D" the year before – and sustain the perfect score in the 2008 report card.

Pleasant City Elementary School repeated its "A" performance this year as well as achieved AYP. Like Lincoln, the school



Jacqueline Perkins

enrolls a number of poor students.

"Isn't it amazing?" said Pleasant City Principal Jacqueline Perkins last year when the school earned the "A" grade.

"We were {once} projected to be an F. I knew that these kids could achieve," she emphasized in South Florida's *Sun-Sentinel* newspaper.

Last September, the School District of Palm Beach County held a celebration to "commemorate the school's phenomenal performance."

Jackson Students Rise To Higher Expectations

With a more rigorous state assessment, 96 percent of Jackson public schools in Mississippi reportedly met adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets for 2007-2008 under the federal *No Child Left Behind* law.

"These test results validate that when the state raised its expectations, JPS {Jackson Public Schools} teachers and students raised the bar as well, and students achieved at a higher level," said Superintendent Lonnie Edwards Sr. in a news release.

The state has upgraded curricula and standardized tests to make them comparable to rigorous national assessments, according to a Jackson *Clarion Ledger* news report. This includes a more rigorous mathematics and reading curricula matching higher assessments in evaluating student progress.

All Jackson elementary schools met AYP – the third year in a row, the district pointed out.

Three Florida Urban Districts Earn 'A' Grades

For the fourth consecutive year, the School District of Palm Beach County has earned an overall "A" grade by the Florida Department of Education.

Unlike last year, when Palm Beach was the state's only urban district to have a perfect score, Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale and Orange County Public Schools in Orlando earned "A" grades in the 2008 annual report card. They both had "B" grades the year before.

"This achievement is the result of hard work by faculty, staff and students," said Orange County Schools Superintendent Ronald Blocker. "In addition, the support from the community has helped tremendously."

The Sunshine State issues grades to schools and districts, ranging from "A" to "F," primarily based on student performance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

The three school systems are not the only urban districts in Florida to receive good grades. Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa maintained a "B" grade, while Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville and Miami-Dade Public Schools earned "B" grades, elevated from a "C" the year before.

'Mo Wants to Know' How to Improve Schools

The new superintendent of schools in Greensboro, N.C., recently launched an initiative called "Mo Wants to Know."

Guilford County Schools Superintendent Maurice "Mo" Green kicked off a campaign aimed at soliciting suggestions from parents, students, employees and the public for transforming the district into one of the nation's top public school systems.

Feedback received from the "Mo Wants to Know" drive will be the basis of a four-year strategic plan, or road map for determining where the district is heading and how it will get there.

Florida School District Forms Partnership With North Carolina University

At Jones High School in Orlando, Fla., seniors are required to apply to five postsecondary institutions. And for an increasing number of Jones' students, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University will be at the top of their list.

The historically black university recently entered into an agreement with Jones High School and two other high schools in the Orange County school district that will enable students to enroll and attend the university with four-year scholarships.

Florida State Sen. Gary Siplin worked with the university, which is trying to recruit more out-of-state students, and the three high schools to make the partnership a reality.

Interested students at the three high schools will begin working closely with a team of admission representatives from the university on their applications as well as receive information about financial aid.

The university is also sponsoring a bus tour of the campus for students as well as their parents. During the tour, students will not only receive information about academic programs, but will be able to apply to the university. Students can fill out the application and if they are deemed eligible will receive an acceptance letter on the spot.

Students at the three high schools will also be encouraged to apply for the Lewis and Elizabeth Dowdy Scholars Program. It is a four-year renewable scholarship available to students in all majors and academic disciplines based on academic performance.

"The goal of every high school is to make sure their students go to college," said Jones Principal Bridget Williams. "When you have a college willing to go out of their way and recruit your students, it's a plus, plus."

Denver Expands Teacher Compensation Benefits

In 2005, Denver Public Schools made national headlines when it launched a new performance pay system for teachers called ProComp (Professional Compensation Plan for Teachers.)

The program changed the way teachers are compensated from the traditional salary scale tied to years of service and graduate coursework to a new system that rewarded them for improving student achievement.

District officials created ProComp to attract and retain the best teachers. And in an effort to make the program more effective, the district recently implemented several changes to expand the program's benefits.

Teachers who participate in ProComp will receive raises of 15 percent, the largest one-year pay increase in the history of Colorado, according to district officials.

Higher bonuses will be paid to teachers at hard-to-serve schools, teachers who teach difficult subjects and those teachers whose students show the most academic progress. Under the program, cash awards will increase from \$1,067 a year to \$2,345 a year.

Teachers who participate in ProComp will also be able to receive \$4,000 for tuition reimbursement or repayment of student loans.

"This gives Denver one of the most progressive pay systems in the country, if not the most," said Denver Schools Superintendent Michael Bennet in the *Denver Post*. "People see this as a substantial advance in the conversation of how we pay teachers."

Bullying *continued from page 7*

The new rules build on the district's "Respect for All" initiative, which was created last year and trains staff to identify and address bullying and harassment. Under the initiative, schools must set clear standards for students and staff, monitor all bias incidents, investigate complaints promptly and take follow-up steps to ensure that schools are safe environments for all students.



Cattle in Anchorage?

Two farm-variety bulls in mid-September wandered onto the grounds of Bowman Elementary School in Anchorage, Alaska – a state better known for bears and moose. The bovine reportedly escaped their pen from a nearby two-acre property. "I can't have bulls on my playground," said Principal Darrell Vincek in the *Anchorage Daily News*. A teacher, who grew up on a dairy farm in the Lower 48 states, and a bus driver herded the cattle off the school premises.



Fifth-grader Jatryan Tuggle makes his way through one of the new cardiovascular fitness stations.
Photo Credit: Sherwin Johnson

Jackson School Recognized For Obesity Prevention

Acting U.S. Surgeon General Steven Galson, M.D., recently visited Jackson, Miss., to honor Pecan Park Elementary School by presenting the National Champion Award, which recognizes schools and organizations with effective obesity prevention programs.

The award pays tribute to “Champions” for their commitment to building partnerships and implementing programs to help children stay active, eat nutritious food, and make healthy choices.

During Rear Admiral Galson’s visit, Pecan Park Elementary also celebrated its new partnership with Project Fit America and dedicated the new cardiovascular fitness stations for the school’s walking track, both of which were provided by funds from the Blue Cross & Blue Shield Foundation of Mississippi.

“We have created a whole wellness package with exercise, nutrition and education, and we’re exposing children to healthier choices,” said Principal Wando Quon.

Jackson Public Schools Superintendent Lonnie Edwards joined students and staff in participating in fitness activities during the Sept. 24 ceremonies. The fitness advocate reportedly exercises regularly, and was a member of the Men’s (50+) National Basketball Team Gold Medal winners in the Senior Olympics Games in 2001.



Superintendent Lonnie Edwards in hula hooping demonstration.

Urban Teachers Selected for New Education Fellowships

Steven Berbeco teaches Arabic language as well as U.S. and world history and government and politics at Boston’s Charlestown High School. And James Liou is a history teacher at Boston Community Leadership Academy.

In addition to teaching in Boston Public Schools, the two educators have something else in common: they were selected for Teaching Ambassador Fellowships with the U.S. Department of Education for 2008-2009. They were among 25 teachers across the nation selected for the newly created fellowships, which offer highly motivated, innovative public school teachers the opportunity to contribute their knowledge and experience to the national dialogue on public education.

Five of the fellows will become full-time U.S. Department of Education employees in Washington, D.C., for one year, while the rest of the fellows will remain in their classrooms and participate in the program through part-time projects. Throughout the year, fellows will engage in policy discussions, work with department officials in various program offices and participate in a variety of education projects.

In addition to Boston, teachers in Anchorage, Baltimore, Los Angeles, New York City and Philadelphia were also selected as fellows. More than 1,000 teachers applied for the fellowships and were selected based upon their record of leadership, impact on student achievement and potential for contribution to the field of teaching.

Education officials hope the fellowship will retain motivated teachers and provide them the opportunity to expand their leadership roles outside the classroom as well as improve education programs and policies.

Urban Teachers continued on page 12

Voter Registration Drive Kicks Off in Buffalo and Detroit

New York's Buffalo Public Schools and the University of Buffalo recently kicked off a voting drive to register 18-year-old high school students to vote in the November election.

The drive was part of the "Kids Voting Western New York," a national bipartisan effort to encourage children to be educated, responsible voters.

Urban Teachers *continued from page 11*

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings believes the fellowships will provide a unique opportunity for teachers to participate in policy discussions. "This program was inspired and designed by a White House fellow and former teacher – someone whom I wish I had met and hatched this idea with years ago. I believe this program will be successful and I hope it becomes part of the fabric at the U.S. Department of Education for years to come."

Buffalo Schools Superintendent James Williams and University of Buffalo President John Simpson launched the campaign when they recently visited Buffalo's Hutchinson Central Technical High School to help register students.

The campaign hopes to register at least 50 high school students at each of the 12 Buffalo schools participating in the voter registration. The students will then be eligible to vote at the polling location of their choice.

Students in Detroit Public Schools are also being encouraged to register and vote.

Detroit community leaders have formed an organization, The Community Coalition, that wants to register as many high school students as possible to vote.

The coalition is contacting high school principals to schedule assemblies with all seniors, where they will receive voter registration applications and instructions on how to fill them out.

Students will also learn about the importance of voting and will be encouraged to think about working at the polls on election day.

Great City Grads



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