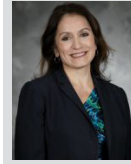


IN THIS ISSUE



- New Leader in Denver, **p.3**
- Reform Plan Unveiled, **p.5**
- LEGISLATIVE**
- School Facilities Bill, **p.10**

Cleveland Grads Say Yes to Free College Tuition In New Communitywide Initiative

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District and residents across the city are celebrating a new scholarship initiative that puts college within reach of its high school graduates.

Say Yes to Education, a nonprofit organization which joins forces with communities to increase postsecondary participation and success, recently named Cleveland the site of its next communitywide initiative.

Beginning this year, Cleveland graduates are eligible to receive scholarships that will cover the cost of tuition at Ohio's public two- and four-year colleges and universities. The offer will also cover tuition at 117 private postsecondary

Cleveland Grads continued on page 4



Cleveland Schools CEO Eric Gordon announces that district graduates can receive college scholarships as part of the Say Yes to Education initiative as Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson, left, looks on.

Buffalo District Begins New Year on a High Note

New York's Buffalo Public Schools began 2019 with good news and a reason to celebrate. The number of schools in good standing in the district have more than doubled since 2015, while the number of schools facing state intervention has significantly decreased.

The New York State Education Department recently announced the accountability status of all schools in the state, designating 37 of the Buffalo school system's 50 schools in "good standing." In the 2015-2016 school year, only 15 schools received that designation.

"We have a new narrative," declared Buffalo Schools Superintendent Kriner

Cash in the *Buffalo News* at a celebration attended by principals, school board members and state and city officials, where the results were announced. "The Buffalo Public Schools [has] turned around."

Low-performing schools that rank in the bottom 5 percent in the state for three consecutive years are placed in receivership and, if they do not make rapid improvements, are eventually taken over by the state.

In 2015-2016, the Buffalo school district had 25 schools in receivership, compared to only two this year and an alternative high school being added next year.

Buffalo District continued on page 6

Urban Educators To Discuss Policy, Legislation

The education priorities of the new Congress will be a major topic of discussion at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Legislative/Policy Conference, March 16-19, in Washington.

Urban school leaders from around the nation will converge at The Mayflower Hotel to attend the conference and hear from legislators, including Congressman Dwight Evans (D-Pa.), who will discuss proposals supporting school construction and renovation.

Congressional staff will also provide the latest updates on legal action in the courts, specifically cases involving the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and the U.S. Census.

Conference highlights are on page 9. To register, access www.cgcs.org.



2019 Annual Legislative/Policy Conference
Registration Brochure

March 16-19, 2019
The Mayflower Hotel
Washington, D.C.

Council of the Great City Schools

Council Relaunches Math, Science Scholarships to Big-City Students

Former NASA astronaut, physician and businessman Bernard Harris was the first African American to walk in space, a feat accomplished during his second Space Shuttle mission in February 1995.

In an effort to encourage minority students to follow in his footsteps, Harris is partnering with the Council of the Great City Schools to launch the CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship Program.

Four \$5,000 scholarships are available to 2019 graduating high school seniors majoring in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) in urban school districts represented by the Council.

The four awards will go to two males and two females—two African Americans and two Hispanics—to support their college studies in STEM-related fields next fall.

Formerly called the ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship, the financial aid program was created in 2010 to encourage under-represented students to pursue STEM careers and to diversify the nation's STEM workforce. When ExxonMo-

bil ended its sponsorship in 2018, Harris assumed the funding through his Harris Institute. The Institute reaches several thousand students each year with various programs, including a free summer science camp for middle grade students hosted at colleges and universities across the nation.

“Throughout the years these competitive scholarships have provided talented minority students in big-city school dis-

tricts a way to pursue STEM studies after high school and excel in their career pursuits,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “We appreciate the generous support of The Harris Institute that will enable this important scholarship program to continue.”

The 2019 scholarship application is available at www.cgcs.org/scholarships, and students may apply online. The deadline for applications is April 12.



Former NASA astronaut Bernard Harris shows students how to reach for the stars.



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A newsletter published by the Council of the Great City Schools, representing 74 of the nation's largest urban public school districts.

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All news items should be submitted to:
Urban Educator

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Find the Council on:



D.C. and Denver Name New Superintendents; Tenure Extended For Dallas, Ft. Worth, Albuquerque, Guilford Co., and Cleveland Leaders



Lewis Ferebee

District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser recently named Lewis Ferebee acting chancellor of the 49,000-student school system in the nation's capital.

Ferebee previously served as superintendent of the Indianapolis Public Schools and succeeds interim chancellor Amanda Alexander.

Under Ferebee's tenure, the Indianapolis school district opened 20 Innovation Network Schools that are run independently by charter schools or other groups but remain accountable to the district. And in November, voters approved an operating and capital referendum that will generate \$272 million to fund higher teacher salaries and safety upgrades in the 32,000-student school system. The referendums were the first passed by voters in 10 years.

In a news statement, Bowser said that Ferebee understands the complexities of leading a large urban school district in a growing city. "He knows there's no one-size-fits-all solution to meeting the needs of our young people," said Bowser. "And he has experience building partnerships that ensure more students have a path toward success."

New Leader at Helm

Denver Public Schools conducted a national search to find its next superintendent, but in the end decided to choose someone in its own backyard.



Susana Cordova

Susana Cordova, who served as the district's deputy superintendent, was unanimously chosen to lead the 92,331-student school system. She

succeeds interim superintendent Ron Cabrera.

Cordova is a graduate of the district and a first-generation college graduate who has served in several positions in the school system, including principal, chief academic officer and chief schools officer.

The veteran educator is also no stranger to the top job. In 2016, she was appointed the district's acting superintendent while Superintendent Tom Boasberg took six months of unpaid family leave to travel and live abroad with his family.

Contract Extensions

The leaders of five big-city school districts recently received contract extensions.



Michael Hinojosa

Michael Hinojosa led the Dallas Independent School District for six years before he left the district in 2011 to become a school superintendent in the Atlanta area. Four years later, he was asked to come back to Dallas, first as interim, and then as permanent superintendent.

Hinojosa is doing such a good job in his second go around, that the Board of Trustees recently voted to extend his contract through 2020, citing his success at establishing financial stability and increasing academic achievement in the 155,000-student school district.

Hinojosa was not the only superintendent in Texas to receive a vote of confidence. The Fort Worth Independent School District Board of Education approved a contract extension for Superintendent Kent Scribner through



Kent Scribner



Raquel Reedy

2023. He has served as superintendent of the 87,000-student district since 2015.

In New Mexico, the Albuquerque Public Schools Board of Education voted to extend Superintendent Raquel Reedy's contract by a year to June 2021, crediting her with providing the district with stability.

In August 2015, Reedy was named acting superintendent of the 84,000-student school system and was named superintendent in April 2016.



Sharon Contreras

Also receiving a contract extension was Sharon Contreras, the superintendent of North Carolina's Guilford County Schools in Greensboro. Her contract was extended through 2022.

The school board praised Contreras for her work in developing a strategic plan for the 72,000-student school system and her efforts to increase student achievement and close performance gaps.



Eric Gordon

And Eric Gordon, who took the reins of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District in 2011, will remain at the helm through June 2023, as a result of a new contract extension.

Under his leadership, the district is implementing *The Cleveland Plan*, a customized blueprint for education reform; academic achievement has improved; graduation rates have increased; and voters have approved and renewed an operating levy and bond issue for school construction.

New Superintendents continued on page 11

Cleveland Grads *continued from page 1*

institutions in 26 states that are members of the Say Yes National Higher Education Compact. These include Ivy League institutions and schools such as MIT and Duke University.

At a recent celebration held to announce the initiative, cheering students joined Cleveland Schools CEO Eric Gordon, Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson, school board members, representatives of local businesses and foundations, and Say Yes founder George Weiss.

“Today we are guaranteeing that your dreams can come true,” Gordon told the ecstatic students, including Cleveland senior Jasmin Diaz. “I think it’s going to change lives,” said Diaz, who spoke at the announcement ceremony and plans to attend college to study social work at Ohio State University. “A lot of people don’t have this kind of opportunity.”

Cleveland’s selection followed a two-year process which required the city to submit a proposal and undergo extensive vetting.

The Cleveland school system formed a partnership with several local organizations, including the City of Cleveland, the Cleveland Foundation, Cleveland Public Library and United Way of Greater Cleveland.

As part of the partnership, a 30-plus member planning committee was created to navigate the community’s journey to becoming a Say Yes to Education chapter.

The committee helped Cleveland meet certain milestones, including raising money for the local scholarship fund, creating a plan to provide support services and securing the commitment of public agencies and private entities to work collaboratively.

According to district officials, nearly \$90 million was raised for a local scholarship fund, with the goal of raising \$125 million to fund scholarships for 25 years. The scholarships can be used only for tuition, not for expenses such as books, housing and meals. Scholarship recipients must attend a district school or a partner charter high school. Counselors are currently being trained to help seniors apply for the scholarships.



A student holds a pendant from Ashland University in Ohio, one of the universities Cleveland students can receive a scholarship to attend.

The Say Yes organization provided \$15 million for start-up costs and will pay for the salary of a locally-based director.

In addition to scholarships, Say Yes Cleveland will align vital support services such as tutoring, after-school programming, mental-health counseling and free legal assistance.

Under the initiative, every school in the district will be assigned a family support specialist or case manager. Services will be rolled out in 15 percent of schools next year and phased in at remaining district schools in the following three years. All seniors in the district will be assigned a mentor who will check in with students by email twice a month and help connect them with internships and jobs.

“The scholarships are important,” said Gene Chasin, president of the national Say Yes organization. “But the real story is the work that goes on to provide needed academic and non-academic support going all the way back to kindergarten,” he said.

Cleveland was selected from a field of 20 communities and is the fourth Say Yes to Education communitywide chapter, joining those in Syracuse and Buffalo, N.Y., and Guilford County in Greensboro, N.C.

Founded in 1987, Say Yes partners with public and private entities across cities to prepare students in public schools for success in postsecondary institutions, with access to resources to help make education more affordable.

Louisville School Board Approves District’s Racial Equity Plan

In an effort to ensure that Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Ky., is addressing longstanding inequities faced by students of color, the school district has approved its first racial equity plan.

The policy, which was unanimously approved by the school board, commits the board to closing the achievement gap between white students and students of color, increasing the diversity of district staff and making sure minority students have equal access to educational programs and resources.

Under the racial equity plan, the school system aims to reduce the suspension rates of students of color by 10 percent; decrease gaps in proficiency rates between African American and white students by 3 percent; and increase the number of minority teachers by 2 percent. The plan also calls for increasing students of color enrolled in higher level courses by 3 percent and providing \$2 million to create initiatives focused on students of color.

In order for the district to complete those benchmarks, staff at each school will be provided with extensive training opportunities in cultural competence, restorative practices and trauma-informed care to reduce disparities in suspension rates.

Jefferson County Schools Superintendent Marty Pollio believes the district cannot move forward unless everyone, regardless of race or nationality, advances.

“This plan sets our deliberate, intentional strategies to create educational equity throughout JCPS and reduce the stubborn gaps in achievement, opportunities and disciplinary actions among certain student groups,” said Pollio in a press release.

The racial equity plan was developed by a 17-member Racial Equity Advisory Council composed of administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members. The plan will be reviewed, amended and renewed at least once every three years.

Las Vegas Superintendent Unveils Five-Year Reform Plan

When Jesus Jara was named superintendent of Clark County School District in Las Vegas in June 2018, he said he was eager to build on and accelerate the district's progress.

"I look forward to starting by listening to the entire Clark County community about what has been working and where we can continue to improve," said Jara, after his selection.

In his seven months as leader of the nation's fifth-largest school district, he has listened closely, and what he heard from the community was a call for change.



Clark County Schools Superintendent Jesus Jara unveils a five-year strategic plan at his first State of the Schools address.

In response, Jara created an ambitious five-year strategic plan for the district, and he recently unveiled it at his first State of the Schools address. The plan, called Focus 2024, aims to address citizen concerns and achieve the goals outlined by the district's Board of Trustees:

- A reduction in 1- or 2-Star schools; (Nevada schools are rated on a scale of 1 to 5.);
- 90 percent graduation rate;
- 100 percent increase in college and career ready diplomas; and
- 100 percent increase in participation and performance on the Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment and Career and Technical Education programs.

In his address, Jara noted that the majority of students in the district are not at grade level in English language arts (ELA) and math. According to the *Nevada Independent*, more than half of third- through eighth-grade students are not proficient in ELA and math, as reflected by 2018 state standardized test results, and only 30 percent of sixth-graders were proficient in math. Jara's strategic plan calls for ELA proficiency targets of 64.9 percent for elementary students, 62.6 percent for middle school students, and 58.1 percent for eleventh-graders to be achieved by January 2024. The math proficiency targets are 58 percent for elementary students, 48.3 percent for middle school students and 45.3 percent for eleventh-graders.

New Programs

To help the 320,000-student school system recruit teachers and principals, the district is creating a pilot program in partnership with the Clark County Education

Association and the Clark County Association of School Administrators. Under the program, teachers and principals assigned to eight at-risk Title I middle schools will receive a \$10,000 incentive, and principals who demonstrate success at the schools will be eligible for an additional \$5,000 bonus.

The pilot program will be funded with federal Title I funds and will start in the 2019-20 school year.

The district is also focusing on recruiting vital support professionals, such as bus drivers and paraprofessionals and others who directly impact learning in the classroom.

Plans also call for a preK-20 partnership with the Nevada System of Higher Education to provide students with more dual credit programs, lower remediation rates and enhanced pathways into the workforce.

Emphasizing his plans to improve

Clark County schools, Jara said his goal is nothing less than a total turnaround of the district. "Every young person who leaves our schools will have a diploma and a plan for how they will continue their education," said Jara. "They should have the preparation to succeed, without remediation, in postsecondary education."

Improving Operations

In November, Jara requested the Council of the Great City Schools conduct a high-level management review of the school district's business operations. Under the Council's Cities Helping Cities program, member districts can request on-site assistance with operational issues from other urban school districts with expertise in the problem area.

The Council recently presented its findings in a 102-page report to Jara and the Board of Trustees. The report concluded that the school system relies on out-of-date practices and needs to make major changes to operations.

"Not only do we lack transparency, but we're decades behind in areas like the efficiency of facilities operations," Jara said, citing the report. "I appreciate that the report gives us clear recommendations to address our challenges."

The report also revealed that the district is underfunded, and as a result, spends much less per pupil on operations than other big-city school districts. According to Council Executive Director Michael Casserly, the Clark County school system is one of the lowest-funded districts of all of the Council's 74 urban school districts.

Jara has pledged that the school system's top legislative priority is to fix the state's education funding formula so that more tax revenues are available to support English Language Learners, students with special needs, and students receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

The Focus 2024 plan is still in the draft stage and will go through several revisions before trustees vote to adopt the final plan.

Milwaukee District Partners With NBA Team in Mentoring Initiative

Milwaukee Public Schools is teaming up with the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team and the City of Milwaukee to launch a new program to increase the numbers of mentors in the city.

The MENTOR Greater Milwaukee initiative will recruit mentors for 1,000 Milwaukee youth in the next two years. It is the 25th affiliate of MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, an organization that develops and supports a network of affiliates across the country that provide

leadership necessary to support quality mentoring relationships.

According to mentoring officials, Milwaukee is the first out of 25 affiliates to have a National Basketball Association team, its host city and the largest school district in the state, partnered together.

The three organizations said they came together in response to a report released in 2016 by a nonprofit organization in Milwaukee called the Public Policy Forum that found there was a gap between the number



Milwaukee school board president Mark Sain, second to left, gives remarks at the launch of a new mentoring initiative in Milwaukee.

Buffalo District *continued from page 1*

Under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), as well as New York's own ESSA plan, schools in the state receive accountability status based on a variety of indicators. They include: student achievement in English language arts and math;



Buffalo Schools Superintendent Kriner Cash praises the district for turning around at a celebration at the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts.

English proficiency by English Language Learners; high school graduation rates; and chronic absenteeism.

A New Bargain

Cash became the superintendent of Buffalo schools in 2016, and after assessing the district's needs, unveiled a reform agenda called "*The New Education Bargain with Students and Parents*" that was adopted by the Board of Education.

The agenda was created with the twin goals of turning around the school system and contributing to economic growth in

Western New York by providing expanded opportunities for career development aligned to emerging industries in the city.

The reform plan had six planks: rigorous early elementary education; strong community schools; new innovative high schools; extended learning excellence; services for the district's neediest children and families; and a new relationship with district school teachers.

Under the *New Education Bargain*, the district has opened more than a dozen community schools that provide an array of enrichment activities, continuing education and community services.

Since the launch of the initiative in 2017, more than 15,000 people have attended programs at community schools, which are kept open beyond normal school hours.

According to district officials, the *New Education Bargain* initiatives have served as a major boost to the turnaround that is occurring in the 34,000-student school system.

"We're working school by school by school," said Cash in the *News*. "My goal was to get us out of the perception as a failing school district and you can't view us as a failing school district any longer."

of young people in the city seeking mentors and the number of mentors available to serve them. The report determined that there was no formal mentoring network that could better coordinate and connect the activities of organizations that perform mentoring in the community.

The Milwaukee mentoring initiative will provide the necessary infrastructure to improve mentoring program quality, recruit and support more mentors, foster new collaborations, collect data to describe the impact of mentoring in the community, identify gaps in the range of services needed and influence public policy.

One of the goals of the initiative is to recruit 1,000 mentors by 2021.

The three organizations will contribute \$75,000 each and Milwaukee Bucks players will appear in public service announcements and on social media promoting the importance of mentoring and encouraging people to sign up to become mentors.

In 2014, the Council of the Great City Schools established a partnership with the NBA to improve educational and social outcomes of males of color as part of President Obama's *My Brother's Keeper* initiative.

As part of the effort, the NBA worked with the National Mentoring Partnership to recruit 25,000 new mentors. The NBA achieved that goal in 18 months and has doubled its commitment to 50,000 new mentors.

Three Urban Teachers are Finalists For 2019 Teacher of the Year

Rodney Robinson is a 19-year teaching veteran of Virginia's Richmond Public Schools, who currently teaches social studies at the Virgie Binford Education Center, a school inside the Richmond Juvenile Detention Center. He started teaching at the center so he could get a better understanding of the school-to-prison pipeline and to develop alternative programs to prevent students from entering the juvenile justice system.



Rodney Robinson attends a surprise assembly announcing he is a finalist for the 2019 Teacher of the Year.

In recognition of his efforts, he was selected in October as the 2019 Virginia Teacher of the Year.

"My students are the most vulnerable kids in society," Robinson said after being named the best teacher in his state. "They have made mistakes that they are paying for but they still persevere and strive for success. They are my inspiration, and I will fight to my last heartbeat for them."

But the accolades for Robinson don't end there. The veteran teacher was recently selected as one of four finalists for the 2019 National Teacher of the Year. Sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Teacher of the Year Program identifies outstanding teachers nationwide



Danielle Riha

for their effective work in and outside the classroom.

In addition to Robinson, three of the Teacher of the Year finalists are from school districts represented by

the Council of the Great City Schools.

In 2008, teacher Danielle Riha was recruited to help open the Alaska Native Cultural Charter School in Anchorage, where she developed culturally infused curriculum. Riha also works on the Alaska Humanities Forum Educational Advisory Board to help new teachers and students understand and connect to indigenous culture and lifestyle.

Kelly Harper began teaching at Amidon-Bowen Elementary School in Washington, D.C., in 2014. A third-grade teacher, she has served as a teacher-coach for 3rd-5th grade reading teachers, a professional development trainer

for teachers across the District of Columbia



Kelly Harper

Public Schools for English language arts (ELA), and written ELA curriculum for the D.C. school system.

Every year, outstanding teachers from

each state and the District of Columbia are selected as State Teachers of the Year.

From that group of 57 teachers, four teachers are selected as finalists for Teacher of the Year. After rigorous in-person interviews with a selection committee, which includes representatives from 16 education and community organizations, a finalist is chosen as the best teacher in the nation.

The National Teacher of the Year will be announced in the spring at a White House ceremony. Each year, since 1952, the president of the United States has recognized the winner, who is released from classroom duties for a year to travel nationally and internationally as a spokesperson and advocate for the teaching profession.

San Francisco District New Math Curriculum Shows Results

In 2014, the San Francisco Unified School District wanted to boost achievement in mathematics and close the achievement gap. As a result, the district adopted a new math sequence, which aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

District officials recently learned the new curriculum is paying off in the form of more students enrolling in higher level math courses.

The class of 2019, now seniors, was the first cohort of students to take classes under the new math sequence. Data shows that an additional 456 students took advanced math courses in the 2018-19 school year, a 10.4 percent increase over the previous year.

The district also saw a significant increase in the diversity of students opting for more challenging math courses. The number of students taking courses beyond Algebra 2 improved across multiple groups, including an increase of 34.7 percent among African American students; 32.7 percent more Filipino students; 20.1 percent more Latino students; 25.2 percent more Pacific Islander students; and 16.7 percent more white students.

Other demographic groups also increased enrollment in advanced courses. English Language Learners participating in high level courses saw a 31.6 percent increase, along with a 10 percent increase in students with an Individual Education Program (IEP); and an 11.9 percent increase among students qualified for free and reduced-price lunches.

The number of students taking Advanced Placement (AP) math courses increased by 5.9 percent over the last two years, with an increased enrollment in AP Statistics of 48.4 percent.

Adopted four years ago, the new course sequence was designed to provide students with a reasonable progression of content

San Francisco continued on page 8

Chicago and Denver School Districts Make College Board's AP Honor Roll

For the sixth year in a row, the nation's third largest school district has earned a spot on the College Board's 9th Annual AP District Honor Roll.

Chicago Public Schools is the largest school district named on the AP Honor Roll list and the only large urban district to earn a spot six consecutive years, according to district officials.

The Honor Roll recognized 373 school districts in the United States and Canada that have achieved increases in access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses for underrepresented students, while maintaining or increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on an AP exam.

Selections to the Honor Roll were based on the examination of three years of AP data.

Criteria included increasing participation and access by 4 percent; increasing or

maintaining the percentage of minority groups taking and scoring a 3 or higher on at least one AP exam; and improving performance levels when comparing the percentage of students in 2018 scoring a 3 or higher than those students in 2016.

"Chicago Public Schools is leading the country not just by increasing the number of students taking exams and earning credit, but also by ensuring that more students of color are taking and earning credit year-over-year," said Chicago Schools CEO Janice Jackson in a news statement.

Denver Public Schools also made the 9th Annual AP District Honor Roll, the fourth time the school system has made the list.

National data shows that in 2018, approximately 50 percent of underrepresented students with a high degree of readiness for AP were participating in the program.

San Francisco *continued from page 7*

in algebra, geometry and statistics, with students taking Algebra I in ninth grade, geometry in 10th grade and Algebra II in 11th grade.

In a press release, San Francisco Unified Schools Superintendent Vincent Matthews said families have been asking if their children can still get into advanced math courses in high school under the new course sequence.

"With these data, we can confidently say that not only can our students access higher level math, they are accessing it," said Matthews.

Sharing Math Curriculum

In another development, the San Francisco Unified School District is allowing anyone to use and share its K-5 Elementary Math Core Curriculum.

The district has publicly released the Curriculum under the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

The K-5 Elementary Core Curriculum features support for social-emotional learning and building the culture in the mathematics classroom. The curriculum also includes details about student learning occurring at grade-level, provides connections to learning at a previous grade-level, and indicates how this learning progresses as students transition to the next grade level.

According to district officials, this is the first time a large urban school district in the nation has produced and shared its own open educational resources (OER). OER are teaching, learning and research materials that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license to permit no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.

The open license enables anyone to copy, revise, remix and distribute the curriculum, as long as the San Francisco school system is credited for the original creation.

Cincinnati Graduate Lands First Role In Oscar-Nominated Film

For most actors and actresses their first role in a film is very small. That was not the case, however, for KiKi Layne.

A graduate of the School for Creative & Performing Arts (SCPA) in Cincinnati, Layne made her film debut in the Oscar-nominated film, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, which was released in December.

She portrays the lead role of Tish Rivers, a newly engaged woman who is struggling to prove her fiancé innocent of a crime while carrying their first child. The movie was directed by Oscar winner Barry Jenkins and is based on the 1974 classic novel by James Baldwin.

A graduate of DePaul University in Chicago, where she majored in theatre, Layne was up against 300 actresses for the role.

"Jenkins could have gotten someone with a lot more credits, a much bigger name," said Layne in a story that appeared on the Cincinnati Public Schools' website. "Thankfully, he chose me."

She credits her success to the time she spent as a student from fourth through 12th grade at SCPA, where she was able to hone her craft and received encouragement from teachers to pursue a career in acting.

"SCPA was the only place that I could study the arts in Cincinnati," said Layne. "I am thankful that I had an institution in my hometown that could nurture the excitement and interest that I had in the arts."



Cincinnati graduate KiKi Layne stars in the Oscar-nominated film *If Beale Street Could Talk*.

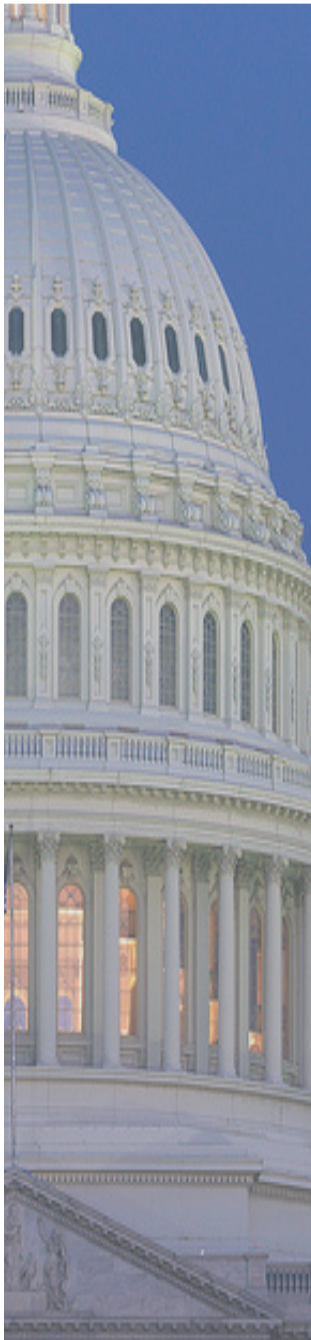


Council of the Great City Schools

ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE/POLICY CONFERENCE

March 16-19, 2019

The Mayflower Hotel • Washington, DC



Saturday, March 16

- Registration
- Continental Breakfast
- Fall Conference Planning Meeting
- Blue Ribbon Corporate Advisory Group Meeting
- Discussion on State Policy Issues
- The “ABC’s” of Federal Education Policy
- Meeting of Legislative & Federal Programs Liaisons
- Executive Committee Meeting
- Task Force Meetings
- New Member & New Attendees Orientation
- Welcome Reception

Sunday, March 17

- Registration
- Buffet Breakfast
- Board of Directors Meeting
- Great City Colleges of Education Meeting
- Luncheon with Speaker
- Legislative Briefings with Council Staff
- “Taste of Louisville” Reception

Monday, March 18

- Breakfast with Speaker
- Policy Briefings with Congressional and Administration Staff
- Luncheon with Speaker
- Capitol Hill Visits (You must arrange your own appointments)
- Reception at The Mayflower Hotel

Tuesday, March 19

- Breakfast and Briefing
- Adjourn

Philadelphia District Receives Upgraded Bond Rating

A national bond rating agency recently gave the School District of Philadelphia an improved credit rating, citing the district’s improved financial outlook and three consecutive years of operating surpluses.

Moody’s Investor Services raised the Philadelphia school system’s bond rating by two levels to Baa3, the first time Moody’s has assigned an Investment Grade rating for the school district since 1977. Moody’s also raised the district’s financial outlook to “stable.”

The improved credit rating was a result of the district returning to a locally appointed board of education in July 2018, after being run by a state-controlled School Reform Commission for 17 years.

According to Moody’s, the district’s governance is now more closely tied to that of the city of Philadelphia, which will result in a better alignment of city and school district interests. Moody’s also cited the city’s willingness to support the school district with permanent new dedicated tax revenues.

Los Angeles Teachers’ Agreement Reached

Teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District ended a six-day strike recently after reaching an agreement with the nation’s second largest school system.

The agreement calls for teachers to receive a 6 percent raise, reduced class sizes in grades 4 through 12 and an increase in the number of librarians, counselors and nurses.

“Today marks a new chapter in public education for Los Angeles Unified,” said Los Angeles Schools Superintendent Austin Beutner in a news statement. “Public education is the ultimate labor-management collaborative and we are committed to working together to make sure every student gets a great education.”

Ominous Start to 2019

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

Just when federal dysfunction looked at its worst, 2019 began and set new records. The longest federal agency shutdown in the history of the nation reached 35 days at the end of January and it could be reignited after a 21-day “cooling off” period. At stake are the full-year spending levels for seven remaining FY 2019 appropriations bills and the border wall.

Fortunately, U.S. Department of Education programs have been spared from the shutdown since the FY 2019 appropriations bill for labor, health and human services, and education were packaged together last fall and passed along with the defense department funding bill. The Department of Agriculture continues to be ensnared in the shutdown scenario as well, but enough funding remains available to keep school meals programs operating through March.

In any case, shifting from single-party control of the executive and legislative branches of government to Republican control of the Senate and Democratic control of the House has changed the political dynamic in Washington for the next two years. And, while legislative accomplishments may be hard to come by during the 116th Congress, the oversight and investigative functions are already in full swing.

The Rebuild America’s Schools Act (H.R. 865; S. 266), newly-introduced by Education and Labor Committee Chairman Bobby Scott (D-VA) and Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), has garnered the most attention in the elementary and secondary school community to date. Unmet school infrastructure needs across the nation were estimated by the U.S. Department of Education at nearly \$200 billion back in 2014. Moreover, with a grade of D+ for America’s school infrastructure, the American Society of Civil Engineers reported an underinvestment in school facilities of \$38 billion annually.



A bipartisan provision added to the current federal education appropriations bill by Senators Reed (D-RI), Brown (D-OH), and Murkowski (R-AK) will also ensure that the two-decades old analysis of nationwide school facility needs by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) will be updated and recalculated from its initial estimate of \$112 billion in 1995.

The new Rebuild America’s Schools bill would provide \$70 billion in needs-based school construction and repair grants through the states. Some \$30 billion in tax credit subsidies for school bonds would also reinstate the School Infrastructure Bonds and Qualified Zone Academy Bonds that were repealed as part of the tax reform bill in 2017. Funds could be used for construction, modernization, renovation, or retrofitting of schools, including major repairs, site acquisition and preparation, energy efficiency, accessibility, and health and safety code compliance.

At the same time, much of the federal education legislative energy in Washington will be devoted to another effort to reauthorize the Higher Education Act. The chances of movement on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act are understandably slim.

Securing enough bipartisan support to pass a major federal school facilities improvement program seems remote in an environment of near-perpetual legislative gridlock, but it may not be impossible. President Trump’s campaign promise of a massive national infrastructure initiative – though without school construction – offers an outside chance that school facility needs could become part of a larger legislative package in the upcoming year. Some 150 representatives and 20 senators are already on board. Let’s go to work.

Students in K.C. Eligible to Receive Seal of Biliteracy

Students in Missouri's Kansas City Public Schools will now be recognized for their achievements in mastering a foreign language.

The district will soon be able to award the state's Seal of Biliteracy to students who attain proficiency in one or more of the world's languages, including sign language, as well as proficiency in English.

The Missouri Seal of Biliteracy was launched in October by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to encourage native English speakers to study a foreign language, as well as non-native English speakers to acquire high levels of English.

School districts must meet certain criteria to award the Missouri Seal of Biliteracy. The Kansas City school system is one of only about 40 districts in the state that are qualified to give the award to their high school graduates.

"As the most diverse school system in the state, it only makes sense for KCPS to add the Missouri Seal of Biliteracy to the growing array of academic and extra-curricular programs, options and honors we offer our remarkable scholars," said Kansas City Schools Superintendent Mark Bedell.

Several local colleges and universities offer college credit to students who have earned the Missouri Seal of Biliteracy. District officials estimate that approximately 300 high school students will have an opportunity to qualify for the seal.

Doug Bartel, an ELL teacher at East High School in the district, believes that too often ELLs are viewed as language deficient because they do not speak English with native proficiency when they first arrive to the United States. "The Seal of Biliteracy finally offers Kansas City Public Schools and the State of Missouri an excellent, formal way to honor and encourage our students' multilingual talents," said Bartel.

Nominees Sought for Presidential Award In Math and Science

Nominations are now open for the 2019 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. The award is the nation's highest honor for science, technology, engineering, mathematics and computer science teachers.

Administered by the National Science Foundation for the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, the award recognizes teachers that have both deep content knowledge of the subjects they teach and the ability to motivate and enable students to be successful in those areas.

In order to be eligible for the award, teachers must have at least five years of full-time science, technology, engineering, mathematics or computer science teaching experience. This year, the award is open to teachers working in grades 7-12.

A teacher may be nominated for the award by others or may nominate themselves. The nomination deadline is March 1, 2019 and the application deadline is May 1, 2019. The nomination form is available at <https://www.paemst.org>.

Winners will receive a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation and travel to Washington, D.C., to attend a series of recognition events and professional development opportunities.

Since 1983, more than 4,800 teachers have been recognized for their contributions to not only the classroom, but their profession. Up to 180 exemplary teachers are recognized each year.

Elementary teachers receive the award in even-numbered years and secondary teachers receive the award in odd-numbered years.

Former L.A. Superintendent Remembered



Michelle King

Former Superintendent Michelle King of the Los Angeles Unified School District died at age 57 on Feb. 2 after reportedly battling cancer.

King was named superintendent of the nation's second largest school district in January 2016, becoming the first African-American woman to lead the 694,096-student school system.

A graduate of the district, King began her teaching career as a math teacher at a Los Angeles middle school. She held a variety of positions in the district, including senior deputy superintendent.

Under her leadership, graduation rates increased and she was named the 2017 National Superintendent of the Year by the National Association of School Superintendents.

New Superintendents *continued from page 3*

Interims Named

Shelby County Schools in Memphis has appointed Joris Ray, the district's chief of academic operations and school support, its new interim superintendent. Ray succeeds Dorsey Hopson, who resigned from the district in January.

Indianapolis Public Schools named Aleesia Johnson, the district's deputy superintendent for academics, its interim superintendent. Johnson succeeds Lewis Ferebee, who left the district to lead the District of Columbia Public Schools.

And New York's Rochester City School District selected Daniel Lowengard to serve as interim superintendent. Lowengard, who was also appointed interim superintendent in 2016, but only served four days because of illness, will succeed Barbara Deane-Williams, who recently retired.



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2019 Council of the Great City Schools Conference Calendar

Chief Human Resource Officers Meeting	February 13-15, 2019	Albuquerque, NM
Annual Legislative/Policy Conference	March 16-19, 2019	Washington, DC
Chief Operating Officers Conference	April 2-5, 2019	Columbus, OH
Bilingual Directors Meeting	May 14-18, 2019	Fort Lauderdale, FL
Curriculum and Research Conference	June 25-28, 2019	San Diego, CA
Public Relations Executives Meeting	July 11-13, 2019	Washington, DC
63rd Annual Fall Conference	October 23-27, 2019	Louisville, KY
Chief Financial Officers Conference	November, 2019	TBD