



# Urban Educator

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## Council to Offer Education Leadership Program at Harvard Business School

In many urban school districts teachers, principals, senior-level administrators and even superintendents receive professional development. Yet there is very little professional development offered to school board members, even though school boards play an essential role in improving and sustaining student outcomes and creating the conditions for urban school districts to succeed.

As a result, the Accelerating Board Capacity (ABC) Institute has been custom-designed for the Council of the Great City Schools by a team of Harvard University faculty members and will run July 28-31.

Urban school board members and superintendents from across the country will travel to the Harvard Business School in Boston to participate in the professional development program focused on strong and effective school board governance.

The program will include classroom sessions using the Harvard Business School case study method, along with smaller-group sessions and discussions on issues such as the Roles and Responsibilities of the School Board.

Participants will receive faculty instruction from professors from the Harvard Business School, as well as the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

**Leadership Program** *continued on page 8*

## Las Vegas Student Overcomes Challenges To Earn Prestigious Scholarships

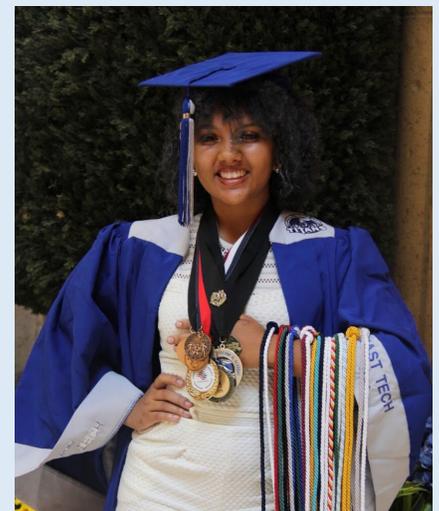
As early as kindergarten young Jayla Scott told her mother that she would become a valedictorian.

Remembering those early years, Scott, a 2019 graduate of East Career and Technical Academy in Las Vegas, said she knew even then she was going places in life despite the challenges she faced.

Those challenges included a drug addicted mother and a father who left the family when she was three. When Scott was 5, her mom was arrested, leading to a placement in foster care for the young girl and her two brothers. In their second foster home, Scott said she and her older brother were sexually assaulted.

After about 18 months in foster care when the siblings were reunited with their mother, family financial struggles caused Scott to assume a caretaker role for her brothers. The elder brother, who was later arrested, has been in and out of jail since 15 and is currently incarcerated.

Faced with the turmoil of home life, Scott sought refuge at school, which became a place where she would strive for



Las Vegas student Jayla Scott celebrates her graduation from high school.

and achieve her highest goals.

"My grades were the only thing I could control in life," said Scott in an interview with the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. "I couldn't control how much money my mom made. I couldn't control how stupid stuff was at home. But I

**Student Overcomes** *continued on page 5*

## Council Applauds U.S. Supreme Court Decision Rejecting Citizenship Question in 2020 Census

The Council of the Great City Schools applauded the recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to disallow for now a citizenship question from being added to the 2020 decennial Census.

A decision in the opposite direction would have exacerbated the undercounting

of U.S. residents in urban jurisdictions, low-income areas, and communities of color, and it would have resulted in the misallocation of tens of millions of dollars in federal education aid. The decision is being remanded for further consideration.

**Supreme Court** *continued on page 7*

# Four Urban Students Win Math and Science Scholarships

Four graduating urban high-school seniors recently received the CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship from the Council of the Great City Schools.

The students were chosen from several hundred applicants in big-city school districts across the nation for their academic performance, leadership qualities and community involvement.

The scholarship was created by former NASA astronaut Dr. Bernard Harris, the first African-American to walk in space, to encourage and assist promising students of diverse backgrounds who

plan to pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies after high school.

The awards were given to two African-American and two Hispanic seniors from high schools in four of the 75 urban school districts represented by the Council.

“These scholarships are a wonderful way to promote academic excellence in math and science and spur more young people to enter the STEM field,” said Dr. Harris. “I am proud to support these young men and women as they create a brighter future for themselves and be-

come the leaders and innovators of tomorrow.”

Formerly called the ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship, the name of the financial aid program changed when Harris assumed the funding through his Harris Institute.

“Throughout the years these competitive scholarships have provided talented minority students in big-city school districts a way to pursue STEM studies after high school and excel in

**Science Scholarships** *continued on page 3*



DeGreer Harris



Nasya Lucien



Ruben Marroquin



Kaitlyn Quesada



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# New Leaders in Indianapolis, Rochester; Norfolk, Tampa Supts. to Resign

Indianapolis Public Schools recently named Aleesia Johnson to lead Indiana's largest school system. She has been serving as interim superintendent since January.

Johnson is the first African-American woman to lead the 30,000-student district.

Johnson most recently served as the district's deputy superintendent for academics, where she oversaw curriculum and instruction, performance and continuous improvement, postsecondary readiness, special education, student services and portfolio initiatives. She succeeds Lewis Ferebee, who heads the District of Columbia Public Schools in Washington, D.C.

"I'm excited about the opportunity to continue to serve and encouraged by the team of phenomenal and talented people we've built across the district from the classroom to the boardroom," said Johnson in a news statement. "I commit to do ev-



Aleesia Johnson

everything I can to lead our team with an urgent and laser-like focus to create the best learning environment for all children."

Also selecting a new superintendent was New York's Rochester City School District, which recently named Terry Dade to lead the 29,984-student school system.

Dade has been an assistant superintendent in Virginia's Fairfax County Public Schools since 2015, leading 45 elementary, middle and high schools.

Dade said he is humbled and honored to join the Rochester school system.

"Together we can accomplish tremendous gains in student achievement and success, and I look forward to partnering with all stakeholders to make this a reality for our students, families, staff and community," said Dade in a news release.

Dade succeeds interim superintendent Daniel Lowengard.



Terry Dade

## Leaders to Resign

Jeff Eakins, the superintendent of Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa, Fla., recently announced he is resigning from the 215,000-student school system he has led since 2015.

Under his leadership, graduation rates in the district increased, student achievement improved and voters recently passed a 10-year, \$1.3-billion education referendum that will enable the district to begin major maintenance and repair projects.

Eakins will retire at the end of his current contract, which ends June 30, 2020.

Also resigning is Melinda Boone, the superintendent of Virginia's Norfolk Public Schools, who has led the district since 2015.

Boone was the school system's first female superintendent and previously served as the district's chief of academics and executive director of elementary schools. During her tenure, graduation rates increased and more of the district's schools reached full accreditation.

## Science Scholarships *continued from page 2*

their career pursuits," said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "We appreciate the generous support of The Harris Institute, which enabled this important scholarship program to continue."

Each scholar receives \$5,000 for continued education in a STEM-related field. This year's award winners are:

- DeGreer Harris, Charles R. Drew Charter School, Atlanta Public Schools;
- Nasya Lucien, Nova High School, Broward County (FL) Public Schools;
- Ruben Marroquin, East Early College High School, Houston Independent School District; and

- Kaitlyn Quesada, San Fernando Senior High School, Los Angeles Unified School District.

In the fall, Harris will attend Stanford University and major in either material science engineering or chemical engineering. Lucien will study biomedical engineering at Duke University. Marroquin plans to study electrical and computer engineering at Rice University, and Quesada will pursue a degree in bioengineering at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Administration of the scholarship program, including the application process, pre-selection and presentation of awards, is provided by the Council. Dr. Harris makes the final selection of recipients.

## Philadelphia Expands Book Pilot Program

Young readers in Philadelphia have begun building their own home libraries one, two or three books at a time. Now, the School District of Philadelphia wants all K-3 students on that track within four years.

In a pilot project, the nonprofit group Book Trust provided kindergarten to third-grade students in 10 city schools with 49,554 books this past school year. Students were able to choose as many as three books for their own once a month throughout the school year. At the district's Gilbert Spruance School 644 students received 11,663 books.

Now the program is being expanded,

**Book Pilot** *continued on page 10*

## Chicago Twin Sisters Both Accepted To Ivy League Colleges

Nannette and Naomi Beckley are twins and members of the Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy High School Class of 2019 in Chicago, where they participated on the math team and served as student ambassadors. They were also named to this year's Class of 2019 Gates Millennium Scholars.

And the twins share another similarity. They both will attend Ivy League universities in the fall. Nannette is headed to Princeton University in New Jersey while Naomi will attend Yale University in Connecticut.

"I'm not always going to be with my sister so I'm like, 'Why don't I start now in college, becoming known as just Naomi and not the twin,'" said 18-year-old Naomi in a story that appeared on the Chicago Public Schools' website.

Naomi is undecided on a major, but wants to either pursue a career in law or public policy, while her sister Nannette will major in International Relations, with the hopes of working for the United Nations. Nannette was accepted into several other universities, such as Johns Hopkins University, but selected Princeton because of the diversity she saw during her campus visits. Naomi also had several options to choose from, having been accepted into institutions such as Northwestern University, but chose Yale for its research program.



Chicago twins Nannette and Naomi Beckley will attend Ivy League institutions in the fall. Photo credit: Chicago Public Schools



## Homeless Students Pursue Their Musical Dreams

Jafre Chase, a 2019 graduate of the Baltimore School for the Arts, has been playing viola since he was in the fifth grade. As a junior, he planned to audition for several university music programs but had nowhere to practice because he was homeless.

Chase was homeless for a few months during his 10<sup>th</sup> grade year and most of his junior year, living with his family at a Salvation Army homeless shelter.

His living situation was unknown to Mellasenah Edwards, his conductor and the high school's music department head, until Chase came to the school looking for practice space.

"For him to be able to maintain this exceptional level of work and discipline through this time and to find these places to practice and then also maintain decent grades at the time and to get ready for those auditions is remarkable," Edwards said in an interview with *WBAL*.

Chase's dream to major in viola performance has come true with him being offered full-tuition scholarships at Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester in New York; the University of Michigan; the University of Maryland, College Park; and the Johns Hopkins Peabody Institute in Baltimore.



Jafre Chase

Foley Smith, a 2019 graduate of Capitol Hill High School in Oklahoma City, has a passion for music and that passion has sustained him through difficult circumstances.

A few years ago, Smith was diagnosed with appendicitis. At the same time his parents were experiencing financial problems and eventually lost their car and were forced to move out of their house. The family went to live in a barn on Smith's grandparents farm. The barn had no electricity or running water, so the family had to shower at truck stops.

When Smith was old enough he worked two jobs. Despite his heavy workload, he still went to school every day, sometimes only sleeping for 30 minutes a day.

The staff at his high school helped Smith get on the food pantry program and encouraged him to graduate.

"We knew that he was capable of great things and refused to let him settle for mediocrity," said band director Tristianne Asbury in an interview with *KFOR*.

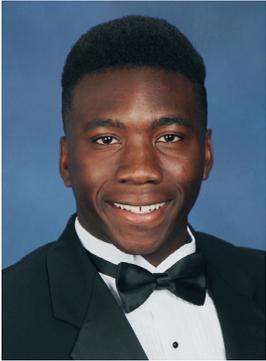
Smith was accepted into the University of Oklahoma and as a student in the university's Crimson Commitment program, will not have to pay tuition.

His goal is to study music and follow in the footsteps of his mentor, Asbury.



Foley Smith

## Florida Valedictorian Headed to Harvard



Fred Asare-Kondu

Fred Asare-Kondu was the valedictorian of his 2019 senior class at Edgewater High School in Orlando, Fla. He was also captain of the lacrosse team, a member of his school's football and soccer team and homecoming king.

Throughout high school Asare-Kondu was known as 'Mr. Edgewater,' because everyone knew the smart, friendly teen.

He now can go by another name and that is Harvard University student. Harvard was one of six Ivy League schools Asare-Kondu was accepted into.

In the fall, he will attend Harvard on a Gates Millennium Scholarship, which will cover his full-tuition.

Asare-Kondu is the youngest son of a single mom who immigrated to the United

States from Ghana and struggled to raise three children by herself on a grocery clerk salary. She always encouraged her sons to work hard and strive to succeed.

"I always identified a lot with the American dream, knowing that my mom came here for a better opportunity for herself and for her kids," said Asare-Kondu in an interview with the *Orlando Sentinel*. "I'm trying to capitalize on what she did for us."

In high school Asare-Kondu played football and soccer but excelled at lacrosse, traveling the country playing in tournaments and being recruited by colleges. But in the fall of 2017 he suffered an injury playing football that caused him to be unable to play for seven months.

During that time, he began to dedicate more time to academics and spent his mornings receiving tutoring. He is now on his way to Harvard, where he plans to study pre-med and become a doctor, a profession he believes that will enable him to make the most positive change in society.

### Student Overcomes *continued from page 1*

could control how I did in school," she said.

Scott's efforts have paid off with a long list of impressive achievements. She earned a 4.75 grade-point average, revitalized her school's Black Student Union and was a HOSA (a national student organization for health education and biomedical sciences) award winner.

She also excelled outside of school, serving more than 500 hours as a local hospital volunteer. The survivor of childhood sexual assault also started a campaign called *Respect the No* to advocate for sexual assault victims.

The graduate with the inspiring story of overcoming obstacles received full-tuition scholarships from nine universities. She was awarded more scholarship money than any student at her high school—\$2.5 million. In addition, she was one of only 300 students in the nation to receive a Gates

Millennium Scholarship. Created by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the scholarship will pay for tuition, housing, books and fees at the college of her choice.

In an interview with *Vegas PBS*, East CTA Principal Darlin Delgado, who Scott calls her second mom, expressed pride in the success Scott has achieved. "That journey she has had...graduating from high school with the potential of going to one of the most prestigious universities in the world, I think that is special in itself," said Delgado.

In the fall, Scott will use her Gates scholarship to attend Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore where she plans to study medicine and pursue a career as a trauma surgeon.

"I feel like my avenue to help people is through medicine," said Scott, who is well on her way to surpassing her early dream of becoming a valedictorian.

## Greensboro Student Defies Physical Limits

Caroline "Calley" Hull applied, auditioned and was accepted into the competitive theatre program at Weaver Academy for Performing and Visual Arts in Greensboro, N.C., as a ninth grader. Hull has taken almost every Advanced Placement class available to her at Weaver and recently graduated with a 4.3 grade-point average.

In addition to being a successful student, she was involved in the Weaver Ambassador Club and volunteered her time after school and on Saturdays to assist with Open Houses and auditions. So what sets this 2019 graduate apart from others?

Hull has cerebral palsy and is wheelchair bound and physically limited. However, she does not allow her disability to limit her in other ways.

She loves the theatre and has performed in many productions. "I just love that you can become a different person..." said Hull in an interview with *WFMY*.

Hull was the recipient of \$30,000 a year in scholarships from Guilford College, as well as a \$1,500 scholarship awarded to one student with disabilities statewide each year. At Guilford College, she will major in Spanish, English or communications.

And what advice would she offer students who are dealing with physical disabilities?

"I would say keep going and...don't give up on yourself and believe in yourself and you can do whatever you set your mind to," said Hull.



Caroline Hull, front, is congratulated by her family at her graduation ceremony.

## First in Family to Graduate High School



Rocio Ibanez

When Rocio Ibanez recently walked across the stage to receive her high school diploma, the 2019 graduate of Woodrow Wilson High School Administration of Justice and Law Magnet in Los Angeles had many reasons to celebrate. She maintained a grade-point average above 4.0 all four years of high school and will be attending Dartmouth, an Ivy League university in New Hampshire, in the fall. However, she also had another reason to celebrate: she was the first in her family to graduate from high school.

Ibanez's mother works long hours as a housekeeper and Ibanez has had to run the household, including caring for her younger two siblings. Despite shouldering adult responsibilities, she did not let that get in the way of succeeding in the classroom. She enrolled in honors courses and maintained perfect attendance, never missing a day of school in four years at her high school.

## Buffalo Refugee Becomes Valedictorian

When Eh Ler Tha arrived in Buffalo, N.Y., from a refugee camp in Thailand with his family the fifth-grader was unable to speak English.



Eh Ler Tha

Today, Eh Ler Tha not only speaks English but two other languages. The multilingual speaker was the valedictorian of his 2019 senior class at Buffalo's Riverside High School.

Eh Ler Tha was born in a refugee camp in Thailand after his parents left their war-torn home country of Burma. The family eventually decided to move to America so

Ibanez also participated in extracurricular activities in school clubs, community service and athletics. Since her freshman year, she has participated in the mock trial competition, earning the MVP award twice for her outstanding performance. She has served on the Los Angeles Mayor's Youth Council, was the associated study body leader for her school's leadership program and was co-captain of the Junior Varsity Girls basketball team.

Ibanez has also volunteered in her community by coaching elementary school children at her local recreation center and tutoring younger students at the local library.

At Dartmouth, she plans to double major in human science/public policy and sociology/political science. While she is afraid of the cold and snowy weather she will experience in New Hampshire, she views attending Dartmouth as an opportunity to step out of her comfort zone.

"I'm scared of leaving home and the environment that I'm used to," said Ibanez in a story that appeared on the Los Angeles School District website. "However, it's a good opportunity to learn."

he could have more opportunities to improve his education.

Eh Ler Tha took advantage of those opportunities, serving as the chief editor of Riverside's newspaper, operating the school's website and participating on the school's baseball, tennis and bowling teams.

According to Riverside High School counselor Jessica Korkomaz, when Eh Ler Tha first started school he was shy but soon blossomed into a very social student.

"He's really special. He just has such a positive attitude and a bright spirit," said Korkomaz in an interview with *WGRZ*.

Eh Ler Tha plans to study criminal justice at Buffalo State College and wants to join the Air National Guard and eventually become a pilot.

## Dallas Teen Survives Battle With Cancer



Joshua Suarez

Joshua Suarez was a sophomore at Woodrow Wilson High School in Dallas when he received the news that he had stage four testicular cancer.

"My heart sunk to the bottom of my chest when I heard the word 'cancer,'" Suarez said in a story that appeared on the Dallas Independent School District's website. "It was really heartbreaking to hear, and all I could ask was 'why me?'"

The cancer spread to his lungs, with approximately 22 tumors in each one. His life quickly became a whirlwind of surgeries, chemotherapy, physical therapy and life-threatening complications. During his road to recovery Suarez faced many medical complications and multiple near-death experiences in battling such an aggressive cancer.

Although he could no longer attend school due to the high risk of infection, Suarez refused to abandon his education and took on homeschooling during chemotherapy sessions. He always had a strong love of science and was looking forward to taking Advanced Placement Biology. However, with no certified homeschool teachers for that course, he decided to teach himself.

"It was a struggle, but I had to do it on days that I felt good and on days that I didn't," Suarez said. "I'm really proud of myself that I was able to take that challenge and pass with a B plus."

Suarez's cancer is in remission and he recently graduated from Woodrow Wilson. This fall, he will attend Albion College in Michigan to study biology.

After all Suarez has endured, he said his cancer experience has helped him grow spiritually. "I now have a crazy amount of optimism that's going to set me so far ahead in life," said Suarez. "I didn't know what to do with my life before, but now I see my purpose – to serve others."

## Chair Looks Back on Year Leading the Council



Larry Feldman

Larry Feldman has been serving dual roles in education. He is a school board member of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, a position he has held since 2008. He also was the chair of the Council of the Great City Schools' Board of Directors, serving in this role from July 2018 to June 2019.

As chair, Feldman presided over the Council's executive meetings, Annual Legislative/Policy Conference, Annual Fall Conference and led the organization in its work to improve education for the nation's 7.8 million urban schoolchildren.

Feldman has a 46-year career in education, having served in the Miami-Dade County school system as a special needs teacher, principal and past chair of the school board.

He believes that educators are the stewards of a long-standing American institu-

tion, public education. This life-long belief has been reinforced through this experience serving as Chair, where he brings the 75 school district members together. He has worked all year to affirm the importance of each member's value and their contributions.

"Whether influencing legislative policymaking, lobbying to enhance the quality and financing of education in urban districts, proffering opportunities for districts to share best practices, or spearheading research initiatives and studies, the Council has very much earned the respect of the educational and legislative community," said Feldman.

Council Executive Michael Casserly said the organization was fortunate to have Feldman serve as its chair.

"Larry's leadership provided important direction to urban education nationally at a critical point in our reform and improvement efforts," said Casserly. "He did an outstanding job serving the needs of urban public school students across the nation," said Casserly.

### Supreme Court continued from page 1

"The Supreme Court correctly decided to block the Trump Administration from manipulating the U.S. Census, exacerbating the undercount of residents, and skewing the distribution of critical federal education aid," said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council.

In April, the Council filed an *amicus curiae* brief with the Supreme Court in the case of *New York v. United States Department of Commerce* that spelled out the negative effects on the nation's major city public and private schools that a ruling allowing the question would have had.

The Council analyzed data from six member school districts and found that they could lose millions of dollars, every year for the next decade, in funding for federal education programs if the citizenship question was included in the

2020 Census.

The Supreme Court's majority ruling agreed with the Council that the citizenship question would have resulted in "sufficiently concrete and imminent injury."

However, urban and other communities will continue to struggle to ensure that all their residents are counted in 2020. Housing mobility, multi-family and multi-generational living arrangements, language barriers, and wariness of government intrusion complicate the traditional Census-taking process even in the best of circumstances.

The challenge for urban school officials, local government leaders, and community groups will be to effectively reach out to residents to encourage universal participation in the 2020 Census survey.

## New Leadership At Council to Begin



Eric Gordon

The Council of the Great City Schools will head into the 2019-2020 school year under new leadership.

Eric Gordon, CEO of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, advances from chair-elect to the chair of the Council's Board of Directors, effective July 1.

Gordon, who was the 2016 Urban Educator of the Year, succeeds Lawrence Feldman as chair of the policymaking body of the national coalition representing 75 of the nation's largest big-city school districts. Feldman will assume the position of immediate past chair.

The Council's 145-member Board of Directors includes one superintendent and one school board member from each of the districts represented.

Boston School Committee member Michael O'Neill moves from secretary-treasurer to chair-elect. O'Neill was elected by the Council's



Michael O'Neill

Board of Directors last year to move up to officer status after serving on the policy body's Executive Committee.

Rounding out the officers as secretary-treasurer is Barbara Jenkins, superintendent of



Barbara Jenkins

Florida's Orange County Public Schools in Orlando.

## High Hopes for Newest Early College STEM School in Chicago

There are high hopes for the \$75 million Englewood STEM High School set to open on Chicago's South Side in the fall and one big question: Will they come?

The new Englewood school will be Chicago Public Schools' ninth Early College Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) High School. It will include a medical center for both students and community members and an outdoor sports facility and will offer students a chance to earn college credits in partnership with a nearby community college.

Principal Conrad Timbers-Ausar has been recruiting students since spring and is on a mission to make the new school the first choice of students in the neighborhood.

"Teachers are facilitators so we must make sure we set an environment that is conducive to learning for students," he said in a story that appeared on the Chicago Public Schools' district website.

"It has to be culturally relevant pedagogy in order to be relevant to the students we serve in this community."

The school will open for ninth graders in the fall term and will add one grade each school year until it serves grades 9-12 in the year 2022-2023. Enrollment in the school's first class is expected to be 300 to 350 students, almost all from Englewood,

**STEM School** continued on page 12



Conrad Timbers-Ausar is the new principal of Englewood STEM High School in Chicago, which will open this fall. Photo credit: Chicago Public Schools

**Leadership Program** continued from page 1

Michael O'Neill has been a member of the Boston School Committee since 2008 and was instrumental in spearheading the program. He is looking forward to the opportunity to interact with other big-city school board members on the critical issues of improved school board governance.

"As a Boston school board trustee I oversee 54,000 students in 125 schools and a \$1.2-billion budget, which is a very different situation than most of the school districts in Massachusetts deal with," said O'Neill in an interview with the *Urban Educator*.

"So there's much more value for me being in a room with other urban school board members who are grappling with the exact same issues that I am."

Invitations to apply to the program were sent out in February and the response was overwhelming. Some 82 board members and 14 superintendents from across the country will attend.

With Council discounts and subsidies, the cost to attend is \$2,813 a person.

One of the unique features of the professional development program is that it is a true collaboration between Harvard Business School and the Council. The two

organizations held multiple meetings and there was tremendous respect for what each partner brought to the table.

"Harvard Business School really collaborated with the Council to create a professional development program designed to strengthen the capabilities of urban school boards and superintendents," said Michael Casserly, the Council executive director.

The Council's Board of Directors provided extensive feedback as the program was being developed to make sure urban school leaders needs were being met and that superintendents were included. The Council and Harvard hope the program will leave participants with tangible tools for improved governance in their respective school districts and lead to increased student achievement outcomes and improved relations between the school board and the superintendent.

There is already a waiting list for next year's program and O'Neill envisions that over time, a majority of a district's school board will have attended. "We want school boards to recognize that professional development is just as important for themselves, as it is for everyone else," said O'Neill.

## Stockton School Wins Third Academic Pentathlon

The seventh and eighth grade teams from Rio Calaveras Elementary in Stockton, Calif., continued their winning streak and took home the gold at the recent United States Academic Pentathlon®. This is the third consecutive year teams from the school have won the competition, which was held in Nashville.

Middle school students from across the nation competed in this year's sixth competition. Students learn a theme each year and this year's theme was "The 1960s: A Transformational Decade."

The 23-member team from Rio Calaveras, led by coach Jennifer Duren, began studying for the competition in August. In order to get a greater understanding of the 1960s the students took a field trip to



Students from Rio Calaveras Elementary in Stockton, Calif., hold their first-place trophies after winning the 2019 United States Academic Pentathlon®.

San Francisco to visit the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood.

**Stockton School** continued on page 11

# Miami Superintendent Uses Green-Garner Scholarship to Fund Innovation Challenge

By Hilda Diaz  
Special to *Urban Educator*

For the past 29 years, the Council of the Great City Schools has recognized big-city school leaders with the nation's highest honor for urban education leadership, the Green-Garner Award. Every winner has received a \$10,000 college scholarship to present to one student in their school district.

Last year's winner was Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho. But instead of just awarding one student with a scholarship, Carvalho wanted to involve the local community in an effort to reward even more students. His brainchild called for student teams to leverage their knowledge, passion and creativity to develop innovative solutions to large-scale issues in three categories: the environment, society and health.

The students, who spent months experimenting and researching, would have just three minutes to present their solutions to a panel of judges, à la TV's "Shark Tank." As a result, the Superintendent's Student Innovation Challenge was born.

Opened to both juniors and seniors enrolled in Miami-Dade County public high schools, two-student teams submitted 20-page proposals describing their issue's scale, impact and solutions. These had to be creative and novel ideas, supported by relevant scientific evidence, and they also had to be feasible to implement.

As the challenge morphed and grew, so did interest from the community, with \$60,000 eventually being raised.

"Through (the students') research they gain a true and deeper understanding," said Karen Fryd, a community leader, who do-

nated to the challenge. "I know they will make the world a better place."

The challenge received more than 40 proposals and the issues tackled ranged from climate change and mental health to homelessness and bullying. The four highest-scoring proposals in each category advanced to round two. The 12 teams were each assigned a "pitch coach" who spent several hours helping the students finesse their pitches before they faced the judges at the event, which Carvalho hosted.



Miami-Dade Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, right, presents a \$20,000 check to Miami students Cristian Ochoa and Maria Estrada, who stand with their pitch coach Tina Brown.

The judges used a rubric to score each presentation, with three teams each winning \$20,000 to be divided evenly between team-

mates. The team of Maria Estrada and Cristian Ochoa from Coral Gables Senior High team won for their social project, *Closing the Opportunity Gap*, a college mentorship program for minority students.

"I am so grateful," said Estrada. "Hopefully more students will be encouraged to apply to college. Education should be accessible to everyone, regardless of your socioeconomic status."

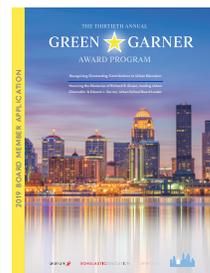
Donations from organizations such as the Miami Dolphins made sure that all of the students who participated in the challenge received a cash prize.

According to district officials, the challenge was so successful that it will return next year.

"Receiving the Green-Garner Award from the Council gave us the impetus to go forward and develop this exciting challenge," said Carvalho. "The students showed up with some phenomenal ideas that inspired all of us in attendance."

# Nominations Sought For 2019 Urban Educator of the Year

As part of the Council of the Great City Schools' ongoing efforts to highlight those superintendents or school board members who demonstrate excellence in school leadership, the Council is now seeking nominations for the 30th Annual Green-Garner Award.



Named in memory of Richard Green, the first African-American chancellor of the New York City school system, and Edward Garner, former school board president for Denver Public Schools, one school board member will be selected as this year's top urban educator.

The winner will receive a \$10,000 college scholarship to be given to any student of the winner's choosing in his or her school district.

Sponsored by the Council of the Great City Schools, Aramark K-12 Education, Cenergistic and Scholastic, Inc., the winner will be announced at the Council's 63rd Annual Fall Conference in October in Louisville, Ky.

The deadline to apply for the award is August 30.

## Queen Smith Award

Nominations are also being sought for the 2019 Queen Smith Award for Commitment to Urban Education.

The award honors an urban school teacher who has made significant contributions to education and the community and is sponsored by the Macmillan/McGraw Hill Publishing Company.

The \$5,000 award will be presented at the Council's Annual Fall Conference in October in Louisville, Ky. The deadline to apply is August 30.

For further information on both awards, access the Council's website at <http://www.cgcs.org>.

## Louisville School District Employees Award First-Ever Scholarships

Asha Reaves was born in Detroit and moved to Louisville, Ky., in 2012 with her mom and younger sister to be in a safer environment. Yet she experienced depression because she no longer had family or friends nearby. But after going back to Detroit to attend the funerals of family members, Reaves began to work hard in school.

The hard work paid off with Reaves entering the Early College Program at Western High School. She earned an associate's degree from Jefferson Community & Technical College and will enter Indiana University Southeast this fall with 61 credit hours and will major in psychology. Reaves, who graduated with a 4.0 grade-point average, wants to eventually earn a doctorate and become an applied developmental psychologist.

She is one of eight seniors from Jefferson County Public Schools' Class of 2019 awarded scholarships as part of the JCPS-Employee-Sponsored Student Scholarship Fund.

The fund was created by Jefferson County Schools Superintendent Marty Pollio as a way for district employees to invest in the futures of the students they serve. Employees were able to contribute to the fund through payroll deduction or by making an individual donation.

Graduating seniors with a 2.5 grade-



**Jefferson County Schools Superintendent Marty Pollio presents student Asha Reaves with a \$11,000 scholarship.**

point average and demonstrating financial need were eligible to apply for a scholarship through the Community Foundation of Louisville. Finalists were chosen from among 116 applicants and then interviewed by Pollio and his staff.

The scholarship fund raised \$48,000, which was given to eight students, with each amount determined by individual need. Three scholarships were for \$10,000 or more, with Reaves receiving \$11,000, the highest amount rewarded.

"These students had some incredible stories that I am so proud to support," said Pollio, who surprised the students in their classrooms with a large scholarship check bearing their name. "I am amazed at some of the hardships that our students go through yet persevere toward success."

### Book Pilot *continued from page 3*

with a \$1.3-million grant from the William Penn Foundation, which also funded the initial book distribution. In the coming year, Book Trust will reach more than 13,000 students in 50 district schools with a plan to reach all 150 elementary schools and 40,000 K-3 students within four years.

Philadelphia Schools Superintendent William Hite called the take-home-a-book program "a vital component" of the district's focus on early literacy.

"We know that when students are able to choose the books they want to read, and

their families are engaged and invested in their learning, they have the greatest opportunity to succeed," said Hite in a news statement.

Book Trust will deliver one million books to 57,000 students in 21 states. Philadelphia is the first city to go districtwide with the program, according to Tiffany Kuehner, president of Book Trust.

Kuehner said her group was "thrilled to have the opportunity to expand Book Trust's evidence-based...and student-driven program and be part of Philadelphia's concerted efforts to increase early literacy."

## Urban Schools Honored For Their Efforts In Going 'Green'

Eagle Rock Elementary and Magnet Center in Los Angeles has written environmental literacy requirements that address nine subject areas designed to expand students' knowledge about the earth. The school has also reduced gas use by 29 percent between 2010 and 2018 and more than one-third of the school's energy is obtained from purchased renewable energy such as wind and solar.

Marine and Science Technology Academy in Miami is the first school in Miami-Dade County Public Schools to eliminate straws from its cafeteria. The school also replaced Styrofoam cafeteria trays with compostable trays and installed six water-bottle filling stations across the school to encourage healthy hydration and reduced waste.

These efforts are why these two schools were among 35 from across the nation designated as 2019 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools.

Each year, the award recognizes schools based on their progress in reducing environmental impact and utility costs, providing better health for students and staff and offering effective environmental and sustainability education, including civic learning, green careers and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) connections.

In addition to schools in Los Angeles and Miami being honored, schools in Boston and Hawaii were also designated Green Ribbon Schools.

Boston Green Academy works to reduce its water usage, implement green cleaning and encourage sustainable transportation to the school. Each year, every student works on projects to explore environmental, social and economic issues and explore career paths in the field.

Kapalama Elementary School in Honolulu has decreased its footprint and lowered its expenses through a statewide energy program, which includes energy-efficiency measures and renewable energy additions.

## Atlanta School Surprised with \$25,000 Donation

Students at Coretta Scott King Young Women’s Leadership Academy in Atlanta got a huge surprise recently when they were greeted by *Good Morning America* host Robin Roberts and her crew.

Roberts dropped by to tout the school’s focus on STEM (science, technology, education, math) education on her morning show, and she brought along Oscar-winning actress Lupita Nyong’o.

Nyong’o presented the school with a \$25,000 donation for projects and supplies from DonorsChoose.org, an online crowd-sourcing non-profit that has funded more than 1.3 million classroom project requests.

“When I look into this room I see problem solvers. I see creative thinkers. I see activists,” Nyong’o told the thrilled young women. “But most importantly I see women who are learning how to learn, and learners change the world.”

The event marked the launch of a new DonorsChoose.org initiative dubbed #IS-

eeMe, which will fund projects from teachers of color and women STEM educators as well as projects that help students see their diverse identities reflected in their teacher’s curriculum.

*Good Morning America* aired the event



Left to right, television anchor Robin Roberts and actress Lupita Nyong’o look on as Atlanta principal Eulonda Washington receives a \$25,000 donation for her school.

live and Roberts dubbed the school for girls grades 6 to 12, “Most Likely to Succeed,” for its focus on STEM education.

**Atlanta School** continued on page 12

## Columbus Auditor Invited to National Accounting Post



Carolyn Smith

Carolyn Smith, the internal auditor for Ohio’s Columbus City Schools, was recently appointed to a five-year term on the Governmental Accounting Standards

Board (GASB), which sets accounting and financial reporting standards for state and local governments of all sizes across the United States.

Smith was appointed to the GASB by the Board of Trustees of the Financial Accounting Foundation (FAF).

In her position as the internal auditor in Ohio’s largest school system, Smith leads all audits and advises the Board of Education on risk, control and compliance functions.

Columbus School Board President Gary Baker said it is an honor for the Columbus school system to know that Smith’s work in helping the district deliver services in a more efficient and transparent way is now being recognized at the national level.

“In this role, she will be able to offer a unique local voice and provide a school district perspective as the nation’s accounting standards are modernized and set for governments large and small across the country,” said Baker.

**Stockton School** continued from page 8

Students on the team met every Saturday in the spring to study together.

The 7<sup>th</sup> grade gold-winning team scored 20,505 points, beating the second-place team by more than 3,000 points. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade gold-winning team scored 21,298 points, beating the second-place team by more than 2,000 points.

## Des Moines Sponsors Summit on School Climate

In 2016, Iowa’s Des Moines Public Schools held for the very first time a national summit aimed at improving school climate and culture.

The two-day summit was so successful that the district has held it every year since then, culminating in this year’s 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit on School Climate and Culture, which will be held Aug. 12-13 at the Iowa Events Center.

Pedro Noguera, a professor of education at the University of California, Los Angeles, is one of the keynote speakers at this year’s summit, which will focus on improving school climate and culture through professional development, skill building and application of best practices and research.

For more information and to register online, access <https://sscc.dmschools>.





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**STEM School** *continued from page 8*

according to school district projections.

Englewood STEM is being viewed as the solution to a long-standing issue: students and families opting out of Englewood's four neighborhood high schools. According to Timbers-Ausar, approximately 93 percent of local students have opted for schools elsewhere.

Chicago Public Schools CEO Janice Jackson said accessible neighborhood public schools are vital for student success.

"Our design was to ensure this was a neighborhood school," said Jackson in the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "We're so excited to bring a high-quality option right here in their backyard that the students can go to and be proud of."

To help students develop leadership skills, principal Timbers-Ausar said he is bringing in external partners to provide mentoring programs and internships.

Like Jackson, Timbers-Ausar is a former Chicago Public Schools' student-turned-educator.

"I want to help students like myself," he said. "I really want them to know there's somebody in the building that they can go to, multiple people."

**Atlanta School** *continued from page 11*

The school's motto is "Every girl has a dream with her name on it."

The students consider themselves "STEMinists" and some of their projects include raising quails and distributing their eggs to the community and doing research into their ancestry using DNA sampling.

The Leadership Academy was recognized in the spring as Georgia's first all-girls middle and high school to be accredited as a science, technology, engineering and math school by the nonprofit AdvancED, a national accrediting agency.

The Atlanta school district in recent years has worked to create what it calls "signature programs" in selected schools focusing on special academic areas. The idea is to make offerings more specialized to prepare students for college or career.

Bernice King, CEO of The King Center and daughter of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King, attended the event and extolled the school's achievements.

"My mother would be super proud today because she said 'women are the soul of the nation and to be saved you must become a soul' and these young ladies are the soul of our nation," said King.

## Council Fall Conference Registration Begins

The Council of the Great City Schools' will hold its 63rd Annual Fall Conference Oct. 23-27, in Louisville, Ky.

Hosted by Jefferson County Public Schools, the conference will feature former presidential adviser Valerie Jarrett and presidential historian and author Jon Meacham.

Registration for the conference can only be conducted online and will be available mid-July. To register for the conference, access the Council's website at: <http://www.cgcs.org>.

