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## NYC to Offer Free Preschool for All 3-Year-Olds

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio recently rolled out a plan to offer free, full-day, preschool to all 3-year-olds in the nation's largest city.

Called *3-K for All*, the new initiative builds on the city's early-childhood education program for 4-year-olds, which is considered a success with more than triple the number of 4-year-olds enrolled in free, full-day pre-kindergarten in two years.

*3-K for All* will begin this fall, aiming to serve more than 11,000 3-year-olds, especially in two of the city's lowest-income school districts in the Bronx and Brooklyn.

**Free Preschool** continued on page 4

## Three Urban Schools Ranked Among The Nation's Top 10

*U.S. News & World Report* last month ranked three urban schools in districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools in the top 10 of "Best High Schools" in the nation for 2017.

Two Dallas high schools and one in Houston ranked among the 10 "best" nationally in the newsmagazine's annual rankings of more than 28,000 public

**Top 10** continued on page 4

## National Commission to Study Cleveland's Social, Emotional Learning Program

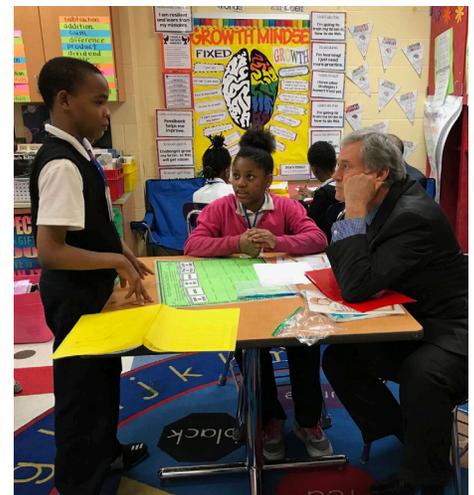
The Cleveland Metropolitan School District will serve as a case study for a report on helping the nation's students cope with the distractions of anger, stress, anxiety and fear.

The Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development, which spent the first two days of May in Cleveland, will issue the report late next year as part of what it calls the most significant conversation about K-12 education in a generation. The Aspen Institute is a nonpartisan forum for the exchange of leadership ideas.

Commissioners chose Cleveland for the first of only two scheduled site visits. They came because of a comprehensive social and emotional learning program the Cleveland school district launched a decade ago -- after an armed high school student wounded two teachers and two classmates and then killed himself.

"We were never going to let a child feel that desperate again," the district's Chief Executive Officer Eric Gordon told the commission during a panel presentation at a downtown Cleveland hotel. The commission's 25 members, including Democratic Gov. Terry McAuliffe of Virginia and Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval of Nevada, represent educators, policymakers, scholars and business leaders. The leaders say that learning to deal with trauma will help children, particularly those steeped in poverty, fare better in school, work and life.

The Cleveland school district's social and emotional learning program, known as Humanware, includes instruction in pre-



**Commissioner Gene Wilhoit listens intently to a Cleveland student during a school visit.**

school through eighth grade (the district is researching a high school curriculum), student support teams in each school, constructive alternatives to suspension, and forums where students can build a sense of community, solve problems and give feedback.

"Conditions for learning" surveys administered twice a year measure whether students feel safe, respected and supported and how they evaluate their social, emotional learning (SEL). At most grade levels, growing majorities of students rate conditions in those categories as adequate or better.

Commissioners observed social and emotional learning at two schools: Wade Park, for children in preschool through

**Cleveland Program** continued on page 4

# L.A. School Wins Academic Decathlon for Third Straight Year

Students on the academic decathlon team at Los Angeles Unified School District's Granada Hills Charter High School spent their spring break studying 10 to 12 hours a day. But all their hard work paid off with the team taking home the first-place trophy at the 2017 United States Academic Decathlon®, held last month in Wisconsin.

Granada Hills will need a bigger trophy case because this win marks the third time in a row the team has won the three-day competition, as well as the sixth time in the last seven years a decathlon team from the school has taken home the top prize.

The United States Academic Decathlon® is recognized as the most prestigious high school academic team competition in the country and features high school teams from across the nation, as well as Canada, China and the United Kingdom. Each high school enters a team of nine students: three "A" students, three "B" students, and three "C" students.

Teams compete in 10 categories: art, economics, essay, interview, language and literature, mathematics, music, science,



Students from the decathlon team at Granada Hills Charter School are welcomed home with a rally after winning the 2017 United States Academic Decathlon competition.

social science and speech. The competition also includes multiple-choice exams in each subject and essays and speeches. This year's study subject was World War II.

The winning team from Granada Hills not only beat 77 other teams, but won with a score of 54,507 out of a possible 66,000 points. According to the *Los Angeles Daily*

*News*, approximately 60 students apply to be on the team each year, with nine students selected.

Since 2003, a California team has won the national academic decathlon every year.

**L.A. School** continued on page 3



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# Sacramento, St. Paul, Bridgeport and Birmingham Name New Leaders; Superintendents in Louisville and Richmond to Step Down



**Jorge Aguilar**

After a superintendent search that began with 28 candidates, California's Sacramento City Unified School District has selected Jorge Aguilar to lead the 46,815-student school district.

Aguilar currently serves as the associate superintendent for equity and access for California's Fresno Unified School District, a position he has held for nine years. During his tenure, he established a partnership with University of California, Merced (UC Merced) and played a strong role in improving the district's graduation rate. He will succeed superintendent José Banda, who will leave the district in June.

Aguilar is the son of immigrant farmworkers in California, who as a teen often spent his summer working in the fields. He has been a high school Spanish teacher, worked as a legislative fellow in California's state capitol and served as an associate vice chancellor for educational and community partnerships and special assistant to the chancellor at UC Merced.

In a press release, Jay Hansen, president of the Sacramento school board, said Aguilar has proven experience in successfully addressing the needs of the district's students. "I believe the work Mr. Aguilar has done in Fresno and his background working on equity and achievement gap issues make him the ideal candidate for our

district."

Also selecting a new leader recently was Minnesota's St. Paul Public Schools, which named Joe Gothard as its new superintendent to lead the 39,000-student school district. He will begin July 1, succeeding interim leader John Thein.



**Joe Gothard**

Gothard has served since 2013 as the superintendent of Minnesota's Burnsville-Eagan Savage School District 191, which serves 9,500 students.

"I'm very excited that I have been given the opportunity to help lead the state's second largest district," said Gothard in a news statement. "I look forward to getting to know the St. Paul community and bringing great excitement to our staff and schools in service of our great students."



**Lisa Herring**

Alabama's Birmingham City Schools chose a veteran educator to lead the school district. Lisa Herring, who has served as the chief academic officer for Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools

in Louisville since 2016, will take the reins, succeeding Larry Conti.

Prior to working in Louisville, Herring held several positions in South Carolina's Charleston County School District, including director for student support ser-

vices, associate superintendent for instructional support, chief academic officer and deputy superintendent for academics.

At a press conference announcing her selection, Herring thanked the board for their vote of confidence to lead the district and said she is humbled by the assignment and the opportunity to serve.



**Aresta Johnson**

"The role of superintendent is going to be taken very seriously," she said. "...I will commit to you my very best in ensuring that every child that is a part of Birmingham City Schools is a part of excellence, and exits with excellence because that is the calling of our work."

Connecticut's Bridgeport Public Schools didn't have to look far to choose its next superintendent. The district selected Aresta Johnson, who has served as its interim leader since 2016.

Johnson has held a variety of positions in the Bridgeport school district, having served as an assistant principal, principal, curriculum director and assistant superintendent.

## Stepping Down

After serving six years as the superintendent of Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Ky., Donna Hargens will step down from her position, effective July 1. Hargens joined the district in 2011 and under her leadership the district has increased its graduation rate, doubled its college and career readiness rate, increased overall reading and math for every student subgroup, and increased the number of students taking Advanced Placement classes.

Also stepping down is Dana Bedden, who has led Virginia's Richmond Public Schools since 2014. He will leave the district June 30. Before coming to Richmond, Bedden was superintendent of Texas' Irving Independent School District.

### L.A. School *continued from page 2*

"These students made history," said Los Angeles school board member Scott Schmerelson. "Congratulations to each of them for another stellar performance and for brilliantly representing L.A. Unified."

"The entire L.A. Unified family is ex-

tremely proud of your victory and stalwart commitment to teamwork," Los Angeles Schools Superintendent Michelle King said in a statement. "You are all fine examples of champions."

**Cleveland Program** *continued from page 1*

eighth grade, and Facing History New Tech High School. The one-of-a-kind high school combines the social-justice curriculum Facing History and Ourselves with the project-based learning style of the New Tech Network.

“Facing History is what we are; it’s what we do,” Principal Marc Engoglia told the commissioners. “That brings a lot of social and emotional learning to our classrooms.”

While in Cleveland, commissioners heard from principals, teachers and students. Cleveland Teachers Union Vice President Jillian Ahrens called SEL a “bread-and-butter issue” for labor and said Humanware is so critical, provisions were placed in the teachers contract to ensure the program would survive changes in leadership.

Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction Paolo DeMaria and State Sen. Peggy Lehner, chair of the Senate Education Committee, were among the other presenters. Lehner, a Dayton-area Republican, applauded the steps the Cleveland school district and others have taken to help children manage their emotions, build positive relationships and make responsible decisions.

### ‘Cultural Change’

“What you are doing is very, very important,” she said. “You really are at the forefront of a cultural change in how schools are run.”

In addition to providing information, schools have to instill inspiration, commission Co-Chair Timothy Shriver said as his stay in Cleveland neared an end. He added: “I see that happening here.”

“The focus has shifted from a focus on academic subjects to a focus on children,” said Shriver, who is founder and co-chair of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning and chairman of the Special Olympics. “The district speaks this language; the teachers speak this language.”

*(Story reported by the Cleveland Metropolitan School District News Bureau)*

## Anchorage Bond Issue Passes After Failing Last Year



to be replaced.

But the school recently received good news, when voters went to the polls last month and approved a \$58.5 million school bond that will fund school building roof and ventilation system repairs for the

At Rogers Park Elementary School in Anchorage, Alaska, leaks in the hallway and classrooms occur every year because the school’s roof is 26-years-old and needs

Anchorage School District.

Rogers Elementary will receive a new roof along with six other schools and the district’s student nutrition facility, while three schools will receive heating and ventilation replacements.

In addition, funds from the bonds will be used to repair the library shared by West High and Romig Middle School that was damaged from a magnitude 7.1 earthquake that occurred in January. Funds from the bond will also be used to build new class-

**Anchorage Bond** *continued on page 9*

**Top 10** *continued from page 1*

high schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia that were evaluated.

More than 6,000 gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded – 80 percent to traditional public high schools, many of them big-city schools – based on state assessments, graduation rates and college readiness.

*U.S. News* ranked the School for the Talented and Gifted in Dallas No. 4, Carnegie Vanguard High School in Houston No. 8, and the School of Science and Engineering in Dallas No. 9.

Two more urban high schools in Council districts rounded out the top 20 nationally. The High School of American Studies at Lehman College in New York City’s Bronx ranked No. 17, and DeBakey High School for Health Professions in Houston followed at No. 18.

Superintendent Richard Carranza of the Houston Independent School District noted, “To be recognized on a national level is a testament to HISD’s commitment to prepare our students for success after graduation – whether beginning in a successful career or pursuing higher education.”

**Free Preschool** *continued from page 1*

The plan is to expand the program every year until all city districts provide preschool education for 3-year-olds by 2021.

To offer early education for 3-year-olds citywide, New York City will need additional support from partners in the state and federal government.

“We will build a coalition to put together whatever state and federal resources we need to bring this to full fruition,” the mayor said in the *New York Times*.

*3-K for All* is part of the Mayor’s Equity and Excellence for All agenda, which strives to ensure that 80 percent of students graduate high school on time and two-thirds of graduates are college-ready by 2026.

“The research is clear – investment in early childhood education reaps benefits for students, families and communities for years to come,” Mayor de Blasio said in a news release.

“As a lifelong educator, I understand just how much and how fast our youngest children can learn -- a level of learning that you can’t make up later on,” said New York City Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña. “In free, full-day, high-quality 3-K, our students will build their vocabulary, a love of learning, and start to develop the social and behavioral habits they need to succeed in pre-K and kindergarten.”

## Oakland School Wins Urban Debate Championship

When Christine Harris was a middle school student in Oakland, Calif., she hung out with the wrong crowd, received bad grades and thought about dropping out of school due to her lack of motivation.

Four years later, Harris is on her way to the University of California–Berkeley with a full scholarship, and plans to one day become an attorney.

A senior at Oakland Unified School District’s Skyline High School, Harris owes a great deal of her academic success to her participation in the Bay Area Urban Debate League (BAUDL). A member of the league for four years, she, along with her debate team partner Malachi Ambrose, recently captured the top prize at the 2017 Urban Debate National Championship.

Hosted by the National Association of Urban Debate Leagues, the three-day tournament was held on the campus of Loyola University in Chicago and featured teams from 21 urban debate leagues across the country competing against each other.

Urban debate teams debate in a style called policy debate, in which teams of two students debate on a current event topic. This year’s topic was on whether the United States federal government should substantially increase its economic and/or diplomatic engagement with the People’s Republic of China.

Even though Harris and Ambrose have only been a debating team for a year, they were able to beat out 83 teams to take home the winning trophy, with three judges unanimously giving them a final round win. This is the first time a team from BAUDL has won the Urban Debate National Championship, which is in its 10th year. Currently, 350 students are participating in BAUDL, which was created in 2008.

In addition to winning this year’s championship, Harris won the Top Speaker trophy as the tournament’s best debater.

Initially, she was not interested in debate and only attended her first tournament for the extra credit and the free food. But joining the urban debate league four years ago has completely changed her life.



**Oakland students Malachi Ambrose and Christine Harris hold their first-place trophy for winning the 2017 Urban Debate National Championship as their coach Christopher Scheer looks on.**

“Debate gave me that outlet, a community that believes in me, that made me think I was capable of success in life,” said Harris in a story that aired on *KPIX TV 5* profiling her success.

Debate has also led to positive developments for her debate partner Ambrose. His success as a debater has earned him a debate scholarship from the University of Texas–Austin, which he will attend in the fall.

“I think debate provides a great opportunity for understanding what it means to be yourself,” said Ambrose in an interview with the *East Bay Times*. “When I found debate, I found myself, and that’s the biggest value this national championship has for new debaters.”

Toni Nielson, the executive director of BAUDL, has seen the positive effects of debate, not only in Harris and Ambrose, but in many of the students she works with.

“I think in this alternative-fact world that we live in these days young people need critical thinking, research and reading skills,” said Nielson in an interview with the *Urban Educator*. “And debate does all of that at a level beyond what a classroom can do because young people choose to become very active learners.”

## Boston Launches Public-Private Teaching Collaborative

Teachers from Boston Public Schools are joining together with teachers from the city’s charter and Catholic schools in a new learning collaborative designed to share best classroom teaching practices.

The Boston Educators Collaborative (BEC) will enable teachers from district, charter and Catholic schools to take university-level professional learning courses together led by current classroom teachers. The five-week, 15-hour courses will be based on topics that ensure instruction reaches all learners, provides rigorous curricula and is culturally proficient.

The professional learning courses are free and designed to foster collaboration among the participating teachers. The instructors for the courses will be recruited, selected and trained by Teach Plus, a Boston nonprofit organization that prepares teachers to become leaders.

The six courses, which begin in May, include ‘Culturally Responsive Teaching: How Does Culture Play a Role in Learning?’ and ‘Literature Circles 101: Teaching Students to Read Like Adults’. The courses are open to all Boston school district teachers and additional courses will be offered throughout 2017 and 2018.

Boston Public Schools Superintendent Tommy Chang believes the collaboration will enable educators from across the city to learn from one another and build on each other’s strengths.

“Collaboration of best practices is a proven way to improve strategies that increase academic rigor and narrow opportunity and achievement gaps for all of our students,” said Chang.

The BEC was established through a partnership with Teach Plus and the Boston Compact, which brings together educators from district, charter and Catholic schools across Boston in an effort to improve education for all children in the city.

## Palm Beach Student Wins \$40,000 Award In Science Talent Search



Stefan Wan accepts his award at the 2017 Regeneron Science Talent Search. Photo credit: Society for Science & the Public/Chris Ayers

Stefan Wan, a senior at Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts in West Palm Beach, Fla., is valedictorian of his high school, with a grade-point average of 4.0. He is also president of the school's math and science honor societies, respectively.

And in addition to excelling in academics,

Wan is a classically trained pianist, who has studied piano for the past 12 years.

He can now add one more achievement to the list: receiving top honors in the 2017 Regeneron Science Talent Search, the nation's oldest and most prestigious high school science and math competition.

Wan placed tenth in the competition and received a \$40,000 award for his development of a new material to remove phosphate from wastewater and storm runoff and then recycle it to enrich farm soil.

Wan focused on the issue of phosphorus pollution in water because it is a problem that heavily affects South Florida. For the past two years, he has been conducting research in conjunction with professors from the University of Florida.

More than 1,700 high school seniors from across the country entered this year's science talent search, sponsored by the So-

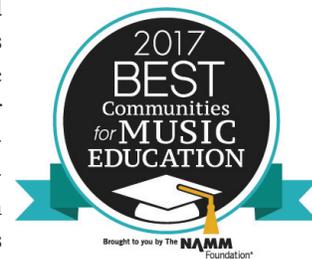
**Science Award** *continued on page 12*

## Urban Districts Named Best in Music Education

Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas has a strong commitment to the arts with every elementary school having a certified music teacher. In addition, the 320,000-student school system has 261 music teachers in grades six through 12 and, according to district officials, the largest fine arts program in the nation.

As a result, the school system was recently named one of the "Best Communities for Music Education" by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation. This is the 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive year the district has been included on the list.

Each year, NAMM selects school districts and schools across the country for their support of music education programs for students.



This year, 527 districts and 92 schools were honored for their outstanding music programs and their commitment and dedication to offering students access to music education.

Joining Clark County was New Mexico's Albuquerque Public Schools, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Shelby County School in Memphis and Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District and Arlington Independent School District. In addition, Florida's Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa and The School District of Palm Beach County made the list.

In order to be recognized, districts had to complete an 18-page application, including a survey and detailed questions about a variety of factors in the community that affect students' access to music education.

According to NAMM, new research has demonstrated strong ties between K-12 school students who actively participate in school music education programs and overall student success.

## National Summit to Be Held Aug. 7-8 On School Climate and Culture

A national summit to help educators improve school climate and culture through professional development, skill building and application of best practices and research will be held Aug. 7-8 in Des Moines, Iowa.

This is the second year Des Moines Public Schools has conducted the Summit on School Climate and Culture at the Iowa Events Center, where educators and experts will converge to discuss how climate and culture contributes to

student, school and district improvements.

The summit will feature experts such as Sir Ken Robinson, an international leader on creativity and innovation in education and business.

And sessions at the two-day summit will focus on best practices in improving school climate, cultural proficiency, stakeholder engagement and leadership among other areas of interest.

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



## Fresno School District Recognized For 'Excellence in Financial Management'

The Council of the Great City Schools recently honored California's Fresno Unified School District for reaching the highest standards in financial management, accountability and fiscal control.

For enhancing, safeguarding and protecting the financial integrity of the district, the Council presented the Award for Excellence in Financial Management at the May 3 Fresno school board meeting.

"The award we are presenting tonight represents a significant achievement by the board of education, the superintendent, and staff of the district," said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly, who was joined by the Council Director of Management Services Robert Carlson. "We particularly recognize and praise the outstanding work of Ruthie Quinto and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer."

Casserly emphasized, "The Fresno Unified School District has demonstrated an extraordinary dedication to excellence in financial management and integrity in the stewardship of taxpayer dollars."

In accepting the honor, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Financial Officer Quinto noted in a press release, "Fresno Unified has worked diligently over the last decade to adhere to the highest financial accountability standards. This award is a significant milestone and recognizes the substantial fiscal progress we've made, which allows Fresno Unified to provide better facilities and programs for our students."

This is only the fifth time since the Council launched the award program in 2009 that it has honored a school district with its highest national award for sound financial management. The last award was given to the Atlanta Public Schools in 2015. Other big-city school districts recognized have been the Miami-Dade County Schools, Houston Independent School District and Florida's Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale.

To receive the Award for Excellence in



**Fresno Deputy Superintendent and Chief Financial Officer Ruthie Quinto accepts financial management award from Council Executive Director Michael Casserly with school board President Brooke Ashjian, right, and others looking on.**

Financial Management, an urban school district must demonstrate it complies with a series of management practices that represent the highest standards in financial accountability and control in nine categories: general financial management, internal controls, budget, strategic planning and management, internal and external financial auditing, capital asset management, debt management, risk management and purchasing.

The Council convenes a panel composed of respected senior financial executives from major school systems across the nation to conduct the review process, which includes an assessment of the district's management practices, an extensive review of documents, and a lengthy site visit.

## Males of Color Meeting Held in Memphis



**Ray Hart**

The University of Memphis' Benjamin Hooks Institute for Social Change recently sponsored a symposium on creating greater outcomes for African American male achievement. Co-sponsored with

**Males of Color** continued on page 12

## Urban Students Named Presidential Scholars

Ten urban students are among 161 high school seniors recently named to the 53<sup>rd</sup> class of U.S. Presidential Scholars by the federal Department of Education.

"Today's Presidential Scholars are tomorrow's leaders, and I am confident they will continue to be shining examples as they enter the next phase of their academic careers," said U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos in a press release.



**Ellie Cox Houston**

The White House Commission on Presidential Scholars annually selects graduating high school seniors from around the nation based on essays, school evaluations, transcripts, SAT and ACT college-entrance scores, as well as evidence of their leadership and community service and nominations.

Of the nation's 3.5 million students expected to graduate in the Class of 2017, more than 5,100 candidates qualified for this year's awards.



**Emily Yang Honolulu**

U.S. Presidential Scholars named from large urban public-school districts included students in Anchorage, the District of Columbia, Miami-Dade

County, Palm Beach County, Hawaii, Louisville, Portland, Ore., and Houston. The Anchorage and Miami-Dade County school systems have two scholars.

Created in 1964, the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program has honored nearly 7,500 of the nation's top-performing students. The 161 honorees in the 2017 Class will receive the prestigious Presidential Scholar Medallion at a June 18 ceremony in Washington.

## Des Moines District Wins Energy Star Award

Iowa's Des Moines Public Schools has implemented a number of energy efficiency projects, including replacing windows and doors with high-efficiency installations and installing a high-efficiency geothermal heating and cooling system. As a result of these efforts, the district was recently named a 2017 ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year – Sustained Excellence Award winner by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy.

The honor was given to 143 businesses and organizations for their commitment to saving energy, saving money and protecting the environment through superior energy efficiency achievements. The 32,000-student school district in Des Moines was one of only two school systems in the nation to receive the designation. This is the sixth year in a row the district has received the Partner of the Year award.

The school system partners with ENERGY STAR to promote energy efficiency awareness and education to students, faculty and staff members and has utilized the

ENERGY STAR guidelines for energy management in the development and execution of their district-wide energy plan. In 2016, the school system earned ENERGY STAR for eight new buildings, resulting in a total of 57 ENERGY STAR certified buildings in the district. The district has also installed more than 7,200 ENERGY STAR certified light-emitting diode (LED) lighting fixtures and 4,000 ENERGY STAR certified LED replacement lamps.

All of these efforts have resulted in significant savings, with the school system spending an average of \$114 a student on energy cost, more than \$90 below the national average of \$205 a student.

According to Bill Good, the district's chief operations officer, the effort put into energy efficiency is paying dividends not only for students and the environment. "Each year hundreds of thousands of dollars are being directed towards education rather than energy costs, funds that support our top priority: teaching the children of Des Moines," said Good.

## Spanish Embassy Honors Florida School

Berkshire Elementary School in West Palm Beach, Fla., has a dual language program in which students who enter the program are exposed to Spanish 90 percent of their instructional time. The instructional time in English increases each year until they follow a 50/50 Spanish/English language model.

The program has been operating for 13 years and is the largest elementary dual language program in the School District of Palm Beach County, with more than 700 students participating.

As a result, Berkshire has been selected by the Education Office of the Embassy of Spain as the 2016 Spanish School of the Year.

Students in the dual language program are exposed to project-based learning in Spanish, while mathematics is taught exclusively in Spanish. And the school also has two teachers on staff who are on an exchange program from Spain.

## Urban Educators and Schools Win Top National Magnet Awards

Pat Skorkowsky has been superintendent of Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas since 2013 and under his leadership, the nation's fifth largest school district has expanded the number of magnet schools by 44 percent, offering 114 programs of study at 36 schools.

For his efforts, Skorkowsky was recently named the 2017 Magnet Schools Superintendent of the Year by Magnet Schools of America (MSA), the national association for magnet and theme-based schools. The award was presented at the organization's recent national conference in Los Angeles and was given to Skorkowsky for his leadership in supporting magnet schools.

Also receiving an award at this year's conference was the Miami-Dade County School District, which was presented with the Donna Grady-Creer District Award

for Magnet Sustainability. The award is given to a school district that exemplifies equity, excellence, and diversity while sustaining strong and dedicated support for magnet schools.

Miami began its magnet program in 1973 and has launched more than 109 new magnet programs under the tenure of Miami Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho.

The nation's fourth largest school system currently offers students 375 magnet programs to choose from and last month was recognized by MSA for having more Magnet Schools of Excellence, the highest designation a magnet school can earn, than any school district in the country.

**Magnet Awards** continued on page 12



Miami-Dade Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho accepts the District Award for Magnet Sustainability at the Magnet Schools of America conference in Los Angeles.

# Buffalo State College, Buffalo Public Schools Launch Teachers Academy

Buffalo Public Schools recently partnered with Buffalo State College to launch a new teacher-preparation program called the Urban Teachers Academy.

The academy, which will accept its first cohort of students this fall in the city's McKinley High School, is designed to develop a strong corps of highly effective teachers of color who are committed to cultural competence, community engagement, and careers in urban school districts.

The Buffalo City School District has one of the most diverse student populations in the United States. However, white teachers make up 86 percent of the workforce in the district of 81 percent non-white students.

The Urban Teachers Academy signals a commitment to increase the diversity of its teacher corps to better reflect the broad cultural backgrounds of its students. For example, the Buffalo Public Schools director of Human Resources recently took a hiring team to Puerto Rico that resulted in the successful recruitment of 13 bilingual teachers.

"The need to build cultural and linguistic diversity into our teaching corps is immediate," said Buffalo Public Schools Superintendent Kriner Cash. "I am delighted that we now have a way to 'grow our own' teachers from our talented and diverse student population. Our students will begin their college classes while still in high school, and future BPS students will benefit from having teachers who mirror their background and culture."

Moreover, the superintendent noted, "In addition, I know that students in the Urban Teacher Academy will add rich cultural context to Buffalo State's teacher edu-



Buffalo school board President Barbara Seals Nevergold, left, and Buffalo Superintendent Kriner Cash flank Buffalo State President Katherine Conway-Turner in partnership.

cation classrooms."

"We look forward to collaborating with Buffalo Public Schools and McKinley High School on the Urban Teachers Academy," said Buffalo State College President Katherine Conway-Turner. "Encouraging our local high school students to pursue the profession of teaching has the potential to benefit not just the Buffalo Public Schools but any school district with a diverse student body."

Faculty members from Buffalo State and staff from the Buffalo Public Schools will collaborate on developing the curricula for four college-level courses to be taught as part of this new program. Academy students will also take part in activities at Buffalo State to help them prepare for college.

Students who successfully complete the Urban Teachers Academy courses—a total of 12 college credits toward an educa-

tion degree—will be accepted into Buffalo State's teacher education programs. Buffalo Teachers Federation President Phil Rumore has pledged to bring additional needed funding to this program.

In addition, the Buffalo Public Schools will incentivize top Urban Teacher Academy graduates who earn a bachelor's degree in education from Buffalo State to apply for positions within the district.

The Urban Teachers Academy is one of seven New Innovative High Schools begun under the Buffalo Public Schools reform agenda called *New Education Bargain with Students and Parents*, introduced by Superintendent Cash and adopted by the Buffalo Board of Education in January of 2016.

**Anchorage Bond** *continued from page 4*

rooms at the schools to replace portable classrooms.

School officials were thankful to voters for passage of the bond, particularly because last year a \$49 million bond to make repairs and improvements at 37 schools was narrowly rejected by 51 percent of the voters. And since last year's failed bond package was rejected, the district's list of repairs that needed to be made had only grown.

"This is a victory not only for our education system and facilities, but for the citizens of Anchorage, too," said Anchorage school board president Tam Agosti-Gisler in an interview with *KTUU-TV*. "These are taxpayer facilities and it's important to keep them up to date and repaired and in good condition for a safe and secure educational environment."

According to district officials, while taxpayers will spend \$11.67 per \$100,000 in assessed property annually, the tax rate will be lower than current year's rate because of recently retired bond debt from previous years.

**Teacher Population in the Buffalo Public Schools**

2016-2017 (Snapshot on 09/16/2016)								
Teachers		Gender		White (Caucasian) Teachers	Black (African American) Teachers	Hispanic Teachers	Asian Teachers	Native American Teachers
Total:	3525			3021	317	147	31	9
		Female	2710	2298	254	122	27	9
		Male	815	723	63	25	4	0

## Is Federal Education Funding at a Crossroads?

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

The flurry of legislative activity from Congress and the Trump administration in the first week of May has fueled a growing apprehension over the outlook for federal education funding in the upcoming school year and beyond. Even with the enactment of the long-delayed omnibus funding bill (H.R. 244), covering nearly all federal agencies for the remaining five months of FY 2017, school districts still do not have a viable estimate of how much federal funding will be available to implement the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) when school begins later this summer. And the House-passed health care “repeal and replacement” bill (H.R. 1628) threatens to strip school districts of support for Medicaid services provided to hundreds of thousands of students with disabilities.

In fact, political wrangling over a range of controversial and high-profile issues in the FY 2017 appropriations left K-12 programs in the Education Department with only a nominal increase in funding. Congress provided a mere 0.04 percent increase across all ESSA appropriations accounts to implement the highly-touted, bipartisan federal education law. The cornerstone Title I program for disadvantaged students and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) program for students with disabilities, for instance, each received less than a one percent increase. The Title II program supporting teacher training and reductions in class size was cut by 12.5 percent.

At the same time it was considering the funding measure, the U.S. House of Representatives narrowly passed the American Health Care Act (AHCA) to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA aka Obamacare). Nearly a trillion dollars in the new ACHA legislation is underwritten by cuts to the federal Medicaid program and the termination of medical entitlement services for low-income children and adults. Schools receive some \$2 billion in federal reimbursements for a portion of their costs in providing medical services to Medicaid-eligible students, primarily students with disabilities. These medical services include: physical therapy, audiology, speech therapy, nursing services, medical screening, case management and medical referrals, psychological



and mental health services to list but a few. Arguably, only the ESSA Title I program for disadvantaged students, the IDEA program for students with disabilities, Title III for English language learners, and the national school lunch program provide more critical federal resources to the nation’s public school students.

The nation’s school officials now await apprehensively the upcoming FY 2018 Federal Budget request from the Trump administration at the end of May. An abbreviated blueprint of the Trump budget proposal was provided in March, although it dealt only with a quarter of the \$4 trillion

in annual federal spending subject to annual appropriations. This preview, nonetheless, was alarming. The Education Department was slated to be cut by \$9 billion or 13 percent. The \$2 billion Title II program for teacher training and class-size reduction would be eliminated, as would the \$1 billion 21<sup>st</sup> Century Afterschool Program. A proposal for a new Title I “funding portability” initiative, if similar to the proposal rejected during the ESSA reauthorization process, would undercut long-established funding principles in Title I that were based on the concentration of poverty. And a new \$250 million private school choice program was promised by the Administration as well.

The competing priorities reflected in the just-enacted bipartisan omnibus funding bill does not bode well for federal education funding long-term. Increases in defense spending, medical research, and border security, for example, squeezed out other areas of federal discretionary spending like education. Partisan battles over “policy riders” – such as agency regulations, sanctuary cities, Planned Parenthood, gun control, as well as funding for a border wall – continue to divert attention and political capital away for other critical education funding needs. After only a few months under the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress and the new Trump administration, it may be too early to predict long-term federal education funding trends, but the decades-old funding priorities spanning multiple presidential administrations – Democrat and Republican – are now being challenged like never before.

## Urban Schools Win Green Ribbon Awards

Castle Creek Elementary School in Orlando, Fla., has a certified green bus that serves after-school programs. Nebraska's Omaha Northwest High Magnet School partnered with the University of Nebraska to engineer and build a rain garden to capture and filter storm water runoff. And the School District of Philadelphia has launched a five-year sustainability plan called GreenFutures, and plans to implement a recycling program at all schools and invest \$1 million to install hydration stations at every school.

As a result of their efforts to improve the environment, Castle Creek, Northwest High Magnet and the Philadelphia school system were recently named 2017 Green Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education. The award recognized 45 schools and nine school districts across the country that have made efforts to re-



duce environmental impact and utility cost, promote better health and provide effective environmental education.

In addition to Castle Creek and Northwest High Magnet, two other schools in districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools were recognized: Morningside Elementary School in Atlanta and Chandler View Elementary School in Omaha.

And joining Philadelphia as a 2017 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School District Sustainability Awardee was Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Fla. The school system has reduced annual utility costs from \$26 million to \$20 million and allows employees to charge electric vehicles while at work.

The winning schools and school districts were chosen by their respective state education authorities and then reviewed by a team of several dozen experts.

## Charlotte Apprentice Program Pays Off

Olympic High in Charlotte, N.C., is preparing its students to enter the workforce by offering students the opportunity to participate in a four-year apprenticeship program.

Students who complete the program are provided with free higher education and a salary and skills in a competitive trade at a partnering company. They also receive a certification as a journeyman in their respective field.

In return, the sponsoring companies obtain highly skilled employees to fit their technical needs.

Maceo Shivers, a 2013 Olympic graduate, began the program when he was a junior and is currently apprenticed to engineering firm Bosch-Rexroth Corp., as a



**Charlotte graduate Maceo Shivers is an apprentice at an engineering firm.**

computer numeric-controlled machinist.

This year, Shivers will complete his apprenticeship program and will also graduate from Central Piedmont Community, becoming the first in his immediate family to graduate from college.

He plans to continue with Bosch-Rexroth Corp. and credits his career-focused studies at Olympic for leading him to his passion for building precision manufacturing equipment.

"I took classes in drafting, carpentry, wood shop and principles of engineering," said Shivers. "I was offered opportunities that fit my needs and I took advantage of it."

## 7 Urban Schools Ranked Among Nation's Most Challenging

*The Washington Post* earlier this month released its rankings of "America's Most Challenging High Schools," with seven schools in districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools listed in the top 20 of national school rankings.

Two Dallas schools ranked among the top of large urban public schools -- the Science and Engineering Magnet (No. 3) and Talented and Gifted (No. 7).

The *Post* rankings are based on a formula called the Challenge Index, which ranks schools on the number of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Cambridge tests given at a school each year and divided by the number of graduating seniors.

As it approaches the 30-year mark, "America's Most Challenging High Schools" project has grown, as longtime *Washington Post* education columnist Jay Mathews pointed out in the newspaper, "In 1998, the first year of what I call the Challenge Index, only about 1 percent of U.S. schools qualified. The number this year is up to about 12 percent."

Nearly 2,300 high schools nationwide received Challenge Index scores.

Other urban high schools in Council districts that ranked in the top 20 are:

- Stanton College Prep in Jacksonville, Fla., No. 8;
- Carnegie Vanguard in Houston, No. 11;
- Suncoast Community in Palm Beach County, No. 15;
- MAST Academy in Miami-Dade County, No. 19; and
- Young Women's Leadership Academy in San Antonio, No. 20.



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## Great City Grads



**S. James Gates, Jr.**

**Theoretical Physicist**

**National Medal of Science Recipient**

**1969 Graduate**

**Jones High School**

**Orange County Public Schools  
(Orlando)**

**Science Award** *continued from page 6*

ciety for Science & the Public and Regeneration Pharmaceuticals. Forty students were named finalists and invited to Washington, D.C., to compete for the top 10 awards.

**Males of Color** *continued from page 7*

Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Ky., the symposium enabled teachers and administrators from Memphis' Shelby County Schools to learn and share best practices to boost academic performance among males of color.

Addressing the conference were John Marshall, the chief equity officer in the Jefferson County school district, and Ray Hart, the director of research at the Council of the Great City Schools. The Council has established a Males of Color Initiative to identify solutions and spearhead systemic change in urban school districts across the country.

"In support of our focus on improving student achievement among our males of color, it was a pleasure to share a national perspective on best practices," said Hart.

**Magnet Awards** *continued from page 8*

Several big-city schools represented by the Council of the Great City Schools also received awards. Idlewild Elementary School in Charlotte, N.C., a Title I Learning Immersion and Talent Development magnet program, received the Dr. Ronald P. Simpson Distinguished Merit Award of Excellence for providing high ability learners from all racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds with the opportunity to maximize their potential.

The Elementary Magnet School Merit Award of Excellence was given to Clark County School District's Walter Bracken STEAM Academy, which features learning labs and outdoor learning focused on science, engineering, creativity and innovation that offers students hands-on experiences.

And another Clark County school, Thurman White Academy of Performing Arts, was presented with the New and Emerging Magnet School Merit Award of Excellence. The school provides students with opportunities to explore and develop their talents in orchestra, drama, band, choir and theater.