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Town hall participants, left to right, Evelyn Reyes, Joshua Lynn, Lily Kwiatkowski, Nick Paesler, Esther Ubadigbo, Bishop Crosby, Kay Galarza, Mei-Ling Ho-Shing and moderator Fez Zafar.

Students Express National Concerns at Council Town Hall Meeting

BALTIMORE—Kay Galarza is a student youth leader in the New York City school district and believes that in order to end the school-to-prison pipeline the nation must stop criminalizing youth in school systems.

“If you have students being suspended and kicked out of the classroom, how do you expect them to come back?” she asked. “And when you have metal detectors, you’re further dehumanizing students.”

Galarza shared her beliefs during a 90-minute, live-streamed national town hall held in conjunction with the Council’s 62nd Annual Fall Conference here. She was one of eight student leaders from urban school districts across the nation who participated in a frank and riveting discussion on issues facing today’s youth.

Not only did the town hall feature all students, but the event was moderated by Fez Zafar, a junior from Iowa’s Des Moines

Public Schools.

Before the town hall began, Zafar had a message for students. “Your voice is important. Whether white, black, brown, gay, straight, male, female or in between, no matter your religion, cultural ethnicity, socioeconomic status, political affiliation or where you come from, you deserve to be heard.”

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Council Releases New Reports

The Council of the Great City Schools recently released new reports focusing on academic performance indicators, procurement best practices and operational management in the nation’s big-city school districts.

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Former Second Lady Focuses on Education



Jill Biden

BALTIMORE—When Jill Biden’s husband Joe was vice president of the United States, she lived a double life. On some days, she would head to her office in the White House, a large stately room with a fireplace, filigree molding and windows overlooking Washington, D.C., the most powerful city in the world.

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Miami Schools Chief Recognized as Urban Superintendent of the Year

BALTIMORE—Alberto Carvalho has served as the superintendent of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools for 10 years. Under his leadership, the district has earned an “A” grade by the Florida Department of Education, was awarded the 2014 College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Equity and Excellence District of the Year for expanding access to AP courses and won the Broad Prize for Urban Education in 2012 for its strong leadership and community engagement.

The district received another accolade when Carvalho was recently selected as the 2018 recipient of the Green-Garner Award at the Council of the Great City Schools’ 62nd Annual Fall Conference here, recognizing him as the Urban Superintendent of the Year.

Sponsored by the Council, Aramark K-12 Education, Cenergistic and Scholastic, Inc., the award is the nation’s highest honor for urban education leadership. It is named for Richard Green, the first African American chancellor of the New York City School system, and Edward Garner, a businessman and former school board president of the Denver Public Schools.

“Receiving the Green-Garner Award from the Council of the Great City



Miami-Dade Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, center, holds his Green-Garner Award and oversized check, receiving congratulations from, left to right, Council Executive Director Michael Casserly, Secretary-Treasurer Michael O’Neill, Tai Chapman of Scholastic, Inc., William Spears of Cenergistic and Yvette Turner of Aramark K-12 Education.

Schools is proof that regardless of challenge or circumstance, anyone’s impossible can become everyone’s inevitable, through belief, skill and will,” said Carvalho, after accepting the award. “I am humbled by this recognition for it serves as an acknowledgement of the district’s impressive body

of work over the past several years...”
As a recipient of the Green-Garner Award, Carvalho receives a \$10,000 college scholarship to present to a 2019 graduate of the Miami-Dade County school system.

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Milwaukee and Denver School Districts Appoint New Leaders; Memphis and Rochester School Chiefs to Depart



Keith Posley

Milwaukee Public Schools recently appointed Keith Posley to lead Wisconsin's largest school district after he served as interim superintendent since May, and Denver Public

Schools named a veteran Colorado educator interim chief following a longtime superintendent's tenure.

Superintendent Posley took the reins of the Milwaukee school district in October after unanimous school board approval and has begun a renewed focus on district classrooms and increasing academic achievement. "Nothing is more important than the academic success of our young people," he said in a news release.

Posley has risen through the ranks after nearly 30 years in the Milwaukee school system, beginning as an elementary school teacher, then taking assistant principal and principal posts and serving in various district administrative roles, including chief school administration officer. He became interim superintendent last spring, succeeding Darienne Driver, who was also board chair of the Council of the Great City Schools at the time.

Denver Transition

In Colorado's largest school district, the Denver school board named Ron Cabrera, who began his nearly 40-year education career as a teacher in the school system, interim superintendent to take the helm during the district's leadership transition.

For nearly 10 years, Superintendent Tom Boasberg has led the Denver Public Schools, and announced last July that he was stepping down in October.

"Ron's leadership capabilities and knowledge of DPS will allow our focus to remain exactly where it should be – on

helping every student succeed," Boasberg said in a news release.

Cabrera has served as a teacher, principal, instructional leader and superintendent in Denver and school districts in the Denver metropolitan area. He retired as assistant superintendent for instructional leadership and equity in Colorado's Boulder Valley School District in June 2017.

Leaders Departing

Superintendent Dorsey Hopson of the Shelby County Schools in Memphis plans to leave Tennessee's largest school district in January to assume a position in the private sector.

He took the reins of the school system in January 2013 following the merger of the Memphis City school district with the Shelby County Schools. He had previously served as general counsel of Memphis City Schools, and subsequently was elected by the then-merged school board to head the school district.

"We have accomplished a great deal together, such as eliminating a \$100 million dollar deficit, investing more in students and developing the Summer Learning Academy to prevent summer learning loss," he said. "I would love to see this work to the finish line, but I feel confident that we have laid a strong foundation for the next leader of Shelby County Schools."

Hopson was recently one of nine finalists for recognition as Urban Superintendent of the Year by the Council of the Great City Schools.

Also stepping down will be Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams of New York's Rochester City School District, who recently announced that she plans to retire at the end of January.

She became the first woman to serve as permanent superintendent of the Rochester school system in August 2016. She has been a school administrator for some 30 years and served as senior deputy superin-

tendent of Boston Public Schools before taking the reins in Rochester.

"Though we face many long-standing challenges, we have made progress..." she said in an online district message, giving examples such as ensuring students have expanded learning opportunities and creating stronger community schools.

Aurora School Chief Tops in Colorado



Rico Munn

The Colorado Association of School Executives recently named Aurora Public Schools Superintendent Rico Munn 2019 Colorado Superintendent of the Year.

"Rico is the last to seek credit for his work and accomplishments; he prefers to keep the focus on the priorities that staff and teachers are pursuing to improve student achievement," said the association's executive director, Lisa Escárcega, in a news statement. "He is most deserving of this honor, and Colorado is so fortunate to benefit from his public education leadership."

Superintendent Munn, who is the first person of color to lead the Aurora Public Schools, has celebrated some milestones since taking the helm in 2013. Under his leadership, the district last year earned its way off the Colorado Department of Education's Accountability Clock. Over the past five years, graduation rates have climbed more than 15 percent and dropout rates have been cut in half.

As Colorado's Superintendent of the Year, Munn will represent the state in the 2019 American Association of School Administrators National Superintendent of the Year program.

Town Hall *continued from page 1*

According to the *Washington Post*, people ages 18-24 represent a third of the nation's electorate, but in the 2014 midterms only 16 percent of this age group voted. "Why are students so disengaged from voting and what can be done to increase their involvement?" Zafar asked the panelists.

"I think students don't really see how their voice and their vote can make a difference," said Nick Paesler, a senior in Oregon's Portland Public Schools. "We need to get more voting organizations and advocacy voting in our schools."

"I speak for the African American community and we have a system that does not work for that community," said Joshua Lynn, a sophomore in Baltimore City Public Schools. He is working with a local organization to organize events such as "Party at the Polls," which aim to encourage more young people to vote by making voting fun.

Evelyn Reyes, a junior in Boston Public Schools, believes that it's key for students to understand how their engagement can influence their local politics, as well as on a national level. She also advocates having young people educate other young people on what it means to vote. "Hearing it from one of your peers can be more impactful than hearing it said from someone else," said Reyes.

A question was asked about how to reach students who aren't engaged on the issues.

Bishop Crosby, a senior from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, serves on the district's student advisory council and is a student mediator and ambassador at his school. "Me having a voice for the people that are in my school is important because I can relate to them, because I know what it's like to feel hungry; I know what it's like to have situations going on at home," said Crosby. "I feel like me speaking on this panel today is a huge opportunity and a blessing because I can speak for the students who can't speak."

Esther Ubadigbo, a junior in Des Moines Public Schools, said teachers should start discussions in their classrooms



Kay Galarza speaks as student panelists, left to right, Bishop Crosby and Mei-Ling Ho-Shing look on.

and get students talking because "you're promoting positive discourse and students can feel empowered to get out in the world and make a difference."

New York's Galarza noted that voting rights for undocumented students is a neglected issue and that the term "illegal aliens" strips people of their humanity.

"I think the least we can do is give them [immigrants] the right to vote..." she said, explaining that immigrants contribute to the welfare of the country and America is comprised of immigrants. "Undocumented immigrants are important to us, we see you, this isn't just our country, this is yours, too."

Addressing Gun Violence

Zafar noted that with the rise of the March for Our Lives movement, following the shootings at a school in Parkland, Fla., there has been a major effort by students to bring gun control into the national conversation.

Mei-Ling Ho-Shing, a survivor of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shootings, noted that when students say they want gun control, all people hear is that the government wants to take away their guns.

"It's a shame how we get counter protests when we just want to live," said Ho-Shing. "We are shooting each other, we need to stop appeasing people. We need to put our foot down and vote and say we are not going to have [gun violence] anymore."

"What can we do as students to alleviate the effects of climate change?" Zafar asked the panelists.

Lily Kwiatkowski, a senior in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, is a member of a local environmental organization. In addition to stopping a company from building over a wetland, the group is involved in a landmark lawsuit suing the federal government for not taking action on climate change.

"Students feel they can't do anything about the environment," said Kwiatkowski, "but I am living proof that you can do things."

The panelists were asked what programs or policies they would implement to improve the nation's schools.

Baltimore's Lynn said that renovated schools in his district contain restorative justice classrooms that allow students to discuss their problems and issues. "By having these restorative justice classrooms, it gives students a sense of self worth," said Lynn.

Kwiatkowski advocated that schools provide more counselors and mental health services. "I am in a building that has three different schools and we have one counselor," said the Cleveland student. "On this issue, we need to be proactive rather than reactive."

Boston's Reyes believes that districts need to get rid of their zero tolerance policies. "Those aren't helping anybody, they are just pushing us out," she said.

Des Moines' Ubadigbo noted that despite coming from different areas of the country, the one thing the student panelists have in common is that they are passionate about what they believe in and she urged everyone to keep moving forward and continue to be a leader in



Moderator Fez Zafar

their communities.

"What I have noticed is that change is coming because we are empowering those who have been disenfranchised," said Ubadigbo. "The MeToo Movement is about empowering victims. What we are doing is correcting everything we see wrong in our society."

Florida's Duval County Students Raise \$30,000 to Help Homeless Peers

There are more than 3,000 homeless students attending Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Fla., and a group of students in the district are working to reduce that number.

The district recently received a \$30,000 check from the I'm A Star Foundation, a non-profit organization comprised of middle and high school students in the Duval County school system who volunteer to improve their community.

Since its conception in 2010, the I'm A Star Foundation has raised more than \$100,000 to help combat the increasing student homelessness in Duval County.

I'm A Star was started by former Duval County school board member Betty Burney to promote healthy living and to combat the homelessness among youth in Jacksonville.

The Foundation has held numerous events to raise money so that students can afford school supplies, bus passes and uniforms. Students have also organized 5K walks, phone-a-thons and celebrity basketball games to raise money for underprivileged youth.

3 Urban Principals Honored Nationally

As a child growing up in South Africa under apartheid, Nongongoma Majova-Seane was inspired by the impact her father, headmaster of a school, had on the lives of young students. She has followed in his footsteps, serving since 2010 as the principal of Stanton College Preparatory School in Jacksonville, Fla.

Majova-Seane is one of three big-city school leaders who recently received the 2018 Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership from the U.S. Department of Education.

Also receiving the award was Reginald Landeau Jr., who has served as principal for 14 years at George J. Ryan Middle School

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Duval County Public Schools Superintendent Diana Greene, second from left, holds a \$30,000 check that district students from the I'm A Star Foundation raised to help their homeless peers. The check was presented at a recent school board meeting.

Voters Decide on Education Ballot Issues

Election Day resulted in good news for several urban school districts.

In Texas, voters approved a Penny Swap that will enable the El Paso Independent School District to tap into \$7.5 million in state matching funds to reward employees and fund dual-language education programs. And voters approved a 13-cent tax increase that will be used to attract and retain high-quality teachers and fund early childhood learning programs in the Dallas Independent School District. Also approved was a \$75-million bond for new buses for the district and a \$75-million bond to refund outstanding maintenance tax notes.

Voters in Florida approved a half-penny sales tax the Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa will use to pay for improvements to schools, while a referendum to provide higher teacher compensation and improve school safety in Miami-Dade County Public Schools passed with 71 percent approval. And a referendum was approved that will provide the School District of Palm Beach County with approximately \$200 million a year over the next

four years to increase teacher salaries.

In Minnesota, two referendums that will increase operating revenue for Minneapolis Public Schools by \$30 million passed, while an operating levy that will provide an additional \$18.6 million for St. Paul Public Schools also passed.

In Indiana, an operating and capital referendum for Indianapolis Public Schools that will generate up to \$52 million to fund higher teacher salaries was approved.

In California, a \$3.5-billion bond measure for the San Diego Unified School District passed to fund school and safety upgrades. And voters approved a \$232-million school improvement bond measure for the Santa Ana Unified School District to update classrooms.

In Colorado, voters approved a \$35-million mill levy for Aurora Public Schools to expand staff and training dedicated to student mental health. But a ballot measure that would have provided Denver Public Schools with approximately \$150 million in additional funding for teacher compensation failed.



Conference continued from page 1

And on other days, Biden would go to a very different office: a small cubicle at Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), where she used push pins to hang up drawings created by her grandchildren.

“Eight years of my life was divided between being second lady and Dr. B,” said Biden in an address to more than 1,200 urban educators assembled here for the Council’s 62nd Annual Fall Conference. “I’ve been a teacher for more than 30 years and still continue teaching full time at NOVA.”

An English professor, Biden told urban educators that she has been passionate about great city schools since she worked in the inner-city schools in Wilmington, Del., about 30 years ago. She was a reading specialist and it was her job to help kids who fell behind because they had been overlooked or attended poor schools.

“I saw how tough that hill was to climb when kids were beginning high school without the basic reading skills,” said Biden. “My students worked so hard but they were up against near insurmountable odds as well as poverty and institutional racism.”

She thanked conferees for taking on the work of educating students, not because it’s easy but because students need them.

She recalled that as second lady she met many interesting people from different professions. “But at the end of the day, it’s educators like you who I like to spend my time with because we share a love for education and students that is not always easy to explain to other people,” said Biden.

Grandmother’s Footsteps

Biden chose to be an educator because of her grandmother, who taught in a one-room school and opened up new worlds for the students she taught.

“Every child who passed through the walls of her little classroom became enchanted, including me,” recalled Biden. “I wanted to do that, I wanted to help those kids see the world in a different way.”

At the University of Delaware, Biden decided to become a teacher herself, and



Education advocate Jill Biden

it was also where she met then-senator Joe Biden, who after five marriage proposals became her husband.

After graduating, Biden became a full-time teacher, raising three children and pursuing her education at the same time. “For 15 years, I worked and studied at night, one or two classes a semester, always the oldest student there,” said Biden. “But in the end, I completed two master’s degrees and a doctorate.”

Every day that she goes to work she is grateful that she chose to follow in her grandmother’s footsteps, because every day she sees how powerful education can be.

As a community college professor, she teaches veterans, refugees looking to become a part of a community and single moms trying to make a better life for their families.

“Over and over again, I’ve seen lives changed, not just with better jobs or career opportunities, but also in ways that can’t be quantified,” said Biden.

She acknowledged that educators are up against significant challenges, but must continue to fight to provide children with the best education they can give them.

“Shape the mind and hearts of the next generation, strengthen our schools and make a world that is worthy of our children,” urged Biden. “And because of your work, we’re a little bit closer to that today.”

Immigration Advocate

In 2016, Khizr Khan and his wife were invited to participate in a tribute to Gold Star families at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia. But after talking with family and friends, who were worried about negative repercussions, they decided they would not attend.

That next morning Khan checked his mailbox and found a letter from several 4th grade students who wrote, “Mr. and Mrs. Khan would you make sure that Maria is not thrown out of this country, we love her, she is a good student.”

Khan showed his wife the letter, who told him to call convention organizers and tell them they would attend. “We will speak on [the students] their behalf,” Khan recalled his wife telling him.

Since Khan’s speech at the convention, he has traveled the country talking to people and his address to big-city educators at the Council’s conference marks his 229th speaking engagement.

Khan grew up in a modest home in Pakistan without electricity and running water and his grandparents always told him, “You’re not complete unless you complete your education.” It was the pursuit of education that brought



Constitutional scholar Khizr Khan

Khan to the United States in 1980, where he eventually received a law degree from Harvard Law School and pursued a career as a lawyer.

He thanked educators for their dedication and devotion. “In a world

where education is the currency of this information age, it is no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success, but a prerequisite,” said Khan.

He noted that China is graduating eight times as many engineers as the United States and only 20 percent of students in America are prepared to take college-level classes in English, math and science.

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“This kind of America is morally unacceptable for the future citizenry, it is economically untenable for our future and it is not who we are as a nation,” said Khan. “America will only be as strong in this century as the education we provide to our students.”

He believes that educators are leaders who remain a source of hope and light for the nation, especially in times of turmoil and division the country is currently experiencing.

“In a democracy facing serious challenge, educators are our moral compass,” said Khan to conferees. “You have become not only educators, but the candle bearers for the nation.”

In 2015, when then-presidential candidate Donald Trump gave a speech promoting the idea of banning Muslims from entering the country, Khan, a Muslim American, gave an interview to a reporter for an online publication denouncing the policy and discussing how his son died in the Iraq war serving his country.

That article is the reason the Khans were asked to speak at the Democrat National Convention, where Khan held up a pocket-sized U.S. Constitution emphasizing the words “liberty” and “equal protection of law.”

Khan has received thousands of letters from people in the United States and from around the world, but one letter stands out.

The 26-page letter was written by a retired World War II army nurse, who on the last page wrote, “Mr. Khan continue to speak. Had more people spoken prior to the second World War we could’ve avoided it.”

“So even though I’m just one voice, I will continue to do my part,” said Khan.

A Racial Caste System

Michelle Alexander’s 2010 book *The New Jim Crow, Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* has sold more than a million copies and helped start a nationwide movement for sentencing reform. Yet, the ground-breaking book almost went unnoticed because it was published

when Barack Obama was elected president.

“The country was awash in post racialism and the fact that a racial caste system existed in the United States was something nobody wanted to hear,” recalled Alexander.

After almost two years of trying to get mainstream news outlets interested, she was on the verge of giving up when she received a phone call from Phillip Jackson, a grassroots activist in Chicago.

He read her book and invited Alexander to speak at a local church, where he filmed her talk and distributed it to everyone he knew. Soon, she started fielding speaking requests and NPR interviewed her. That interview helped put the book on the *New York Times* bestseller list, where it spent 180 weeks.

“Thanks to one grassroots activist,” said Alexander “...who said if you come to Chicago, I will fill a church with people who care about education and these kids and make sure your message gets out.”

When the author was doing research for the *New Jim Crow*, she learned that more African Americans are in correctional facilities than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the American Civil War began.

A civil rights lawyer, she also came to learn that tens of thousands of African Americans are trapped in permanent second-class status, stripped of the right to vote, the right to serve on juries, the right to be free of legal discrimination in employment and housing and subject to legal discrimination no less than blacks were subjected to at the height of Jim Crow.

“We as a nation managed to rebirth a system of racial and social control that would have Dr. King turning in his grave today,” declared Alexander.

She recalled that she attended schools where white students did drugs and fought, but doesn’t ever remember a cop being called to arrest anyone.

That’s why she was so grateful when President Obama had the courage to say



Author Michelle Alexander has a Q&A with Philadelphia Schools Superintendent William Hite at the conference.

he did drugs when he was young.

“He didn’t go to Harvard Law School and become president of the United States because somebody taught him a good lesson by sending him to jail,” noted Alexander. “And yet with black kids, we have this mindset that what they really need is somebody to teach them a lesson, when what kids most need is someone to care about them.”

Alexander told the story of how a student she mentored told her that the middle school she attended looks like a prison. Alexander didn’t believe the student until she visited the school, which was surrounded by barb wire and had metal detectors.

“For young people who see their parents cycling in and out of prison, the worst thing you can do is send them to a school that feels like a prison,” said Alexander.

She advised educators to “create environments where kids matter because kids at a very young age internalize that ‘I’m a criminal and their lives don’t matter.’”

She told conferees that she is counting on them because there is no institution that has a greater impact every day in the lives of kids of color that are trapped in the new Jim Crow than urban schools.

“If we are honest with ourselves, we will see that our schools have come to function like prisons rather than places of learning, and that [educators] are functioning more like police than caring, compassionate, nurturing people that children deserve,” said Alexander. “Treat those kids in ghettos the way we want our own kids to be treated,” she stressed.

Charleston District Receives Accreditation

South Carolina's Charleston County School District recently received a nod to receive its first-ever systemwide accreditation from AdvancED, an international accrediting agency of primary and secondary schools.

"The district is moving in the right direction. That's the major message. But it must maintain that effort," said AdvancED President and CEO Mark Elgart in a news release.

Elgart chaired the AdvancED team that conducted a rigorous on-site review of the district, spending three days in the state's second largest school system. He presented the agency's findings to the Charleston school board in October with a set of priorities for the district's initial five-year accreditation period.

"This AdvancED Performance Accreditation represents a significant milestone for our system," said Charleston County School District Superintendent Gerrita Postlewait. "This marks the first time in the history of CCSD that the entire school

district and all of our schools are internationally accredited. This truly is an accomplishment to cherish and to celebrate."

Houston Grad Wins \$40,000 Award on TV

A 2017 graduate of Houston's Booker T. Washington High School recently received a \$40,000 scholarship on ABC-TV's "Good Morning America" to continue his studies at Langston University in Oklahoma.

Matthew Blue is one of the first recipients of the College Board's new Opportunity Scholarship, unveiled on the TV show. While in high school, Blue had increased his college chances by participating in the Official SAT Practice at Khan Academy in a partnership with the College Board and the Council of the Great City Schools.

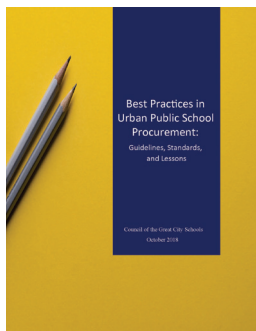
New Reports continued from page 1

Academic Key Performance Indicators gives urban school districts a performance benchmark to compare their academic growth against the progress of others. The report presents different ways that Council districts can use data to disaggregate results, show trends and combine variables in analyzing academic performance in such areas as pre-K and kindergarten enrollment, algebra I completion rates, absentee rates by grade level, and Advanced Placement participation rates.

Best Practices in Urban Public School Procurement: Guidelines, Standards, and Lessons is a report to help procurement de-

partments in urban school districts "to excel quickly and not have to learn the best way by trial and error over a long period of time." With the evolution of technology and other factors, a school district's procurement function has evolved beyond just ordering and delivering goods and services efficiently. The report gives procurement best practices that are applicable today in providing "strategic contribution and guidance for cost management, supplier performance, and source identification and development."

Managing for Results in America's Great City Schools 2018 is an update of the Council's annual report on performance measures that could be used to improve business operations and services, finances, human resources and technology in urban school districts.



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Queen Smith Award

Andrea Greene, the choral director for seven years at Jones High School in Florida's Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, was the recipient of the Queen Smith Award for Urban Education at the conference. The \$5,000 award is named in honor of the late vice president of urban programs for Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.

A graduate of Jones High School, Greene was a 2018 Grammy nominee for the Music Educator Award.



Andrea Greene gives remarks after receiving the Queen Smith Award.

Urban Impact Award

Also, the Council of the Great City Colleges of Education, an affiliate group of deans working with urban school leaders, presented the Dr. Shirley Schwartz Urban Impact Award to the University of South Florida College of Education and Florida's Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa for the Mort Teacher Leader Academy. The teacher leader development program aims to transform teacher professional learning at a school site, while transforming graduate coursework and advanced credentials at the university, with the goal of improving student achievement on state standardized tests.



Winners receive the Dr. Shirley Schwartz Urban Impact Award from Lehman College CUNY Dean Deborah Shanley, left.

Three Urban Schools Named the Best

El Sol Science and Arts Academy in Santa Ana, Calif.; Patrick Henry Preparatory Academy P.S./I.S. 171 in New York City; and The Middle College at UNCG in Greensboro, N.C., are among the best urban schools in the nation.

The three schools were among the four recipients of the 2018 America's Best Urban Schools Award gold level winners, presented by the National Center for Urban School Transformation at San Diego State University.

The award is presented annually to the nation's highest performing urban elementary schools, middle schools and high schools. Fifteen winning schools were recognized at the gold, silver and bronze levels.

To be recognized, schools must serve a large percentage of students from economically disadvantaged families and must meet or exceed a list of student performance criteria, which include high achievement scores and high graduation rates for every demographic group of students.

Santa Ana's El Sol Science and Arts Academy has a dual language program in Spanish and English and middle school students use their bilingual skills in the community for service projects.

At New York's Patrick Henry Preparatory, teachers rely heavily on data to monitor student performance. Their data assessment allows teachers to pinpoint the areas each student needs to improve.

North Carolina's Middle College in Greensboro at UNCG has 100 percent of its graduation cohorts attending college and students reach at least 80 percent mastery in Advanced Placement or college-level courses.

Three schools in Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District were recognized at the silver level. And one school in California's Long Beach Unified School District, one school in Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas and one school in Fort Worth earned a bronze award.



Women Superintendents Converge

In a recent forum to promote women superintendents in addressing the underrepresentation of women in school district leadership, left to right, Oakland district chief Kyla Johnson-Trammell, retired Boston, Memphis and Minneapolis superintendent Carol Johnson and Chicago Schools CEO Janice Jackson joined more than 20 current and former women superintendents at the Spencer Foundation in Chicago, co-sponsored by Vanderbilt University. Subsequently, the Council of the Great City Schools also held a session at its Fall Conference in Baltimore focusing on women leaders, Title IX, and the MeToo Movement.

Nashville Official Wins Council's CFO Award



Chris Henson, left, receives the Bill Wise Award from the Council's Robert Carlson.

Chief Financial Officers meeting in Nashville.

Sponsored by the Council and ABM Industries, the Bill Wise Award is presented to a past or present senior school business official in a Council district who exemplifies professionalism, commitment, integrity and leadership. Henson has served as

Chris Henson, the chief financial officer at Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, received the Bill Wise Award at the Council of the Great City Schools' recent

the chief financial officer since 2016.

Also receiving an award was Melissa Dodd, the chief technology officer for the San Francisco Unified School District. Dodd received the Distinguished Service Award, sponsored by the Council and Gaggle, for representing the ideals of leadership, innovation, commitment and professionalism.

And the 2018 Arthur Hanby Chief Procurement Officer Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Gary Appenfelder, director of purchasing at Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools; and Tim Schmandt, director of procurement & supply at New York's Rochester City School District.

Sponsored by E&I Cooperative Services and the Council, the award honors two senior procurement leaders with a scholarship of \$2,000 each.

A Reconfigured Congress

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

The lame duck session of the 115th Congress limps toward adjournment, along with final negotiations on seven remaining appropriations bills, a major farm bill, an annual tax-extender bill, and assorted other legislative cats and dogs. These year-end activities are further complicated by threats of a federal government shutdown over border-wall funding and continuing high-pitched rhetoric following the 2018 election cycle. With funding for the Education Department already enacted for FY 2019 (the 2019-20 school year), a shutdown of education programs and the usual funding delays thankfully will be averted this year.

Leadership and procedural decision-making for the upcoming 116th Congress are already underway in the House of Representatives with its new Democratic majority of 235 votes, and in the Senate with its increased Republican majority of 53 votes. As the new House majority organizes its committees, new rules may provide enhanced opportunities for bipartisan legislative efforts while maintaining the traditional primacy of the majority party's legislative prerogatives. The traditional super-majority vote for passing important legislation in the Senate – with limited exceptions – will continue to be a procedural bottleneck that forces at least a degree of bipartisan support in order to get anything done.

The once-a-year expedited authority for budget-related legislation, the budget reconciliation process with its requirement for only a simple majority vote, has been the



preferred procedural vehicle for the House and Senate when operating under single-party control. The signature legislative accomplishments of the Obama and Trump administrations, the Affordable Care Act and the Tax Cut and Jobs Act, respectively, were both passed using reconciliation procedures. In the divided 116th Congress, however, reconciliation may have more limited utility.

Nonetheless, the first year following any national election typically provides the best opportunity for new legislative action before the politics of the next election cycle become all-consuming. But how the Trump administration interacts with a House and Senate controlled by different parties is uncertain at this point. The likelihood of multiple investigations of Trump administration policies and personnel could easily poison the well before common legislative interests emerge.

The nation's major education groups entertain only modest expectations for education-related legislation in the 116th Congress. Top on the wish list would be school infrastructure legislation – a priority for House Democrats, including incoming House Education Committee Chairman Bobby Scott. President Trump also prioritized a broad national infrastructure program as a campaign promise back in 2016. From the perspective of the Council of the Great City Schools, this seems like a constructive starting point for 2019.

8th-Grade Richmond Students to Receive Scholarships to Virginia Union U.

A new partnership between Virginia's Richmond Public Schools and Virginia Union University will enable 8th-grade students in the district to attend college tuition free.

Full academic scholarships will be given to 50 8th-grade students, who currently attend Richmond schools. When the students graduate from high school, they will receive scholarships to attend Virginia

Union University, a historically black university in Richmond.

The university will not only award scholarships to Richmond students, but will also give the district access to its labs, classrooms and advisement from professors for education and professional development.

In addition, a mentorship program will be created in which university students will

mentor students in the Richmond school district.

"We are so excited to partner with Virginia Union University—a pillar of the Richmond community – to offer this life-changing opportunity for 50 of our students," said Richmond Public Schools Superintendent Jason Kamras in a press release.

Pictorial of 62nd Annual Fall Conference



Jill Biden, center, poses with the Council leadership, left to right, Chair-elect Eric Gordon, Past chair Felton Williams, Council Executive Director Michael Casserly, Chair Lawrence Feldman, Baltimore CEO Sonja Brookins Santelises, Denver school board member Allegra Haynes and Secretary-Treasurer Michael O’Neill.



Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh welcomes conferees to Baltimore as Council Executive Director Michael Casserly holds a “mayoral salute” she gave to the Council for its work on behalf of urban schoolchildren.



Fort Worth school board trustee Ashley Paz and Fort Worth Schools Superintendent Kent Scribner give a presentation together.



Clark County Schools Superintendent Jesus Jara (Las Vegas), Guilford County Schools Superintendent Sharon Contreras (Greensboro, N.C.) and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Superintendent Clayton Wilcox participate in a session on school governance.



Nashville Schools Superintendent Shawn Joseph presents information at a session.

Photos by Clarence Tabb Jr.



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Former NYC Schools Chief Remembered

Harold O. Levy, chancellor of New York City's public school system from 2000 to 2002, died on Nov. 27 at his home in Manhattan. He was 65.

He reportedly had Lou Gehrig's disease, and in recent years was executive director of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

He led the nation's largest school district during the administration of then-New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

Urban Principals continued from page 5

216 in New York City.

A special lifetime of leadership award was presented to Kathleen Hurstell Riedlinger, CEO of the Lusher Charter School, the largest public charter school in New Orleans.

The Bell Award honors 11 principals from the 2018 cohort of National Blue Ribbon Schools and is presented to exceptional school leaders committed to improving outcomes for all students.

New *Urban Educator* Editor Named



Tonya Harris

Tonya Harris has been named the new editor of the *Urban Educator*, the Council of the Great City Schools' award-winning newsletter.

She will succeed Henry Duvall, who is retiring Jan. 2 as the Council's director of communications and the news publication's editor for the past 26 years.

Council Executive Director Michael Casserly appointed Duvall to the post in 1992, after Casserly took the helm of the nation's leading urban-schools coalition that year. The *Urban Educator* was also launched then.

With Duvall departing, Harris has been elevated to director of communications after serving as the Council's communications manager since 2005.

She has been the newsletter's associate editor and the organization's webmaster. She joined the Council in 1999 as communications specialist.

Also, the Council recently appointed Joanne Coley as communications specialist to coordinate social media activities among other duties, which include being a staff writer for the *Urban Educator*.

In the past 26 years, the Council has won 35 communications awards, including seven Telly Awards for outstanding TV public service announcements.

"Henry Duvall has been the longest serving and most effective communications director of any education organization in the nation and we will miss him profoundly," says Casserly, who has been with the Council for more than 40 years. "But we know that we are in excellent hands with Tonya Harris, who has expertly managed communications operations for the Council for nearly 20 years."