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Boston Mayor Martin Walsh, kneeling, and Boston Schools Superintendent Tommy Chang test out students' paper piano. Using principles of electrical currents and conductive properties, students engineered musical instruments out of basic classroom staples.

Boston District Awarded \$3.9-Million STEM Grant

The U.S. Department of Education recently awarded Boston Public Schools a multi-million dollar grant to boost the district's STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programming.

The five-year, \$3.9-million grant will be used to expand BoSTEM, a city-wide initiative to introduce STEM learning opportunities to 10,000 students between the 6th and 8th grades through after-school programming.

Launched in 2015, the program is a collaboration with several local community-based organizations, such as the United

Boston District continued on page 4

Council to Draft Legislation in Response To Broward County School Shooting

In the aftermath of the Valentine's Day shooting last month at a Broward County, Fla., high school, the Council of the Great City Schools plans to draft federal legislation calling for gun control and increased mental health services.

The proposed new federal legislation will focus on assault weapons, gun-free school zones, school-security planning, coordination and strengthening, mental health and counseling, and federal data collection.

"We recommit ourselves to nationwide gun-control efforts, as well as efforts to strengthen the country's mental health services," said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly in a press statement. "We do not want to lose another member of our family or yours."

He added that the nation's big-city school districts "stand with our friends and colleagues in the Broward County Public Schools," which is a member of the Council's 70 urban-school districts.

In one of the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history, 17 students and faculty were shot and killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. A former student is in custody for the massacre.

Broward County Schools Superintendent Robert Runcie told reporters, "Mental health issues in this country are growing, and are a big challenge, and it's something that will need to be addressed within our school systems, as well as in the broader society to make sure these tragedies don't continue."

In January 2016, the Council supported then-President Obama's new executive actions to reduce gun violence and make the country's communities safer.

"Gun violence has touched nearly every major urban community in the United States ... as well as many non-urban communities, and has taken the lives of too many promising young people for the nation to continue to tolerate inaction," Casserly stressed.

Newspaper Recognizes Chicago Schools CEO



Janice Jackson

Chief Executive Officer Janice Jackson of the Chicago Public Schools has been named by *Education Week* as one of 12 "Leaders to Learn From" for 2018.

She and two other urban educators were

among the 12 recently recognized as exceptional leaders working to enact – and inspire – transformational change in the nation's school districts.

The other two big-city educators are Mohammed Choudhury, chief innovation officer of Texas' San Antonio Independent School District, and Susana Cordova, dep-

Newspaper Recognizes continued on page 4

School District in Memphis Partners with Humane Society

Last summer, Shelby County Schools in Memphis was looking for a way to promote its reading program. So, the district teamed up with the Humane Society of Memphis & Shelby County to offer students who excelled in reading the opportunity to participate in the society's Pet of the Week program designed to increase the number of adoptions of homeless pets.

The partnership over the summer was such a success that the school system and humane society have continued the initiative.

Each week, a student in the district is selected to film a video with a dog that is available for adoption. The video is filmed at the school and shows the student interacting with the dog and reading a short script written by the Humane Society that explains the history of the dog, its characteristics and what kind of home would be good for the dog. The videos are then posted to the district's social media pages.

The partnership is a win win for the school district and the Humane Society. The Pet of the Week program provides students with the opportunity to



Anna Gwin and Chloe Davis, 4th-grade students at Rozelle Elementary School in Memphis, share the spotlight with Lyndale, a dog at the Humane Society of Memphis & Shelby County who is awaiting adoption. Photo credit: Kyle Bullock, SCS Newsroom Editor

show off their reading skills in front of the camera and reward them for their academic efforts in school, while helping homeless pets find their forever homes.

"The videos are so effective because

people get a chance to see the dogs playing and interacting with the students and can imagine them in their own home," said Matthew Womack, community outreach

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New School District Leaders Named in NYC, Louisville and Omaha; Acting Chiefs Appointed in D.C., Newark and Oklahoma City



Richard Carranza

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has named Richard Carranza as chancellor of the city's 1.1 million-student school district.

He will succeed Carmen Farina, who is retiring from the New York City Department of Education she has led since 2014.

Carranza has headed the Houston Independent School District, Texas' largest school system with more than 215,000 students, since 2016. As superintendent, he led the effort to re-open schools two weeks after Hurricane Harvey.

Before coming to Houston, Carranza served as superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District for four years. Under his leadership, graduation rates increased for African American and Hispanic students, and students outpaced gains in the state and narrowed the achievement gap.

A veteran educator, Carranza has held positions as a bilingual classroom teacher, a campus principal, and a senior-level administrator in school districts in Las Vegas and Tucson, Arizona.

Carranza served as a former chair of the Board of Directors for the Council of the Great City Schools.

Memphis Partners *continued from page 2*

and humane education manager.

The Pet of the Week program has also been a great way for the Humane Society to introduce pets to children, who may have not had exposure to them, as well as a way for them to spread awareness of the organization, which specializes in injured or abused dogs.

And according to Womack, the program has been a success. "Fifteen dogs that have been featured in videos have been adopted."



Martin Pollio

Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville didn't have to look very far to choose its next superintendent. The district recently named Martin Pollio, who has been serving as the interim superintendent, to lead the largest school system in the state with 109,000 students. He succeeds Donna Hargens, who resigned last year after six years at the helm.

Before serving as the school system's acting superintendent, Pollio was the principal of the district's Doss High School. He began his career in the district as a social studies teacher at a high school and his entire teaching career has been with the school system.



Cheryl Logan

As acting superintendent, Pollio is credited with developing an initiative to track K-12 student learning, partnering with local businesses to develop a high school academy initiative and creating an improved climate and culture.

New Leader in Omaha

Also naming a new superintendent recently was Nebraska's Omaha Public Schools, which named Cheryl Logan to take the reins of the state's largest school district.

According to the *Omaha World-Herald*, Logan will be the 50,000-student school district's first African American superintendent.

She is the chief academic officer for the School District of Philadelphia, responsible for the academic achievement of more than 135,000 students in 218 schools. Logan will succeed Mark Evans, who recently announced plans to retire from the district after serving five years.

Logan has served as chief academic officer of the Philadelphia school system since

2015, and before that position, she was an assistant superintendent. She will take the reins of the Omaha school district on July 1.

New Interim Leaders

The District of Columbia Public Schools in the nation's capital recently appointed Amanda Alexander as its interim chancellor. Alexander is the district's chief of elementary schools and began her career with the school district as a kindergarten teacher. She replaces Antwan Wilson, who recently announced his resignation from the school system he has led since 2017.

New Jersey's Newark Public Schools recently appointed Robert Gregory as the district's interim superintendent. He succeeds Christopher Cerf, who resigned after serving as the head of the district since 2015. Gregory is the district's deputy superintendent and a graduate of the school system.

And Oklahoma City Public Schools has named Rebecca Kaye as acting superintendent to succeed Aurora Lora, who recently resigned from the school district she has led since 2016. Kaye is the district's chief of staff.

Contract Extended in El Paso

Juan Cabrera was appointed the superintendent of Texas' El Paso Independent School District in 2013, and during his tenure voters approved passage of a \$668.7-million bond, the largest in the district's history.



Juan Cabrera

The district has also expanded its dual-language and International Baccalaureate programs and strengthened its social and emotional learning initiatives.

As a result, the school board recently gave Cabrera a one-year contract extension, with his contract now extending to 2023.

Boston District continued from page 1

Way of Massachusetts Bay, to help engage Boston students who have been underrepresented in STEM learning and careers.

“In Boston Public Schools, we’re preparing our students for the careers of the future,” said Boston Mayor Martin Walsh at a press conference announcing the grant. “Some of the jobs our young people will have in five or 10 years haven’t even been invented yet, but we can make sure students have the tools and resources they need to succeed.”

The Boston school system will use the grant to help increase interest in STEM, align curriculum and instruction across school and out-of-school time, provide hands-on learning opportunities with STEM industry professionals, and bridge the STEM achievement gap across student groups.

Many students currently participating in BoSTEM come from economically disadvantaged families. In addition, 92 percent of BoSTEM students are African American or Latino. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, African Americans and Latinos make up 48 percent of the overall U.S. workforce, yet they fill only 24 percent of STEM jobs.

During the 2016-2017 school year and summer 2017, 1,710 students participated in BoSTEM. With the grant, the number of BoSTEM program sites will expand from eight to 12.

As part of the grant, BoSTEM will undergo an independent evaluation to cover the next five years to ensure the effectiveness of a research-based model that can be replicated beyond Boston schools. The evaluation will measure interest and aspiration in STEM and STEM careers, growth and improvement in social and emotional learning and academic proficiency and achievement in STEM.

According to district officials, 77 percent of all participating students reported positive gains in “STEM interest overall” and 80 percent of students reported positive growth across the social and emotional skills of critical thinking, perseverance, and interpersonal relationships.

Chicago Launches Leadership Programs

In Chicago Public Schools, African American males hold only 9.1 percent of administrator positions, while Hispanic males comprise 7.6 percent. In an effort to increase those numbers, the district is launching a new mentoring and professional development program called Great Expectations.

The initiative is designed to increase diversity in the district’s administrator ranks. District principals, assistant principals and deputy network chiefs are eligible to participate in the program, which begins in May.

Participants in the program will attend monthly classroom programming as well as participate in one-on-one mentoring sessions.

The program is also seeking to increase the number of Hispanic females, who comprise 11.6 percent of administrator positions.

According to district officials, African American females comprise the largest demographic group among district leadership

at 29.1 percent.

The nation’s third largest school system is also launching a program to pair experienced principals with newer principals.

The Master Principal Program is designed to offer intensive, hands-on mentoring to new principals that will help them develop leadership skills and spur school improvement.

Experienced, high-achieving principals, designated as Master Principals, will spend at least one day a week at school with their mentee in the program. Participants will receive stipends for taking part in the program.

A Master Principal is required to have at least five years of experience as a principal of a district school and deep knowledge of leadership development and a proven track record of success. Principals interested in participating in the program as mentees must have expressed interest in improving their leadership skills and working one-on-one with a more experienced principal. The program will launch this fall.

Newspaper Recognizes continued from page 1

ty superintendent of the Denver Public Schools.

“These 12 leaders are single-minded about finding solutions and trying new approaches all in pursuit of excellence for the students, teachers and communities they serve,” said Lesli Maxwell, assistant managing editor of *Education Week* who led the “Leaders to Learn From” project.

Chicago’s Jackson is recognized for leadership in supporting urban schools. In the newspaper’s special magazine-style report on “Leaders to Learn From,” she is described in an article headlined “CEO’s Leadership Transcends Politics.”

San Antonio’s Choudhury is recognized for leadership in expanding school choice. The article



Susana Cordova

profiling him carries a headline reading “Giving Families An ‘Equal Shot’ At Choice.”

Denver’s Cordova is recognized for leadership in equity for all students. The special article on her is headlined “A ‘Perpetual Fighter’ Looking Out for All Kids.”

The newspaper’s editors chose the 12 leaders from hundreds of nominees submitted by readers, its staff reporters and other education writers, school administrator groups, and experts in elementary and secondary education.

The 2018 “Leaders to Learn From” will be honored in April in Washington, D.C. For more information on this year’s “Leaders” report and event, access <http://leaders.edweek.org>



Mohammed Choudhury

A Parade for a Special-Education Therapist

Physical therapist Margaret Akingbade was “beyond surprised.”

A few days before her 70th birthday, she was led to a parade in the halls of the Haynes-Inman Education Center in Jamestown, N.C., where students with disabilities, faculty, staff, parents and others celebrated her birthday.

They also acknowledged her 42 years with the education center, a special-education school in North Carolina’s Guilford County Schools, based in Greensboro.

When Akingbade responded to the school principal’s recent urgent page, she suspected something when she saw her favorite color of purple everywhere – and someone placed a purple feather boa around her neck.

Students, some in wheelchairs and some with other health-related aids, paraded by Akingbade, giving her birthday cards and gifts.

“Somebody loves you, Margaret – a whole lot of somebodies!” yelled adaptive physical education teacher Vicki Simmons as reported in the *Greensboro News & Record*.

After the surprise early-birthday celebration, Akingbade thanked and expressed



School physical therapist Margaret Akingbade receives birthday wishes from a student at Guilford County Schools’ Haynes-Inman Education Center. Photo credit: Norma B. Dennis

her gratitude to Haynes-Inman family and friends. “I was beyond surprised; I remain truly flabbergasted!” she told them in an email.

“Who would have thought that the scared little girl that got off the plane in Boston, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1969, never having traveled beyond 200 miles of my little town in Nigeria, and knowing no one in this country, would be here nearly 50 years later doing what I love, and surrounded by so many beautiful people,” she wrote. “I feel truly blessed.”

Richmond District Partners with Local University To Integrate Art in the Classroom

A new professional development program is making its debut in Virginia’s Richmond Public Schools. With the aid of a \$1.3-million grant, educators from the Richmond school system will be able to enroll at the University of Richmond to participate in the new Arts Integrated Learning Certificate Project.

The project is dedicated to enhancing the presence of the arts in all subject areas and classrooms. The four-year grant will enable 100 educators the opportunity to participate in the professional development course.

The certification project is through the

University of Richmond’s Partners in the Arts program, where educators are connected to the region’s arts and cultural community. Part of the art community engagement includes connecting each participating teacher with a current local art event.

Teachers who complete the certification will also be knowledgeable in creating curriculum and lesson plans that integrate the arts for improved student engagement and achievement.

“This generous grant will enable Richmond’s teachers to align their teaching

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Council Plans Second Trip To Puerto Rico

A team of chief operating officers and facilities directors from big-city school districts in Florida plan to visit Puerto Rico to help improve management and operations of school facilities in a second trip led by the Council of the Great City Schools.

The Council organized a weeklong trip this past November to assess damaged school buildings and conduct repairs to reopen schools in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria that devastated the island in September.

Invited by Puerto Rico Secretary of Education Julia Keleher, the Council-led team was composed of chief operating officers and facilities directors from school districts in Cleveland, Houston, Albuquerque, Baltimore, Miami-Dade County, California’s Fresno and North Carolina’s Guilford County in Greensboro.

Following the initial trip, the Council submitted a 230-page report to Secretary Keleher on the assessment of school buildings in Puerto Rico.

The second visit, scheduled for early March, is aimed at helping the island build facility capacity, and organize, manage and fund school buildings, says Michael Casserly, Council executive director.

A team of urban-school leaders from Florida districts in Miami, Tampa, St. Petersburg, Orlando and Palm Beach plan to visit and meet with Education Secretary Keleher and other Puerto Rican officials.



\$25,000 Milken Educator Awards Announced

Two years ago, Ryan James, a social studies teacher at Lucille M. Brown Middle School in Richmond, Va., took over a civics class. Under his tutelage, James' students achieved a 92 percent pass rate in 2014-15, 10 points above the district average and a 7 percent gain over the previous year.

In addition to leading the school's International Baccalaureate program, he coaches the basketball and football teams, tutors students in history, mentors new teachers, sits on the school's planning and management team, and helped implement a new history curriculum.

For his efforts, James was one of 45 teachers across the nation to receive a 2017-18 Milken Educator Award.

Sponsored by the Milken Family Foundation since 1987, the award is presented with a \$25,000 cash prize to outstanding



Milken Educator Award recipient Ryan James, left, a teacher in Richmond Public Schools, takes a photo with then-Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe and a student at the award ceremony. Photo credit: Milken Family Foundation

big-city school district to receive a Milken Educator Award.

Also receiving an award were Valerie Baalerud from Eagle River High School in Anchorage, Alaska; Jennifer Fuller from Arlington Collegiate High School in Arlington, TX; Dale Adamson from Howard D. McMillan Middle School in Miami; Aja Brown from Metropolitan Soundview High School in the Bronx, NY; Andrew Franz from Hamlin Park Claude and Ouida Clapp Academy #74 in Buffalo; and Ken Kang from Aiea High School in Hawaii.

educators in early to mid-career. The award is hailed by *Teacher* magazine as the "Oscars of Teaching" and alternates yearly between elementary and secondary educators.

James was not the only teacher from a

NYC Teacher Receives Top 2018 Grammy Award

The GRAMMY Awards honor musicians across a magnitude of genres, but there are more winners than just the ones seen during the live television broadcast.

One of those winners was Melissa Salguero, a music teacher in the Bronx, N.Y., who was selected as the 2018 recipient of the Music Educator Award.

Presented by the GRAMMY Museum and the Recording Academy, the award was created to recognize a music-based educator who has made a significant and long-lasting contribution to music education. Being named for the award is no small feat, with open eligibility for teachers from public or private institutions ranging from

kindergarten through the collegiate level. Salguero was chosen from more than 2,300 other teachers and nine other finalists for her work in resurrecting and rejuvenating the music program at her school.

Salguero teaches at P.S. 48 Joseph Drake Elementary School where nearly a fourth of the student population are homeless. Her goal is to cultivate creativity, enhance interest, and plant a tenacious work ethic in her students through music. And so, she restarted the school's band and overcame financial hurdles with many students not being able to afford to rent their own instruments.

Grammy Award continued on page 12

Study Finds Boston's Extended Learning Program Successful

In 2005, Boston Public Schools increased the school day at several pilot schools and in 2015 began a three-year initiative to expand the school day at 57 elementary, middle and K-8 schools in an effort to improve academic achievement and close the achievement gap. A recently released study shows the effort has paid off, with students at those schools reporting academic gains.

The initiative, known as Extended Learning Time (ELT), added 40 minutes to the school day which, according to district officials, added up to the equivalent of 20 extra days of instructional time a year.

The study on ELT was conducted by the district, in partnership with the American Institutes for Research, to get a better understanding of its impact on student outcomes. Researchers used Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System test score data from 2005 to the 2016 school year.

The study found that black, Latino and students from economically disadvantaged families saw the largest gains in math and English Language Arts, with scores increasing between 2.9 and 7.7 points on a 100-point score, compared to their peers in schools without ELT.

In addition, English Language Learners were also found to benefit from ELT, outperforming their peers in math by an average of 7.2 points.

ELT was implemented by Boston schools to help more students gain valuable learning and enrichment opportunities, receive more personalized support, and allow teachers more time to collaborate and improve the quality of instruction.

Under the initiative, the school day for elementary schools is six hours and 40 minutes, while the school day for middle schools is six hours and 50 minutes. In addition to the longer day, teachers receive an additional 75 minutes of planning time a week.

L.A. District No. 1 on School Breakfast Scorecard

The “most important meal of the day” is being served at more than 650 school sites to about 365,000 students in the Los Angeles Unified School District. It is that kind of widespread commitment to helping students start their day in a positive and nutritious manner that has landed the Los Angeles school system at No. 1 once again.

For the second consecutive year, the school system has been recognized by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) as having the highest participation in a school breakfast program among other urban school districts in the nation.

According to FRAC, Los Angeles was the only big-city school system that managed to serve more breakfast meals than lunches to low-income students. As back-to-back winners, the district even beat its past accomplishments by reaching 9,486 more students on an average day this year compared to last year.

“Our mission is ‘nourishing children to achieve excellence,’ which we accomplish

by providing three hot, nutritious meals every day,” said food services director Joseph Vaughn.

The district has remained on top by offering free breakfast to eligible students at the majority of their campuses, as well as offering meals called after-the-bell breakfasts.

An after-the-bell breakfast is a model that allows students to receive breakfast from carts or kiosks throughout the school instead of it only being offered at the cafeteria. This is beneficial because it offers students a second chance at the “most important meal of the day” if they were not able to arrive at school early enough for the traditionally timed breakfast.

“By offering breakfast in the classroom to all kids at L.A. Unified – a district with 80 percent of our students living in poverty – we are ensuring their ability to learn and grow without the burden of hunger,” said Los Angeles board vice president Nick Melvoin.

Breakfast Scorecard *continued on page 12*



Metropolitan Community College Chancellor Kimberly Beatty and Kansas City Public Schools Superintendent Mark Bedell attend a signing ceremony to launch the new Middle College Program.

K.C. District Launches Dropout Program With Local College

Students who have dropped out of Missouri’s Kansas City Public Schools are receiving a second chance, as a result of a new program that will allow them to obtain an equivalent to a high school diploma.

The new Middle College Program is a joint development among the Kansas City school system, the Metropolitan Community College (MCC) and the Kansas City Full Employment Council.

The program makes available to students tutoring, leadership development, adult mentoring, counseling, financial literacy education, entrepreneurial skills development, post-secondary education transition support, job placement support, online course work, and more. All classes will be held at the MCC-Penn Valley campus.

The program is highly supported by Kansas City Schools Superintendent Mark Bedell who believes it continues the district’s goal to serve and take responsibility for all students in the school system. “As a school system, we refuse to give up on any student at any time,” said Bedell. “That is a non-negotiable. We must learn how to engage each student as a unique individual.”

The Middle College Program plans to help 30 students this calendar year. Eligible students may range between 16 and 24

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Former Council Leader Remembered



Judith Farmer

Judith Farmer, a former chair of the Council of the Great City Schools’ Board of Directors and a longtime member of the Minneapolis school board, died Feb. 14 after battling cancer. She was 82.

With 27 years on the school board, Ms. Farmer became the longest-serving member of the Minneapolis school district’s policymaking body. In 1999, she received the Council’s notable Richard R Green Award, which recognizes the

top urban-school leader of the year.

She was also a long-serving member of the Council’s executive committee. “Judy Farmer made profound contributions to urban public education nationally,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

“She guided the organization during a turbulent period between the late 1990s and mid-2000s, when public education, particularly in our major cities, was facing significant challenges. Her sharp intellect, incredible people skills, and midwestern common sense carried the day in every situation in which Judy was involved,” Casserly remembers.

“She was also one of the nicest and most decent human beings that one could ever know,” he adds. “I was proud to call her my friend and will miss her dearly.

5th-Grader Sees Her Script Come to Life in Opera

A beaming fifth-grader in North Carolina's Guilford County Schools felt like a celebrity.

Lily Leach had been called to the stage at the Carolina Theatre in Greensboro and introduced as the writer of the "Finally Me" performance -- adapted as an opera by professionals from the Greensboro Opera and University of North Carolina-Greensboro.

"They captured every detail," she said in a recent story that appeared in the *Greensboro News & Record* and subsequently in the *Washington Times* in the nation's capital.

Lily's classmates from the Academy at Lincoln Middle School and their 5th-grade peers from other Guilford County Schools saw the three days of shows in February at the downtown theater.

Last school year, Lily had participated in a fourth-grade "Write Your Own Opera" contest. Her winning entry, a storyline of a young girl in her sister's shadow, came to life in the recent Carolina performance.

When David Holley, director of opera and professor of music at UNC-Greensboro, called her to the Carolina Theatre stage, the middle-schooler who turned 11-years-old days after the performance said she felt like a celebrity.

"He said, 'Lily, what is your favorite opera?' 'I said, 'Finally Me,' of course!"



David Holley, director of opera at UNC-Greensboro, congratulates Guilford County student Lily Leach for writing an opera his group performed. Photo credit: VanderVeen Photographers

Holley liked the message in Lily's script. "This one is something I think many children her age are experiencing," the professor said in the local newspaper article picked up by the Associated Press. "It's being in the shadow of an older sibling or not matching up to peer expectations and finding your passion."

Program Supports Black Cleveland Girls

Inspired by a Case Western Reserve University graduate student, a program called Cleveland Jewels has been created to help teen-age black girls at a Cleveland public school become confident young women and leaders in their community.

Alexis Payne, a Cleveland-area native, returned to her hometown for graduate studies after graduating from Howard University, where the nonprofit mentoring organization Jewels, Inc. was founded.

The Cleveland Jewels is the only branch of the organization that is not affiliated with a historically black college or university (HBCU).

"Cleveland doesn't have a local HBCU, but we still need mentorship and role mod-

Academies of Louisville Launched to Connect Schools with Business

Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools recently unveiled Academies of Louisville, an initiative aimed at preparing high-school students for the local workforce and ensuring that they graduate career-, college- and future-ready.

The district celebrated 13 inaugural business partnerships to form support of the Academies of Louisville initiative. Superintendent Martin Pollio told representatives of the 13 businesses that their commitment would benefit the students, the companies and the community.

"What happens in our classrooms today impacts what happens in our world tomorrow," the superintendent stressed in a press release.

The initiative began at the start of the current 2017-18 academic year with 11 Jefferson County public high schools. A 12th high school in late February also joined the initiative, and beginning with the next school year will focus on preparing students for careers in law enforcement, fire science and heavy equipment, according to the district.

els for black girls in our community," Payne said in a Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) News Bureau story.

Case graduate students spend an hour each week mentoring middle-school girls. The group started meeting in November with workshops focusing on goal-setting, self-love and critical thinking.

The school, Mary B. Martin, is near the university, and is in a high-poverty area.

School principal Gary McPherson already sees a positive impact on the teen-age girls because of the Jewels program. "Talking with some of the girls, I know that as a result of these interactions, they're able to put together some options for their futures that maybe they wouldn't have before," he said.

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years of age.

Organizers believe this program will not only give students the equivalency of a high school diploma, but springboard them into a career path or higher learning institution.

"Some of these will be older students who wouldn't feel comfortable returning to a high school setting," said Tyjaun Lee, president of the MCC-Penn Valley campus. "... Better yet, these students will have a chance to get comfortable in a college environment and hopefully realize that not only is a high school education attainable, so is a college diploma."

First-Time L.A. School Board Member Combines Teaching, Policy Skills

When Kelly Gonez was running for a position on the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education last year, she was endorsed by the *Los Angeles Times*, which called her “a collaborative presence who might help cut through some of the endless debate with calm, informed reason.”

Being a collaborative presence is exactly what the 29-year-old Gonez has tried to do since taking office in July as a school board member in the nation’s second largest school district. “I met with everyone during the campaign whether or not they agreed with me, and I’m continuing that same tactic as a school board member,” said Gonez in an interview with the *Urban Educator*. “We face large challenges as a district and we need to bring people together in order to confront those challenges in a thoughtful way.”

For Gonez, those challenges include providing equitable opportunities across racial and socioeconomic lines and ensuring the district’s highest needs students get access to the same high quality education as all other students.

She represents 145 schools and plans to visit every school before her term ends in 2022. So far, she has visited 90.

“Sitting on the board of an urban school district, you represent a large number of students who have high needs, but I don’t think you understand the full scope of it until you really see it on the ground,” said Gonez. “Visiting so many of my schools has allowed me to get to know their needs up close.”

As the first in her family to attend college, she notes that among her priorities is ensuring every child who comes through the Los Angeles school district graduates college and career ready. In October, she introduced her first resolution, which passed unanimously, calling for the school system to track how many students enroll and graduate from college as well as earn vocational certificates, complete apprenticeships and obtain employment after high school.

Even though she is a first-time school



Los Angeles school board member Kelly Gonez, third from left, talks with students during a visit to Richard E. Byrd Middle School.

board member, Gonez is no stranger to the field of education. After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, she became a geometry teacher at a high school in the Los Angeles school system.

“I grew up in the East San Fernando Valley in a working immigrant family and had decided to become a teacher to help support greater opportunities for more kids and families like mine,” said Gonez.

Supporting High Standards

In 2014, she was appointed by President Barack Obama to serve as an education policy advisor during the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

“I knew from my experience as a teacher that the *No Child Left Behind Act* was really flawed and this was a huge opportunity, the first time in 15 years to rewrite the nation’s foundational education law,” said Gonez. She believes that the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, signed into law in 2015, was able to strike a good balance between providing more flexibility for states and districts, while also maintaining critical guardrails to ensure greater equity for students.

She is particularly proud of her work on the measure regarding English Language Learners (ELL) and that she was able to successfully push for ELLs to be included under the federal accountability system in Title I.

In 2016, Gonez moved back to Los Angeles, where she taught 7th grade science at a district charter school. But when a position to serve on the school board became available, she threw her hat into the ring.

“I really felt like being on the school board would be a chance to take my policy knowledge and knowledge as a teacher and use it to help positively impact more kids and be a voice for my community,” said Gonez.

Her 2017 race, combined with a race for a second seat on the board, was the most expensive in the nation’s history, with more than \$14 million being spent in an election that was often viewed as pitting charter school advocates against teacher unions. Yet Gonez believes that as a school board member, it’s her job to work with and learn from the charter schools that have really strong results, while holding those charter schools accountable that are not meeting students needs.

“That’s my perspective, the quality of charter schools vary like the quality of all other schools, and it’s our job to ensure high standards for all students,” said Gonez.

She serves on the Board of Directors for the Council of the Great City Schools and in her spare time likes to exercise with her husband Manuel. And she is working on preparing to be a parent; the couple is expecting their first child in July.

When her five and a half year term on the board is over, she would like to be known not only as being an advocate for the schools, educators and students she represents, but as someone who helped change the tone of educational politics.

“I really do think the divisiveness is harmful to finding real solutions,” said Gonez. “I try to be somebody who can bring people together. And after five years, I hope that I would’ve been able to make somewhat of a difference.”

Federal Funding Moves One Step Forward and Then One Step Back

By Manish Naik, Legislative Manager

The FY 2019 budget process kicked off in February with the release of the president's budget proposal, but for the second year in a row, the president's proposal for the upcoming year was released before Congress has finalized the previous year's appropriation bills.

In FY 2017, Congress initially extended their funding deadline pending the outcome of the presidential election, and then extended it again until well after the transition to the new Administration was complete.

The deadline to finalize spending levels has been pushed back several times in FY 2018, with congressional attention on health care and tax legislation requiring the approval of five short-term Continuing Resolutions (CRs).

The impact on school districts of the protracted process for FY 2018 involves the delay of local budgeting decisions for school year 2018-19 until federal grant information is available. One potentially positive outcome, however, is that the fifth CR approved by Congress also included a two-year budget agreement for FYs 2018 and 2019.

The two-year deal lifts the existing budget caps that threatened sequestration of both defense and non-defense programs, creating an opportunity for increased funding in some programs. Congressional appropriators now have until March 23rd to craft a final FY 2018 spending bill with individual program amounts using the higher budget levels from the agreement.

Additional funding is sorely needed for school districts to implement the major provisions of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). Hailed as a bipartisan breakthrough two years ago, insufficient local funding for ESSA threatens a successful implementation. Increased set-asides under ESSA and shifting poverty levels resulted in lower Title I allocations for more than half of the nation's school districts in the first two years after the law's passage.



As ESSA's new state plans are approved and the scope of work for school districts is made clear, more Title I funding is needed to implement new accountability provisions, intervene in the additional schools that are identified, and meet the increased data and reporting requirements.

ESSA's success will also depend on congressional decisions regarding Title II. Both the White House and the House of Representatives have proposed eliminating funding for educator effectiveness in FY 2018. This funding is vital for recruiting, retaining, and training a high-caliber teaching force, and many cities pay for the salaries of teachers with Title II funds.

After the FY 2018 funding levels are finalized, Congress must also address the president's troubling budget proposal for FY 2019 (school year 2019-20). The Administration has once again requested the elimination of Title II, as well as 21st Century Afterschool Programs, and the new Title IV grant, while supporting increased funding for charter schools, new grants for private school scholarships, and an open enrollment pilot for public school choice.

The president's FY 2019 budget also proposes a major infrastructure initiative that omits targeted support for school construction, and it renews last year's attempt to cut Medicaid funding through state caps and block grants.

The upcoming midterm elections mean that members of Congress will be spending more time in recess and on the campaign trail this year. The compressed timeline for making FY 2018 and FY 2019 funding decisions means there will be no break for urban districts and their advocacy to support the students, personnel and programs that are needed for successful city schools.



Nation's Top Physical Education Official

Eric Stern, K-12 health and physical education curriculum administrator for Florida's School District of Palm Beach County, has been named the 2018 Channing Mann Physical Education Administrator of the Year by SHAPE America, the Society of Health and Physical Educators.

After more than 23 years in education, Stern is being recognized for his work to support health and physical education at the national, state and local levels, and for exemplifying the highest standards in accomplishment, innovation and leadership.

Richmond District *continued from page 5*

practices to how students learn, closing the opportunity to learn gap for all RPS students through the arts," said University of Richmond Program Director Rob McAdams.

The grant will also expand the school district's Turnaround Arts partnership, a program for helping low-performing schools through arts education. Currently, three schools in the district offer the Turnaround Arts partnership.

"It isn't about the professional development," said the district's recent interim superintendent Tommy Kranz in an interview with the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. "It's about what we're going to do for students and we're going to help our students become productive citizens in our society, not just as middle schoolers and high schoolers, but for life." Teachers can begin enrollment with the university starting this summer.

Puerto Rico District Joins Council



The Puerto Rico State Department of Education recently joined the Council of the Great City Schools, increasing the urban-school coalition's membership to 70 public school systems.

The Puerto Rico State Department of Education is the island's only public school system with 365,057 students, 1,272 schools and 20,915 teachers. The department is led by Julia Beatrice Keleher.

Baltimore Student Wins \$50,000 *Top Chef Junior* Honor

Imagine a top tier three-course meal that includes a delicious cream of turnip soup, followed by a pallet-soothing duo of pork, and a gracious serving of braised short rib with chanterelles and truffle. Does this sound like food a 13-year-old kid would cook? Well, that is exactly what Owen Pereira, an 8th grader at Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School, did to win the inaugural season of *Top Chef Junior* and a \$50,000 cash prize.

The show, a spinoff of the Bravo network's popular cooking show *Top Chef*, aired on Universal Kids in October and featured 12 contestants battling each other in the culinary arts over a span of 14 episodes.

"It still hasn't completely hit me that I won," admits Pereira in an interview with the *Baltimore Sun*.

The show's challenges often tested the contestant's culinary education, skill set, and imagination.

So, how did Pereira learn to cook so well to win? "A lot of YouTube," says Pereira, who started cooking as young as 5 years old. He also notes that cookbooks and cooking classes at his school have helped to

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Baltimore student Owen Pereira won the \$50,000 first-place prize on *Top Chef Junior*.



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Grammy Award *continued from page 6*

Through her leadership, the program has persevered through many other hardships, such as property vandalism, but students remained diligent by writing letters and entering contests to gain funds for the band. Their hard work eventually landed them on the *Ellen Show*, where they received donations of \$50,000 to the school and about \$20,000 in new instruments.

Salguero was presented with the Music Educator Award during GRAMMY Week. "This is one of the most epic moments of my life," said Salguero in an interview with the Recording Academy. "... To be honored in New York City as a New York teacher, this has been one of the most amazing experiences in my life."

Breakfast Scorecard *continued from page 7*

Other top performing urban districts on the FRAC scorecard were Texas' San Antonio Independent School District; New Jersey's Newark Public Schools; Houston Independent School District; Dallas Independent School District; New York's Roch-

Baltimore Student *continued from page 11*

nurture his talent.

What is next for the *Top Chef Junior* champion is unclear, but his future remains bright. While his cash prize has been placed in a trust fund for future use, he wants to learn more about the restaurant industry by actually working in one. He is also considering opening a pop-up eatery in Chicago with a fellow junior contestant.

One thing that is certain for Pereira since winning is his change in approach to cooking. Prior to the show, he was using a contemporary style of cooking with a French twist. Now, Pereira says, "Every chef or artist just goes through creative changes in their life, and I guess my style just changed."

ester City School District; Missouri's Kansas City Public Schools; San Diego Unified School District; Virginia's Richmond Public Schools; Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Florida; Ohio's Columbus City Schools; Tulsa Public Schools; Cincinnati Public Schools; and Shelby County Schools in Memphis.

Great City Grads



Dr. Bernard Harris Jr.

Former NASA Astronaut

1974 Graduate

Sam Houston High School

San Antonio Unified

School District