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Political commentator Mark Shields discusses the history of American politics.

Journalist and Two U.S. Legislators Address Urban School Leaders

Political columnist and commentator Mark Shields admires politicians with courage and recalled that the first time he ever slept in the same corridor with African Americans was at Parris Island, South Carolina, at a Marine Corps boot camp.

“The only reason I did that was because Harry Truman, facing the toughest election of his life in 1948, a man whose grandfather owned slaves, did what no president before him did and had the courage to do, and that was desegregate the United States military,” said Shields in an address to big-city school leaders gathered in Washington, D.C., for the Council of the Great City Schools’ recent Annual Legislative/Policy Conference. “It was a courageous stand, it was the right thing to do and it made America better.”

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Large City Schools Maintain Long-Term Gains on Rigorous National Test

Student achievement in the nation’s big-city public schools largely held steady between 2015 and 2017 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), while continuing to show longer term gains in both reading and math over the last 10 to 15 years.

Since 2015, large city public schools saw little change in eighth-grade reading and math and in fourth-grade reading, but they saw a significant decline in fourth-grade math—the first such decline in any subject or grade since large cities began participating in *The Nation’s Report Card: Mathematics and Reading Trial Urban District Assessment* (TUDA).

At the same time, several participating cities defied broader national trends and produced significant gains. For instance,

San Diego saw significant gains in fourth-grade reading and math compared to 2015, and it had numerically higher scores in both subjects at the eighth-grade level. Duval County (Jacksonville), Fresno, and Miami-Dade County posted significant gains in fourth-grade math and Albuquerque and Boston saw significant gains in eighth-grade reading.

“Really, what you see in 8th grade starts in early literacy,” said San Diego Unified School District Superintendent Cindy Marten during the April 10 release of the 2017 TUDA results and reported in *Education Week*. “Third-grade reading has been a major goal for our district, because it tees us up for important achievement in 8th grade. You can’t wait until middle school to

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Council Board Passes Resolution on Gun Control

The Board of Directors of the Council of the Great City Schools last month passed a sweeping resolution “demanding effective and comprehensive action from the federal government to protect schoolchildren” from gun violence.

The resolution urges the U.S. Congress “to ban the sale, purchase, pos-

session, and use of assault weapons and large-capacity ammunition cartridges, except those needed by the military and law enforcement.” It also calls for the legislative body to support universal background checks in the purchase of firearms and to take other actions.

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L.A. Educator Inducted Into National Teacher Hall of Fame

Bradley Upshaw has been a teacher for 33 years and each day he likes to wear a different university sweatshirt to inspire the third-grade students he teaches at Vanalden Avenue Elementary School in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

That inspiration is one of the reasons he was one of five teachers from across the nation recently inducted into the National Teachers Hall of Fame.

“Mr. Upshaw has always inspired extraordinary efforts from his students,” said Yoshim Yang, the principal of Vanalden Elementary, in the Los Angeles Schools’ online newspaper the *LAUSD Daily*. “For over 30 years, he has proven that every student can learn.”

Upshaw admits he loves teaching and loves kids. “I love to teach every day, and I want to keep doing it.” he said.

A national board-certified teacher, he is well known for his high energy in the classroom and has created award-winning videos to showcase his students’ achievements.

At a surprise assembly that was recently held in Upshaw’s honor, student Kingsley James-Huff offered a Top 10 list of the reasons he and his fellow classmates love their teacher. “Every day, he says, ‘We are a

family,’” said James-Huff, listing the No. 1 reason. “And we sure are!”

The National Teachers Hall of Fame was created in 1989 to honor exceptional teachers. Nominees must have a minimum of 20 years of teaching experience.

In June, Upshaw will be officially inducted into the Hall of Fame, along with the other 2018 winners, at a ceremony at

the Hall of Fame headquarters in Emporia, Kansas.

Upshaw is the second teacher from the Los Angeles school system to be inducted into the Teachers Hall of Fame, following Garfield High School math teacher Jaime Escalante, who was the subject of the 1988 film *Stand and Deliver*.



Bradley Upshaw, right, a Los Angeles-area teacher at Vanalden Elementary School, is honored at a school assembly to announce his induction into the National Teachers Hall of Fame. He was nominated by principal Yoshim Yang. Photo credit: Los Angeles Unified School District



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Secretary-Treasurer

Eric Gordon
CEO, Cleveland

Executive Director
Michael Casserly
mcasserly@cgcs.org

Editor
Henry Duvall
hduvall@cgcs.org

Associate Editor
Tonya Harris
tharris@cgcs.org

Staff Writer
Darrell Robinson
drobinson@cgcs.org

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Urban Educator

Council of the Great City Schools
1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Suite 1100N - Washington, DC 20004
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Seattle, Palm Beach and Dayton Districts Name New Leaders; Houston Appoints Interim



Denise Juneau

Seattle Public Schools recently selected Denise Juneau to lead Washington state's largest school district with 53,000 students. She will succeed Larry Nylund, who has led the school system since 2015.

Juneau began her teaching career in North Dakota as an English teacher and then went to law school and became a lawyer. A member of the Mandan Hidatsa Tribes, she became the first American Indian woman in the country ever elected to an executive statewide office when she became Montana's superintendent of public instruction. In this position, she served as the top advocate for the state's K-12 education system, including 410 school districts, 821 public schools and 145,316 students.

During her eight-year tenure, she developed a successful statewide initiative, Graduation Matters Montana, which partnered school districts, businesses and communities together to increase graduation rates.

"I am ready to work with the school board to help them achieve their goals of educational equity in outcomes, closing the opportunity gaps, robust engagement with community and parents, and providing a quality education for all students," said Juneau in a news statement.

Also selecting a new superintendent recently was Florida's School District of Palm Beach County, which chose veteran educator Donald Fennoy II to lead the school system. Since May 2016, he has served as the district's chief operating officer.

Fennoy will head the nation's 11th largest school district with 193,000 students. He is the district's first African American superintendent. Prior to coming to Palm Beach, he was senior area superintendent for Georgia's Fulton County Schools.

When Fennoy was a high school principal in North Carolina's Charlotte-Meck-

lenburg Schools, he received the National School Change Award, presented annually to six schools in the nation that have demonstrated the greatest academic turnaround in a two-year period.



Donald Fennoy

"Everyone is so passionate about the kids in the district, and I am too," said Fennoy in a press release. "Schools are built for the purpose of educating our children and that's our job, period."

Fennoy succeeds interim superintendent Keith Oswald, the district's deputy superintendent.

And Ohio's Dayton Public Schools has named Elizabeth Lolli as the district's new superintendent. Lolli has served as the district's acting superintendent since November 2017, succeeding Rhonda Corr.



Elizabeth Lolli

Lolli joined Dayton Public Schools in 2016, where she served as associate superintendent of curriculum and instruction. Before coming to Dayton, she was the senior director of curriculum and instruction in the Middletown City School District in Ohio.

Houston Names Interim

The Houston Independent School District recently named Grenita Lathan the district's interim superintendent. Lathan is the school system's chief academic officer and will succeed Richard Carranza, who recently left the district to take the reins of the New York City Department of Education.

Lathan, who joined the Houston school district in 2015, has served as the chief academic officer since the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year.

Council Chair to Step Down as Milwaukee Superintendent



Darienne Driver

Darienne Driver joined Milwaukee Public Schools in July 2012 as the district's first chief innovation officer, where she led efforts to improve outcomes in the schools in greatest need of improvement.

Two years later, she was named superintendent, becoming the district's first permanent female superintendent.

Driver recently announced that she is leaving the 78,502-student school system she has led for four years to become the president and CEO of the United Way of Southeastern Michigan. Her last day in the district will be in July.

As superintendent of the largest school system in the state of Wisconsin, Driver developed a districtwide strategic plan known as the Eight Big Ideas that focused on improving academic achievement with an emphasis on equity. In addition, the district launched a new Office of Black and Latino Male Achievement as well as MPS C.A.R.E.S., an initiative to provide safe places for young people after school.

The district saw results, with an improvement in early literacy scores, an increase in graduate rates, and an increase in the number of students taking Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate classes.

Driver also has a national presence, serving as the chair of the Council of the Great City Schools' Board of Directors for the 2017-2018 academic year.

Council Executive Director Michael Casserly said that Driver is a sterling chair for the organization. "She overhauled our task forces, pumped new energy into our males of color work, conducted a strategic plan, and wrapped up the organization's succession planning," he stressed. "She was exactly what the group needed when it needed her most. Great job, Darienne."

National Test *continued from page 1*

make this happen,” she stressed.

In all, five city school districts saw numerically higher scores in at least three subject/grade combinations: San Diego, Atlanta, Fresno, Hillsborough County (Tampa), and Los Angeles. Four additional city school districts saw numerically higher scores in two subject/grade combinations: Chicago, the District of Columbia, Duval County, and Miami-Dade County. And six other cities showed numerically higher scores in one subject or grade: Albuquerque, Austin, Boston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Cleveland, and Detroit.

In addition, the new data show that several major city school systems scored comparably to or above the national average, including Austin, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Duval County, Guilford County (Greensboro, N.C.), Hillsborough County, Miami-Dade County, and San Diego, in fourth-grade math. In fourth-grade reading, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Duval County, Guilford County, Hillsborough County, Jefferson County (Louisville), Miami-Dade County, and San Diego posted 2017 scores that were at or above national averages. At the eighth-grade level, Austin, Boston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Duval County, Hillsborough County, and San Diego scored comparably to or above the national average in either reading or math—or both.

“We are still striving to increase the pace of progress in all of our big-city school districts, and the Trial Urban District Assessment helps us to analyze and accelerate student achievement,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, who also spoke at the TUDA release event at Washington’s National Press Club.

In 2000, the Council appealed to Congress to allow urban school districts to participate independently in the rigorous national test so that the nation’s largest school systems could track their progress against other cities, states, and the nation. Under TUDA, 27 big-city school districts participated in the 2017 urban NAEP, with Clark County (Las Vegas), Denver, Fort Worth,

Guilford County (Greensboro), and Shelby County (Memphis) participating for the first time. Milwaukee also rejoined the TUDA program after not participating in 2015.

Progress Over Time

Long-term growth in reading and math scores in large city schools significantly decreased the achievement gap with the nation over the last 15 years.

Between 2002 and 2017, large city schools have narrowed the gap with the

nation from 14.7 scale score points to 7.6 in fourth-grade reading, and from 12.5 points to 7.4 in eighth-grade reading. In math, between 2003 and 2017, large cities narrowed the gap with the nation from 10 points to 7.6 in the fourth grade, and from 14.2 points to 7.7 in the eighth grade—meaning that over the long run large city schools have improved faster than the nation at large.

Since TUDA began in 2002 (reading) and 2003 (math), cities that have made among the largest gains in reading or math include Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, the District of Columbia, Los Angeles, Miami-Dade County and San Diego.

Urban NAEP Task Force Created

A task force has been created to support the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA), which measures student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) of the 27 big-city school districts nationwide that participate in taking the national test.

The TUDA Task Force is a collaboration between the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for NAEP, and the Council of the Great City Schools. Leaders from 10 urban school districts sit on the task force to share how they use and disseminate TUDA data and offer policy feedback to the Governing Board and the National Center for Education Statistics.

“This new task force provides important opportunities for the Governing Board and the districts which volunteer to participate in TUDA to work together on The Nation’s Report Card,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

“Our goal from this effort is to make NAEP even more of a resource and enhance its relevance for those who work to improve academic achievement across the country,” said Governing Board Executive Director Bill Bushaw.

Gun Control *continued from page 1*

Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), who addressed the Council during its Legislative/Policy Conference, spoke about the resolution on the U.S. House of Representatives floor, and entered it into the *Congressional Record*.

The resolution also calls on the president of the United States “to charge all agencies of the federal government with the task of reducing the number of gun-related injuries and death in America.”

The chair of the Council board, Superintendent Darienne Driver of the Milwaukee Public Schools, personally delivered the resolution to U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos in a visit by urban-school leaders to her office.

“We have heard the cries of our students for tougher gun legislation and their pleas for stronger mental health support,” said Driver. “Today, we honor those voices and respond to their call for action.”

The resolution also opposes teachers with guns and supports students seeking gun control.

The Council’s board, represented by the superintendent and a school board member from each of its 70 big-city member school systems, stands with the Broward County Public Schools, a member district, in the wake of the 17 students and faculty recently gunned down and killed at one of its schools.

Detroit District Receives \$3 Million To Empower Parents

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation last month granted \$3 million to the Detroit Public Schools Community District aimed at empowering parents and families to help their children succeed.

The grant will fund the Detroit school system's Parent Academy, Kindergarten Transition Program and the Parent Teacher Home Visits Program, vehicles to help engage parents in their students' education.

A Kindergarten Bootcamp, part of the Parent Academy, will be held during the summer months as a transition program to prepare pre-kindergarten students and their parents for success in kindergarten.

"Our commitment to rebuild the district must include the empowerment of our parents and families to be consistent and stronger advocates for their children's education at scale," said Superintendent Nikolai Vitti in a press release. "As a district, we must own that process and be leaders citywide to develop parent leaders."

Detroit has the smallest percentage of two-parent households with children, and the Motor City has the highest percentage of family households with children under 18 led by single mothers in Southeast Michigan, according to a 2014 report by Wayne State University's Center for Urban Studies.

The data prompted the Detroit Public Schools Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to partner.

The \$3-million grant is part of a \$25-million commitment to a major initiative called Hope Starts Here to help strengthen the education of Detroit children, especially at an early age.

"This is the first of those awards and it centers on two things Detroit children need in order to achieve success in school – ongoing community engagement and strong partnerships across sectors," says Kellogg Foundation President and CEO La June Montgomery Tabron.



Snowy 'March for Our Lives'

Snow didn't stop students from the Des Moines Public Schools from participating in the "March for Our Lives" at Iowa's state capitol. They joined hundreds of thousands of students, teachers and parents on March 24 who marched on Washington, D.C., and in cities around the globe demanding gun-control reforms. The "March" was sparked by 17 students and faculty fatally gunned down at a school in Parkland, Fla.

Superintendent in Memphis to Raise Living Wage to Honor MLK's Legacy



Dorsey Hopson

tion workers.

In an effort to answer Dr. King's call for economic equality, Dorsey Hopson, the superintendent of Memphis' Shelby County Schools, recently announced plans to ensure all employees in the district earn a living wage.

The plan would raise the living wage for

The nation recently commemorated the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., who had traveled to Memphis in 1968 to support striking sanitation

all of the school system's employees to \$15 an hour, resulting in increases in wages for approximately 1,200 employees. According to district officials, nearly one in 10 employees earn less than \$15 an hour, including clerical assistants, warehouse staff, nutrition support workers and teaching assistants.

"As the second largest employer in the city, we employ a considerable number of family and community members," said Hopson at a recent board work session meeting where he announced the plan. "What better way to honor Dr. King's legacy than by ensuring all of our employees receive at least a living wage."

A report by the National Civil Rights

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He believes that politics is important, especially in a country as big and diverse as the United States. “I don’t know how otherwise we resolve our differences except through the commitment, care, the energy, and decency of people who engage in the political process,” said Shields.

A political commentator for the award-winning *PBS NewsHour* since 1988, Shields admits he is a political junkie who favors the kind of politics that rebuilt a war-torn Europe with the Marshall Plan or that has removed the terror out of old age with the passage of Social Security and Medicare.

“I like the kind of politics that have demanded equality: racially, religiously and by gender in this country,” said Shields, “and made America stronger and better as a result.”

Shields writes a weekly syndicated newspaper column and said that what Democrats and most Republicans failed to grasp during the last presidential election is that between 1998 and 2016, the gross domestic product of the country doubled while median household income went down.

“Donald Trump spoke to Americans who had been ignored and forgotten, those working class Americans who have seen factories and jobs leave and their hometowns decimated,” said Shields. “One can say he didn’t have an answer, but he paid attention to it.”

According to Shields, voters in 2012 had a happy choice for president between Barack Obama and John McCain and thought favorably of both men, with Obama having a 61 percent favorable rating, while McCain had a 58 percent favorable rating.

He contrasted that to 2016, where Hillary Clinton had a favorable rating of 43 percent and an unfavorable rating of 55 percent, while Trump had a 38 percent favorable rating and a 60 percent unfavorable rating.

“If Donald Trump had been on the ballot by himself, he would’ve lost,” said Shields. “The only reason he won is because he was running against Hillary Clinton.”

Shields, whose first major campaign ex-



Congressman Earl Blumenauer discusses the need to stop gun violence.

perience was during Robert Kennedy’s bid for the presidency, laments that many politicians have demonized government and have been weak in their defense of the difference government has made in the lives of people.

He remembers when Richard Nixon was president of the United States and the Great Lakes were dying with 80 percent of the lakes and rivers in the nation not swimmable and unfishable. As a result, Congress passed the Clean Water Act in 1972 and President Richard Nixon signed it.

“More than 40 years later, 80 percent of the rivers are now swimmable and fishable and the Great Lakes were saved,” said Shields.

The political commentator’s favorite story about America is when during the middle of the Civil War, a Republican congressman from Vermont named Justin Morrill introduced a plan that the United States federal government would give each state 30,000 acres of public land *per* congressman. In return, the states had to build public colleges and universities. The plan resulted in the Morrill Land-Grant Colleges Act, which was signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 and led to the establishment of many American higher institutions of learning across the nation.

Shields said that at the time the law was passed fewer than 5 percent of Americans had ever set foot on a college campus.

“That’s what optimism, confidence and leadership are about,” said Shields. “We’ve done great things and can continue to do great things. That’s what we have to remind ourselves of as well.”

Combating Gun Violence

Conferees also heard from Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Oregon), who has served in Congress since 1996.

The congressman is a strong environmental advocate and has served as Congress’ chief spokesperson for Livable Communities: places where people are safe, healthy and economically secure.

“You can’t have a livable community without the fundamental infrastructure of strong public schools,” Blumenauer said.

A member of the the U.S. House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee, he called the passage of a \$1.5 trillion tax package last year by Congress the largest transfer of wealth in the nation’s history, and lamented that most of the money in the tax package went to wealthy people and corporations that didn’t need extra help.

“It didn’t result in more resources on the front lines dealing with the wide variety of things you contend with,” Blumenauer told urban educators.

The congressman noted that the nation has been through horrific incidents of gun violence before, but the situation feels a little different now and points to what happened in Florida recently when the state legislature passed a bill that would impose new restrictions on firearm sales, despite objections from the National Rifle Association (NRA).

He lauded the students from Florida’s Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, who since a deadly mass shooting occurred at their school, have organized and advocated for gun control.

“They have been just amazing, demanding answers,” said the congressman. “Even the most polished and powerful politicians were set back on their heels.”

He said that the nation needs to prevent mass shootings but noted that “every day in this country we have the equivalent of several of those mass shootings.”

Blumenauer said that the nation loses many young people to suicide by guns and society must take a step back and treat gun

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violence like the public health crisis it is.

“If there was any other epidemic sweeping the country that took over 30,000 lives a year, we would be doing something about it,” declared the congressman.

Blumenauer is encouraged by what the nation did over the past 40 years to increase auto safety, by encouraging the use of seat belts and passing laws against drunk driving, and credits these types of measures with decreasing the number of people killed on the nation’s highways by two-thirds.

“It wasn’t any single magic bullet; it was education, enforcement, engineering and changing public’s attitude,” said Blumenauer. “I think there’s an opportunity for us to do the same thing with gun violence.”

He said that the nation must make sure that certain weapons have no place in society and make sure that young people who cannot legally purchase a beer, also not be able to purchase an assault weapon.

“And these things are broadly supported by the American public, and that the majority of gun owners agree with,” stressed the congressman.

He believes that a conversation on gun safety can be built by empowering young people and their parents to demand answers and create coalitions to take advantage of an unprecedented wave of civic activism.

He recalled the marches women had after the 2016 presidential election across the country, and said that the challenge is to be able to figure out ways to encourage people to follow through and for people to insist on answers from people in the political process.

“Take the power of what we do locally to change national policy,” Blumenauer urged conferees. “Be able to harness that local activism and be able to channel it into things that make a difference to you.”

Providing Role Models

Also discussing the need to prevent gun violence was Frederica Wilson, a Democratic congresswoman from Florida, who



Congresswoman Frederica Wilson stresses the importance of boys having role models.

has served in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2010.

She told big-city school leaders that gun violence is plaguing the nation’s neighborhoods and schools, and forcing children to fear the one place where they should feel certain they will be safe.

“Whoever thought that children would be scared to go to school because they would be shot in school,” said Wilson. “Parkland, Sandy Hook, Columbine, how many more mass shootings must occur to convince politicians in Congress that enough is enough.”

The congresswoman strongly believes that assault weapons should be banned for use by ordinary citizens because they are weapons of mass destruction and that only law enforcement and the military should have access to these guns.

She said that Congress needs to stop blindly following the NRA and pass an assault weapons ban as well as other legislative initiatives such as making background checks more stringent.

Wilson noted that there has been a lot of debate recently about arming teachers in schools with guns, and pointed out that legislators in Florida recently passed a bill allowing teachers to be armed.

“Have you heard anything as ridiculous as arming teachers?” she asked conferees.

A former elementary school principal, Wilson believes that even with years of weapons training confronting an active shooter is a staggering challenge, and lamented that “teachers are now the school’s police force in Florida.”

She believes it is vital that children are loved, embraced and know how important they are and it is one of the reasons she created the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project mentoring program 25 years ago.

The program, which aims to empower minority males by pairing them with school-based and community mentors, has been implemented in approximately 102 schools in Miami-Dade County Public Schools and currently serves 6,000 students. The program has been so successful that it has expanded to schools in Florida’s Duval County Public Schools, Pinellas County Schools, Broward County Public Schools and six schools in Detroit.

Wilson believes the program has worked because when boys are around successful men who look like them, they can envision themselves becoming the same.

“Children who have a vision of themselves in the future have hope, they can dream,” said Wilson. “Without vision, you don’t have hope, you don’t value your life and the lives of others. With this program, they all think they are President Barack Obama.”

The mentoring program is funded by the school system and private and corporate sponsors and boys participate in peer, group and one-on-one mentoring, and take field trips to colleges as well as prisons.

Wilson then told conferees the story of Kionne McGhee, the child of a single mother who was labeled emotionally handicapped and learning disabled and had been suspended from school 47 times by the time he reached 7th grade.

When he was 12-years-old, he was placed in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project mentoring program. He credits the program with changing his life, eventually graduating from Howard University, becoming an attorney and a Florida state legislator. Recently, he was selected to be the leader of Democrats in the Florida House of Representatives at the age of 39.

“I just had a shining moment in the history of the 5000 Role Models,” Wilson recalled McGhee describing his experience in the mentoring initiative. “I knew that they loved me, and I tried to do my best not to disappoint them. I began to change.”

Long Beach College Promise Marks 10 Years Of Success

Ten years ago, California's Long Beach Unified School District partnered with Long Beach City College (LBCC) and California State University-Long Beach (CSULB) to create an initiative to make it easier for students to attend college.

Called The Long Beach College Promise, the program has been a great success, according to a report recently released that found students now have greater access to college and are better prepared for higher education than they were 10 years ago.

Under the program, students who graduate from the Long Beach school

district are eligible for a year's free tuition at LBCC and guaranteed admission to CSULB.

In 2014, the City of Long Beach and the Mayor's Office joined the initiative and added a student internship program, which trains interns and matches them with local businesses.

The 10-year anniversary report, "Moving Long Beach Ahead," found that en-

rollment by Long Beach students at the university increased by 71 percent since The Promise was created. In addition, enrollment by LBCC students at the university increased by 55 percent, along with increased enrollment of students from Long Beach Unified who are the first in their families to attend college.

The report also found that the number of Long Beach students taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams have significantly increased, and more students are meeting the entrance requirements for



Long Beach Schools Superintendent Christopher Steinhauser discusses the success of The Long Beach College Promise at a 10th anniversary celebration.

the University of California and California State University systems.

As part of the Promise program, 4th and 5th graders participate in college tours and 6th-grade students and their families receive academic planning and counseling that continues through high school. The program has also increased access to AP classes and subsidizes AP test costs to encourage more students to take AP exams.

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Museum and the University of Memphis, released in February to analyze poverty trends in Memphis since King's death, found that African Americans in Memphis still lag behind whites in income, and almost half of the area's African American children live in poverty.

In an interview with the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, Hopson said a teaching assistant told him she was contemplating quitting her job to work at a local mall because the wages were higher.

Hopson said he realizes student achievement and poverty are intertwined

and district administrators have been looking for ways to improve economic equality, especially because many of the district's employees have children who attend the Shelby school district.

School board members applauded the plan to raise employee wages. "This is a bold step for us to move forward as a district," said board chairwoman Shante Avant.

According to the *Commercial Appeal*, Hopson will bring a formal proposal to raise wages to the school board in the next 30 days.

Urban Teachers Selected to PBS Digital All-Star Team



Leah Aiwohi

Leah Aiwohi is a teacher at Kauai High School in Hawaii, where she has helped her students with media literacy, which led to them participating in a student news network.

Larissa Wright-Elson is the English and language arts curriculum coordinator



Larissa Wright-Elson

for the Anchorage School District in Alaska, whose experience includes 18 years in the classroom teaching students writing and supporting teachers with technology integration.

integration.

For their efforts, they are among the 30 teachers chosen from across the nation to have been named to the first ever PBS Digital Innovator All-Star Program.

Each All-Star was selected for their dedication to integrating technology in the classroom, positive interactions with their communities and steadfast service to under-resourced families.

They were previously recognized as part of the PBS Digital Innovator Program, which began in 2013.

Big-city teachers in Chicago, Las Vegas, Puerto Rico and Austin, Texas, were also named All-Stars.

"We're excited to see the new and inventive ways these educators will support students' learning through this program," said Sarah Schapiro, vice president of education for PBS.

The All-Stars will spend the 2018-2019 school year furthering engagement among students, families, educators, schools and their local PBS stations. They will have access to digital resources and tools and networking opportunities.

Toledo District Believed to Be in Forefront of Human-Trafficking Education

By *Mary-Beth Matthews*
Special to *Urban Educator*

COLUMBUS, Ohio - For most people, being a high school history teacher and vice president of the teachers' union would be enough.

Mona Al-Hayani isn't most people.

The Toledo Early College history teacher and vice president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers accepted a challenge four years ago from Kevin Dalton, president of her local union, to learn about human trafficking.

The interest was there because national statistics often list Toledo in the top five cities for human trafficking, thanks in part to the city's easy access to major transportation arteries that lead to surrounding states and Canada.

Al-Hayani has become such a passionate advocate for human trafficking victims - and for teaching educators and others how to spot possible victims - that she is now known statewide for her efforts.



Mona Al-Hayani

She was instrumental in planning the 2nd Annual Human Trafficking Youth Prevention Summit that was held on March 22 at the Ohio Statehouse here, and her advocacy work has pushed Toledo Public Schools to the forefront of efforts in both Ohio and the nation to combat human trafficking.

The dedicated educator estimates that she has trained more than 10,000 educators, school practitioners and students in her quest for a network of people who will spot potential victims and intervene before they fall prey to traffickers. She has now created curriculum that explores the risk factors of human trafficking and emphasizes self-esteem, positive body image and social media safety.

"As educators, we should be on the front lines of this issue," she says. "Vulnerability is the common denominator among trafficked youth."



Toledo students at human-trafficking summit address press conference as Ohio state legislator Teresa Fedor looks on.

The March summit was attended by more than 300 high school students from across the state - including more than 80 from Toledo Public Schools - who listened in respectful silence to overwhelming statistics and gut-wrenching stories from survivors before attending a series of breakout sessions on various topics.

One of the event organizers, Ohio Rep. Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo), is a former Toledo Public Schools teacher who has made human trafficking one of her main issues.

"We are working to end modern-day slavery and that can't be done without *you*," she told the students. "You see through fresh eyes all of the things we need to address. And remember, this is a problem that affects everyone around the world."

Human-Trafficking Statistics

Al-Hayani, the director of Human Trafficking and Social Justice Issues for the Toledo teachers' union, opened the summit with a quick overview of statistics on human trafficking, numbers that left the students stunned.

She told them human trafficking is estimated to net as much as \$150 billion a year worldwide and that there are 20.9 million victims of human trafficking globally, according to the United Nations and International Labor Organization, with 6.7 million of them being trafficked for sex.

Of the total number of victims of human trafficking, 55 percent are women and girls and 26 percent of victims are children.

It is these statistics that fuel Al-Hayani's work because she knows that educators can be the first ones to spot a possible victim.

"We are trying to target the roots of what are the risk factors for young people," said Al-Hayani, who is the co-chair of the Ohio Attorney General's Prevention, Education, and Awareness youth subcommittee as well as the chair of the School Education subcommittee for the Lucas County (Ohio) Human Trafficking Coalition.

"Victims are not having their basic needs met so they reach out to someone who gives them love of affection, who gives them attention."

Controlling Trafficking

Perhaps the most powerful speakers at the summit were two survivors, who gave the students an unvarnished look at their lives on the streets, telling in graphic detail their descent into drug use and prostitution after being wooed by older men.

"Love who you are and don't let a guy or anybody define who you are," counseled Rachel Kaisk, adding at the end of the session: "Get your education. If you don't, you're going to regret it. Don't let anyone mess it up for you."

Later in the day, Al-Hayani and Grace Garand, a 16-year-old sophomore at Toledo Early College, held a breakout session about positive body image and self-esteem, two topics that Al-Hayani believe are the key to preventing young people from falling victim to traffickers.

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Funding Increases, Tax Cuts and Deficit Remorse Spotlight Federal Policy Incongruencies

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

Following enactment of major tax-reform legislation and a new budget agreement providing substantial increases in defense and domestic spending for FY 2018, many conservative members of Congress are now exhibiting “deficit remorse.” These bills dominated the legislative agenda and the political landscape over the last six months and reflected competing priorities for corporate and individual tax relief and bolstering defense spending and addressing unmet domestic needs. In addition, these legislative measures ballooned the federal deficit and the national debt beyond all expectations.



the Trump administration and the House of Representatives, the Title II teacher quality and class size reduction program was level funded at \$2 billion. And, the Title III program for English learners was frozen at \$737 million. The Perkins CTE program and the Adult Education program each received an approximately 6 percent increase. And, most other education programs received nominal increases.

The tax bill represents the signature legislative accomplishment of the Trump administration and the 115th Congress so far. Not unexpectedly, however, a new Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report projects that the tax bill will add some \$1.9 trillion to federal deficits over the next decade. And, the FY 2018 Consolidated Appropriations bill passed in March will add over \$300 billion in deficit spending over the next 10 years under current law, and \$1.7 trillion if adjusted for inflation.

However, the Title IV-A program for Student Support and Enrichment received an outsized \$700 million increase (175 percent) to \$1.1 billion based on renewed congressional interest in enhancing federal funding for school safety. Early childhood programs like Head Start and the Child Development Block Grant received 6 percent and 83 percent increases, respectively. Unfortunately, a legislative solution to continue the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was not included in the omnibus package.

Still, the FY 2018 omnibus appropriations bill provided a welcome increase in funding for virtually every federal education grant program. The Trump administration’s priority on significantly boosting defense spending by some \$80 billion also resulted in over \$60 billion in new domestic spending being included in the final funding bill. The ESEA Title I program for disadvantaged students received a modest increase of \$300 million or approximately 2 percent. The IDEA program for students with disabilities received a similar increase of \$275 million or 2 percent. After being targeted for elimination by

A significant number of Congressional representatives and senators, particularly in this election year, now find the expanded federal spending and deficits to be antithetical to their long-standing political positions. As a result, Congressional leadership will schedule several votes this spring to allow legislators to showcase their anti-deficit predilections. First, Congress will vote on a “balanced budget” constitutional amendment – a largely symbolic vote. Second, Congress is expected to vote on a “rescission package” that rolls back a variety of spending initiatives they just agreed to in the March Omnibus Appropriations bill. Although the programs targeted for rescission have yet to be unveiled, the likelihood of passage seems remote. In either case, the political maneuvering continues with control of Congress at stake in the November election.

Atlanta Superintendent Receives National Communications Award



Meria Carstarphen

With more than 18,000 followers on Twitter and a feed of nearly 8,000 tweets filled with student achievement stories, it is no surprise that Atlanta Public

Schools’ Meria Carstarphen was recently honored with the 2018 Communication Technology Award for Superintendents from the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) and Blackboard.

Carstarphen won the award for leveraging social media and other technologies in a creative manner that engages well with

stakeholders internally and externally in her district. This includes the utilization of live streams, easy “text to give” fundraisers, Google Classroom, consistent blogging, strong media relationships, and the encouragement to central office staff, principals, and teachers to promote positive district news online.

Pictorial of 2018 Legislative Conference



Political commentator Mark Shields, right center, is greeted by members of the Council of the Great City Schools leadership, left to right, Executive Director Michael Casserly, Secretary-Treasurer Eric Gordon, Chair-elect Larry Feldman, Chair Darienne Driver and past Chair Felton Williams.



Omaha school board member Lacey Merica listens intently during a conference session.



Boston Schools Superintendent Tommy Chang, left, and Dallas Schools Superintendent Michael Hinojosa attend a legislative briefing.



Council Chair Darienne Driver gives U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos the Council's resolution urging federal action against school shootings during a meeting between DeVos and Council school leaders.



Los Angeles school board member Kelly Gonez poses a question to congressional staffers.

Photos by Alex Jones



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Grace talked of her journey to self-love, which included getting off of social media and deciding “who I am and what I’m passionate about.”

“Finally, be yourself. It takes guts but people respect you for it,” she said.

As part of the March summit, Rep. Fedor and her co-chair, Rep. Tavia Galonski (D-Akron), held a student-led news conference to talk about the issue of human trafficking and to push for the passage of their HB 461, Protect Trafficked Minors Act, which will have Ohio’s Revised Code mirror federal penalties for trafficking a 16- or 17-year-old and will prevent courts from re-victimizing survivors. It is just the latest in a series of bills that the Ohio Legislature has passed on the issue of human trafficking.

One of the student speakers at the news conference was Keyara Edwards, an 18-year-old senior at Toledo Early College, whose message was short but eloquent: “With all of the hate and violence in the world, we have to show love and respect to each other.

“That way, we get a better sense of who people are ... and can reach out and help them.”



Urban Educators Discuss Dual Language On Panel at SXSW Conference in Austin

Three big-city school superintendents, left to right, Juan Cabrera, superintendent of Texas’ El Paso Independent School District; Barbara Jenkins, superintendent of Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Fla.; and Paul Cruz, superintendent of Texas’ Austin Independent School District; discuss the success of dual-language programs in their respective districts during a panel discussion at the annual SXSW EDU conference recently held in Austin. Moderated by Liz Willen, right, editor of *The Hechinger Report*, the superintendents shared how non-English students, as well as students who only speak English, are benefiting from participating in dual-language programs.