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Former Second Lady, Gold Star Parent and Legal Scholar To Address Urban School Leaders at Council Fall Conference



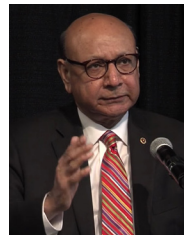
Jill Biden

The nation's former second lady Jill Biden, noted Gold Star father Khizr Khan and legal scholar, civil rights advocate and author Michelle Alexander will address the Council of the Great City Schools' 62nd Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 24-28, in Baltimore.

As the wife of former vice president Joe Biden, Dr. Biden taught English full time at a community college in Northern Virginia while serving as second lady and advocated for military families and women. Calling community colleges "one of America's best-kept secrets," the professor hosted the first-ever White House Summit on Community Colleges with former president Barack Obama.

She will deliver a keynote address before the nation's urban school leaders under the conference banner "Building A Gen-

eration: Blueprints for Success in Urban Education" at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront hotel.



Khizr Khan

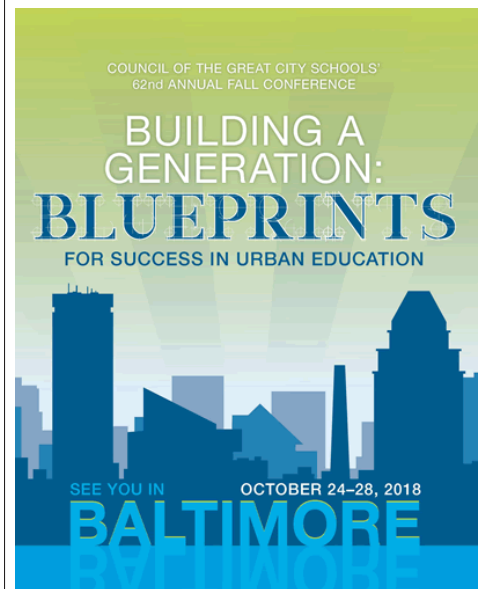
Another keynote speaker will be constitutional rights advocate, Muslim American patriot and military Gold Star parent Khizr Khan, whose son, a U.S. Army captain, lost his life in an explosion in Iraq. Born in Pakistan, Khan attended Harvard Law School, practiced law and became known for his speech at the 2016 Democratic National Convention.



Michelle Alexander

Also addressing the conference, hosted by the Baltimore City Public Schools, will be civil rights lawyer, advocate and legal scholar Michelle Alexander,

who authored the award-winning 2010 book *The New Jim Crow*. The book has received rave reviews and has been featured in various national news outlets.



From France to Columbus City Schools: Short-Story Kiosks

A vending machine for literature?

The latest American import from France has arrived in Columbus, Ohio, in the form of an ATM-like machine that dispenses short stories.

Columbus City Schools recently partnered with the City of Columbus and

Columbus Public Health to deploy the city's first Automated Short Story Kiosk, a cylinder-shaped device that dispenses one-, three- or five-minute short stories at the push of a button that's popular in France. "Press. Read. Enjoy!"

Kiosks continued on page 4

'Best High Schools' In the Nation Ranked

U.S. News & World Report recently released its 2018 edition of "Best High Schools," ranking five schools in districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools in the top 20 of more than 20,500 public schools evaluated nationwide.

Best Schools continued on page 4

Chicago School Wins Urban Debate Championship

Ariana Collazo and Ousaf Moqet are seniors at Lane Tech College Prep High School in Chicago and are members of the Chicago Debate League. They have found success as a debating team, ranking in the top 10 percent of all debaters in the league, and making it to multiple quarter, semi final, and final rounds at various tournaments in Chicago, including winning this year's Chicago Debate League City Championships.

And they recently accomplished one of their biggest feats yet, by winning the 2018 Urban Debate National Championship. Held last month on the campus of Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., the tournament was hosted by the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues and featured 44 teams from 21 different cities across the country.

Urban debate teams debate in a style called policy debate, in which teams of two students debate one current event topic. This year's topic was whether the United States federal government should substantially increase its funding and/or regulation of elementary and/or secondary education in the United States.

Collazo and Moqet are dedicated debaters, having attended a seven-week sum-



Chicago students Ariana Collazo and Ousaf Moqet hold the first-place trophies they received for winning the 2018 Urban Debate National Championship.

mer debate program at Wake Forest University last summer. Their coach, Andrew Fine, says that they are two of the most outstanding students he has ever come across in his seven years of teaching and

coaching debate.

“Not only are Ousaf and Ariana exceptional critical and analytical thinkers,

Debate continued on page 3



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School Districts in L.A. and Las Vegas Name New Superintendents; Milwaukee Appoints Interim



Austin Beutner

The nation's second largest school district has selected a philanthropist and former investment banker to lead its school system. Austin Beutner was recently named to helm the Los Angeles Unified School District, succeeding interim superintendent Vivian Ekchian.

At a news conference held after he was named superintendent, Beutner acknowledged that his selection to lead the 602,000-student school district was unconventional. But he said his leadership experience has prepared him to deal with the financial challenges facing the district and he pledged to improve academic achievement for all students.

"My commitment to the students of L.A. Unified is to make sure everything we do- and I do -is with your best interest in

Debate continued from page 2

serious scholars, and individuals possessing excellent written and verbal communication skills, but they are also two of the most kind-hearted, hard-working and courageous students I have been fortunate enough to teach," said Fine. "If any of my students (past or present) are on a trajectory to change the world for the better, it is Ousaf and Ariana."

The National Association for Urban Debate Leagues works with its 22 partner leagues to provide debate programming to urban middle and high school students.

The Chicago Debate League launched in partnership with Chicago Public Schools in 1997. Starting with just five schools, the league has grown into the largest of the 22 urban debate leagues around the country, serving approximately 1,300 students each year from 60-70 schools.

mind," said Beutner. "My challenge to each and every one of the students in L.A. Unified is to become active and engaged in this effort because our community of students are our future."

Beutner is no stranger to the Los Angeles school system; in 2012 he founded Vision to Learn, a nonprofit organization that provides students in the school district with vision screening, eye exams and glasses.

And in 2017, he was asked by Michelle King, the district's previous superintendent, to assemble the LA Unified Advisory Task Force. The group brought together leaders from business, labor, education and the community to offer recommendations to improve the school system, including focusing on reducing chronic absenteeism.

In addition to a career as a successful investment banker, Beutner was Los Angeles' first deputy mayor and also served as the publisher and CEO of the *Los Angeles Times*.

In a press release, school board vice president Nick Melvoin said that the district needs new, creative solutions to tackle old, seemingly intractable problems and Beutner has proven his willingness to lead in difficult circumstances.

"Austin Beutner is the right person at this time to help us forge a new path for success in a climate of financial uncertainty, pervasive achievement gaps and severe underfunding of our public schools," said Melvoin.

New Chief in Las Vegas

Clark County School District in Las Vegas recently named Jesus Jara as its new superintendent. He will succeed Pat Skorkowsky, who has led the nation's fifth largest school district since 2013.

Jara is currently the deputy superintendent of Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Fla. Before serving in this position in 2012, he was the superintendent of Florida's Monroe County Public Schools



Jesus Jara

in Key West. "...Ensuring that every single student gets that same opportunity is why I first became a teacher and what drives my work every day," said Jara in a press release. "I could not be more eager to get to work alongside CCSD's incredible teachers, principals, and staff to build on and accelerate the district's progress."

Milwaukee Names Interim

Milwaukee Public Schools recently selected Keith Posley, a 27-year veteran of the school district, as its interim leader. Posley, the district's chief school administration officer providing support to the district's 160 schools, will succeed Darienne Driver, who is leaving the district in July.

NYC Launching 48 Bilingual Programs

New York City Chancellor Richard Carranza recently announced that the nation's largest school district plans to open 48 new Dual Language and Transition Bilingual Education programs this coming fall.

The first-ever Albanian Dual Language program is slated to open in the Bronx along with new programs to be launched in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish and Urdu across 42 schools in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island as well as the Bronx.

"Every family in our city, including immigrant families and undocumented students, deserves a high-quality education, and language should never be a barrier to

NYC Bilingual continued on page 4

Kiosks *continued from page 1*

Believed to be the first school district in the world to install the device, the Columbus public school system has five short-story kiosks that dispense free short stories for both young and older readers.

Only five other U.S. cities are known to have or plan similar kiosks in such places as libraries, a university and even an airport.

“These Automated Short Story Kiosks are just the latest example of the innovative efforts developed by our district to make reading and literacy a community-wide priority,” said Interim Superintendent/CEO John Stanford of the Columbus City Schools. “The goal is to provide our young people with access to reading opportunities in as many places as possible, to promote literacy and good reading habits in young people and in adults....”

Printed on rolls of paper like a receipt, the free short stories are for young read-

ers and everybody else. “We want to build excitement around reading,” said Scott Varner, the school district’s executive director of communications, in the *New York Times*. “Especially among families.”

Varner and his communications team first learned about the kiosks from a story on *CBS Sunday Morning*. They reached out to the company that manufactures the dispensers, Short Edition, a publisher based in Grenoble, France. The Automatic Short Story Kiosks were given to the school district at no charge by a local development company.

Through a partnership with Columbus Public Health, the school district will place a kiosk near the children’s area of the immunization clinic. Kiosks will also be placed in the district’s newly renovated Central Enrollment Center and in locations where young people might not have access to reading material, such as waiting rooms, government offices, or shopping areas, according to the district.



Interim Superintendent John Stanford of the Columbus City Schools and City Health Commissioner Mysheika Roberts unveil the Automated Short Story Kiosk.

NYC Bilingual *continued from page 3*

equal access,” said Chancellor Carranza in a press release.

“When I started kindergarten, I only spoke Spanish and my parents trusted pub-

lic schools to teach me English,” he added. “I want to make sure every English Language Learner in New York City has the same experience I did growing up.”

Five Urban Schools Win ‘Green’ Awards

Jack London Community Day School is a small high school in the Los Angeles Unified School District serving high-risk students. In 2013, the school converted an 18,000-square-foot asphalt parking lot into a garden where vegetables, herbs, berries and fruits are grown.

Students built and maintain the garden, which serves as the outdoor classroom for the school’s horticulture program. The experience of working together in the garden plays an important role in keeping students at the school out of trouble. As one student wrote in an essay, “The garden brings everyone together. It helps us learn gardening skills and teaches us how to grow healthy food. Working together in the garden helps us to learn how to solve conflicts.”

Green Award *continued on page 5***Best Schools** *continued from page 1*

The Dallas Independent School District saw two of its schools ranked in the best 20 nationally: The School for the Talented and Gifted (No. 11) and the Science and Engineering Magnet School (No. 13).

Two more big-city schools in Texas – Houston’s Carnegie Vanguard High School and Austin’s Liberal Arts and Science Academy – ranked No. 15 and No. 16, respectively.

The other top school from a Council district hailed from North Carolina’s Guilford County Schools in Greensboro -- The Early College at Guilford, ranked No. 12 nationally.

“Top-ranked schools succeed in three main areas: exceeding expectations on state proficiency tests, offering challenging coursework and graduating their students,” said Anita Narayan, managing editor of education at *U.S. News*.

The newsmagazine awarded gold, silver or bronze medals to some 5,948 schools in the nation, with a number of urban schools earning recognition.

L.A. School Wins Eighth U.S. Academic Decathlon

El Camino Real Charter High School in the Los Angeles Unified School District has won the United States Academic Decathlon® seven times. The tradition continues for an 8th year; with nine students from the school recently being crowned champions at the 2018 competition, held in Frisco, Texas.

The team from El Camino Real bested more than 600 students from the United States, Canada, China and the United Kingdom competing in the 10-event scholastic competition for high school students.

Students competing in this year's 37th competition were tested in 10 categories:

Green Award continued from page 4

Gove Elementary School in Florida's School District of Palm Beach County is a Title I school where more than 90 percent of students are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch. The school features landscaping consisting of native species, which require less water, encourages carpooling and biking to school, and reduces pesticides by incorporating ladybugs and marigolds in the landscaping. In just two years, Gove has reduced energy use by 74 percent and water needs by 57 percent.

These efforts are why these two schools are among the schools recently selected by the U.S. Department of Education as 2018 Green Ribbon Schools. The award recognized 46 schools, school districts and post-secondary institutions across the nation for their innovative efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, promote health and wellness, and ensure effective sustainability education.

In addition to Jack London and Gove Elementary, Charles R. Drew Charter School in Atlanta, Southside Occupational Academy in Chicago, and Hawaii's Honowai Elementary School were the other big-city schools recognized.

The honorees were named from a pool of candidates nominated by 25 states and the Department of Defense.

art, economics, music, language and literature, mathematics, science, social science, speech, interview, and essay. At the end of the competition, students competed in a Super Quiz, a Jeopardy style question-and-answer session that tests students on all subjects.

In addition, students also were required to write an essay and were judged in speech and interview. The questions for each annual competition focuses on a different theme, with this year's theme being Africa.

The El Camino Real team scored 54,531.2 out of a possible 60,000 points and also won the Super Quiz.

A team from El Camino Real has won the academic decathlon in 1998, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2010 and 2014.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, schools from the Los Angeles school district have won the national competition 19 times since 1987.

The United States Academic Decathlon® is considered the most prestigious high school academic team competition in the nation and is designed to include students from all academic ability. Each high school enters a team of nine students: three

Philadelphia District Expands Training For Students Pursuing Trade Careers

The School District of Philadelphia has a shortage of plumbers and electricians in its ranks, so last year it launched the Maintenance Apprenticeship Program.

The program provides graduates of the district's career and technical education program the opportunity to work as apprentice plumbers and electricians, and has been so successful that the program will expand to 18 new apprentices next year from six, and include apprenticeships in H.V.A.C. and steamfitting.

Apprentices in the program go out to schools everyday with the district's trades technicians in electrical and plumbing and must complete 8,000 hours of on-the-



Students from the decathlon team at El Camino Real Charter High School hold their first-place trophy after winning the 2018 United States Academic Decathlon competition.

“A” students, three “B” students, and three “C” students. Each team member competes in all 10 events against other students in their individual divisions, and team scores are calculated using the top two individual scores from each division.

Los Angeles Schools Interim Superintendent Vivian Ekchian congratulated the team. “Your academic stamina and competitive spirit to win is remarkable,” said Ekchian in a press release. “The entire L.A. Unified family is so proud of you!”

job training. They also receive 576 hours of classroom instruction to develop their skills and technical abilities.

Apprentices are paid during their tenure and will not be subjected to repaying the training. Upon completion of the four-year program, apprentices become certified in their trade and are guaranteed full-time employment with the school district. Employment includes a salary of about \$50,000 annually with a pension plan and health benefits available, according to the *Philadelphia News*.

“I had been doing plumbing for two years, and finally received this opportuni-

Philadelphia District continued on page 11

Cleveland District Creates Student Lead-Testing Program

Cleveland Metropolitan School District has teamed with Case Western Reserve University, the Cleveland Clinic and several local community groups to launch a program to detect and treat lead poisoning in young students.

The Partners in Health lead screening initiative recently began as a pilot program at four district schools for children ages 3-5, according to a story that appeared on the Cleveland Metropolitan School District News Bureau website.

Nurses and nursing students visited classrooms during the school day and tested blood lead levels in children by conducting finger-prick tests. Participation in the program required parental consent and, according to district officials, the program is welcomed by parents and guardians, based on the high return rate of consent forms that each school sent home.

The lead-testing program was launched in response to research showing that children in Cleveland are at an elevated risk for lead poisoning. During a five-year period ending in 2014, more than 17 percent of Cleveland children under the age of 6 had more than 5 micrograms per deciliter of lead in their blood—the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s “blood level of concern.”

A study conducted in a neighborhood of one of the pilot schools found 23.3 percent of its children under the age of 6 poisoned by lead.

Negative Effects

Research has found that children with even low levels of lead can suffer from aca-

ademic, mental and behavior problems.

Sakaiya Rahmon, a 2017 Cleveland school graduate, was diagnosed with lead poisoning as a child. She was exposed to lead from the house she and her family lived in.

As a result, she was diagnosed with ADHD and struggled in school academically and experienced anger problems.



A kindergartner at Michael R. White School in Cleveland is tested for lead poisoning as part of the district’s Partners in Health screening initiative.

An arts program she participated in helped her cope, and after graduating, Rahmon now attends community college. However, her symptoms have worsened with age

and she finds herself easily overwhelmed and struggles with anxiety.

District officials hope the Partners in Health lead screening program, which also includes Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson’s office, will prevent another student from having to suffer the negative consequences of lead poisoning as Rahmon has. In addition to testing children early for lead poisoning, the program also aims to connect families of children with elevated lead levels with medical treatment and help those families with home testing to pinpoint the source of lead exposure, according to a story in *StateImpact Ohio*.

While the program is currently operating in only four Cleveland schools, district officials plan to expand it across the 38,949-student school system in the next two years.

Deborah Aloschen, the district’s director of nursing and health services, is leading the program and has been fighting for 15 years to get an initiative like this in the city’s schools.

“You don’t know how happy I am,” said Aloschen. “...There’s no reason our kids should be at a disadvantage because of lead, and we’re putting a stop to this.”

Tulsa Teacher Corps Launched

The search for new teachers has expanded in Oklahoma’s Tulsa Public Schools with the debut of the Tulsa Teacher Corps.

The program was developed by the school district to recruit, train, and retain college graduates in Tulsa’s classrooms.

The initiative is funded partially by the U.S. Department of Education’s Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant program. The Tulsa Teacher Corps is a direct action to counter the teacher shortage statewide in Oklahoma.

Applicants to the program must hold at least a bachelor’s degree and the district has currently received more than 200 applications for only 75 spots.

“We’re excited not only in the number of applicants we’ve received, but also with the quality of the applicants,” said Devin Fletcher, the district’s chief talent and learning officer.

The Tulsa Teacher Corps is a tuition-free program. And in an effort to make it accessible to more people, corps members will receive a \$1,500 stipend to defray summer living expenses or relocation expenses.

Through the Corps program, candidates engage in a rigorous five-week hands-on summer training regimen. Upon completion of the summer program, candidates are hired as full-time teachers in the district.

These Corps members turned district educators will still be connected to personalized training and experts throughout their first year as new teachers. Among the high quantity of applicants and high quality of training to be completed, there is a level of diversity being met as well.

In its opening class, one-third of the applicants are males, one-fourth are graduates of the district, and 40 percent identify themselves as persons of color.

“We know how critically important it is for students to be able to see themselves in their teachers, and we are thrilled that our first Tulsa Teacher Corps cohort will better reflect the diversity of the children and families we serve,” said Fletcher.

Buffalo's My Brother's Keeper Initiative Helps Male Students of Color Succeed

In 2014, President Obama launched My Brother's Keeper (MBK) to address persistent opportunity gaps facing boys and young men of color and challenged communities to commit to implement strategies to ensure all young people can succeed.

New York's Buffalo Public Schools has taken up that challenge, launching its MBK program in 2016. The aim of the program is to increase access to services, supports, enriched programs and diverse staff; engage parents, the community and students in solutions that guarantee long-term success for the district's males of color; expand cultural, academic and social enrichment opportunities for males of color; and motivate them to succeed to their full potential in and out of school.

As part of the MBK program, this past summer the district launched a two-week MBK Male Academy for 7th and 8th grade African American and Latino boys. The students continued participation in the program throughout the school year after school and on Saturdays, learning African American and Latino history and culture and taking field trips to historic places such as the Harriet Tubman House in Auburn, N.Y.

MBK Grants

The district is using money from MBK grants it received from the state of New

York to fund several key initiatives.

The MBK Family and Community Engagement Grant is a three-year \$382,500 grant to increase parent and community collaboration. The grant is helping the district improve services in its District Parent Centers and funds workshops and courses for parents specifically focused on rearing males of color.

A three-year \$325,000 grant was given to Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, N.Y., to partner with Buffalo Public Schools to encourage students at the college to join the Buffalo teaching ranks. The grant offers tuition assistance and hands-on professional development, including internships with the district.

The district also received a \$2.4-million MBK Pre-Natal to College and Career Readiness Challenge Grant to implement a cradle-to-career strategy. The grant will be used to fund mentoring, a middle school male academy, career internships and access to college courses.

"We want our young men in the MBK Academy to have what many of us had growing up; a big dream, a strong support system, and a clear path to success," said Buffalo Schools Superintendent Kriner Cash. "These young men are learning what it takes to get there, and they deserve our guidance and assistance."



Buffalo Schools Superintendent Kriner Cash (center) joins MBK Academy Scholars and Mentors.

Las Vegas School Named Top Magnet School in the Nation

East Career and Technical Academy in Las Vegas is a magnet school that opened its doors in 2008 and provides students the opportunity to enroll in one of eight themes such as construction technology, culinary arts or health information management. A Title I school, it is also the only five-star high school in the state of Nevada where more than 60 percent of students receive free- and reduced-price lunch.

The school also received another recognition when it was recently named the nation's top magnet school by Magnet Schools of America (MSA), the national association for magnet and theme-based schools. At the organization's annual conference, East Career and Technical was presented with its highest award, the Dr. Ronald P. Simpson Distinguished Merit Award.

This award is given to the top magnet school in the nation that demonstrates a commitment to high academic standards, curriculum innovation, successful desegregation and diversity efforts and strong parent and community involvement.

Darlin Delgado, the principal of East Career and Technical Academy, was surprised and grateful her school received the award. "This is the top award given to one magnet school in the nation..." said Delgado. "Our students, staff, parents and east Las Vegas community deserve this special recognition, and I couldn't be more proud."

Other big-city schools also received awards from the MSA. Van Nuys High Schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District received the Dr. Donald Waldrip Award, the organization's second highest honor. Liberty Elementary STEM Museum Magnet from Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., received the President's Magnet School of Merit Award of Excellence.

Top Magnet continued on page 11

Urban Students Named Presidential Scholars



Rachel Fan

received a full scholarship to attend Vanderbilt University.

Rachel Fan, a senior at White Station High School in Memphis' Shelby County Schools, is a National Merit Scholar, scored a perfect 36 on the ACT, has taken 17 Advanced Placement courses and re-

ceived a full scholarship to attend Vanderbilt University.



James Balo

Photo credit: Gesi Schilling

James Balo is a senior at Design and Architecture Senior High in Miami, who used art to help him overcome a rough childhood. He has participated in the prestigious National YoungArts Week and his talent as a vi-

visual storyteller and filmmaker earned him a four-year scholarship to the Maryland Institute College of Art.

These are two of the 15 urban students who were recently named to the 54th class of U.S. Presidential Scholars. They were among 161 high school seniors across the nation recognized for their accomplishments in academics, the arts and career and technical education fields.

The White House Commission on Presidential Scholars selects students annually based on their academic success, artistic excellence, essays, school evaluations and transcripts, as well as evidence of community service, leadership and demonstrated commitment to high ideals.

U.S. Presidential Scholars named from big-city urban school districts included students from Anchorage, the District of Columbia, Miami-Dade County, Hawaii, Chicago, Las Vegas, Providence, R.I., Houston and Dallas.

Miami-Dade County and Clark County School District in Las Vegas had three scholars, while Chicago Public Schools had two.

More than 5,200 candidates out of the 3.6 million students expected to graduate from high school this year qualified for the 2018 awards.

Created in 1964, the U.S. Presidential Scholars are comprised of one young man and one young woman from each state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, as well as 15 chosen at-large, 20 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts and 20 U.S. Presidential Scholars in Career and Technical Education.

This year's ceremony will be held June 24 in Washington, D.C., and each honoree will receive a Presidential Scholar Medalion.

CNN Host to Speak At National Summit On School Culture



W. Kamau Bell

W. Kamau Bell, host of the CNN docu-series "United States of America," will be one of the keynote speakers at a national summit to help educators

improve school climate and culture to be held Aug. 13-14 in Des Moines, Iowa.

This is the third year Des Moines Public Schools is conducting the Summit on School Climate and Culture at the Iowa Events Center, where educators will engage with experts on how to improve the school environment through professional development, skill building and application of best practices and research.

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

Dallas to Expand Program Targeting Low-Performing Schools

In an effort to improve academic achievement at seven historically low-performing schools, Dallas Independent School District launched the ACE program, which stands for Accelerating Campus Excellence, in the 2016-2017 school year.

The program has proven so successful that the Dallas school system recently announced an expansion of the ACE initiative to include six additional schools for the 2018-2019 school year.

The ACE program offered stipends to top teachers and principals who worked at an ACE school, a longer school day for students and mandatory after-school tutoring. In addition, the schools offered several enrichment services.

District officials found that the ACE schools showed improvement in all content areas. According to the *Dallas Morning News*, six of the seven ACE schools moved off the state's failing list after just one school year. In addition, several schools experienced 20-percentage-point gains in reading and math achievement, attendance improved and surveys revealed that parents felt more positive about their child's school.

Schools will be part of an ACE 3.0 hybrid model called "ACE Leadership" focusing on building a foundation for readiness with a strong focus on developing teacher leadership. The ACE 3.0 program will give monetary incentives to top teacher leaders, principals and campus leaders to study leadership, curriculum alignment, data and other best practices and then apply these practices to improve teaching and learning at their schools.

Dallas' ACE program has been such a success that it has been replicated by Texas' Richardson Independent School District, which recently launched its own ACE initiative at four schools.



Students from Arlington Community High School in Indianapolis learned life skills, participated in water games and hiked trails during this year's spring Str8Up Mentoring Program camp.

Indy Alumnus Offers Students a Spring Adventure

This spring, 100 boys and girls from Arlington Community High School in Indianapolis were given the opportunity to leave their urban environment and spend the day hiking, canoeing on the lake, playing sports and participating in team-building exercises.

The one-day camp is the brainchild of business owner Kurt Moore, a graduate of Arlington, who sponsors the camp each year in the fall and spring at a local lodge as a way to provide a different environment for young people from the inner city-- even if it's only for one day. "A lot of our kids are kids but they're living adult lives with the single-parent homes and some homes where the parent isn't there, and these kids are basically raising themselves," said Moore in a story on the Indianapolis Public Schools website. "For the kids to go into the woods, they love it."

The camp is an extension of Moore's Str8Up Mentoring Program, which he started eight years ago when he was approached by Arlington principal Stan Law to mentor 25 7th- and 8th-grade boys. Many of the boys were failing in school and half of them had experience with the

juvenile justice system. Within eight weeks, Moore and a group of men he assembled were able to help the boys improve academically and behaviorally. As part of the program, Moore and a group of volunteers serve as mentors twice a week to students. They offer academic tutoring, provide college and career planning and even a basketball team.

One of the reasons Moore loves mentoring is because he knows first-hand the pitfalls that students face. After graduating from Arlington and attending a junior college in Alabama, where he played basketball for two years, Moore returned to Indianapolis and started dealing drugs. At the age of 27, he was arrested and spent 13 years in federal prison. After he was released at the age of 40, he turned his life around, opened a successful auto detailing business and talks to students, offering his life as a cautionary tale.

"They say it takes a whole village, and I want to be a part of that village and be hands on," said Moore. "If I can get into every IPS school, let's make it happen. I want to be where there's more of a need, where these young men are like I was. ...They need me and men like to just show them love."

Urban School Districts Named Best in Music Education

Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District strongly believes that music education is critical to nurturing social and emotional skills that students need to be college and career ready.

New Mexico's Albuquerque Public Schools rotates music and art every year in their elementary schools and offers robust music performance electives in middle and high school.

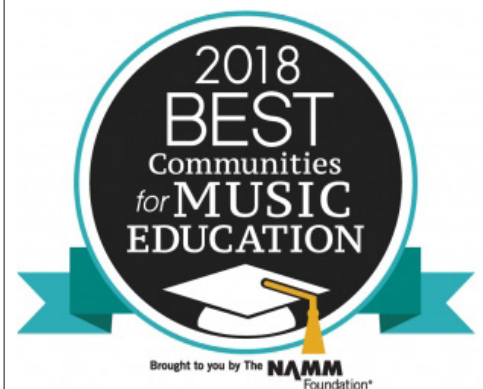
As a result, these two districts were recently included on the "Best Communities for Music Education" list by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation.

This is the fifth year in a row Fort Worth has received this honor, and the third year in a row Albuquerque schools have received the honor.

"The "Best Communities for Music Education" designation affirms our programs are aligned and supported to provide a valuable experience to the students in our district," said Christina Walk, Fort Worth district executive director of visual and performing art.

In cooperation with researchers from the Music Research Institute at the University of Kansas, the NAMM Foundation has recognized 583 school districts across the nation for their outstanding commitment and access to music education.

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The Newest Tactic for Federally-Funded Private School Subsidies

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

For the past few months, conservative advocacy groups in Washington have been promoting H.R. 5199, the Military Education Savings Accounts, as an amendment to the massive National Defense Authorization Act (H. R. 5515) slated for the House floor in May.



This “Military Education Savings Account” proposal by Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.) would create private education savings accounts (ESAs) for children of certain military families by deducting funds from the long-standing Impact Aid Program of federal grants to school districts that help compensate for the financial impact of tax-exempt military and other federal property. These Impact Aid “payments in lieu of taxes” are an important source of revenue for public schools serving students from military families stationed at bases from coast to coast.

H.R. 5199 has some 60 congressional co-sponsors and could result in an alarming and unwelcome new federal policy that supports private school voucher-like federal subsidies, as well as other federal expenditures to pay for “educational enrichment” activities for military-connected students offered by for-profit and other fee-based providers.

Like other “education savings accounts” (ESAs) at the state level, these Impact Aid Military Education Savings Accounts would divert public taxpayer funds away from public schools and into accounts directed by individuals to pay for a variety of activities, including private school tuition, “educational enrichment” activities, instructional materials, computers and other technology devices, college prep and admission tests, specialized services, transportation costs, college attendance costs, qualified college savings

accounts, and home schooling. The potential for fraud and abuse of these federal Impact Aid education savings accounts is akin to the questionable expenditures found in state-based ESAs. Moreover, the educational benefit from the litany of “permissible uses” remains highly suspect, particularly since no evaluation or accountability provisions are built into the legislation.

More directly, the Impact Aid Military Savings Accounts will be subtracted from the annual Impact Aid grant allocations to school districts serving students of active-duty military families. Ironically, this reduction in funds would not only undermine the financial foundation of thousands of public schools, but it would also reduce funding for military-connected children, as well as other students, who continue to be enrolled in these public-school systems.

The original purpose of the Impact Aid program to offset a portion of public-school costs lost from tax-exempt federal property has been disregarded in H.R. 5199 to create this new federally-funded private school subsidy. Public school districts that serve military-connected students as well as public schools that do not should be equally concerned with these federal education savings accounts. Diverting public taxpayer funds to private individual use, undermines the fundamental financial base of America’s public education system. Calls to your House of Representatives delegation are needed to request active opposition to adding an Impact Aid Military Education Savings Account amendment to the annual National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 5515).

Des Moines Wins 7th Consecutive Energy Star Award

For the seventh year in a row, Iowa’s Des Moines Public Schools has been named an Energy Star Partner of the Year by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy.

The district was chosen to receive the award for demonstrated leadership in protecting the environment by implementing cost-saving energy efficiency measures. The

award was given to 163 ENERGY STAR partners from 35 states, with only seven school districts being selected.

The Des Moines school system received the award for its longstanding commitment to sustainability and energy efficiency and for the conservation initiatives the district has implemented in the past year.

The district earned ENERGY STAR

certification for 94 percent of school buildings and spent an average of \$114 a student on energy costs, which was significantly lower than the national average of \$205 a student. District officials have also created an interactive energy report card that provides information on district-wide and building specific energy usage.



Philadelphia Schools Superintendent William Hite visits a first-grade classroom in recently announcing the early-literacy program expansion.

Philadelphia District Expanding Early-Literacy Pilot Program

The School District of Philadelphia plans expansion of its early-literacy pilot program to provide modernized classrooms and materials to pre-kindergarten through third-grade students at 11 additional schools in the upcoming 2018-19 academic year.

The program currently has eight participating schools, focusing on kindergarten through second-grade classrooms. “One of our district’s guiding Anchor Goals is that 100 percent of 8-year-olds are reading on or above grade level,” said Philadelphia Schools Superintendent William Hite in a

press release. “The early-literacy pilot program we have introduced not only provides students access to cutting-edge technology and classrooms more conducive to learning, but it also gives our teachers the training and resources they need to better assist our students.

“We are excited to be able to expand this program to eleven more schools across the city in the coming year,” he emphasized.

The approximately \$20-million expansion will reach more than 160 classrooms in 2018-19, according to the district.

Top Magnet continued from page 7

Young Women’s Preparatory Academy in Miami-Dade County received the Secondary Magnet School of Merit Award of Excellence. And McCaw STEAM Academy in Las Vegas’ Clark County School District was presented with the New & Emerging Magnet School Merit Award of Excellence.

In addition, Florida’s School District of Palm Beach County received the Donna Grady-Creer Award for Magnet Sustainability, which recognizes a school system that exemplifies equity, excellence and diversity while sustaining strong and dedicated support for magnet schools. The Palm Beach school system offers 115 magnet schools and 315 programs.

Newark Official Wins Council Award

Valerie Wilson, school business administrator for New Jersey’s Newark Public Schools, was recently presented with the Distinguished Service Award at the Council of the Great City Schools’ Chief Operating Officers Conference in Atlanta.

Sponsored by the Council, the award honors business officials who exemplify leadership, innovation, commitment and professionalism in urban education.

Wilson has served as the district’s school business administrator since 2009.



Newark Schools official Valerie Wilson receives the Distinguished Service Award from Robert Carlson, director of management services at the Council.

Philadelphia District continued from page 5

ty,” said Antonio Lopez, a 2016 graduate of the school district, who is an apprentice plumber. “I am very happy to have this job and I am learning a lot.”

The apprenticeship program is a partnership among the district’s office of career and technical education, a union that represents public school workers and the state.

Philadelphia Schools Superintendent William Hite praises the program for giving its graduates the opportunity to put their skills to use with a steady career right out of school.

“At the same time, it allows the district to build a sustainable workforce of highly needed, trained employees,” said Hite. “It’s truly a win-win and it only makes sense for us to expand this mutually beneficial partnership.”



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In addition to Fort Worth and Albuquerque, other urban school districts receiving the honor were Texas' Arlington Independent School District and Austin Independent School District; Clark County School District in Las Vegas; Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, N.C.; Metro Nashville Public Schools; Shelby County Schools in Memphis; and Florida's Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa; Orange County Public Schools in Orlando; and The School District of Palm Beach County.

"Along with a strong commitment to music education, there are two common traits that each program shares: consistent funding that anchors music education as part of the core curriculum and music programs that are located in communities where music education is viewed as a jewel of the school system," said Mary Luehrsen, director of the NAMM Foundation.

This is the 19th year in a row Clark County School District has made the list and the eighth year in a row Shelby County Schools has made the list.

In order to be recognized, districts had to complete an 18-page application, including a survey and detailed questions.



Cops and Kids Program in Chicago

Students from Chicago Public Schools recently matched wits with local police officers at the first Cops & Kids Culminating Chess Challenge. More than 145 students participated in the chess tournament with officers from the Chicago Police Department as part of the Cops & Kids program, sponsored by the Renaissance Knights Chess Foundation and the district. The program aims to improve students' chess skills and build better relationships between students and police officers. Since September, local police officers have been visiting 15 after-school chess club schools across the district to practice playing chess with students.