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U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos listens as 2019 Teacher of the Year Rodney Robinson accepts his award at a White House ceremony. Photo credit: Ronald M. Sachs

## Richmond Veteran Educator Named National Teacher of the Year

Rodney Robinson teaches at a school housed in a jail in Richmond, Va., because he believes that all students — even those students who have made mistakes in their lives — deserve a high-quality education.

The veteran teacher's efforts to educate all children and his work to defeat the school-to-prison pipeline contributed to his recent selection as the 2019 National Teacher of the Year. Robinson was chosen for the honor from among 57 state teachers of the year.

The selection of the nation's best teacher began in 1952 as an effort by the Council of Chief State School Officers, which administers the program, to identify exceptional teachers nationwide, celebrate their effective work in and outside of the classroom, amplify their voices and empower them to participate in policy discussions at the state and national levels.

A veteran educator with 19 years of classroom experience, Robinson said he was inspired to become a teacher by his mother, whose upbringing in poverty and segregation in rural Virginia made her own desire to teach an impossible dream. Following

Richmond Educator continued on page 4

## Charleston School Named Best in Nation

*U.S. News & World Report* has ranked Academic Magnet High School in Charleston, S.C., as the best high school in the country.

The newsmagazine recently released its 2019 edition of the top-performing high schools after evaluating more than 17,000 public high schools in 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Schools were ranked on six factors based on their performance on state assessments and how well they prepare students for college.

In addition to Academic Magnet, five urban schools in districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools ranked in the top 20. They were:



- Payton College Preparatory High School in Chicago, ranked No. 9;
- Townsend Harris High School in New York City, ranked No. 11;
- Science and Engineering Magnet School in Dallas, ranked No. 12;
- The School for the Talented and Gifted in Dallas, ranked No. 16; and
- DeBakey High School for Health Professions in Houston, ranked No. 17.

Nation's Best continued on page 5

# Chicago Students Receive Scholarships to Become Teachers

Christopher Goins is the principal of Butler College Prep in Chicago and would like more men of color to follow in his footsteps and become teachers. But he believes that programs to recruit men of color into the classroom when they are in college are too late.

As a result, he created a class called “Intro to Urban Education” designed to introduce high school students of color to a career in education.

His efforts have paid off, as five students who participated in the class recently were surprised with full-tuition scholarships to study education at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). The students received the news that they were the recipients of college scholarships in front of their peers at the school’s “Draft Day” event.

The scholarships were awarded to students as part of UIC’s College of Education MiSTER (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) program, which aims to recruit and train male education majors of color.

UIC College of Education’s Dean Alfred Tatum hopes the scholarships will



A student at Chicago’s Butler Prep reacts to receiving a full-tuition scholarship to attend the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) as, third to right, UIC Dean Alfred Tatum and Butler Principal Christopher Goins look on.

enable the recipients to return to their communities and serve as educators.

“Becoming an educator is one way to ensure you’ll live forever because generations after generation will talk about

your impact,” said Tatum in a story that appeared on the Chicago Public Schools’ website.

The scholarships will provide students with tuition assistance, an academic and

**Teacher Scholarships** *continued on page 3*



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## Memphis and Boston School Districts Name New Superintendents



Joris Ray

After embarking on a national search to find a superintendent, Shelby County Schools in Memphis decided they already had someone more than capable of leading the 100,000-student school system.

So, the school board ended the search and named interim leader Joris Ray the district's superintendent.

Ray has served as interim since January, succeeding Dorsey Hopson, who resigned from the district after nearly six years.

A graduate of Shelby County Schools, Ray has held a variety of positions in the school system during his 22-year career, including teacher, assistant principal and director of alternative schools.

In his previous role as the district's chief of academic operations and school support, Ray directed more than 10 specialized ar-

reas, including the district's enrollment and school choice processes, summer learning academy, and family and community engagement.

In a news statement Ray said he was incredibly honored by the opportunity to lead the school system. "I will continue to fight every single day to improve the lives of our students, no matter which neighborhood they call home," said Ray.

### ***New Leader in Boston***

Boston Public Schools recently named Brenda Cassellius to take the reins of the 55,000-student school district. Cassellius, who most recently stepped down as commissioner of education for the state of Minnesota, will succeed interim superintendent Laura Perille.

Prior to serving as commissioner, Cassellius was the superintendent of the East Metro Integration District in Minnesota, where she led an integration and achievement agenda. She also served as an associate



Brenda Cassellius

superintendent in Minneapolis Public Schools.

"We are excited to begin working soon with Cassellius, whose wealth of experience, commitment to equity, and proven track record as an education leader will be critical

in continuing our progress in the Boston Public Schools," said Boston School Committee Chairperson Michael Loconto.

### ***Interim in Nashville***

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools recently named veteran educator Adrienne Battle as interim director of schools.

Battle succeeds Shawn Joseph, who recently stepped down after leading the district since 2016.

A graduate of the school system, Battle has held a variety of roles in the district, including as community superintendent.

### **Teacher Scholarships** *continued from page 2*

cultural support system and assistance with job placement after they graduate.

Students had to apply for the scholarship by submitting two essays.

Goins has a degree in history/secondary education from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State and has led Butler since it opened in 2013. His desire to create the "Intro to Urban Education" class was formed and developed during his time as a Chicago Surge Fellow, a fellowship that works closely with Chicago teachers.

"It was my capstone project," said Goins. "I'm incredibly passionate about increasing the number of men of color in the classroom."

During his class of about 20 seniors, students were required to follow the news and policy around education and one class assignment had them researching the 2019 Chicago mayoral candidates and then defending who would best serve the city's

educational needs. Goins said the class was developed to create awareness with the hopes of empowering the students to pursue a career in education so they can make an impact.

According to the Illinois State Board of Education, African-American men represent just one percent of teachers in Illinois' public schools.

Trevon participated in Goins' class and was one of the students who received a college scholarship to UIC. He said that after graduating from college he wants to return to his community and become a third or fifth-grade teacher. And with the help of the scholarship, he hopes to make a lasting impact.

"It's important for black males to become teachers," said Trevon. "Students learn better and are able to function in class when they see someone that looks like them. That can be me."

## St. Louis School Board To Regain Governance

In 2007, Missouri's State Board of Education voted to strip the Saint Louis Public Schools of its accreditation, a three-member panel was appointed to oversee the school district, and its elected school board lost control.

After 12 years, the state board recently voted unanimously to restore power to the district's school board.

Since being taken over by the state, the Saint Louis school system has made progress in academic achievement and improved its finances. And in 2008, Kelvin Adams was appointed superintendent and has worked to turn around the school dis-

**Saint Louis** *continued on page 4*

**Richmond Educator** *continued from page 1*

time spent teaching middle school history and later, high school, Robinson took on an assignment that might give some teachers pause, when in 2015 he became a social studies teacher at the Virgie Binford Education Center housed in the Richmond Juvenile Detention Center.

Fully embracing the challenge, Robinson created a classroom culture that provides his students – ages 12 to 19 – a positive school environment where he seeks to connect with them and offer culturally relevant instruction.

An example of this is his participation in the Yale National Initiative, a collaboration designed to strengthen teaching in the nation's public schools. After taking a seminar titled *Race, Class and Punishment* at the Ivy League university with Pulitzer Prize-winning author James Foreman, Robinson created and taught a curriculum on the history of prison and the Virginia Juvenile Justice System. His hope was that the experience would give the students the skills to serve as better advocates for themselves and to make better decisions.

"My kids are in survival mode 24/7, and so a lot of times, when they come into the detention center, they're struggling to understand it all," said Robinson in an interview with *NPR*. "...And so I try to teach them about the system and how they can better be served."

Richmond Schools Superintendent Jason Kamras, who was named the 2005 National Teacher of the Year as a teacher in the District of Columbia Public Schools, praised Robinson for seeing the hope, promise and potential in every student he teaches. "He represents everything we stand for," said Kamras, "boundless love for our students, a fierce commitment to equity, and an unyielding pursuit of excellence. There is simply no one more honorable and more deserving of this recognition than Mr. Robinson."

As the 2019 Teacher of the Year, Robinson will spend the year traveling the country as a spokesperson and advocate for the teaching profession.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, only two percent of public school educators are black males, and Robinson knows from his personal experience as an African-American male that black students need more teachers that look like them.

He has dealt with this issue on a local basis as a member of Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney's Education Compact Team, where he has worked with city leaders and local colleges and universities to recruit underrepresented male teachers into education.

Robinson is looking forward to taking his efforts to a national stage and working to increase the number of African-American teachers and other educators of color in America's classrooms. He says he will also advocate for ending school suspensions, and instead seek to implement more restorative justice and social and emotional learning programs.

During a speech at a recent ceremony at the White House, where Robinson was congratulated by U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, he asked the audience to think back to the worst thing they did as a teenager and imagine that everyone they met during those years (teachers, principals, counselors, student peers) judged them by that moment of weakness.

"Would you have been given the opportunity to be where you are today?" he asked. "Would you be the person you are today? My students are faced with this challenge and deserve a great education just like every other student in the United States, and I am proud to be here to represent them."

**Saint Louis** *continued from page 3*

trict and restore stability.

In 2017, the district was granted full accreditation and a special committee was convened to study board governance. After reviewing the committee's findings and extensive feedback from the community, it was recommended that governance be restored to the district's school board.

The board is scheduled to regain control in July 2019 and board members have

## U.S. Presidential Scholars Named

Ruben Manasseh Banks, a senior at Jim Hill High School in Jackson, Miss., has a long list of accomplishments. He is president of his school's Student Government Association, he serves as the JROTC Brigade Commander for Jackson Public Schools and he was one of two students from Mississippi selected to participate in the 2019 United States Senate Youth Program.



**Ruben Manasseh Banks**

Banks can now add one more accolade to his list of achievements: a U.S. Presidential Scholar for 2019. Banks was one of 161 high school seniors from across the nation recently selected to the 55<sup>th</sup> class of U.S. Presidential Scholars for their accomplishments in academics, the arts, or career and technical fields.

Each year, the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars selects scholars based on their academic success, artistic and technical excellence, essays, school evaluations and transcripts, as well as evidence of community service, leadership, and demonstrated commitment to high ideals. The program is administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

Banks is not the only big-city student to achieve this prestigious honor. Other

**Presidential Scholars** *continued on page 7*

## Award-Winning Documentary Chronicles A Year in a Minneapolis Elementary School

At the start of the 2017-2018 school year two journalists from Minneapolis news station KARE 11, reporter Lindsey Seavert and photojournalist Ben Garvin, created a series of news stories on Lucy Laney Community School in north Minneapolis.

The elementary school had been on the state's list of failing schools for almost two decades. According to the *Star-Tribune*, 82 percent of the school's students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, 12 percent of students are homeless and about 80 percent of the students test a grade level or more below their current grade.

The television news stories about Lucy Laney were so compelling that they were turned into a 90-minute documentary called "Love Them First: Lessons from Lucy Laney Elementary," which recently had its world premiere at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Film Festival.

The film chronicles the ups and downs of life at the school, led by its charismatic principal Mauri Melander Friestleben, who struggles to get her school off the state's list of low-performing schools.

The filmmakers were given unprecedented access for a year to follow Friestleben, her dedicated staff and their students as they celebrate their successes, including the school making gains on the state's standardized test scores and suspensions being reduced by 90 percent.

There is also heartbreak, such as when Friestleben, who has served as the school's principal since 2012, has to speak to students after gunfire occurs at a neighborhood playground with children outside.

The school's students also play prominent roles in the film, particularly fifth-graders Sophia and Naysha. Sophia is Lucy Laney's student council president and as the school year begins learns she will be placed for adoption, along with her two younger brothers who also attend Lucy Laney. The film also follows the journey of Naysha, a member of the school's dance



A student holds a poster from the "Love Them First" documentary about an elementary school in Minneapolis. Photo credit: Melody Gilbert

troupe whose family faces homelessness.

Minneapolis Schools Superintendent Ed Graff praised the film for offering a raw and real look into the experience found in many of the district's schools. "Our students, staff and families are brilliant and bring so much to our school each day," said Graff. "There's a lot of work that goes into meeting each of their unique needs, and we hope this film helps showcase that while starting important conversations about what it means to educate all children, everywhere."

After the premiere of "Love Them First," multiple screenings were added and quickly sold out. The film also received an Audience Choice Award for best Minnesota-made documentary.

A portion of the proceeds from the ticket sales of the film were donated directly to Lucy Laney. For more information about the film access <https://www.lovethefirst.com/screenings/>

## D.C. Schools Launch First-of-its Kind Graduation Guide

High school students attending the District of Columbia Public Schools in Washington, D.C., will have a new way to track their progress toward college.

The Student Guide to Graduation, College, and Career was developed to offer students from ninth through 11th grade an in-depth look at their progress toward graduation. The first-of-its-kind guide will consider academic performance, standardized test scores and personal interests in determining a student's progress and areas for improvement.

No two students' guides are the same — each is customized to the student's grade level, courses, diploma or certificate pathway, post-secondary plans and test scores.

District officials believe the guide, which will be sent by mail and available online, will create more opportunities for counselors to work with students in determining their future goals.

"This guide will provide our students and their families with clear, personalized information to understand the steps they need to take to earn a diploma, learn about college and career opportunities aligned with their interests and aspirations, and develop a plan to hit the ground running once they graduate," said District of Columbia Schools Chancellor Lewis Ferebee in a news statement.

**Nation's Best** continued from page 1

"The Charleston County School District strives for excellence in all things," said Charleston Schools Superintendent Gerrita Postlewait. "With a team of committed educators and students dedicated to learning, schools like Academic Magnet ... continuously excel beyond measure. This national honor is a direct result of what can be accomplished with hard work."

## Denver School District Pilots Free College Testing Program

Last fall, students in Denver Public Schools told superintendent candidate Susana Cordova they would like the school district to provide more test preparation program opportunities for the SAT college-entrance exam.

A first-generation college student, Cordova is now the district's superintendent. Under her leadership, the district recently piloted a free Kaplan Test Prep program to provide students with high-quality SAT test-taking strategies and personalized preparation.

For eight weeks, Kaplan instructors held practice test sessions on Saturday, allowing students to gain effective instruction and a sense of what a test-day experience would be like.



Two Denver students participate in the district's free Kaplan SAT Test Prep Program.

The program was available at four school sites and free transportation was provided for the 200 students who participated.

Filiz Baltaci, a junior who plans to go into forensic psychology, said the program helped him do better on the reading and writing sections of the SAT.

"Before the Kaplan program, I wasn't very knowledgeable about the SAT, but I gained a lot of knowledge on how to take the test and where I needed to focus," said Baltaci in a story that appeared on the Denver school district's website.

District officials are pleased with the results of the pilot program and are looking to expand it.

## Miami School Named Top Magnet in the Nation

Miami Lakes Educational Center is one of only two dual-delivery schools in the Miami-Dade County School District providing vocational training as well as high school academics with a unique blend of programs that integrate career and technical education.

In recognition of its efforts, Miami Lakes was named the top magnet school in the nation by Magnet Schools of America (MSA).

The school received the 2019 Dr. Ronald P. Simpson Magnet School of Merit Award of Excellence, the MSA's most prestigious award for magnet schools, at the 37<sup>th</sup> annual MSA National Conference held recently in Baltimore.

"Winning the prestigious Magnet Schools of America award is another ex-

ample of Miami-Dade's belief that all children have the potential to soar to extraordinary academic heights when they are exposed to curriculum that is cutting-edge and robust," said Miami Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho.

The Waldrip Award, MSA's second highest national award for a magnet school, was presented to the Energy Institute High School in Houston. The high school offers engineering and core classes through program-based learning, technology integration and partnerships with engaged community businesses.

In addition, MacFarlane Park Elementary in Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa, Fla., was awarded the Elementary Magnet School of Merit Award of Excellence.

## Boston and Jackson To Launch High-Quality Pre-K Programs

In an effort to provide students early access to a high-quality education, Boston Public Schools and Mississippi's Jackson Public Schools are launching Pre-K programs.

Boston Mayor Martin Walsh recently announced that the city has invested \$15 million in his FY20 budget to establish the Quality Pre-K Fund, which will guarantee equitable access to free, high-quality pre-kindergarten for all 4-year-olds living in Boston.

The Quality Pre-K Fund is designed to support the creation of 750 high-quality seats in the nationally recognized pre-K programs in Boston Public Schools and in community-based organizations, including Head Start, Boys & Girls Clubs and the YMCA.

The \$15 million will ensure classrooms are staffed with highly-trained and well-compensated teachers, culturally responsive and inclusive learning environments, ongoing professional development for staff and use of a proven curriculum that focuses on literacy, math and supports for students with additional needs.

"Through the Quality Pre-K Fund, we are providing more access and flexibility for families of 4-year-olds that will help to close opportunity and achievement gaps and set up our youngest learners for long-term educational success," said Boston Public Schools Interim Superintendent Laura Perille.

### Pre-K Pilot in Jackson

A Pre-K pilot program, "Ready To Learn," seeks to ensure that children in Jackson Public Schools are well prepared to enter kindergarten by the age of five.

The program is funded by a \$1.2-million grant by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Pre-K Programs continued on page 7



Debate coach Andy Fine from Chicago's Lane Tech looks on as students Ariana Collazo and Aysia Grey hold their first-place trophies for winning the 2019 Urban Debate National Championship. Photo credit: National Association for Urban Debate Leagues and Chris Dilts

## Chicago School Repeats as Debate Champions

The debate team from Lane Tech High School in Chicago recently won the 2019 Urban Debate National Championship, beating 41 teams from across the nation to take home the first-place trophy.

This is the second year in a row a team from Lane Tech has won the tournament.

In addition, senior Ariana Collazo, a member of this year's winning debate team along with Aysia Grey, competed on last year's team, making her the only debater to win the Urban Debate National Championship twice.

"I didn't expect this to happen," said Collazo in an interview with the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "It proved how far I've come in all my years of debate. I was just really shocked and proud that I was able to do that."

Collazo has participated in debate since her freshman year and in the fall will attend DePaul University and major in African American studies.

"Aysia and I winning that tournament... creates a huge impact on what the debate community will be in a few years because

there will be people who look at what we did and say, 'We can do it too,'" said Collazo in the *Sun-Times*.

A team from Lane Tech also won the debate championship in 2008, making Lane Tech the school with the most national championships in the 12-year history of the tournament.

The 2019 Urban Debate National Championship was held on the campus of Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and featured teams from 21 urban debate leagues across the nation competing against each other. The three-day tournament was hosted by the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues (NAUDL), which supports a national network of urban debate leagues in 22 cities and serves nearly 11,000 students.

Urban debate teams compete in a style called policy debate, in which teams of two students debate on a current event topic. This year's topic was whether the United States federal government should substantially reduce its restrictions on legal immigration to the United States.

**Presidential Scholars** continued from page 4

recipients were Aden Jon Rothmeyer from South Anchorage High School in Anchorage; Amando DeJesus Candelario from Eric Solorio Academy High School in Chicago; Allison Kim Tien Tu from duPont Manual Magnet High School in Louisville; Ian Henry Carnate Acosta from Waipahu High School in Hawaii; Ananya Sahiba Dewan from Northwest Career and Technical Academy in Las Vegas; Abigail Pribisova from Eldorado High School in Albuquerque; Madelaine Lebetkin from Brooklyn Technical High School in New York City; and Isaac Arnold Wells-Cage from Ronald Reagan College Preparatory High School in Milwaukee.

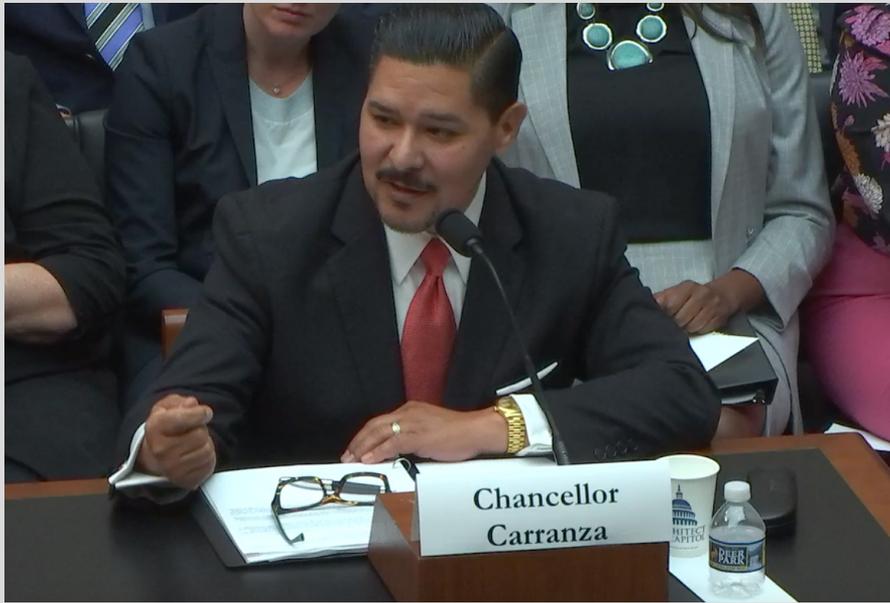
Urban students selected as Presidential Scholars in the Arts were Nina Ahmadi from Design & Architecture Senior High School in Miami; Emma Claire Sutherland from Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing & Visual Arts in Dallas; Anthony Choi from High School for Math, Science, and Engineering at City College of New York; and Njari Dimario Anderson from Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Since 1964, the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program has honored more than 7,500 of the nation's top-performing students.

**Pre-K Programs** continued from page 6

The pilot program will undergo a two-year development process with the first year dedicated to building data and coalitions of early childhood educators across the city. The second year will focus on implementing the pilot Pre-K program at two early childhood development centers in Jackson.

"We have recognized that one of the significant deficits in our children's ability to learn in Jackson Public Schools is that they are entering into the school system at different levels of preparation, and we need to assist our community in preparing our young people to start the learning process," said Jackson Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba in a news statement.



## New York Chancellor Testifies on Capitol Hill

On the heels of the 65th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*, Richard Carranza, the chancellor for the New York City school system, testified on April 30 before the House Committee on Education in a hearing on educational equity. As chancellor of the nation's largest school system, Carranza said that the school district is implementing several initiatives to increase school diversity, including eliminating the single test for specialized high schools, and believes that meaningful integration in education is the responsibility of everyone who cares about the future of the nation's public school students. "We believe that integration and equity can unleash our students' innate brilliance, unlock their creativity, and put them on a path to their dreams," he said.

## Urban Students Win Robotics Championship

A robotics team from Palm Harbor University High School in Florida's Pinellas County Schools was recently crowned world champions at the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics World Championship in Houston.

The four-day competition featured 160 teams from around the world competing against each other in qualification matches and judging interviews.

The students from Palm Harbor University called Team Boom Bots defeated the two-year returning champions in a 2-0 series in front of 40,000 spectators in the Minute Maid Baseball Stadium.

Team Boom Bots also achieved a world-record score at the competition.

The FIRST championship is considered the world's largest celebration of STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) for students and brings together thousands of students from around the world who participate in K-12 robotics programs.

The comprehensive robotics competition aims to inspire high school students to learn about mechanical design and engineering, computer design, programming and professional writing. The competition also encourages students to utilize their skills to reach success in various awards throughout the competition season.

## Miami, Philly Teachers Win Inspiration Award

The Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards were recently presented to six teachers. Inspired by the late composer-lyricist, the award recognizes teachers who have had an extraordinary impact on students' lives, celebrates the teaching profession and the important role of teachers in society, and seeks to inspire others to pursue a profession in teaching.

Teachers are nominated for the award by current or former students, who submit a written, audio, or video story detailing the teacher's impact.

This year, two urban school district educators were among the six recipients to receive the award.

Jennifer Jimenez, a music teacher at South Miami Senior High in Miami, was nominated for the award by one of her former students, Jackeline Zelaya. Zelaya credits Jimenez with teaching her to "breathe" not only to master the flute, but also to get through the tough situations life may bring.

Olga Torres, a health information management teacher at Mastbaum Vocational High School in Philadelphia, was nominated for the award by former student Sandy Matczak. Matczak grew up in poverty, had a tough childhood, and credits Torres with improving her life.

"She believed in me and because of her commitment to motivating her students, I went to both college and graduate school," wrote Matczak.

Each award winner receives \$10,000 and will be showcased, along with the people they inspired, on The Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspiration Teachers Award website.



Jennifer Jimenez



Olga Torres

## Portland Schools Superintendent Works to Transform a District

In 2017 when Guadalupe Guerrero assumed the helm of Oregon's Portland Public Schools – the state's largest with 49,000 students – he inherited a district that had lacked a permanent superintendent for more than a year and had several vacancies in the senior leadership team.

So job one for the new superintendent was recruiting an executive team of experienced educators and administrators. Today, looking back on the work of building the team, he is proud of the caliber of talent and the diversity they represent.

In a recent interview with the *Urban Educator*, Guerrero said a guiding principle in building his team was choosing leaders that reflect the diversity of the students served by Portland Public Schools. "I had a central office that was almost entirely white, and yet within 60 days I had a complete cabinet and 48 percent are people of color," he said. "And I didn't have any problem recruiting these highly talented leaders of color."

The oldest of four siblings of a single mother, Guerrero entered public schools in California as an English language learner and is passionate about providing a high-quality education for all students, especially those who have been historically underserved. And as the Portland school system's first Hispanic superintendent, he is committed to ensuring racial equity for the district's students of color, who comprise approximately 30 percent of the student population.

Another goal is encouraging local colleges to recruit and support students of color to become teachers. "They are our candidate pool, so if it's not diverse there, it's slim pickings for us," said Guerrero who is leading the district to grow its own urban teacher residency program.

"I very much look forward to moving in that direction," said Guerrero, "so that we're cultivating future educators that have a clear sense of the skill sets that we need to serve and meet the priorities of the students we have here in the district."

Expanding the ranks of talented teach-



ers is a major priority, so the district sends recruiters to historically black colleges and universities and seeks out bilingual teachers from the southwest and California.

### **Prepared for the Job**

Guerrero is a first-time superintendent, but believes his 25 years in urban education have more than prepared him for the job.



**Portland Schools Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero visits a classroom.**

A graduate of UCLA, he began his career as a teacher in the San Francisco Unified School District and moved to Boston Public Schools to serve as a principal before returning to San Francisco as an assistant superintendent in 2010. Two years later, he was promoted to deputy superintendent of instruction, innovation and social justice under then-superintendent Richard Carranza.

From his experience working in the San Francisco and Boston school systems, Guerrero learned that in order to improve student outcomes districts must pay attention to essential building blocks such as curriculum, instruction and assessments. And he believes that with the right set

of strategies, Portland can be the premier school district in both Oregon and the nation.

Since becoming superintendent, Guerrero and his leadership team have worked on strengthening the district's core departments and improving programs focused on student academic achievement and student support. The school system has also collected parent and community feedback through focus groups and forums and will soon publish a vision for the Portland school system's future.

"We've been working really hard to create a coherent school district and create a vision for the future," said Guerrero. "And at the very center of that vision is students."

In October 2018, the Portland school board evaluated Guerrero's job performance and praised him for hiring a new leadership team, developing a standards-based curriculum for students and reaching settlements with the district's six unions.

Guerrero, who is 49, met his wife Carolyn when they were both teachers in Boston. They have been married for 19 years and have two children.

A classically trained violinist, Guerrero was a music education major before changing his major to history because he wanted to work in education. And he still enjoys playing when he can find the time.

Guerrero, who has master's degrees from Harvard University's School Leadership Program and its Urban Superintendents Program, believes his entire career has prepared him to help lead a transformation of Portland Public Schools that will take the school system to the next level.

"I'm excited here in Portland because I have recruited a set of national level leaders, combined with talent here locally, to do the right work that school systems that are high-performing do," said Guerrero. "The storyline here is that Portland is in the early phases of transformation."

## Breaking Out of the Status-Quo in Federal Education Funding

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

The U.S. House Appropriation Committee has reported an FY 2020 Labor, HHS, Education spending bill containing notable funding increases for key federal education grant programs. Under the leadership of Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Subcommittee Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), record funding levels have been proposed for multiple education programs that in recent years have received small to modest increases at best.



While the FY 2020 appropriations process has a long way to go before completion, the House Committee bill is a great start. Yet, the necessity for an overall federal budget agreement to increase both defense and domestic budget ceilings remains among several hurdles that must be cleared to avoid another federal funding stand-off.

The House Committee proposes to increase the Education Department's overall discretionary appropriations by \$5.1 billion or 7.2 percent. Not since the early years of the *No Child Left Behind Act* or the stimulus bill under President Obama have similar levels of federal investment in elementary and secondary education been legislated.

Under the new House bill, spending on the cornerstone Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I program for disadvantaged students would increase by \$1 billion. Similarly, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B program for students with disabilities would increase by \$1 billion. Other core elementary and secondary education programs would also benefit from additional funding. The ESEA Title II-A program for teacher professional development and class-size reduction would increase by \$500 million (24.3 percent) after being targeted for elimination in President Trump's budget. The ESEA Title IV-A would increase by \$150 million (12.8 percent) despite being targeted for elimination in the Administration's budget request.

The ESEA Title III program for English language learners is also proposed for a long-overdue \$243 million increase or 32.9 percent increase. Title III funding has remained virtually stagnant since FY2002. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century After School program is slated for an 8.2 percent increase, while the Magnet Schools program is proposed for a 16.8 percent increase.

Perkins CTE grants and the Adult Education program also would receive small increases.

In the past week, discussions between President Trump and Democratic congressional leadership on federal investments in infrastructure projects have also been jump-started. Heading into the April 30<sup>th</sup> meeting, Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif) and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) included school construction in their national infrastructure plan, in contrast to the Administration's infrastructure plan in 2017 that did not mention school construction.

Following the White House meeting, a tentative "meeting of the minds" on a \$2-trillion infrastructure investment was announced, but the "pay for" mechanism and other details have been left to subsequent meetings. The linchpin to any comprehensive infrastructure agreement, however, seems to rest on increasing the federal gas tax, which has not been raised for some 25 years. By paying for transportation improvements with a gas tax increase, other sources of federal tax revenue could be used for other national infrastructure priorities, such as upgrading the electrical grid, ports and waterways, housing, broadband expansion, and schools. Additionally, the extent of any financial contribution from state and local governments and the private sector has yet to be addressed.

In the remaining weeks of the current school year, it is essential that school officials contact their congressional representatives to ensure that school construction funding is included in any federal infrastructure program. Given the breadth of the nation's infrastructure needs, schools could get short-changed or shut out of a final legislative package. Strategic outreach to your congressional representatives should be a top end-of-year priority.

Federal taxing and spending issues remain highly charged and politically precarious. Nonetheless, Congress has gotten off to a good start on spending and infrastructure. Any bipartisan accomplishments will happen in the remaining months of 2019, before election-year politics override everything. Urban school leaders must keep critical school-based needs in front of their Washington delegation over the next month and at the outset of the new school year.



Seattle's Roosevelt High School was the winner of the 24th Annual *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival. Photo credit: Ayano Hisa/Jazz at Lincoln Center

## Seattle School Wins Jazz Band Competition

The jazz band from Roosevelt High School in Seattle was the winner of the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival recently held in New York City.

Considered the nation's most prestigious competition in high school jazz, Roosevelt beat 14 other jazz bands from across the country to take home the first-place prize.

Sponsored by Wynton Marsalis' Jazz at Lincoln Center, the three-day competition featured mentoring, jam sessions and workshops, culminating in a concert where each top-placing band performed.

The second-place winner in the 2019 Essentially Ellington competition was Dillard Center for the Arts from Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

## Anti-Vaping Campaign Launched in Jefferson County

Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Ky., is launching a districtwide campaign to discourage the use of vaping.

The campaign, called "Vaping Equals," will focus on educating middle and high school students about the dangers of using e-cigarettes.

The district is teaming with the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and will disseminate information about the health risks of vaping to students through the use of posters, a new website and through social media messages.

As part of the campaign, students will complete skills-based health lessons to learn how the use of e-cigarettes is unsafe,

understand how the e-cigarette industry and tobacco and vaping companies use marketing to target teens, and how to develop refusal strategies.

"Vaping equals known and unknown health effects," said Jefferson County Public Schools Superintendent Marty Pollio during the announcement of the campaign. "And while many teens believe that vaping is a safe habit, electronic cigarettes contain nicotine and chemicals and are just as addictive as traditional ones."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, teen use of e-cigarettes has risen from about 1.5 percent of high school students in 2011 to 12 per-

## Manchester District Joins Council

The Council of the Great City Schools recently added New Hampshire's Manchester School District to its roster, increasing the urban-school coalition's membership to 75 public school systems.

The Manchester school district, the state's largest, has 14,000 students and is led by interim co-superintendents Amy Allen and Jennifer Gillis.

Notable alumni of the school system include actor and comedians Adam Sandler and Sarah Silverman; talk-show host Seth Myers; and best-selling author Dan Brown.



cent in 2017. The website for the Louisville school system's anti-vaping campaign is [www.vapingequals.com](http://www.vapingequals.com).



A poster from Jefferson County Public Schools' anti-vaping campaign.



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## Fort Worth Student Debuts Recipe

Mark Torres, a culinary student at Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District, displays the Ooh la la Chicken recipe he created. His dish was one of two created by Fort Worth students that were recently featured on the Kids Fit menu at la Madeleine French Bakery and Café restaurants nationwide. "[The] teams blew us away," said vice president of marketing for la Madeleine, Jacqueline O'Reilly.

## San Antonio District To Open Health Clinics

Texas' San Antonio Independent School District is teaming with a local health organization to open health clinics at two middle schools with low attendance rates.

The healthcare centers will provide such services as immunizations and prescription refills. They will be staffed by a nurse practitioner or physician's assistant paid for by the University Health System, while the San Antonio school system will pay for the cost of the health centers.

The clinics are scheduled to open in the fall of 2019 and 2020.

Also, high school students in San Antonio will be able to become certified registered nurses, as a result of a partnership among the district and several community partners to start a new nursing program.

Within four to six years, students at the district's Fox Tech High School will be able to earn a high-school diploma, an associate degree in nursing, and industry certifications at no cost. Students will also receive job placement assistance. The program will be open to ninth graders in the fall of the 2020-2021 school year.

## Great City Grads



**Matt Groening**  
Creator of "The Simpsons"

**1972 Graduate**

**Lincoln High School**

**Portland Public Schools**