Council of the Great City Schools
# Urban Educator

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## Council Report On Black Males Sparking 'Change'

When an eye-opening report in November woke the nation to a crisis among young black males, many urban school districts heeded the study's call for change and are considering or launching initiatives to help African-American male students succeed in life.

The report by the Council of the Great City Schools -- *A Call for Change: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in the Urban Schools* -- presented stark data on the dif-

**Black Males** *continued on page 4*

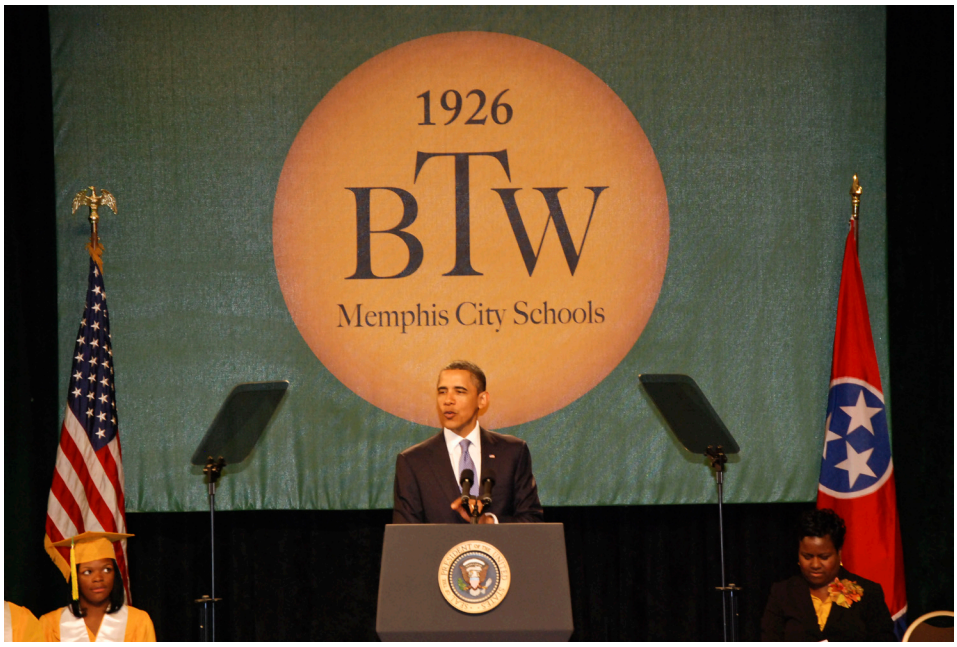
## Stage Set for Council's Fall Conference In Boston



Vicki Kennedy

Victoria "Vicki" Kennedy, widow of the late U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy, will welcome urban school leaders at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 26-30, in Boston.

**Fall Conference** *continued on page 8*




President Obama addresses the Booker T. Washington High School commencement in Memphis as he is flanked, left to right, by valedictorian Alexis Wilson and BTW principal Alisha Kiner. Photo Credit: Robert Jackson

## President Obama Applauds Graduates At Historic School in Memphis

President Obama delivered a commencement address May 16 to graduates of the Booker T. Washington High School in Memphis, the city's oldest high school for black students, established in 1926 during segregation, and the alma mater of civil rights legend Benjamin Hooks.

"Every commencement is a day of celebration," Obama said at the graduation ceremony at the Memphis Cook Convention Center.

"This one is especially hopeful because some people say that schools like BTW just aren't supposed to succeed in America. You'll hear them say, 'The streets are too rough in those neighborhoods.' The schools are too broken.' 'The kids don't stand a chance.'

"We are here today because every single one of you stood tall and said, 'Yes, we can.' Yes, we can learn. Yes, we can succeed. You decided you would not be defined by where you come from but by where you want to go, by what you want to achieve, the dreams you hope to fulfill," he stressed.

The president selected Memphis' Booker T. Washington High School as the winner of the Race to the Top School Commencement Challenge after some 400 high schools around the nation competed for the honor to have the president as the commencement speaker.

BTW was among six finalists chosen -- four of the schools, including Memphis,

**Memphis** *continued on page 4*

# Miami, Houston Schools Win College Board's Inspiration Awards

At Mater Academy Middle/High School in Miami, more than 80 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, yet the school has a graduation rate of more than 90 percent and more than 90 percent of seniors are accepted to college.

And at Furr High School in Houston, the average family income of most students rank among the lowest in Texas, yet nearly 80 percent of seniors will take an Advanced Placement (AP) exam this year, while 97 percent of this year's graduating seniors were accepted to a college or university.

For their success in improving academic achievement, the schools were recently selected as recipients of the 2011 College Board Inspiration Awards. The awards are presented to three high schools across the nation that are helping underserved students achieve access to higher education, despite overwhelming odds.

The awards also recognize schools for their outstanding college-preparation programs and partnerships among teachers, parents and community organizations. Each winning school receives $25,000.




**Houston's Furr High School Principal Bertie Simmons accepts the College Board Inspiration Award during an assembly as Houston Schools Superintendent Terry Grier and College Board President Gaston Caperton look on. Photo Credit: Houston ISD**

Mater Academy serves students in grades 6-12 and places a strong emphasis, starting with students in sixth grade, on preparing students to attend post secondary institutions. Many of the students at the Miami school will be the first in their families to attend college, so the school offers Parent Academies that provide advice, ranging from admission to financial aid, to help parents prepare their children for college. And each year, the school takes seniors on a five-day tour of college campuses.

At Houston's Furr High School, all stu-

**Inspiration Awards** *continued on page 3*

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# Rochester Superintendent Takes Chicago Reins; Newark Names New Chief and Boston Maintains Leader


Jean-Claude Brizard

Jean-Claude Brizard is the son of Haitian immigrants who began his career as a junior high science teacher in New York City. Years later, he is now in position to lead the nation's third largest school district.

Brizard was recently selected by Chicago Mayor-elect Rahm Emanuel to head Chicago Public Schools.

Brizard has served as superintendent of New York's Rochester City School District since 2008, and under his leadership the 38,000-student school district raised the four-year graduation rate, increased the number of students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses, increased the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards in all grades, decreased suspensions and launched a 10-year, $1.2-billion schools modernization program.

Before taking the position in Rochester, Brizard was senior executive for policy and sustainability in the New York City public school system, where he was responsible for increasing student achievement, overseeing budget and accountability issues and initiating policy.

Bolgen Vargas, who previously served as president of the Rochester school board, was recently named Rochester schools interim superintendent.

## New Leader in Newark


Cami Anderson, who was recently selected to lead Newark Public Schools, talks with U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, left, and New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Photo Credit: Spencer C. Tucker

Chicago Public Schools is not the only urban school district to tap a leader who worked in the nation's largest school system.

Cami Anderson, a New York City superintendent, was recently appointed by New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie to lead Newark Public Schools, the state's largest school district.

Anderson oversees an alternative school district in New York City, which serves approximately 40,000 at-risk or incarcerated students. She is credited with improving the district's G.E.D. program, tripling the number of students in the program who took and passed the G.E.D. exam.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan praised her selection in a news statement saying, "I believe she can provide the kind of bold vision that will help Newark continue its crucial work toward providing all children the opportunity at a high-quality public education."

## Contract Extended in Boston


Carol Johnson

Carol Johnson was named the superintendent of Boston Public Schools in 2007 and during her tenure, the district's dropout rate has decreased, graduation rates have increased, more high schools offer college-level courses and a new reading program has been implemented in elementary schools.

As a result of her success, the Boston School Committee has extended her contract to 2015.

"Superintendent Johnson continues to demonstrate that she is the best person to lead this school district," said Gregory Groover, the chairperson of the Boston School Committee.

"I love working in Boston," said Johnson in the *Boston Globe*. "We have good students, some talented school leaders and teachers, and a community committed to improving the quality of education for all children. Boston is a city that has the capacity to move students to proficiency and close achievement gaps."

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**Inspiration Awards** *continued from page 2*

dents who are on grade level are recruited to take part in the school's Pre-AP or AP program, and Saturday school for AP is required for freshmen who are not meeting expectations. Large and small-group meetings are held for parents where teachers and administrators explain the benefits of participation in rigorous courses and provide information about applying to college. And in semimonthly "Coffee with Principals" meetings, parents and administrators discuss goals, the importance and value of homework and review results of benchmark assessments.

"The 2011 Inspiration Award winners offer vivid proof that school innovation can help close the achievement gap," said College Board President Gaston Caperton. "Through their example, many more students will graduate ready to participate in a competitive global economy."

The winners of the Inspiration Awards are chosen by a distinguished panel of judges based on the schools' success in increasing the number of students from all school demographic groups being prepared for college.



President Obama congratulates Memphis City Schools Superintendent Kriner Cash at the commencement exercises. Photo Credit: Robert Jackson

**Memphis** *continued from page 1*

from districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools. Big-city schools in Newark, Pittsburgh and San Diego had a shot at winning the challenge.

The Memphis school's graduation rate rose to more than 80 percent in 2010 from 55 percent in 2007. The significant increase is attributed, in part, to the establishment of separate boys and girls freshman academies to help students adjust to the school culture and the creation of an atmosphere for teachers to work closely with students in helping the youngsters take pride in their schoolwork, according to the White House.

"From the first African-American high school in Memphis, to the first African-American president of the United States, our students are proof positive of the full spectrum of possibilities," said Memphis City Schools Superintendent Kriner Cash.

Aiming to have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, Obama set out to invite the nation's public high schools to apply for the challenge, demonstrating their commitment to prepare students for college and careers. "The six finalists were selected for their creativity in engaging and supporting students, academic results, and progress in preparing students to graduate college and career ready," the White House pointed out in a statement.

**Black Males** *continued from page 1*

ferences between black and white academic and social achievement from the cradle to adulthood.

Almost every indicator of well-being showed that young black males are coming up on the short end in education, social and employment outcomes, prompting the Council to call the situation "a national catastrophe."

The Cincinnati Public Schools took notice of the gripping data and sprung into action by recently launching the African American Male Task Force, an initiative to help students with academic and character development.

The task force plans to expand the successful M.O.R.E. (Men Organized, Respectful and Educated) program at the district's Aiken High School, creating young men's clubs at nine more district middle and high schools aimed at nurturing academic success and strong character among African-American male and at-risk students.

"The African American male is not graduating from high school in the numbers that they should," said Dr. O'dell Owens, a school district graduate and president of Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, in the *Cincinnati Enquirer.*

The district is seeking community and business support in a campaign called "We Need M.O.R.E." to create the additional young-men's clubs, which will offer afterschool programs and enrichment opportunities.

Also recently, the Boston Public Schools launched a multi-faceted initiative called *Impact 300* to support 300 kindergarten and 4th-grade black boys with social development, mentorships and college readiness.

The initiative began with the 300 boys, along with principals and teachers, from some 25 Boston public schools visiting Harvard University -- the first visit to a college campus for many of the youngsters.

Professor Ronald Ferguson, director of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard, welcomed the 300 boys to the campus. "I want you to know any place in the world you're interested in is where you should be...so think big," he told them as reported in the *Harvard Gazette.*

At the end of the campus tour, students rubbed the shoe of John Harvard's statue on the Harvard Yard for good luck.

The Council of the Great City Schools' "Call for Change" is now focusing on generating solutions to the problems cited in its report on black-male achievement. "We want to identify proven solutions, explore possible new and viable ones, and disseminate these ideas and strategies to urban schools and the nation at large," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.



Three hundred African-American boys in Boston visit Harvard University. Photo Credit: Kris Snibbe

# Newark District Wins Debate Championship

For three years in a row, a team from Chicago Public Schools has been named as the top urban debate team in the nation, but this year that winning streak came to an end when two students from Newark, N.J., captured the crown.

Shagun Kukreja and Amna Tariq, who are seniors at Newark's University High School of Humanities, were recently selected as the winners of the fourth annual Urban Debate National Championship tournament. The win marks the first time two females have won the debate competition, which is hosted by the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues.

Second place was awarded to a team from Metropolitan Corporate Academy in New York City.

The two-day tournament was held in New York City at Hunter College and featured 76 debaters from 19 urban debate leagues across the nation. Teams from high schools in cities such as Chicago, Baltimore, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Kansas City, Dallas, Detroit, and New York City competed against each other in a style called policy debate, in which teams of two students debate one current event. This year's topic was whether the United States should significantly reduce its military involvement overseas.

In addition to winning this year's Urban Debate National Championship, Kukreja and Tariq recently won the New Jersey state championship and will represent the state at the National Forensic League national tournament in Dallas in June. In the fall, Tariq plans to attend Rutgers University and Kukreja, who was recently named a Bank of America scholar, is considering Rutgers, among other schools.

Awards were also presented to the best individual debaters, with Joshua Rivera of Lane Tech College High School in Chicago, winning the Top Speaker Award. Rivera will attend Southern Illinois University on a debate scholarship. The Best New League Award was presented to the Boston Debate League, which is one of the nation's fastest growing urban debate leagues.




**Newark student Amna Tariq participates in the Urban Debate National Championship. Her team won first place in the competition. Photo Credit: Jeffrey Vock**

Students at the tournament also had the opportunity to participate in a College and Career Day featuring programs on financial aid, the college admissions process and post-college career options as well as meet and talk with representatives from 15 colleges and universities.

Studies have found that participation in urban debate leagues leads to increased literacy scores, higher grade-point averages, higher graduation rates, higher attendance and improved critical-thinking skills. Urban debate leagues currently exist in 24 of the nation's largest cities.

## *Editor's Note*

Ashley Chandler, a graduate student in international communications at American University, is working as a communications intern at the Council of the Great City Schools, writing and providing layout and design assistance for the award-winning *Urban Educator*, as well as contributing to other communication projects.

# Houston Board Votes Change Of Teacher Evaluations

The Houston Board of Education recently approved a new approach to evaluating teacher performance, rating teachers on multiple measures, including student progress, rather than relying on its current system of classroom observations.

The new teacher appraisal and development system aims to ensure that all teachers receive regular feedback on their performance as well as individualized support that helps them serve their students more effectively.

A number of states and school districts are considering or implementing changes to strengthen their teacher evaluation systems as an academic reform strategy.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan praised the board's vote. "The new system uses multiple measures and incorporates student academic growth in a thoughtful and balanced way," he said in the *Houston Chronicle.* "Houston is providing a model for the state and other districts to follow."

Under the new system, teachers would be rated on student performance, instructional practice and professional expectations, changing the district's current, 20-year-old appraisal system that was created by the state. Many Houston Independent School District teachers and principals have indicated that the current appraisal system is not providing them with meaningful feedback to improve student learning, according to a district news release.

The new appraisal system is part of the Houston school district's *Effective Teachers Initiative*, aimed at placing an effective teacher in every classroom by transforming the way the district recruits, develops and retains its teachers. A new evaluation system for principals is also being planned.

The new teacher development and evaluation system was designed over a six-month period, as the Houston school system sought and received input from thousands of educators, parents and community members.

# Another L.A. School Wins U.S. Academic Decathlon

The 2011 U.S. Academic Decathlon was held last month in Charlotte, N.C., and it was the first time a team from Granada Hills Charter High School in Los Angeles had appeared in the two-day competition. But being new to the prestigious competition did not stop the team from bringing home the first-place trophy.

The nine-member academic decathlon team from Granada Hills beat 35 teams from across the nation to win the national title, scoring 52,113.5 points out of a possible 60,000.

The win for Granada marks the 12th time a school from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has won the national title. Last year, a team from the district's El Camino School won the competition.

The Academic Decathlon is a two-day event in which high school students are tested in 10 categories: art, economics, essay, interview, language and literature, mathematics, music, science, social science, and speech. This year's study subject was the Great Depression.

Each high school team is made up of nine students: three "A" students, three "B" students and three "C" students.

In addition to winning the Academic Decathlon, the team from Granada also received the rookie award presented to a school that has never made it to the finals and has the highest score among the teams in each division.

"It's really unusual, because there's a history of teams going to the nationals for the first time and doing well, but not winning the title," said Cliff Kerr, coordinator of the LAUSD Academic Decathlon in the *Los Angeles Times*. "These guys came and not only won the Rookie of the Year Award but the national title as well."

In March, the team from Granada won the California Academic Decathlon, which earned it a trip to the national competition.

# Award Winners



## Presidential Scholars Named



Daniel Depew

Daniel Depew, a senior at Northwest High School in Wichita, Kan., is a National Merit Scholar and a member of his school's tennis team. He is also one of just 141 high school seniors from across the nation to be selected as a 2011 U.S. Presidential Scholar for demonstrating outstanding academic achievement, artistic excellence, leadership, citizenship, service and contribution to school and community.

Created in 1964, the program honors one male and one female from each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and U.S. students abroad for achieving academic success. In addition, 35 Presidential Scholars in the Arts are named who have demonstrated exceptional talent in the visual, literary and performing arts.

Besides Depew, urban students in Anchorage, Little Rock, Baton Rouge, Los Angeles, West Palm Beach, Louisville, Brooklyn, N.Y., and Weston, Fla. (Broward County Public Schools) were named U.S. Presidential Scholars.

Students are selected as scholars based on their academic success, artistic excellence, essays, school evaluations and transcripts, evidence of community service, leadership and demonstrated commitment to high ideals.

The scholars will be honored for their accomplishments in Washington, D.C., in June and may invite their most inspiring and challenging teacher to accompany them and receive a Teacher Recognition Award from the U.S. Department of Education.

## President Honors Top Math, Science Teachers

When Laura Callahan teaches her kindergarten class, sometimes she will receive visits from penguins and armadillos. That is because Callahan teaches at the Omaha Henry Doorly Zoo, as part of an adopt-a-school partnership between the zoo and Omaha Public Schools' Bancroft Elementary.

Callahan is one of 85 mathematics and science teachers who were recently selected to receive the 2010 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. The award is presented annually to exceptional K-12 science and mathematics teachers from acrosss the nation.

Winners receive a $10,000 award from the National Science Foundation.

In addition to Omaha, urban teachers from Boston, Des Moines, Las Vegas, Indianapolis, the District of Columbia Public Schools in Washington, D.C., and Duval County School District in Jacksonville, Fla., were among this year's recipients. The Anchorage School District in Alaska had two teachers receive an award.

The award alternates between educators teaching kindergarten through 6th grade and those teaching 7th through 12th grades. The 2010 awardees teach kindergarten through 6th grade.

# Baton Rouge Eighth-Grader Is National Middle School Math Champion

Scott Wu, an eighth-grader at Glasgow Middle School in Baton Rouge, La., won the 2011 Raytheon MATHCOUNTS National Competition May 6 in Washington, D.C.

He competed against 223 other middle-school students from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the U.S. Department of Defense and State Department schools worldwide to be crowned the champion.



Scott Wu, a student in Baton Rouge, La., is congratulated after winning the 2011 Raytheon MATHCOUNTS National Competition. Photo Credit: Kris Tripplaar

"Congratulations to all the Mathletes," said Lou DiGioia, executive director of the MATHCOUNTS Foundation, which oversees the prestigious competition that engages the best and brightest in middle-school mathematics through "bee" style contests.

Raytheon Chairman and CEO William Swanson hopes that the national competition "further inspires them {the contestants} to use math as a key to unlocking the doors to rewarding careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics," he said in a statement.

"Winning -- this feels pretty good," Wu emphasized. "I studied a lot from middle and high school math materials. Lots of the competition is thinking quickly and figuring out how to solve a problem."

Wu's brother, Neal, an alumnus of Baton Rouge Magnet High School who now attends Harvard University, won the MATHCOUNTS national title in 2005, according to the East Baton Rouge Parish School District.

As national champion, Scott Wu won an $8,000 scholarship and a trip to U.S. Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala.

"He's just a phenomenal math student," Glasgow Middle School Principal Judy O'Dell said in a district press release. The 12-year-old Wu has completed Calculus A and B and all the high school math courses while in middle school. And she indicates that when the math whiz kid attends high school next year, he will probably take math courses at Louisiana State University -- just as his brother did.




Scott Wu, right, writes his answers during the MATHCOUNTS National Competition as another student struggles.

# Urban Schools Receive 'Grammy Awards'

Hamilton High School Academy of Music in Los Angeles offers its students an Electronic Music Program and the program recently received some good news: a $5,500 grant from the Grammy Foundation that will be used to make upgrades to its lab and music studio.

The school was one of 36 schools across the nation to receive a 2011 GRAMMY Signature School Award. Created in 1998 by the GRAMMY Foundation, the awards are presented to the top U.S. public high schools that are making an outstanding commitment to music education.

In addition to the award, the winning schools receive a monetary grant to benefit their music programs.

Hamilton High was presented with a Signature Schools Enterprise Award, which recognizes efforts made by schools that are economically underserved. Other big-city schools that received the award were Boston Arts Academy in Boston; City Neighbors High School in Baltimore; Emmerich Manual High School in Indianapolis; Glencliff High School in Nashville; Santee Education Complex in Los Angeles; and Iroquois High School and J. Graham Brown School,both in Louisville, Ky.

# Nashville Administrator Wins Council Award

Joe Edgens, the executive director of facilities and operations for Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools in Tennessee, was recently presented with the Distinguished Service Award at the Council of the Great City Schools' Chief Operating Officers Conference in Las Vegas.

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

Edgens is responsible for leading the district's planning and construction, maintenance, and operations and oversees 900 employees.

**Fall Conference** *continued from page 1*

She will deliver welcoming remarks at the conference's opening reception on Oct. 26 at the Kennedy Library in Massachusetts' capital city.

Described by the *New York Times* as "Senator Ted Kennedy's Closest Confidante in Politics and Life," the attorney and advocate of women, children and families stood by President Obama's side at the White House when he signed the landmark health care reform legislation into law last year. Sen. Kennedy had spent most of his life pushing for health care reform.

Shortly after he died in 2009, the Boston school system renamed a school in Sen. Kennedy's honor -- the Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers. The renaming ceremony was one of Vicki Kennedy's first public appearances following her husband's death.



Carole Simpson

### *Pinnacle Event*

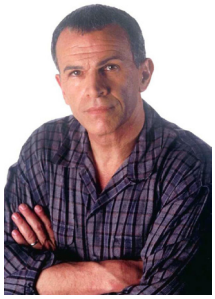
In conjunction with the Fall Conference, hosted by Boston Public Schools, the Council will also hold its annual National Town Hall Meeting on an issue of the day in urban education.

Moderating the conference's pinnacle event on Oct. 28 will be award-winning journalist Carole Simpson, who retired from ABC News in 2006 to become leader-in-residence in the School of Communications at Emerson College in Boston.

At ABC News, Simpson was the anchor of the weekend editions of *World News Tonight* from 1988 to 2003, as well as a senior national correspondent. The three-time Emmy Award winner was the first African American woman anchor of a major network evening news broadcast and her news reports appeared on various ABC News programs, including *Good Morning America* and *Nightline*.

She recounts her 40-year career as a pioneering broadcast journalist in her recently published memoirs, *NewsLady*.

### *Featured Speakers*



Tony Plana

Actor and education advocate Tony Plana will address urban school leaders at lunch on Oct. 27. A career spanning 30 years in film, television and theater, Plana is known recently in his role as "Ignacio Suarez," the father of Betty on the former hit television show *Ugly Betty*.

He is the co-founder of a Los Angeles theater group serving the Latino community through educational outreach programs, including a literacy initiative called Beyond Borders: Literacy through Performing Arts.



Wes Moore

Also speaking at the conference at breakfast on Oct. 28 will be author and youth mentor Wes Moore, former special assistant to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. He penned a book titled *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates,"* which focuses on him, a Rhodes scholar, and another Wes Moore who grew up near him in Baltimore but was convicted for a murder.



Robert Kennedy Jr.

The author, in prison interviews with the other Wes Moore, discovered startling parallels between their lives -- both were fatherless, had difficult childhoods and both had classroom difficulties. Yet, they both headed down different paths, which helps the scholar Moore to redirect the lives of troubled young people and find the support they need to enact change.

Also on stage to address urban school leaders at lunch on Oct. 28 will be environmental leader Robert Kennedy Jr. He is a senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council and is also a clinical professor and supervising attorney at Pace University School of Law's Environmental Litigation Clinic.




## Baton Rouge Student Pushes for Law Repeal

A high school senior in Baton Rouge, La., recently organized a protest rally on the steps of the state capitol in a push for repeal of the Louisiana Science Education Act, which critics believe promotes creationism in schools.

About three dozen people joined 17-year-old Zack Kopplin to rally against the 2008 law, which allows public school science teachers to use supplemental materials in their classrooms beyond state-approved textbooks.

Supporters say the law promotes critical thinking, while opponents consider it "a veiled attempt to sneak religion into science classes," according to an article in *The Advocate,* Baton Rouge's major newspaper.

A state senator has filed legislation to eliminate the law. In addition to staging the rally, the young Kopplin, a student at Baton Rouge Magnet High School, has mustered up signatures from more than 40 Nobel Prize-winning scientists to support a repeal.

Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal reportedly opposes the bill for doing away with the law.

# In Era of Fiscal Constraints, Denver District Adds $10 Million to Budget

Urban school systems across the nation are facing million-dollar budget shortfalls as a result of less state aid combined with the end of federal stimulus money. The fiscal problems have led many school districts to implement cost-saving measures such as increasing class sizes, eliminating summer school and issuing pink slips to teachers.

But Denver Public Schools is doing exactly the opposite and instead of laying off teachers, the district is adding more teachers to its ranks. Officials recently announced that the 79,423-student school system plans to add as many as 150 teaching positions next year and increase funding to schools next year by approximately $10 million.

The Denver school system is taking these steps despite the funding it receives from the state being reduced by approximately $22 million next year. According to district officials, the school system is able to increase funding to classrooms as a result of using money they had asked schools to hold onto as a contingency because of state budget cuts announced in February. Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper had announced that K-12 education funds would be cut by $332 million, but it now appears that funding will be cut by approximately $228 million, a difference of $104 million.

In addition, the school system is cutting $10 million from central services, including transportation, facilities, professional development and student services and plans to utilize $15 million in savings from its pension financing.

The increase in funding is also attributed to two years of record enrollment increases as well as winning more than $80 million in grants over the last two years. The grants include $10 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for teachers; a $30 million i3grant from the U.S. Department of Education to improve instruction for English-language learners; an $8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to invest in training excellent new teachers; and $11 million in grants from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation to invest in greater efficiency and improving technology available to schools.

**Denver** *continued on page 12*

# NYC Uses Stimulus Funds To Boost Technology

In an effort to bridge the digital divide, a new initiative in the nation's largest school district, New York City, is providing computers to approximately 18,000 sixth-grade students.



Tracking the Stimulus

The NYC Connected Learning initiative will offer students at 72 high-poverty middle schools a free computer, discounted broadband service, digital literacy training and access to a bilingual help desk.

The initiative is being funded through a $22-million American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) award from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

District officials believe that by extending learning to the home, the program will increase parental involvement and improve the educational experience of middle school students by providing access to on-line educational resources.

The initiative is being implemented this year and will extend through the 2012-2013 school year.

# San Diego Expands Home Internet Access For Students

A pilot program at Innovation Middle School in San Diego not only provides students with their own netbook computers but the computers also contain 3G wireless access, enabling students to access the Internet at home.

The Mobile Learning pilot program has been so successful that the San Diego Unified School District plans to expand the program using a $1 million grant from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

The district was one of 20 recipients across the country to receive a "Learning On-The-Go" wireless program grant to help K-12 students access the Internet at home and increase their access to digital textbooks, interactive learning tools and other innovative wireless technologies.

The FCC wants to increase the percentage of schools that are using mobile broadband because mobile learning devices enable teachers and parents to tailor school curriculum. The FCC also believes wireless devices will help teachers integrate school and homework assignments for students, creating greater efficiency.

San Diego will use its $1-million grant to offer netbooks with 3G wireless access to sixth graders at eight middle schools and schoolwide in two middle schools. The 3G

**San Diego** *continued on page 10*



Students at Innovation Middle School in San Diego work on their netbook computers.

# Program Versus Program

**By Jeff Simering,** *Director of Legislation*



At least once every decade, there seems to be a major budget cutting effort or program consolidation initiative—sometimes both at the same time. In the 1970s, we saw President Nixon's special revenue sharing block grants and budget cuts. In the 1980s, the Gramm-Latta budget cuts and program consolidations were passed overwhelmingly by Congress. In the 1990s, Congressman Newt Gingrich and President Bill Clinton struggled over the shutdown of the federal government and proposed budget cuts.

Now in 2011, history appears ready to repeat itself but this time the stakes are higher than ever before because they involve a very deep recession, high unemployment, the debt limit, and federal spending and taxes—in other words, everything. Every version of this scenario in previous decades has resulted in sizable education budget cuts and program consolidations. The central question is whether this time will be different or are we in for a serious retrenchment?

Every time one of these cycles emerges we see some education programs and budget lines have dedicated constituents and Congressional or Executive Branch champions to justify and protect their existence—or conversely, antagonists who fight to eliminate one initiative or another. We saw this dynamic in miniature during the six-month battle over the FY2011 Full Year Continuing Resolution (CR). Some programs survived, some eroded, and some were terminated. Notable education programs like Even Start, Striving Readers, Educational Technology Grants, and the Javits Gifted and Talented Program were eliminated. The Title II Teacher Quality Grants, which was cut by approximately $475 million, was seriously eroded. And the Title I LEA Grants for Disadvantaged Students and the IDEA Part B Grant for Students with Disabilities survived virtually unscathed.

Some areas of federal spending—defense, homeland security and often education—typically do better than others. Unfortunately, the scramble for limited resources occurs both across agencies and within budget functions. An example was just announced by the House Committee on Appropriations, which set FY 2012 spending limits that cut allocations for labor, health, human services and education by $18 billion (-11 percent), while defense was increased by $17 billion (+ 3 percent).

With an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization on the national agenda again, some programs will be consolidated or will morph into new configurations. The Obama Administration has jump-started these potential consolidations by proposing to merge 38 separate programs into nine more-flexible funding streams. The Council of the Great City Schools supports much of this simplification in federal education programming, but the first signs are emerging that it may not be enough to satisfy a Congress ravenous for budget cuts.

Serious budget negotiations are just beginning, but it is clear that valuable and effective initiatives will get pitted against one another in a "programmatic Darwinism" where only the strong survive. Urban public schools and the programs that benefit our students will need to be among the strong.

**San Diego** *continued from page 9*

wireless access is the same used by smart phones and tablet computers and the computers will be outfitted with safety software that prohibits students from accessing inappropriate web sites.

The San Diego school system was the only district from the Council of the Great City Schools to receive an FCC grant to fund its wireless pilot program. Also, two individual big-city schools received grants. The Boys' Latin of Philadelphia Charter School and Bethune Elementary School in New Orleans will use their grants to enable students to access the Internet through wireless mobile and data cards.



## Newark Grad Wins Scholarship

Ashley Nieves, a student at New Jersey's Montclair State University, is congratulated by Montclair Dean Ada Beth Cutler for receiving the Dr. Shirley Schwartz Urban Education Impact Award Scholarship, named for the Council of the Great City Schools' director of special projects who died in 2009. The $2,000 scholarship is awarded jointly by Newark Public Schools and Montclair's School of Education, which won the Schwartz Urban Impact Award for outstanding partnership last year at the Council's 54th Fall Conference.

## Omaha Receives Grant to Close Gap

Omaha Public Schools will receive a $50,000 planning grant from the NEA Foundation to close the achievement gap between students of different ethnicities and family incomes, while raising performance for all students.

The grant will go toward a public education partnership comprised of leaders from the school system, the Omaha Education Association and community groups who will join together to develop a proposal

**Omaha Grant** *continued on page12*

# Council Seeks Nominees for Top Award In Urban Education Leadership



Richard R. Green

In 1989, the Council of the Great City Schools launched the Richard R. Green Award in honor of the first African-American chancellor of the nation's largest school system, New York City Public Schools, who had also led Minneapolis Public Schools.

Sponsored by the Council, ARAMARK and Cambium, the award is presented to the nation's top urban educator, who best exemplifies Green's ideals and commitments: leadership, achievement, public confidence, professionalism and involvement.

The award, which rotates annually between urban superintendents and school board members, will be presented this year to a Council school board member.

Nominations for the 2011 Richard R. Green Award are currently being accepted until July 18.

The winner will be announced Oct. 27 at the Council's 55th Annual Fall Conference in Boston and will receive a $10,000 college scholarship to present to a senior in a high school from the winner's school system or from his or her high school alma mater.

The 2011 Richard Green Award application for school board members can be accessed on the Counil's web site at www.cgcs.org.

Last year, the winner of the Richard R. Green Award was Arlene Ackerman, superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia.




## Honored for Volunteerism

Academy Award-winning actress Susan Sarandon congratulates students Neil Nathan of Shreveport and Carrie Ingerman, center, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana's two top youth volunteers in the 2011 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program. They along with other selected student honorees from each state were recognized at a recent ceremony in Washington, D.C. for outstanding acts of community service.

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# Omaha School Board Member Elected to Lead CUBE


Sandra Jensen

Sandra Jensen, president of the Omaha Board of Education, has been elected to serve as chair of the National School Boards Association's Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE).

Jensen has been an active participant in CUBE, having served as vice chair of the CUBE Steering Committee and a member of the CUBE Urban Student Achievement Task Force.

"Through the years, it has been a privilege to be a part of [CUBE] working shoulder to shoulder with school board leaders across the nation to enhance educational opportunities for urban students," said Jensen. "By working together, we will achieve high student achievement for all children, especially our urban children, through effective school board leadership."

**Omaha Grant** *continued from page 11*

that aims to close the achievement gap.

Based on a review of their proposal, the Omaha partnership may eventually receive a five-year, $1.25 million grant from the NEA Foundation to implement its strategies in the Omaha school district.

The NEA Foundation has invested more than $8 million in its Closing the Achievement Gaps initiative.

**Denver** *continued from page 9*

And while Denver Schools Superintendent Tom Boasberg is very pleased to provide classrooms with additional money, he is worried about what will happen in the future.

"We've got to put a stop to the cycle of cuts and cuts," said Boasberg in the *Denver Post*.



# Sharing Lessons Internationally

Gail Holmes, an instructional technology coach for North Carolina's Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, recently shared her research on using technology in the classroom and lesson plans she developed with other educators at the International Conference on Technology, Knowledge and Society in Bilboa, Spain. She also presented a white paper titled "Teaching Students to Think Outside the Book." She is a fellow in the Kenan Fellows Program for Curriculum and Leadership Development.