



URBAN SCHOOL BOARD EXCELLENCE

URBAN ADVOCATE: 2010 Award Edition

2010 CUBE ANNUAL AWARD FOR URBAN SCHOOL BOARD EXCELLENCE

Great urban school districts come in many different forms. Some serve the nation's largest metropolitan areas. Others are located in mid-sized cities. Some have made rapid improvements in recent years, while others have a long track record of reform.

But despite their differences, these top urban school districts do have several factors in common. All have unified boards of education. They share a strong focus on student performance. And they all value public communications and open dialogue.

This year, the best of the best are the Broward County (Fla.) Public Schools, the Houston Independent School District, the Portsmouth (Va.) Public Schools, and the winner of the 2010 Council of Urban Boards of Education Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence, the Baltimore City Public Schools.

A panel of independent judges selected the winner and finalists based on the following four criteria:

- Excellence in school board governance
- Building civic capacity
- Closing the achievement gap—equity in education



Wolfe Street Academy Students Come Ready to Learn. According to the 2009 Maryland Model for School Readiness report, 64.9 percent of Baltimore City Public Schools' kindergarteners arrived at school "fully ready" to learn in 2008-09, up from 57.1 percent over the prior year. Statewide, 73 percent of kindergarteners were fully ready for school in 2009.

- Demonstrated success of academic excellence

The goal of the CUBE Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence is to showcase excellence in

urban education and help spread best practices to other school districts. This year's award was presented at the 2010 CUBE Annual Conference, held Sept. 30 to Oct. 2 in Baltimore.

INSIDE

2 Baltimore City Public Schools

4 Broward County (Fla.) Public Schools

5 Houston Independent School District

7 Portsmouth Public Schools

Baltimore City Public Schools

It wasn't so long ago—less than a decade, in fact—that the Baltimore City Public Schools were considered Exhibit A for the problems facing urban education. But how times have changed for the better.

The district has made double-digit state test score gains, significantly improved the performance of minority students, increased public support in

measurable ways, and sharply cut the number of students dropping out of school. Now, Baltimore remains a role model of how successful large, urban school districts can be.

In 2009, the 83,000-student Baltimore school district was named a finalist for the CUBE Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence. And this year, Baltimore stands as the top urban school district in the nation, the 2010 winner of the CUBE Award.



Chess Champions. Baltimore City Public Schools won its first-ever national chess championship at the National K-12 Chess Championships in Columbus, Ohio. Over 1400 players from 38 states competed in this three-day event. After the seventh and final round, Baltimore Polytechnic Institute was crowned national champions in the unrated division, which consisted of 141 players from 21 states.

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Baltimore City Public Schools Board of School Commissioners:

Neil E. Duke, Chair
George M. VanHook, Sr., Vice Chair
Lisa Akchin
Anirban Basu
Jim Campbell
Jerrelle Francois
Robert Heck
David Stone
Maxine Johnson Wood

Governance structure:

Nine at-large board members and one student member are appointed by the mayor of Baltimore and the governor of Maryland. They serve three-year terms.

Superintendent of Schools:

Andrés A. Alonso

Student enrollment: 82,866

Students by ethnicity:

African-American: 88%
Asian-American: 1%
Hispanic/Latino: 3%
White: 8%
Other: 0%

Students receiving FRL: 74.6%

Students in Special Education: 14.8%

ESL/ELL students: 2%

Average per pupil

expenditures: \$15,379

(combined general and grant funding)

Staff: 11,716

Website: www.bcps.k12.md.us

Remarkable classroom gains

The district has made particular progress since 2007, when the school board hired former New York City Deputy Chancellor Andres Alonso to be the district's CEO.

In three years, the Baltimore City Public Schools have made record progress in closing major achievement gaps and improving the performance of various subgroups. For example:

- Special education students in grades three to eight have improved their reading scores on state tests by nearly 30 percentage points since 2007. English language learners have made even more progress in reading, improving by 39 percentage points.

- In math, those same special education students improved by nearly 28 percentage points during that three-year time span. English language learners improved by 39 percentage points—and actually outperformed their English-speaking peers in math.

- For Hispanic students, Baltimore has narrowed the achievement gap by 38 percentage points in reading and more than 40 percentage points in math since 2007.

- African-American test scores have grown by 21 percentage points in reading and 26 percentage points in math during the last three years.

“Our schools face extraordinary challenges and they need to be extremely nimble and targeted in how they respond

to the needs of kids,” Alonso said. Rather than tell schools how to deliver instruction, he advocates providing needed resources and what he calls “bounded autonomy.” Principals and other school-level leaders have the freedom to make decisions, as long as they stay within certain guidelines and as long as they are moving toward certain goals.

An improved school climate may be as responsible for these significant increases as any particular program.

Baltimore City school board members revamped the district's suspension policy to provide more alternatives to out-of-school suspensions. At the same time, the number of major disciplinary incidents fell by nearly 58 percent between 2004 and 2009, indicating that measures to make schools safer and more orderly are working.

Back from the brink

All of this progress is particularly remarkable in light of just how troubled the Baltimore City Public Schools were in the early 2000s. The district wasn't just troubled—it was on the verge of collapse.

Student test scores and graduation rates were low. School enrollment was declining, as those who could increasingly turned to private and charter schools. The district went through five



Baltimore City Public Schools rolled out Breakfast in Baltimore, an expanded breakfast program marked by better meal options and a big push to get all students to eat breakfast in school. There's an added bonus: the federal government reimburses City Schools for all breakfasts served, so the more students that participate in breakfast, the more dollars for schools.



Making Baltimore Cleaner, Greener, More Sustainable. Students from the Independence School created and implemented a school recycling program, developed an educational campaign for teachers, students and parents, and created a student manual with clear guidelines about how to handle waste management in and out of school.

CEOs in six years. Rock bottom came in November 2003, when board members learned that the district was on the verge of financial insolvency.

The board laid off almost 1,000 employees and took out a \$34 million loan to handle the crisis. In 2004-05, school board members took the painful but necessary step of evaluating their own role in the district's dysfunction. Board members took themselves out of the day-to-day operations of the district and became a policy-making board focused on the bigger picture.

The district began its turnaround in 2004. That progress accelerated starting in 2007, when the board hired Alonso and crafted a strategic academic plan. Progress wasn't always easy. For example, the district closed or reconstituted more than 20 chronically low-performing schools in 2008 and 2009. Those moves were met with some public resistance, but board members stood behind Alonso's plan.

"It all starts with consistency," said School Board Chair Neil Duke, noting that clear, consistent messages from the board to teachers, students, parents, and the public has helped restore credibility and given everyone a common direction.

The district was able to exit state "Corrective Action" status in 2009, after having been on Maryland's watch list since 2002.

In 2009, the school district settled a special education lawsuit that had hung over the schools for 26 years. The settlement agreement ended active court oversight of the Baltimore City school

district and acknowledged that the schools had made significant progress on behalf of disabled students.

A district on the rise

Perhaps the biggest testament to Baltimore's progress is the fact that student enrollment has increased each of the past two school years, following almost 40 years of annual enrollment declines.

"I think it is a real endorsement of the path we're taking," Alonso said. "We're making decisions for the right reasons and we're honest with the information we're providing."

"It's gratifying to know that people are entrusting us with their children in greater numbers than ever before," Duke said.

Alonso also has made public communications, often a trouble spot for a large, diverse urban district, an area of emphasis. The CEO is insistent that the district provide information in a timely, honest manner, even if that news isn't always good. For example, the district has created a 10,000 person distribution list for its regular communications. Rather than waiting for a crisis and the subsequent public outcry, board members and district officials actively solicit input from the public about virtually every key decision.

"This is a school system where the entire community is united about the improvement of the schools," Alonso said. "The schools should not have a fortress mentality."

That investment in community rela-

tionships is paying dividends. In early 2010, more than 500 concerned citizens rallied in Annapolis in support of continued funding for the Baltimore City schools. Such public support would have been unthinkable just a few years earlier.

"For the first time in decades, I feel like we are headed in the right direction," said Bishop Douglas Miles, a prominent Baltimore minister and community leader.

"At the end of the day, we keep in mind that whatever decisions have to be made must be made in the best interests of students," Duke said. "That grounds our decision-making."

But ask the CEO about the district's biggest success in his tenure, and he says without hesitation it has been reducing the number of dropouts. Strategies the district has employed to reduce the number of dropouts include extended-day and flex-time programs, community fairs to publicize graduation options, as well as sending district representatives door-to-door to meet with students who have left school. Beyond that, Alonso said keeping students enrolled is a matter of getting to know students and developing personal relationships with them.

In the last two years alone, the district's dropout rate has declined by 33 percent—or 931 students choosing to stay in school. The latter number is far more meaningful to Alonso than any test score.

"That's about real kids you can count," Alonso said. ■

Broward County (Fla.) Public Schools



Broward County Public Schools: Educating today's students for tomorrow's world.

With more than 255,000 students, nearly 16,000 teachers, 288 schools, and a \$5 billion budget, overseeing the Broward County Public Schools could prove to be a logistical nightmare.

In 2008, the School Board of Broward County (Fla.) embarked on a strategic plan to guide the nation's sixth-largest school system. The three-year plan outlined strategies and goals not only for expected topics, such as student performance and closing racial achievement gaps, but also on wide-ranging goals like employee excellence, student wellness, and even environmental stewardship.

Two years into the strategic plan, school board members credit this goal setting with helping the massive, diverse school district achieve some remarkable progress. For example:

- Broward County has regularly equaled or beaten the Florida state average reading and math test scores in both fourth and eighth grades. In particular, students who speak English as a second language have outperformed their peers statewide.

- The district has made gradual, but significant, progress in closing the performance gaps on state achievement tests between white students and African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students.

- Enrollment in Advanced Placement courses has grown 64 percent for African-American students and 57 percent for Hispanic students in the past five years.

- Since 2005, Broward County's graduation rate has improved from 67

percent to 74 percent, with minority students making comparable gains.

- More than 80 percent of Broward County schools earned grades of "A" or "B" in the state's school accountability program. Nearly 94 percent earned at least a "C." Florida measures reading, math, science and writing.

Getting to success

Achieving these goals hasn't required school officials to operate with a heavy hand. Superintendent James Notter and his team give a great deal of decision-making authority to the individual schools, letting principals and teachers pick the course that works best for their students—as long as they get the desired results as prescribed by the strategic plan.

"We made a decision a while back that we are not an organization that believes we've got to find the best program," Notter said.

Also, the school board doesn't base its success strictly on narrow test score results. Instead, it evaluates the number of healthy meals students receive, the availability of mental health services to students and employees, and the number of work days lost to injury and illness.

"It's not the 'drill and kill' approach," said Jennifer Gottlieb, Chair of the Broward County Board of Education and the mother of two young Broward students. "If you provide a well-rounded education, the children will do well on these tests."

School board members have consistently invested in quality teaching. The board provides a \$10,000 bonus to teachers who agree to teach in low-per-

forming schools and who earn National Board Certification. Broward County currently has more than 1,700 board certified teachers.

A focus on technology

Notter has a story he often tells

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Broward County Public Schools Board of Education:

Jennifer L. Gottlieb, Chair
Benjamin J. Williams, Vice Chair
Robin Bartleman
Maureen S. Dinnen
Phyllis C. Hope
Stephanie A. Kraft, Esq.
Ann Murray
Robert D. Parks
Kevin P. Tynan, Esq.

Governance Structure:

Two board members are elected at-large; seven are elected by district. Members serve four-year terms.

Superintendent of Schools:

James F. Notter

Student enrollment: 255,203

Students by ethnicity:

African-American: 38.23%

Asian-American: 3.58%

Hispanic/Latino: 25.32%

White: 29.14%

Other: 3.73%

Students receiving FRL: 52.53%

Students in Special Education: 11.90%

ESL/ELL students: 9.49%

Average per pupil expenditures:

Exceptional Students: \$12,282

Traditional Students: \$6,714

At-Risk Student: \$7,681

Vocational Student: \$6,393

Staff: 27,356

Website: www.browardschools.com

about going to one of the district's poorest elementary schools and watching a fifth-grader using an electronic white board to create an online map for a class presentation. In another Broward classroom, a group of students chats with an elementary school class in England via a Skype phone.

Such stories are commonplace in Broward County, where every school employs technology extensively and frequently. Students are engaged by technology, Notter said. They enjoy using it, which helps them learn more and focus harder on their school work.

"The use of technology by students and teachers has led to negative discipline issues going down," he said.

One particularly helpful piece of technology has been a district-wide database of lesson plans, or the Broward Enterprise Education Portal (B.E.E.P). Using B.E.E.P, any teacher can pull down complete lesson plans for virtually any topic. Parents and students also can use B.E.E.P to access supplementary educational materials, scholarship information, and district policies. More than 139,000 students use the portal every month.

Broward County Public Schools has been a national leader in virtual education. The district offers a full-time, fully accredited online school. Classes are taught by accredited district teachers and students must meet the same requirements as they would in a traditional classroom. The district also offers the Broward Virtual University, an online professional development program that allows educators to improve their skills and knowledge base from their computers.

Through the district's Digital Divide Program, low-income students in the district are eligible to receive computers for their homes free of charge.

Straightforward communications

From the start of its strategic plan, the School Board of Broward County has made honest, open communications a priority. The board has instituted a formal procedure for soliciting information from the public. In fact, the public had considerable input into the strategic planning process.

Likewise, the board also works hard at disseminating information to the public

in clear, easy-to-understand language. For example, the district's website features a "Myth versus Fact" section on the district's expenditures in an effort to clear up misconceptions about school spending. It's the type of plain, straightforward communication that is often missing from large government agencies.

Gottlieb said the same honest, two-way communications define the board's relationship with the superintendent.

"Just like any public office, it doesn't come without challenges," Gottlieb said. "But when it comes time for the business of the board, we've got a solid working group. We have an open exchange of dialogue with the superintendent."

Challenges certainly remain for the Broward County Public Schools. One particularly daunting obstacle is the prospect of state budget cuts. But even as board members prepare to make difficult budget decisions, Gottlieb said there still is plenty to be thankful for in Broward County's schools.

"I couldn't be happier with not only the education my two biological children are receiving, but also the education the more than 200,000 children of Broward County are receiving," she said. ■

Houston Independent School District

Many school districts who have earned consideration for the CUBE Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence throughout the years have been historically struggling school systems that, through skilled planning and hard work, managed to make dramatic improvements.

But the Houston Independent School District doesn't fit this model. Instead, Houston has been regarded as a role model for school reform dating back to the 1990s, when future U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige was superintendent (the district is a past winner of the CUBE Award for Urban School Board Excellence in 2007.) So the challenge facing the Houston Board of Education has been how to sustain and build upon this progress.

It is a challenge the board has embraced. The district has made a number of sweeping recent changes, including linking teacher performance reviews to student achievement.

To show how serious board members

are about reform, they hired in 2009 noted innovator—and sometimes controversial leader—Terry Grier, to be the district's new superintendent. From Tennessee to North Carolina to San Diego, Grier posted tangible evidence of improved student performance and created programs that have been copied across the country. He also received criticism from those who claimed he wanted to change too much too fast.

Greg Meyers, president of the Houston Independent School District Board of Education, and his colleagues were not satisfied with standing on a pat hand—they want to do even better.

"What does reform really mean these days? Now, the word needs to be



HISD Board President Greg Meyers visiting with students.

stronger than reform—and I threw out the word 'transform,'" he said.

Improving teacher performance

A centerpiece of those transformational efforts has been the board's

innovative and, again, sometimes controversial, approach to teacher evaluation and compensation.

In 2007, the board created the Accelerating Student Progress Increasing Results & Expectations (ASPIRE) program, which uses value-added data to determine educator pay bonuses. To date, the district has paid out more than \$113 million in performance-based bonuses.

Two years later, Houston voted to include value-added results as a reason why a teacher's contract could not be renewed. Based on former University of Tennessee researcher Bill Sanders' work, the value-added system seeks to measure how far teachers take their students in a given school

year, regardless of where those students started.

In other words, teachers whose students did not show enough academic growth might lose their jobs. The local teachers' association strongly opposed the measure, and the dispute became heated. But the board gave its unwavering support to the administration, and the measure has become policy.

District officials also have decided to reconstitute four high schools and five middle schools, replacing the leadership and 40 to 70 percent of the teachers at these struggling schools. Again, these steps have met with some resistance from teachers and community members, but board members remain firm that such wholesale changes are needed to transform chronically underperforming campuses.

These changes may seem more suited to a district in need of a turnaround, but Houston leaders say they are needed to ensure the district continues to improve.

More than 750 angry teachers packed a public meeting, even booing speakers in favor of the value-added plan. Grier also had a highly public run-in with a popular middle school principal accused of improprieties. The principal ultimately resigned, but the incident fostered mistrust for the district in some circles.

However, the district's academic progress has won over many members of the public, even some who may have been initially skeptical.

Change comes quickly

Houston students also have experienced a series of major reforms in recent years.

One effort has focused on improving the district's dropout rate. In January, the district implemented "graduation labs" in most high schools to help students who need the most help. Hundreds of students already have earned credits toward graduation through the program, targeting students who have fallen behind their peers.

"If you don't let them catch up, they'll drop out," Grier said.

Other recent innovations include "twilight" schools for students who must work during the school day, an accelerated program for middle school students who have fallen multiple grades behind, and a "Hope Academy"

for students experiencing academic and social problems in traditional schools.

Grier also ordered barbed wire fences removed at 68 Houston schools, saying these campuses needed to be more welcoming to students and parents.

These efforts are working. In 2009, a district record 74 percent of Houston schools earned the state's highest rankings of Exemplary or Recognized in Texas' accountability program. Houston's performance was tops among large urban districts in Texas. In addition, 80 percent of Houston schools met federal Adequate Yearly Progress goals, and more than 70 percent of schools reported increases in state reading, math, and social studies scores.

Also, the number of students both taking Advanced Placement courses and passing AP exams has risen dramatically during the past two years. The number of Houston high schools on *Newsweek* magazine's list of America's Best High Schools rose from seven in 2009 to 15 in 2010.

Both the superintendent and board members say their relationship couldn't be better. Grier praises the board for setting measurable goals and monitoring them monthly, but then allowing him and his staff to use their expertise in pursuing those goals.

"They are not a rubber-stamp board," Grier said. "But they don't micromanage. This board of education has a history of being the best of any large school district in America."

But while the internal board and board-to-superintendent relationships have been outstanding, district officials admit they need to focus more on selling their transformative vision to a sometimes skeptical public.

"Some of our communications efforts have not been as good as we've needed to do," Meyers said. But the district has taken positive steps in this regard in recent months, greatly increasing the number of community meetings, for example. Recent surveys indicate that the public's perception of the school system is considerably better than it was three years ago.

The Houston Independent School District has a rich tradition—and plenty of reasons to expect even greater success in the future.

"We're proud of what we are doing as a team," Meyers said. ■

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Houston Independent School District Board of Education:

Greg Meyers, President
Paula Harris, 1st Vice President
Diana Dávila, 2nd Vice President
Carol Galloway, Secretary
Anna Eastman, Assistant Secretary
Michael L. Lunceford
Lawrence Marshall
Harvin C. Moore
Manuel Rodríguez, Jr.

Governance structure:

Nine members are elected by geographic district to serve four-year staggered terms.

Superintendent of Schools:

Terry B. Grier, Ed.D

Student enrollment: 202,773

Students by ethnicity:

African-American: 26.5%

Asian-American: 3%

Hispanic/Latino: 61.7%

White: 8%

Other: 0%

Students receiving FRL: 79%

Students in Special Education:

8%

ESL/ELL students: 27.3%

Average per pupil

expenditures: \$6,808

Staff: approx. 29,500

Website: www.houstonisd.org

Portsmouth Public Schools



"Pure science—pure fun!" Sixth-graders attending Aerobase Atlantis, part of Portsmouth's STEM Pathways initiative.

As the 2002-03 school year started, only three of the Portsmouth Public Schools' 25 campuses were fully accredited by Virginia. These dismal figures gave cold factual evidence to the many skeptics who said Portsmouth's heavily African-American, overwhelmingly low-income public schools were unsalvageable failures.

But the Portsmouth Board of Education refused to accept that verdict. Neither did David Stuckwisch, the district's new superintendent entering the 2002-03 school year. The school board, superintendent, and Portsmouth staff set to work on improving the struggling school system.

Year by year, step by step, they did improve the schools—so much that in 2010, the Portsmouth Public Schools is a finalist for the CUBE Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence.

Early challenges

When Stuckwisch, formerly the school superintendent in Hopewell, Va., took over the Portsmouth job, his top directive from the board was to get Portsmouth's schools accredited.

To make that happen, the school board and Stuckwisch embarked on a major campaign to revamp how the school district delivered education. For example, the district reorganized middle school grades, keeping the sixth-graders at their elementary schools. The rationale was that since many students often struggle in middle school, for a variety of reasons, keeping them in a familiar place for an extra year, where they are known by their school's teachers and staff, could only benefit them. So far, that decision appears to be paying dividends.

While the sixth-grade decision was well-received by parents, the board's vote to close a large, chronically low-performing middle school was met with protests.

But during these tumultuous times, board members remained dedicated to their course of action, and to their new superintendent. Despite the protests and the pain that comes with revamping an entire school system, board members supported Stuckwisch in public and in private.

"We figured the only direction we had to go was up," said Linda Ridenour, the school board's Vice Chair.

"We had a board that was willing to work and pull together," said Board Chair James Bridgeford.

Other moves were made. Central office instructional teams were reorganized, and in June 2004, six of the district's 27 principals were reassigned, with the changes coming at underachieving schools. Also, two small elementary schools were transformed into preschools.

One simple reform has been the district's focus on improving student attendance. Every month, the district and board recognize the elementary, middle, and high schools with the highest average attendance, with the winning schools getting to fly a pennant. The competition has helped the district achieve an average daily attendance rate of more than 94 percent.

Finding success

The turnaround wasn't immediate. Improvement was made in gradual, but steady, progress. But each year, more and more schools earned full state accreditation.

Then, at the end of the 2008-09 school year, state education officials announced that every school in the district had earned accreditation. In addition, the district met its federal Adequate Yearly Progress targets, something only 60 of Virginia's 132 school districts accomplished. Eight schools saw more than 90 percent of students pass the state English test, while seven schools had a more than 90 percent passing rate for math.

District officials also increased the number of opportunities and choices available to students.

For example, Portsmouth's First College, a collaborative effort between the school district and Tidewater Community College, gives students the chance to earn college credit while still in high school. The district pays for books, transportation

and half of the tuition costs.

The board and administration also has made a renewed commitment to non-college-bound students. The district started technical education programs for careers in the hotel, early childhood education, culinary, horticulture, automotive, and marine diesel industries. Students can earn certification and learn skills they can use to land a real-world job.

"It should be a given that they are going to graduate," Bridgeford said. "The question is, 'What are you going to do when you graduate?'"

In addition to student performance,

PORTSMOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Portsmouth Public Schools

Board of Education:

James E. Bridgeford, Chair
Linda D. Ridenour, Vice Chair
Dr. Elizabeth Daniels
James M. Hewitt, IV
Edward P. "Ned" McCabe
B. Keith Nance, Sr.
Jean H. Shackelford
Dr. Mark M. Whitaker
Costella B. Williams

Governance structure:

Nine school board members, all elected at-large, to serve four-year staggered terms with elections held in even numbered years. School board members elect their own board chair and vice chair.

Superintendent of Schools:

David C. Stuckwisch

Student enrollment: 15,169

Students by ethnicity:

African-American: 73%

Asian-American: 1%

Hispanic/Latino: 2%

White: 24%

Other: 0%

Students receiving FRL: 59%

Students in Special Education:

14%

ESL/ELL students: 1%

Average per pupil

expenditures: \$10,709

Staff: 2,236

Website: www.pps.k12.va.us

Stuckwisch and the board stabilized teacher turnover, a bellwether indicator of a school system's performance and perception. When Stuckwisch arrived in Portsmouth, he had to fill more than 300 teaching positions. Six years later, the number of vacancies to fill was roughly one-third that number.

District officials credit the greatly improved teacher retention rates to a combination of academic progress (as measured by the number of accredited

schools) and the school board's commitment to improving teacher salaries. Between 2005 and 2008, the Portsmouth Board of Education raised teacher pay by an average of 7 percent annually.

The Portsmouth Public Schools still face challenges—the district is the third-poorest in the state and approximately 65 percent of students are low-income.

But the progress of the past eight years gives Portsmouth leaders the hope and

confidence that they can overcome obstacles and achieve goals. As Ridenour said, teachers, parents and school advocates now see that their hard work hasn't been in vain. By any measure, there is little question that the school district is heading in the right direction.

"Running a successful school system is like a dairy farm," Stuckwisch said. "There's a lot of hard work every day." ■

Council of Urban Boards of Education 2010-2011 Steering Committee

Lock P. Beachum, Sr.,
CUBE Chair, Youngstown, OH
Sandra Jensen,
CUBE Vice Chair, Omaha, NE
Tariq Butt, Chicago, IL
Stephen Corona,
Immediate Past Chair, Fort Wayne, IN
Ruben Cortez, Brownsville, Texas
Elizabeth Daniels, Portsmouth, VA
Khaatim Sherrer El, Atlanta, GA
Minnie Forte-Brown, Durham, NC
Ralph R. Hernandez, Buffalo, NY
Harium Martin-Morris, Seattle, WA
Katherine P. Mitchell, Little Rock, AR
Norma Muñoz, Phoenix, AZ
Gracie Porter, Nashville, Tenn.
Sandra Smith-Jones, Virginia Beach, VA
Susan L. Valdes, Tampa, FL
Van Henri White, Rochester, NY

Ex-Officio Members

Earl C. Rickman III
NSBA President

Anne L. Bryant
NSBA Executive Director

NSBA Staff
Joseph Villani
Deputy Executive Director

Lisa Bartusek
Associate Executive Director

Katrina A. Kelley
Director, CUBE Program

Jessica Bonaiuto
Senior Manager, CUBE Program

Kevin Scott
*Membership Services Manager,
CUBE Program*

Krista Freer
Coordinator, CUBE Program

The CUBE Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence recognizes successfully governed school districts. The award is presented to the school district that best demonstrates excellence in board governance, closing the achievement gap, academic achievement, and community engagement.

Each member will receive the application form for the 2011 Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence next March. All applications received by May 2, 2011, will be considered in the next judging process. We encourage all CUBE districts to apply.

The 2011 CUBE Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence will be announced at the CUBE Annual Conference in New Orleans, Oct. 6-Oct. 8, 2011.

About CUBE

For more than forty years, the Council of Urban Boards of Education has been at the forefront in helping urban school districts strive for excellence. Established in 1967 by NSBA's Board of Directors, CUBE is the only national membership organization governed solely by urban school board members dedicated to the needs and interests of urban school boards. CUBE's mission is to create opportunities for urban school board leaders to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective policy makers and advocates for excellence and equity in public education.

CUBE represents more than 110 urban school districts in 35 states and the Virgin Islands. Our member districts educate nearly 8 million students in almost 12,000 schools with a collective budget of \$99 billion. CUBE helps urban school boards leaders find solutions to challenges at the local level and seeks to improve their policy making effectiveness. CUBE creates a forum for urban school board members to share innovative practices through issues seminars, conferences, legislative advocacy, research projects, professional networking opportunities, specialized publications, and local governance and policy assistance.

CUBE remains committed to closing the achievement and opportunity gaps and educating students in racially, ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse settings.



Serving America's Urban Public School Students

**National School Boards Association
Council of Urban Boards of Education**

1680 Duke Street Alexandria, VA 22314
Telephone: 703-838-6705 • Fax: 703-549-6719
cube@nsba.org • www.nsba.org/cube