AMERICA’S BEST URBAN SCHOOLS SYMPOSIUM

LEADERSHIP FOR EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY

NATIONAL CENTER FOR URBAN SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

OCTOBER 8-10, 2018

www.ncust.com
The National Center for Urban School Transformation would like to thank our school, district, county and higher education partners for their ongoing support of NCUST and for the important work they are doing to improve learning outcomes for all of the students they serve.

Romoland School District
America's Finest Charter School
Springs Charter Schools
Sweetwater Union High School District
Integrity Charter School
Fallbrook Union High School District
Iftin Charter School
SD County Office of Education
National University Sanford Educational Center
San Diego Unified School District
Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Welcome to the America's Best Urban Schools Symposium. Thank you for joining us as we celebrate excellence in public education and learn from urban schools and districts that achieve impressive academic results, especially for children of color, English learners, students with disabilities, and students who meet low-income criteria. As our theme suggests, the schools featured throughout this symposium are establishing “Leadership for Excellence and Equity.” These outstanding elementary, middle, and high schools benefit from teacher leaders, support program leaders, principal leaders, and districts leaders who are working together to 1) create positive transformational cultures; 2) ensure that all students have access to challenging academic curricula; and 3) provide effective, engaging instruction that helps all students (including all of the diverse populations they serve) succeed in meeting high academic standards. Throughout this symposium we will feature teachers, principals, support staff, and superintendents who have inspired, supported, nurtured, and/or studied efforts to ensure excellence and equity for all students.

We appreciate the generous support of SDSU’s Department of Dual Language and English Learner Education. With their support, this Symposium features our first Dual Language Academy Award Category. We also appreciate the generous support of AVID, Pivot Learning, and The Consortium on Reaching Excellence in Education (CORE). Their support has helped us identify and award more outstanding schools. Also, we recognize and value the commitment of everyone in attendance at this event. We appreciate the outstanding educators who have come to share what they have learned on their journey toward equity and excellence in public schooling. As well, we appreciate the dedicated teachers, principals, support staff, superintendents, researchers, and technical support providers who have come here in search of information that might help them make a greater difference for the students they serve. Finally, we welcome the participation of school and university partners of the Sanford Inspire Program. We hope this event is useful as all of us work to create outstanding schools that inspire every child to excel.

Best wishes,

Joseph F. Johnson, Jr., Ph.D.

Interim Provost and Senior Vice President | San Diego State University
Executive Director | National Center for Urban School Transformation

NATIONAL CENTER FOR URBAN SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION
ncust.com
Admission to Conference Activities
Your name badge is your “ticket” for admission to ALL sessions and symposium activities. For security reasons, please wear your name badge at all times.

Hotel Contact Information
The following is the hotel contact information for those who may need to reach you during the symposium:
San Diego Marriott La Jolla
4240 La Jolla Village Drive
La Jolla, California 92037
P: +1 858-587-1414
F: +1 858-431-6634

Registration
Conference registration will take place in the La Jolla Ballroom Lobby during the following hours:
Sunday, OCT 7th 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM
Monday, OCT 8th 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM
Tuesday, OCT 9th 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM
Wednesday, OCT 10th 7:00 AM to 12:00 PM

On-Site Assistance
Our staff will be available in the La Jolla Ballroom Foyer during conference hours. We are there to assist you and answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to call upon us for any on-site needs.
OPENING PLENARY AND KEYNOTE

8:00 AM - 9:35 AM
La Jolla Ballroom

Entertainment
Jazz Combo, The San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts, San Diego Unified School District
Director: Dr. John Reynolds
Principal: Timothy Farson

Presentation of Colors
AJROTC, Crawford High School, San Diego Unified School District
Director: Major Foss and Sgt. Coleman
Principal: Dr. Richard Lawrence

National Anthem
Vivian Romero, The San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts, San Diego Unified School District
Principal: Timothy Farson

Welcome
Cindy Marten, Superintendent, San Diego Unified School District

Teaching and Learning: Equity is found in the Details
TUESDAY OCTOBER 9 / 8:30 AM

Kate Gerson, CEO of UnboundEd, examines curriculum as an equity issue and the need to support all students’ access to and success with grade-level standards in order to close the ‘provision gap’.

Kate Gerson has driven the design and development of curriculum implementation and professional learning, trained transformational school leaders, and served as both a high school teacher and principal. As managing partner of programs at UnboundEd, Kate sets the vision and oversees the design, delivery, and quality of all programs. Kate was the senior fellow for educator engagement at the Regents Research Fund, where she oversaw the design and development of New York State’s groundbreaking curriculum, training and professional development resources related to higher educational standards on EngageNY.org. Previously, she was executive director with the national nonprofit New Leaders and trained aspiring school leaders. She also served as a principal at a turnaround high school for overaged, under-credited students in South Brooklyn, New York.
Wildflower Wildcats benefit from a dynamic educational environment focused on enhancing social skills, students’ dreams and aspirations and access to rigorous standards to “increase learning for all.” All stakeholders know and understand their role in achieving the mission and contributing to the school vision. Communication is purposeful and designed to be inclusive; appreciation of diversity and ensuring equity for all students is the goal. Teachers are departmentalized and students are grouped to differentiate and tier instruction to fill gaps and help guide students to their maximum potential. Teachers utilize the Understanding by Design process to break down and plan instruction. Teachers believe in continuous improvement and using data to help keep them focused and to support a system for immediate intervention. Students also have the opportunity to work at a higher grade level if they have mastered grade level concepts. And, the school has a Genius Hour for project-based learning opportunities. As well, students have extensive extracurricular opportunities to expand their passions through clubs including art, cheerleading, coding, science, honor choir, intramurals, tech club and more. Staff want students to be happy in the learning environment and have ownership over their learning.

Presenters
Wendy Godwin | Principal
Sarah Lehmkuhl | Assistant Principal

Facilitator
Cara Riggs | NCUST Executive Coach
At Ortiz Elementary School, all students, including those who are learning English and those with special needs, are learning the same rigorous curricula. Administration, faculty, and staff all believe in the capacity of their students to learn at high levels. “We get things done,” explained first-year principal Patricia Garza. “We do have obstacles, but we don’t make excuses.” When the state moved to more challenging standards, the gap between second and third grade achievement was stark. In response, Ms. Garza (then as dean of instruction) began to articulate clear academic expectations in the primary grades. Today, Ortiz kindergarteners are reading and first graders are writing in paragraphs. Ms. Garza was concerned that her students with special needs were not gaining access to grade-level material. Today, special need students learn alongside their grade-level peers and resource support is pushed into the classroom. Join us for a discussion about how the new principal of this two-time NCUST award-winning school employs heterogeneous grouping, teacher collaboration, and other structures and practices to continue to push the level of rigor and ensure that all of her students have access to challenging curricula.

**Presenters**
Patricia Garza | Principal
Patricia Rodriguez | Assistant Principal

**Facilitator**
Lynne Perez, Ph.D. | Former NCUST Deputy Director
Kenmore Elementary uses a Response to Intervention (RTI) model to ensure all students have access to a standards-based, rigorous curriculum. They believe that, “all students can succeed by mastering one standard at a time.” A big part of ensuring access to the curriculum is consistent use of Thinking Maps and Write from the Beginning and Beyond across all grade levels. They want students to gain academic vocabulary and organize their thinking so that they can write about what they have learned, believing this will bring students to a higher level of comprehension. Teachers share strategies and plan lessons during 45-minute collaboration meetings weekly. They also review data to plan intervention groups for their 45-minute intervention blocks three times a week which are supported by all staff including the principal, assistant principal and high school ROP students so that students receive the support they need. Teachers also receive support to grow from instructional coaches who model lessons and also through visits to other teachers’ classrooms to observe use of effective teaching strategies. Come learn how Kenmore created a literacy integration program that won a Gold Ribbon Award.

Presenter
Jane Sattari | Principal

Facilitator
Granger Ward | NCUST Executive Coach
The World Languages Institute mission is to prepare students linguistically, socially and cognitively to lead with creativity and innovation. Students arrive with varying degrees of proficiency in English and Spanish but are immersed in courses in both languages immediately. All students take Latin in sixth and seventh grades to support their language development and have the opportunity to learn a fourth language if they choose. To support students’ learning, teachers incorporate both content and language objectives into lessons that are frequently project-based and hands-on. As well, teachers use a common lesson plan format that includes essential questions, vocabulary, differentiation for diverse learners and methods of assessment. The administrative team audits lesson plans, conducts walkthroughs with particular foci and develops weekly professional development based on data analysis, observations and student work. There is a real team spirit at WLI with emphasis on Tier I instruction, so assistants and support staff including SPED push into classrooms. Professional Learning Communities discuss student work and strengths and weaknesses in their instruction that yielded the outcomes, all in an effort to improve. Come learn how this school is getting great results for its dual language learners.

**Presenters**
Guadalupe Barreto | Principal
Marie-Lise Mosbeux | Assistant Principal

**Facilitator**
Rupi Boyd, Ed.D. | NCUST Executive Coach
Maplewood Richmond Heights School District
Maplewood, MO
2015 America’s Best Urban Schools Winner
9:45 AM - 10:55 AM
Coronado Room

This urban, racially diverse high school, neighbor to St. Louis, has achieved outstanding results for all of its students. Educators have developed rigorous curricula that rival the offerings of many elite suburban schools including honors courses in the core curricular areas as well as six different AP courses. The teachers have established common, effective teaching practices that support the success of all students including differentiation of instruction and use of technology, as the school provides a laptop for each student. Curriculum and instruction are situated in a warm and pleasant climate that makes high school students want to come to school and learn. In addition, an apprenticeship program exposes students to “real world” work experiences to develop their career skills and interests. In a few short years, leaders at Maplewood Richmond Heights turned around student discipline, academic expectations, connections to parents and the community, and the level of collaboration among teachers. Learn how leaders helped transform Maplewood Richmond Heights into a model high school that improves students’ lives.

Presenter
Kevin Grawer | Principal

Facilitator
Shirley Peterson, Ed.D. | NCUST Executive Coach
2.1: FAY HERRON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | PK-5

Clark County School District
North Las Vegas, NV
2018 America’s Best Urban Schools Winner
11:10 AM - 12:20 PM
Newport Room

Fay Herron staff are dedicated to their students and “by any means necessary” will find the resources teachers need to reach their primarily low-income and Latino student population. The principal’s motto is, “If you make a decision with the best interest of the child in mind, it will be the right decision.” Freaky Friday meetings provide grade levels time to collaborate and design learning goals with differentiation in mind so that they reach each and every student. Wacky Wednesday meetings allow for vertical collaboration so teachers can have in-depth conversations with colleagues in other grade levels to align instruction and also professional development to learn new strategies. Teacher rely on data to provide feedback on their instruction and do weekly progress monitoring on specific skills. A 30-minute intervention period and a before and after school program supports struggling students to reach grade-level standards. Staff at Fay Herron also have a lot of fun with each other and the students. They offer numerous clubs for students including an art club, jazz dance team, rock club and baking club in addition to an active arts program. Students have the opportunity to do Folkloric Dance and participate in Disney musicals in school.

Presenter
Judy Jordahl | Principal

Facilitator
Cara Riggs | NCUST Executive Coach
At Mary and Frank Yturria Elementary School in Brownsville, Texas a coherent system of structures provides the foundation for excellence. Weekly grade-level meetings provide structure and time for educators to work together to analyze student performance data, identify individual students’ learning needs, plan targeted lessons, create assessments, and share ideas about how to increase instructional engagement and effectiveness. Regular diagnostic and formative assessments are designed and administered to guide teachers’ decisions about instruction and determine intervention and enrichment opportunities for students. The administrative team observes teaching and learning regularly and frequently. As a teacher explained, “They are very good about doing a lot of walkthroughs and give a lot of feedback. I’m never worried. It isn’t a ‘gotcha.’ They provide constructive feedback to improve our practice.” And, classrooms are structured such that all students (special need, bilingual, gifted, and general education) learn together and interact with one another throughout the school day. Join us for a closer look at how this elementary school is implementing a system of structures that supports excellence and equity for all students.

**Presenters**
Sandra Cortez | Principal
Melinda Lopez, Ed.D. | Dean of Instruction

**Facilitator**
Lynne Perez, Ph.D. | Former NCUST Deputy Director
El Sol Science and Arts Academy is an independent charter school founded in 2001 with 110 students and now enrolls over 900. The Dual Language program begins in Transitional Kindergarten as a 90/10 model, 90% Spanish/10% English, and gradually increases the use of English. By fourth grade the use of each language is 50/50. Middle school students use their bilingual skills in the community for service projects. They have translated menus for local restaurants and for Nurse Practitioners at community health fairs. Teachers collaborate and have common planning times. There is in-classroom support for teachers, demonstration lessons, and peer-to-peer observation in order to improve student outcomes. Parents are also an integral part of the school and can be seen volunteering on the playground helping with supervision, in classrooms, and doing clerical work for teachers. During the parent focus group they expressed how much they appreciated everything the school does for their children and how excited they are to have their students be bilingual and biliterate. El Sol strives to establish a positive community climate through its culture of kindness, respect, trust, and support for everyone. Come learn how this school has established a thriving school culture dedicated to biculturalism.

**Presenters**
Monique Daviss | Executive Director
Jenny Zavala | Director of Curriculum and Instruction

**Facilitator**
Cristina Alfaro, Ph.D. | Professor, San Diego State University, Dual Language and English Learner Department
In August 2012, Young Men's Leadership Academy (YMLA) opened its doors as an innovative school aimed at preparing young men to succeed in college and take their place as responsible leaders of our global society. The graduated their first class in 2018— all “scholars” have been accepted to a four-year college and earned a collective $7.5 million dollars in scholarships. There is a strong community at YMLA, they call it a brotherhood, where every teacher and every student roots for the brother next to him. Relationships are both about understanding and supporting as well as holding each other accountable to the high standard set. The curriculum is challenging and hands-on. All students take Latin and participate in STEAM curriculum through Project Lead the Way. The courses spiral and scaffold learning in a project-based learning environment. Students also participate in interdisciplinary and cross curricular projects designed to help them learn about themselves and the content. College is not just an aspiration, but something consciously worked toward whether it be scholars telling visitors the college they will attend, building their Career Cruiser portfolio or attending college fairs and writing about what they learned pertaining to their future plans.

**Presenter**
Rodney White | Principal

**Facilitator**
Granger Ward | NCUST Executive Coach
2.5: EASTLAKE HIGH SCHOOL | 9-12

Socorro Independent School District
El Paso, TX
2017 America’s Best Urban Schools Winner
11:10 AM - 12:20 PM
Cardiff Room

Eastlake High School prides itself on its atmosphere of college readiness. To this end, the school offers its 2100 students 16 different Advanced Placement courses and 8 dual enrollment opportunities. Many Eastlake teachers have adopted a blended-learning approach to instruction. Still others have implemented a flipped instructional model where the course content is delivered to students, through a combination of videos, podcasts, click-through lessons and other technologies, outside the instructional day, using class time to engage students collaboratively in authentic, hands-on activities. Eastlake’s AVID program further supports students’ preparation for post-secondary education through the use of Cornell notes, Socratic seminar, and WICOR (writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading). Join us as we learn more about how Eastlake High School’s rigorous curriculum and innovative instruction is preparing students to be successful both in and beyond high school.

Presenter
Gilbert R. Martinez | Principal

Facilitator
Shirley Peterson, Ed.D. | NCUST Executive Coach
LUNCHEON PLENARY AND ABUS AWARDS PRESENTATION

12:30 PM - 2:00 PM
La Jolla Ballroom

Entertainment
Show Choir, Chula Vista High School SCPA,
Sweetwater Union High School District
Director: Michael Sakell
Principal: Mary Rose Peralta

Presider
Joseph F. Johnson Jr., Ph.D., NCUST Executive Director

AMERICA’S BEST URBAN SCHOOLS AWARDS

Bonnie Brae Elementary School
Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, TX
Principal: Samantha Gonzalez
Award presented by: Christina Theokas, Ph.D., NCUST Director of Research

Dr. C. M. Cash Elementary School
San Benito Consolidated Independent School District, San Benito, TX
Principal: Dilia Cornett
Award presented by: Nate Carman, Ed.D., Superintendent, San Benito CISD

El Sol Science and Arts Academy
Santa Ana Unified School District, Santa Ana, CA
Executive Director: Monique Daviss
Award presented by: Cristina Alfaro, Ph.D. | Professor, San Diego State University, Dual Language and English Learner Department

Fay Herron Elementary School
Clark County School District, North Las Vegas, NV
Principal: Judy Jordahl
Award presented by: Lorna James-Cervantes, School Associate Superintendent, Performance Zone 5, Clark County School District

Keller Dual Immersion Middle School
Long Beach Unified School District, Long Beach, CA
Principal: Thomas Espinoza
Award presented by: Chris Steinhauer, Superintendent, Long Beach Unified School District
Kenmore Elementary School
Baldwin Park Unified School District, Baldwin Park, CA
Principal: Jane Sattari
Award presented by: Angela A. Salazar, Assistant Superintendent, Student Achievement, Baldwin Park Unified School District

Mary & Frank Yturria Elementary School
Brownsville Independent School District, Brownsville, TX
Principal: Sandra Cortez
Award presented by: Esperanza Zendejas, Ed.D., Superintendent, Brownsville Independent School District

Nestor Language Academy Charter School
South Bay Union School District, San Diego, CA
Principal: Gil Luna
Award presented by: Katie McNamara, Ed.D., Superintendent, South Bay Union School District

Patrick Henry School Preparatory PS/IS 171
Community School District 4, New York, NY
Principal: Dimitres Pantelidis
Award presented by: Alexandra Estrella, Ed.D., Superintendent, Community School District 4

The Middle College at UNCG
Guilford County Schools, Greensboro, NC
Principal: Angela Polk-Jones
Award presented by: Tony Watlington, Ed.D., Chief of Schools, Guilford County Schools

Solomon P. Ortiz Elementary School
Brownsville Independent School District, Brownsville, TX
Principal: Patricia Garza
Award presented by: Esperanza Zendejas, Ed.D., Superintendent, Brownsville Independent School District

Westcliff Elementary School
Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, TX
Principal: Sara Gillaspie
Award presented by: Christina Theokas, Ph.D., NCUST Director of Research

Wildflower Elementary School
Harrison School District 2, Colorado Springs, CO
Principal: Wendy Godwin
Award presented by: Cara Riggs, NCUST Executive Coach

World Languages Institute
Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, TX
Principal: Guadalupe Barreto
Award presented by: Christina Theokas, Ph.D., NCUST Director of Research

Young Men’s Leadership Academy
Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, TX
Principal: Rodney White
Award presented by: Christina Theokas, Ph.D., NCUST Director of Research
3.1: BONNIE BRAE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | PK-5

Fort Worth Independent School District
Fort Worth, TX
2018 America's Best Urban Schools Winner

2:10 PM - 3:20 PM
Newport Room

Bonnie Brae Elementary School in the Fort Worth Independent School District has been on an upward improvement trajectory over the last several years. Their goal is to set and ensure the same high standards for all students. Teachers and administrators discuss lesson plans and share ideas throughout the school day, as well as during grade level and staff meetings. Lesson plans are reviewed on a weekly basis by administrators and three sets of lesson plans receive feedback each week. This feedback helps teachers evaluate their own lesson plans and increase rigor in their classrooms. This process is also used as a tool to check lesson plan alignment to standards and student outcomes. The campus makes every effort to limit students being pulled unnecessarily from class and core instruction. Every classroom teacher holds a daily zero hour from 8:00-8:45am. This is a time to reteach and hold interventions with students. Struggling students are pulled in small groups, allowing them additional time to master the curriculum with teacher support. Learn how leaders and teachers are implementing a methodical approach to improvement and next steps in their journey to excellence for all students.

Presenter
Samantha Gonzalez | Principal

Facilitator
Rupi Boyd, Ed.D. | NCUST Executive Coach
Staff at Patrick Henry believe, “students learn best when they are engaged, valued and challenged.” To accomplish this a strong set of systems and protocols governs life every day at school. Teachers work collaboratively in teacher teams to develop and refine curriculum using school-wide curriculum templates and protocols including a Curriculum Map Template, Guide for Creating and Enhancing Curriculum, Scope and Sequence Template, Lesson Plan Template and Exemplars and Expectations Checklist for Every Lesson. All units of study are based on state standards and the results of both formal and informal assessment of student work. Teachers discuss effective teaching strategies at their grade level team meetings and monitor individual student progress using specific protocols and formative assessments. All lessons include teaching points, essential questions and connections to previous learning. Student work is graded with rubrics and actionable teacher feedback and next steps are provided across all disciplines. And, following interim assessments, teachers organize student data to determine patterns and trends and work collaboratively to discuss appropriate instructional initiatives and/or interventions to address individual student needs. Come learn about these aligned and coherent systems.

**Presenters**
Dimitres Pantelidis | Principal
Mallory Locke | Instructional Coach

**Facilitator**
Granger Ward | NCUST Executive Coach
Keller DI Middle School is a small 6th through 8th grade school located in the Long Beach Unified School District. Keller has a 40% English/60% Spanish program model across all grades. Students develop language and literacy skills in core subjects and P.E., including English Language Arts and Spanish Language Arts. Students attend seven required courses each day and complete the academic courses in two languages. Students are grouped heterogeneously in classes by language ability in order for all students to have language and literacy models. Students are often observed helping each other in the use of the target language and with the content. Lessons are typically project-based to engage students. For example, in 8th grade, instead of writing biographies students use iMovie to create documentaries. Part of writing a persuasive essay includes a project where they create persuasive commercials. All students have an iPad that are used continuously by students to complete projects. There are many extra-curricular clubs, the majority led by teachers. The clubs meet either before school, after school, during lunch or on the weekend. Examples of clubs are: ballet, Folklorico, hiking, robotics, and speech and debate.
Although the Middle College at UNCG is a small high school, it has many lessons to share with schools both small and large alike. The campus is intentionally diverse and has as its goal to increase college going for first generation students. To date, they have been quite successful with 100% of their graduating cohorts going on to college. One of the ways they accomplish this is by having the majority of courses taught at the honors, AP or college level with support provided to ensure students reach at least 80% mastery. As well, all students participate in a pathway that begins freshman year. They begin with field trips for exposure, move to job shadowing and end senior year with an internship. The Middle College is committed to mastery, teachers submit lesson plans weekly that require at least three activities that will engage different modalities. Students are expected to read, write, think and speak everyday in class; station rotation facilitates this for students. It is not just teachers tracking mastery, students also examine their work and write goals for improvement in each class. Come hear how The Middle College has created this focus on mastery and what they are working on now to continue to improve.

Presenters
Angela Polk-Jones | Principal
Janis Antonek, Ph.D. | Spanish Teacher

Facilitator
Cara Riggs | NCUST Executive Coach

Guilford County Schools
Greensboro, NC
2018 America’s Best Urban Schools Winner
2:10 PM - 3:20 PM
Coronado Room
Pace Early College High School was an ABUS award winner in 2016, but NCUST has continued to study and learn about their systems and practices as they have continued to develop their program to ensure each student has a chance to go to college if they desire. Pace’s motto, “Educate students, graduate leaders, empower community” comes to life when you step on campus. Students are actively engaged in their classes and want to tell you what they are learning about. However, students are also going out into the community and doing internships in local businesses to explore their interests or engaging in community service to give back. It is a large, comprehensive high school but no student or teachers gets left behind. They are a “family” and work together in department and grade level teams to ensure students’ needs are met, using ongoing formative and benchmark assessments to track their progress. They focus on first, best instruction, using the Common Instructional Framework, but if intervention is needed, it occurs quickly and seamlessly. The master schedule is developed around student needs and interests, so students can meet high academic goals, but also engage in opportunities and activities that develop their passions and set them on their postsecondary path.

**Enrollment: 2,074**
- **Hispanic**: 99%
- **Other**: 1%

**Demographics**
- **English Learners**: 19%
- **Students With Disabilities**: 13%
- **Free/Reduced Lunch**: 99%

**Presenter**
Rose Longoria | Principal

**Facilitator**
Shirley Peterson, Ed.D. | NCUST Executive Coach
RECEPTION

3:30 PM - 5:00 PM
La Jolla Ballroom

Please join us in celebrating America's best urban schools award winners and NCUST partners of past, present, and future!

Chat with NCUST staff and principals, teachers, and district leaders from across the country!

Complimentary food and wine!

MEMBERSHIP

Please join us and become part of a community committed to increasing achievement for urban children and youth, learning from one another and continuously improving. We believe there are educators out there who have figured out how to improve schools, particularly for students of color and those living in poverty, and it is our job to identify them, celebrate them, learn from them and broadly disseminate that knowledge. Although many would have us believe that excellence and equity do not coexist in urban education, our experience tells us differently. We have found schools in major cities across the U.S. that are helping all of their students achieve at high levels and reach their goals and aspirations. Through our work, we have learned that there is reason to be hopeful about urban education and we want to share that inspiration and knowledge!

NCUST.COM/MEMBERSHIP

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Ray & Lynne Perez

NATIONAL CENTER FOR URBAN SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION
National Center for Urban School Transformation

OUR MISSION

To help urban school districts and their partners transform urban schools into places where all students achieve academic proficiency, evidence a love of learning, and graduate well prepared to succeed in post-secondary education, the workplace, and their communities.

OUR 3 INITIATIVES

Celebrating Excellence and Equity

First, we award some of America’s best urban schools. After an extensive review of student data, followed by comprehensive on-site visits, we identify typical urban public and public charter schools that achieve impressive results for every demographic group of students.

Disseminating Best Practices

Second, we study America’s best urban schools and highlight their best practices through print, digital technology, and events such as our annual national symposium.

Partnering with Schools and Districts

Third, we engage school and district leaders in intensive efforts to emulate the best practices found in America’s best urban schools.

OUR WORK

A-Plus Program

Based upon our studies of many of America’s best urban schools, our A-PLUS program helps leaders improve school culture, curricula, and instruction to influence outstanding learning outcomes for all students. We tailor partnerships in a manner that builds on existing district initiatives but minimally we meet with a small network of schools monthly and conduct individual coaching sessions at each school.

Equity Audits

We conduct school and district level audits to identify inequities in access to high-quality teaching, programs, and resources. It is a collaborative process with stakeholders across the district. Each audit generates a report to the school or district with findings and recommendations specific to strengths and areas of need.

Administrative Services Clear Credential program

Fully accredited by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, NCUST offers novice administrators professional development grounded in the real work of the schools and districts they serve and informed by the leadership systems and practices found in America’s highest performing schools.

Learn more at www.ncust.com
8:00 AM - 9:35 AM
La Jolla Ballroom

Entertainment
Mariachi Estado de Oro, Southwest High School, Sweetwater Union High School District, San Diego, CA
Director: David Rodriguez
Principal: Froylan Villanueva

Welcome
Dr. Karen Janney, Superintendent, Sweetwater Union High School District

What does it mean to be a reform-minded leader today?

Dr. Esperanza Zendejas, Ed.D.
Superintendent, Brownsville Independent School District, Brownsville, TX

Dr. Esperanza Zendejas will share her experiences and what she has learned turning around schools and improving academic outcomes for students in the Brownsville Independent School District, as well as other districts around the country. She will share what she believes school leaders (superintendent, principal, or teacher leader) should think about and do to help ensure equity and excellence for all students.

Dr. Esperanza Zendejas returned as the Superintendent of the Rio Grande Valley’s largest school district, Brownsville ISD, on June 25, 2015, with unanimous approval from the Board of Trustees. Prior to her permanent appointment, she had served as the BISD Interim Superintendent for five months beginning on February 16, 2015, after having previously held the position from 1992 - 1995.

Since arriving back in Brownsville, Zendejas has taken significant steps to improve the district’s image by making herself readily available and visible in the community. She has worked vigorously to establish and formalize partnerships with local, state and national organizations and businesses to support students. She has actively realigned employee responsibilities to improve campus services and district operations. Dr. Zendejas has over 35 years of experience at all levels of education having held positions as a teacher, counselor, principal, district administrator and superintendent across the U.S.
Dr. C.M. Cash Elementary School serves the educational needs of over 600 prekindergarten-through-fifth-grade students, over 80 percent of whom meet low-income criteria. Administration, faculty, and staff are committed to providing all students “a safe, supportive, and equitable learning environment.” Consequently, when assessment data indicated that students with special needs were not meeting their year-to-year growth targets, Principal Cornett responded by beginning to implement a more inclusive model of service, increasing the time students spent in their regular classrooms learning grade-level material and bringing the special services and support to the students. Similarly, when the administrative team noticed that not all of the students in one grade level were being taught the same rigorous content, the team created a detailed lesson plan for all teachers to follow. As one of the teachers explained, “They gave us a lot of support – we have noticed a complete change [in our instruction].” Join us to learn more about how the educators at Dr. C.M. Cash Elementary School identify and respond to emerging challenges in ways that promote learning equity and excellence.

Presenters
Dilia Cornett | Principal
Marleen Araiza | Assistant Principal

Facilitator
Lynne Perez, Ph.D. | Former NCUST Deputy Director
Westcliff Elementary School in Fort Worth Independent School District is a thriving and active place, from their classrooms, to their outdoor learning center to the multiple community and parent volunteers and student teachers from Texas Christian University. They have benefitted from consistent leadership from their principal, Sara Gillespie, who has created a family environment and continuous improvement culture. The focus the past two years has been on “differentiation for all.” Teacher PLC groups deeply examine data, identify priority standards, and group students in quintiles for targeted instruction. Monthly RTI meetings focus on creating specific interventions for struggling learners, special needs students, ELL students and others. While PLC meetings every two weeks focus on creating advanced activities, novel studies, and research projects for students in the top two quintiles of performance. Staff recognized that their advanced students were stagnating, and they were determined to raise the bar for them while also ensuring mastery of standards for all students. Teachers bring student work to examine its alignment with the standards and with advanced thinking and communication skills. One way they accomplish this differentiation is by using Title I tutors and developing a rich volunteer program.

**Presenter**
Sara Gillaspie | Principal

**Facilitator**
Rupi Boyd, Ed.D. | NCUST Executive Coach
South Bay Union School District  
San Diego, CA  
2018 America's Best Urban Schools Winner  
9:45 AM - 10:55 AM  
Soledad Ballroom

Nestor Language Academy Charter School, a K-8 school in the South Bay Union School District, believes "languages are the pathway to the world." They have provided bilingual education for 22 years and have had a school wide dual language program for the last eight years. A two-way immersion model that initially provides a 90:10 instructional model transitions to 50:50 over the school years to build fluency in English and Spanish. Nestor's bilingual teachers are always trying to innovate their instruction by introducing new teaching strategies to meet their goals. This past year, they introduced reading and writing workshop in both English and Spanish across all grade levels. Teacher collaboration helps ensure the effectiveness of instruction as teachers plan and teach similar lessons maintaining fidelity to grade level standards and pacing schedule. A number of supports have been integrated to meet students’ needs including an innovative cross-age tutoring program where bilingual high school students from a neighboring school come over and mentor students. Nestor has earned the CABE Seal of Academic Excellence Award and is a California Distinguished school.

Presenters  
Gil Luna | Principal  
Estela Corrales | Assistant Principal  
Facilitator  
Sera Hernandez, Ph.D. | Professor, San Diego State University, Dual Language and English Learner Department
Revere High School has followed a path of rigor, relevance, relationships and resilience for a number of years and across different principals, with the unequivocal support of district leadership. This has allowed RHS to focus and deepen its practices each year as well as innovate to improve and better meet the needs of a diverse and changing student population. Principal Lourenco Garcia describes his school as “teacher led.” By this, he is referring to their leadership with professional development and 12 different student-centered learning committees that are thinking through the school’s next phase of development across all the departments (e.g., literacy), programs (e.g., advisory), and initiatives (e.g., the academic portfolio or device media). The School Redesign and Innovation Team (SRIT) - a group of teachers and administrators- oversees the work to ensure progress, communication and coherence. The next step Revere would like to take is to develop a competency-based grading system to support the student-centered learning environment they have been creating the last several years. All this work is supported with professional learning groups, embedded professional development and a robust observation and feedback system.

**Presenter**

Lourenco Garcia, Ed.D. | Executive Director of Data and Program Accountability

**Facilitator**

Shirley Peterson, Ed.D. | NCUST Executive Coach
Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Miami, FL
2017 America's Best Urban Schools Winner
9:45 AM - 10:55 AM
Cardiff Ballroom

Hialeah Gardens Middle School’s vision seeks to foster a learning environment where diversity is valued, and students are able to seek an enhanced quality of life. Students can choose from six academic academies: Biomedical, AgroSciences, Engineering, Law, Arts and Entertainment, and Information Technology. In addition, during the 8-period school day, students are able to select four elective courses, from among 14, ensuring a well-rounded education. At Hialeah Gardens, the sense of family is tangible. Principal Maritza Jimenez has set an expectation of caring and intentionally created opportunities to build trust among teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Through common planning time, regular examination of data, and clearly communicated goals and expectations, Hialeah Gardens has reached academic achievement levels for all groups of students that exceed state averages. They have been recognized, for the last three years, by the Exceeding Expectations Project in Florida as a school making significant progress for low-income students. Learn more about Hialeah Gardens Middle School and how the administration and teachers continue to push academic limits, preparing students for global success even at the middle school level.

Presenter
Maritza Jimenez | Principal

Facilitator
Granger Ward | NCUST Executive Coach
INTERACTIVE PANELS

5.1: Teaching Practices in America’s Best Urban Schools

Join former NCUST Deputy Director Lynne Perez, Ph.D. for a brief look at teaching and learning in the urban schools that NCUST has awarded and studied. Learn more about the structures and practices in place in these very successful schools that support teachers toward the design, delivery, and refinement of quality first instruction.

Presenter
Lynne Perez, Ph.D. | Author, Teaching Practices in America’s Best Urban Schools

11:10 AM – 12:20 PM
Newport Room

5.2: A New Approach to Teacher Leadership: High-Leverage Practices that Lead to Excellent Teaching and Equitable Learning

Instructionally focused teacher leaders can support all teachers in ways that have a significant impact on student learning in the school and district. New Teacher Center will share researched-based program components with a deep focus on instructional practice and an optimal learning environment that have been proven to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement. These learnings can inform any school or district seeking to further leverage teacher leaders as key partners with school leaders to drive meaningful change in instructional practice and student learning. Free resources to help schools and districts design and assess teacher leadership programs will be shared.

Presenter
Lynn Kepp, Ph.D. | Senior VP Strategic Partnerships, New Teacher Center

Facilitator
Cara Riggs | NCUST Executive Coach

11:10 AM – 12:20 PM
Irvine Room
INTERACTIVE PANELS

5.3: Successful Urban High Schools Panel
NCUST studied four successful urban high schools serving predominantly Latino students to more deeply understand their school design and strategies that led to their success. We identified five key practices we will discuss in this session. The principals of the four schools will share specific examples of implementation at their school and how they overcame barriers and challenges to academic success and postsecondary readiness for their students. The book the schools are featured in, “Five Practices for Improving the Success of Latino Students: A Guide for Secondary Leaders” will be available during the conference.

Presenters
Christina Theokas, Ph.D. | Director of Research, NCUST
Brian Rainey | Principal, The O’Farrell High School | San Diego, CA
Rose Longoria | Principal, Pace Early College High School | Brownsville, TX
Lourenco Garcia, Ed.D. | Former Principal, Revere High School | Revere, MA
Gilbert Martinez | Principal, Eastlake High School | El Paso, TX

11:10 AM – 12:20 PM
Coronado Room

5.4: Excellence in Dual Language Education Panel
Come participate in a discussion about the updated Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education with Cristina Alfaro, Chair of the Dual Language and English Learner Education Department at SDSU. She will share how the winners of the 2018 ABUS dual language schools award exemplify those standards. You will also hear directly from the principals of those schools and the steps they took over time to achieve bilingual, biliterate and bicultural students.

Presenters
Christina Alfaro, Ph.D. | Chair, Dual Language and English Learner Education Department, SDSU
Thomas Espinoza | Principal, Keller Dual Immersion Middle School | Long Beach, CA
Monique Daviss | Executive Director, El Sol Science and Arts Academy | Santa Ana, CA
Gil Luna | Principal, Nestor Language Academy | San Diego, CA

11:10 AM – 12:20 PM
Soledad Ballroom

Session 5.5: Leadership in America’s Best Urban Schools
Join Joe Johnson, author of “Leadership in America's Best Urban Schools”, to discuss the nature of leadership in the impressive schools NCUST has awarded and studied. Lean more about what these leaders do, why they do it, and how they do it consistently and effectively.

Presenter
Joseph F. Johnson Jr., Ph.D. | Interim Provost and Senior Vice President, San Diego State University and Executive Director, National Center for Urban School Transformation

11:10 AM – 12:20 PM
Cardiff Room
LUNCHEON PLENARY AND KEYNOTE

12:30 PM - 2:00 PM
La Jolla Ballroom

Entertainment
String Ensemble, Chula Vista High School
Sweetwater Union High School District, Chula Vista, CA
Director: Dr. Conrad Bruderer
Principal: Mary Rose Peralta

2:00 PM
Raffle
Sponsored by AVID

Resilient Teachers and Leaders:
Challenging the Status Quo to Create the
Best Urban Schools

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 10 / 1 PM
“Every child deserves someone to be crazy about them.” This is the mantra of Salome Thomas-EL, award-winning teacher and principal, and internationally recognized educator. Principal EL believes that resilient teachers and leaders take risks, make courageous decisions, and challenge the status quo. In his thought-provoking keynote presentation, Principal EL will share how we can develop positive school cultures that foster the social and emotional development of all students, so teachers and leaders can focus on the protective processes that build responsible decision-making and resilience. Principal EL brings a powerful combination of love, passion, caring, and leadership to craft a refreshing, common-sense roadmap for teachers and administrators to help kids achieve their dreams, no matter the odds!

Salome Thomas-EL
Principal/CEO | Choose To Stay, Inc.

Salome Thomas-EL is a national education consultant and long-time teacher and principal in Philadelphia. He received national acclaim as a teacher and chess coach at Vaux Middle School, where his students have gone on to win world recognition as Eight-Time National Chess Champions. Principal EL is a regular contributor on the “The Dr. Oz Show” and the author of the best-selling books, I Choose to Stay (movie rights optioned by Disney), and The Immortality of Influence, which stresses the importance of leadership, mentoring, parenting and service to others. He has received the Marcus A. Foster Award as the outstanding School District Administrator in Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania’s distinguished Martin Luther King Award. Principal EL was honored as a Reader's Digest Magazine, “Inspiring American Icon”.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR URBAN SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION
ncust.com
BOOK SIGNING

2:15 PM – 3:00 PM
La Jolla Ballroom Foyer

Leadership in America’s Best Urban Schools
Joseph Johnson, Ph.D.
Lynne Perez, Ph.D.
Cynthia Uline, Ph.D.

Teaching Practices from America’s Best Urban Schools
Joseph Johnson, Ph.D.
Lynne Perez, Ph.D.
Cynthia Uline, Ph.D.

Christina Theokas, Ph.D.
Mary Gonzalez, Ed.D.
Consuelo Manriquez, Ed.D.
Joseph Johnson, Ph.D.

I Choose to Stay
Salome Thomas-El

The Immortality of Influence
Salome Thomas-El
The America’s Best Urban Schools Award (ABUS) is presented annually to the nation’s highest performing urban schools. In October of each year, the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) presents this award to elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, dual language schools, and alternative schools. In order to compete for an America’s Best Urban Schools Award, schools must submit the following data and meet or exceed the criteria as defined.

1. **Urban Location**: The school must be located in a metropolitan area with 50,000 or more residents.

2. **Non-Selective Admissions**: In general, the school may not require students to meet academic criteria in order to attain or retain admission. For example, a school that requires students to possess/maintain a certain test score or possess/maintain a minimum grade point average would not be eligible for consideration. Schools may house programs (e.g., programs for students identified as gifted or talented) that admit children from beyond the school’s attendance area through selective admissions if fewer than 10 percent of the school’s students are enrolled through selective admissions.

3. **Low-Income Eligibility**: For elementary schools in which the highest grade is grade six or lower, at least 60% of the students enrolled (both in the prior and the current year) must have met eligibility criteria for free- or reduced-price lunch. For middle schools (grade nine or lower), at least 50% of the students must have met the same criteria. In high schools, at least 40% of the students must have met the same criteria.

4. **High Rates of Academic Proficiency**: The school must be able to show that the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency on state assessments, in the last two years, was higher than the average of all schools in the state (within the same grade span grouping). The school must have exceeded the state average in at least half of the subject areas/grade levels assessed.

5. **High Rates of Academic Proficiency for Every Racial/Ethnic Group**: The school must indicate the percentage of students from each racial/ethnic group who achieved academic proficiency. The school may be eligible to compete only if, in at least two academic subjects, the percentage of students proficient in each racial/ethnic group exceeds the average of all schools in the state.

6. **Evidence of High Achievement for English Learners**: If more than 20 students are identified as English learners, the school must present evidence that a high percentage of English learners are progressing toward proficiency with the English language. As well, the school must indicate the percentage of English learners that achieved proficiency on state assessments.

7. **Evidence of High Achievement for Students with Disabilities**: The school must indicate the percentage of students with disabilities that achieved proficiency on state assessments.

8. **Low Rates of Out-of-School Suspension**: For every demographic group served, with an enrollment greater than 20, the total number of student days lost to suspensions must be less than the total number of students enrolled.

9. **High Attendance Rates**: The school must have evidence to indicate that the average student attendance rate exceeded 95% for each of the past two academic years and that rates of chronic absenteeism are low.

10. **Low Rates of Teacher Absence**: Schools must indicate the percentage of teachers who were absent more than 10 days.
Schools must also respond to several open-ended questions that ask for evidence of rigorous curricula, engaging and effective instruction, a positive school culture, student engagement in extracurricular activities, excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics education (STEM) and describe what efforts the school is making to ensure students are successful in subsequent school levels (e.g. elementary schools must show evidence that their students are successful at the middle school).

**Additional Criteria for High Schools**

In addition to the general criteria, high schools must meet the following criteria:

**Percentage of First-Year High School Students Advancing to the Second Year:** Each high school must present the number and percentage of their ninth grade students who earned sufficient credit to be promoted to second-year status.

**Percentage of Students Earning College Credit or Participating in Advanced Placement Courses during High School:** Each school must present evidence of the number and percentage of students who earned college credit in the prior year. Also, each applicant must present evidence of the number and percentage of students who participated in advanced placement or international baccalaureate courses; the number and percentage who took advanced placement or international baccalaureate assessments; and the number and percentage who received passing scores. Schools also provide average SAT/ACT scores.

**High Graduation Rates:** Each high school must present the latest four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (as defined by the U.S. Department of Education) for every racial/ethnic group of students.

**Additional Criteria for Dual Language Schools**

In addition to the general criteria, dual language schools must meet the following criteria:

Schools that apply in the dual language category must provide school-wide dual language programs. Dual language applicants must meet all other award criteria.

**Additional Criteria for Alternative Schools**

In addition to the general criteria, alternative schools must meet the following criteria:

Alternative school applicants must meet criteria one through three above. Regarding item two, alternative schools may be considered if they selectively enroll students who have experienced academic and behavioral difficulty in typical schools. Additionally, alternative schools must present data regarding all other criteria however, there are not minimal eligibility criteria associated with these criteria. Alternative schools will be reviewed and considered on a competitive basis.
NATIONAL CENTER FOR URBAN SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

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