

THE METLIFE FOUNDATION AMBASSADORS IN EDUCATION AWARD

BEST PRACTICES 2008

The 2008 MetLife Foundation Ambassadors in Education Award recognizes exemplary school principals who:

- Build partnerships with community organizations, parents, and guardians;
- Resolve conflicts and promote safety in the school and the community; or
- Promote civic engagement and community service.

Public school principals in 25 cities across the United States were recognized by the award program, distinguishing them as some of the nation's most collaborative educators. The award is part of a National Civic League program designed to honor exceptional educators, teachers and principals who have become national role models through community engagement activities in support of students. In honor of the achievement, all schools with an award winner will receive a \$5,000 grant.

The selection was the result of a nationwide search involving thousands of students, parents, colleagues and community members, who nominated hundreds of educators for the award. All middle and high school principals in 25 public school districts were eligible.

This year's award winners distinguished themselves in a myriad of ways. Some have turned around failing school by dint of their personal leadership qualities. Others have emphasized the educational benefits of service learning or civic engagement. Others have pioneered new programs or founded alternative schools. Each of these outstanding educators has understood the power of collaborative leadership and the importance of developing partnerships among community groups and local businesses.

"Principals play a crucial role in building family, school and community relationships to encourage successful teaching and learning," said Sibyl Jacobson, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "The Ambassadors in Education Award recognizes educators who are exceptional leaders in connecting school and community."

In addition to the \$5,000 school grants, which are intended to help continue building community networks, the educators will have their accomplishments profiled for use by schools and communities across the country. They all will be recognized at an award ceremony at their school, which will include a crystal apple to signify their special accomplishments.

“MetLife Foundation and the National Civic League started the Ambassadors in Education Award program in 2003 after the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher* revealed a divide between many educators and their schools’ communities,” said National Civic League President Gloria Rubio-Cortes. “The program has now recognized 115 Ambassadors in Education with a total of more than \$500,000 in grants.”

MetLife Foundation supports programs that increase opportunities for young people to succeed, give students and teachers a voice in improving education, develop partnerships between schools and communities and strengthen relationships among parents, teachers and students. The National Civic League, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization devoted to community building and strengthening democracy, administers the program.

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Words like “energy” and “optimism” come to mind when describing principal Andre Williams. Before he assumed the position of principal, Coan Middle School was on a downward path. The school had failed to receive a passing grade from the state’s annual progress targets eight years in a row. The PTA was practically nonexistent and teacher morale was said to be at an all-time low.

Williams forged partnerships with local churches and nonprofit organizations to develop new mentoring, tutoring and anger management programs for the students. He gave the school a “facelift,” decorating the halls with warm welcoming hues. He also fostered a spirit of collaboration and professionalism with the staff. “Andre Williams recognizes the value of community support and knows how to make it work for the school environment,” writes Coan teacher Lisa Whittington.

In recent years, the middle school has shaken off a negative reputation with improvements in student behavior and academic performance, higher levels of participation in after school programs and a new library program to encourage kids to read for pleasure. Students from other parts of the city are now seeking permission to attend Coan, which has met or exceeded annual performance targets three years in a row.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Principal Karl E. Perry recruited local artists to create a school arts club. Community volunteers work as substitute teachers. The school building has become a meeting place for

local clubs and organizations. Representatives of the state department of health visit every Friday to discuss community issues with the students. Students are dismissed three hours early on Fridays to do work in the community.

The school is located in the zip code with the highest incidence of AIDS/HIV in the city, so principal Perry organized a community coalition to fight the disease. He also formed a partnership with the Juvenile Crime Prevention Program that promotes good citizenship, teaches the importance of education and social etiquette. In recent years, Renaissance Academy students have placed first and third citywide debate competitions. School Partnerships include One World Community After-School Program, Young Executive After School Program, Outward Bound, Financial Literacy Workshops.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

The Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA) is known as a “last chance” school. Its 300 students mostly come from low income, inner city neighborhoods and have experienced problems succeeding traditional school settings.

“Talk about no child left behind,” says headmaster Margaret Maccini, a Harvard and University of Massachusetts trained educator. “These kids have been left behind in every way by every possible institution. We have our share of failures, but one thing I’m extremely proud of is the doors are always open. They can always come back.”

The academy is actually three schools in one—a day program, a night program and distance learning for students who can only attend school a few days a week. Four years ago, Maccini guided what started in 1995 as a small evening program for overage students into a comprehensive, 12-hour-a-day school.

BDEA doesn’t assign grade levels, thus avoiding a source of embarrassment for students have been held back a year or two. “A lot of them have failing grades because of poor attendance,” says the headmaster. “That doesn’t really tell us what they can do. That just tells us that either because they were homeless, or had family problems, or were not morning people, or just were disenfranchised from the school, so they were not able to attend school enough.”

Maccini and staff formed a partnership with the city to turn a piece of land into an organic garden, where students plant, harvest and donate vegetables to families in need. A local café uses the vegetables in a program to train BDEA students in culinary skills. A local church was recruited to start a day care center for single parents. “Meg brings the community to the school,” writes one colleague. “She also brings the school to the community,” creating an environment in which “staff and community members have a relationship that extends beyond school walls.”

Earlier this year, Maccini announced that she would be leaving the academy to enroll in a doctoral program in education and social justice at the University of Massachusetts. The move was part of her desire to join a “national conversation” on alternative education. “My ultimate dream is to open a lab school attached to a university that serves Springfield and Holyoke (Massachusetts) students who are over age for grade level who want a high school diploma and want to have lots of different opportunities in both colleges and experiences in workplaces,” she says.

Leaving the academy has not been easy. “I’ve never worked with such a talented and creative staff, and the kids are magic,” she says. “All they need is a place where they can become who they are. And when you have kids like that, who have every reason not to trust and are open to give it one more chance, it’s such an honor to be part of it.”

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

McClintock Middle School is an “at risk” school with 723 students of whom about 75 percent qualify for free or reduced price lunches. When Pam Espinosa took over as principal, she created a McClintock Partners in Education Program to provide academic enrichment opportunities for students and their families and to increase community involvement in the school. About 300 members of the Christ Lutheran Church volunteer for the program, which includes a weekly family night, tutoring and summer programs for the kids. Espinosa formed a partnership with Central Piedmont Community College to offer English as a second language classes during family night and will soon have a GED program. She has also partnered with Junior Achievement to bring in volunteers who mentor the students and develop their job skills. The school’s “Parent University” program provides a hot dog dinner for families every Tuesday night, followed by seminars for parents on topics ranging from nutrition, to resume-writing, to budgeting and finance.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Principal Phylis Hammond has been known to go door to door in the neighborhoods and commercial districts around the Tilden Career Community Academy in Chicago to introduce herself and talk about what’s going on at the school.

She has also worked hard to build the relationship between the school and parents, hiring a fulltime liaison to develop workshops and organize family activities. “She continually seeks methods to connect our students, faculty and parents to the world around them and beyond,” writes Bailey. “Her unrelenting efforts are an inspiration to us all.”

Edward Talbot, chair of the science department, notes that it was principal Hammond’s collaborative outreach efforts that helped Tilden get accepted in the highly selective Bill and Melinda Gates Transformation Program, an effort to reduce dropout rates by motivating freshman to find an active interest in school.

DALLAS, TEXAS

Kyle Richardson believes the Marsh Middle School should be a “focal point” for the community. He encourages after hours events such as Family Math and Science Night and Family Reading and Social Studies Night. Parents and other family members come to the school for learning activities. Two years ago, the district decided to bring in 6th graders, and Richardson is said to have handled the transition “masterfully.” The principal partnered with the local YMCA to create sports activities for the newcomers. In turn, the YMCA gets the use of school playing fields on weekends for their programs. He is working to get neighborhood business to sponsor school events. “The momentum is definitely building,” says parent Susie McMinn. “The transformation of our school into a neighborhood school has begun and Mr. Richardson welcomes the involvement of all the parents in the process. We would follow him anywhere.”

DAYTON, OHIO

Principal Czerny Buxton has an innovative approach to preparing students at the Jefferson Magnet School for proficiency tests. She enlisted the aid of a local church to donate turkeys for a “How to Prepare a Proficiency Turkey day,” which gave students hands on training in math skills, reading, cooperative learning and teamwork. “She is a great motivator and mentor” writes teacher Margaret Peters. “She uses her extraordinary interpersonal skills to involve parents and other members of the community through long term projects.”

She has organized after school programs to improve reading comprehension. She helped start a district-wide ballroom dancing contest for seventh and eighth-graders. “You never know what it's going to be that's going to make the difference in that child's life,” Buxton told a Dayton Daily News reporter recently. “One person might have football, another basketball, but for some of these it's ballroom dancing.”

DENVER, COLORADO

The Denver Center for International Studies is a sixth grade through high school program that focuses on foreign languages and exploring the cultures and histories of other countries.

The school puts a big emphasis on service learning and involvement with outside organizations, especially those that have an international focus. “We really want the students to be activists,” says Principal Dan Lutz. “We want them to be learning firsthand from people that are involved in the international arena. All of our students are required to participate in service projects.”

Lutz’s interest in international learning programs goes back to the 1970s when he served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Afghanistan. “Every day I felt I was learning something new,”

recalls Lutz. “The feeling of learning how to adapt and seeing things from another cultural perspective was a really rich experience. I felt like I wanted to do something with international education in public schools.”

His chance came in the mid-1980s when the Denver district created a committee evaluate ideas for new magnet programs to encourage voluntary desegregation of students. The idea was to build a program to focus on international studies, which would give students an edge in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. Two years ago, the Denver Center for International Studies from its headquarters at West High School to its own campus. Now students begin the program in 6th grade and continue through the senior year in high school.

The new configuration has a number of advantages. Students are encouraged to pick one of five languages—Spanish, French, Italian, Japanese or Chinese—and stick with it for six years. Also they can immerse themselves more in the cultures and issues of the countries they are studying.

“The philosophy of the program is to open kids’ horizons, both figuratively and literally,” says Lutz. “Having a focus that drives the school and gives vision to the faculty and parents about what the school is about really does help to pull other academic areas in. As a result our kids do very well. The rigor is intense and some kids chose not to stay, but we have an academic contract process, so we work with students and families to help the students pull it out.”

The school’s heavy emphasis on reading and writing seems to have paid off. Of the last two graduating classes, 100 percent of students were accepted at colleges or universities. “It’s not for everybody,” notes Lutz, who is proud of the fact that the student body is socially and ethnically diverse. “There’s an admission process that is not mainly telling kids you can’t come here, but helping kids and their families see if this is a match for their interests.”

“The school has close to 20 partnerships that offer students a wide range of opportunities, from healthy living initiatives, immersion service trips to India, college preparation, service learning projects in the local community and scholarships to hear world-renowned speakers talk about global issues to exchanges to China and Mongolia,” writes Kate Farmer, the school community relations director.

Lutz is quick to point out that the award is not just for him, but for the entire school. He attributes the success of the program to three things: an excellent faculty, partnerships in the community and the emphasis on service and involvement in the community and with the world at large.

DES MOINES, IOWA

Before Spence Evans became principal of Amos Hiatt Middle School, attendance was dropping and there were serious morale problem among students and faculty. "It is amazing to me how much Mr. Evans has been able to accomplish that in a short time," writes teacher Jenie Olson. "He has completely turned out school around." He makes it a point to visit the feeder primary schools every year to welcome new students who will be coming to Amos Hiatt Middle School. He brings in local artists to work with the kids on murals at the school. He worked with a local church to start a "safe village" after school program. One-to-one tutoring is provided at a local college. He invites nationally known authors and motivational speakers to address the students. One of his more innovative efforts was to contact the local county attorney's office to work with the school on an early intervention program for possible juvenile offenders and discourage truancy violations. Staffers from the county office work with the school to mediate difficult situations as they arise. He also brings in parents, counselors, social workers and therapists to address problems facing his students and their families. "Under Mr. Evans's leadership, his program of early interventions has thrived as student disagreements are now handled at the school and only those most serious matters get referred for charges," Cory McClure, who works in the county attorney's office. "His enthusiasm, integrity, professionalism and approach separate him from many in his field."

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

Principal Linda Spight worked with the Neighborhood United Community Block Association and nearby Marygrove College to develop an innovative alternative for students who are suspended from the school for up to five days. Instead of sending them home or cooping them up in an in-school suspension room, she sends them to a leadership development training program housed at the college. "We see it as an opportunity to make corrections in their behavior," says Spight who has been principal at Mumford High since 1996. "Some students wanted to go back even though they hadn't been suspended." Violence at the school has been reduced and students have improved academically and socially because of the skills they learned.

The program has led to increased cooperation between the school and college. Spight works actively with community groups and parents to use the school for meetings and trainings. She plans to use the grant from the MetLife Foundation Ambassadors in Education award to help overcome the digital divide by giving parents training in computers and technology. "We're trying to help parents who don't really know how to use the technology that's available to them," says Spight. "We going to let them computer labs and for job searches and other thing and help their children achieve."

With the city having to close two area recreation centers, the school's open doors policy to the surrounding community has been an important resource.

FORT WORTH, TEXAS

Principal Gary Braudaway has fostered a strong relationship with parents, the community and former students of Polytechnic High School. He started a Parental Involvement Initiative, a tutoring program, and a number of successful partnerships with local colleges and businesses, encourages the use of the school building for afterhours community meetings and political forums. He has involves alumni in school improvement efforts, meeting with them every month to inform them of news of the school. These relationships resulted in a grant for an after-school tutoring program. “Mr. Braudaway fosters what has come to be known as the ‘Poly Spirit,’ notes teacher Wendy Coleman. “It is not one thing, but rather a combination of integrity, hope, character, pride, perseverance, and faith.” At the beginning of the year, Braudaway gave all of the faculty wristbands that said: “the difference is me.” Fellow educators say the reputation of the school is improving, along with its test scores.

GREENVILLE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

Three years ago, veteran educator Brodie Bricker came out of retirement at the request of the county schools superintendent to help turn around a struggling “at risk” middle school. With declining test scores, reduced attendance and high levels of poverty, the school had become the focus of a heated community debate—whether to keep the old building or to build a new one in a location that was more central to local development patterns.

Today, the Beck Academy has a waiting list for its International Baccalaureate magnet program, and so many students, the district has had to put up temporary buildings. “Dr. Brodie Bricker’s leadership has brought Beck back from a reputation of one of the least regarded middle schools in Greenville to one of the most desirable,” writes educator Royanne McWaters-Baer.

Adopting the slogan, “Beck to the Future,” Principal Bricker worked with parents, faculty members, the PTA, and community to improve the school. “We just kind of went in and rallied the troops,” says Bricker. “My focus right away was discipline and quality instruction and a positive school environment. One of the things I had to do was change the image. People thought it was a bad school, and that was not the case.

He enforced a strict dress code, making all students wear collared shirts and belts and found business sponsors to help families who couldn’t afford to buy new outfits for their kids.

Today the school has tutoring and mentoring relationships with Fluor Daniel Inc., Clemson University, and Furman University. High achieving students receive awards sponsored by local business. Good attendance wins students gift certificates at area restaurants. In

return, the principal encourages parents to patronize businesses that provide support for the school.

The end result is that Beck has moved up two levels on their overall ratings on the state education report card. Disciplinary referrals are down and the student enrollment increased from a low of 537 to a high of 890 students.

With a new image and better student performance, Beck is now considered a desirable school to attend, but Bricker isn't satisfied. "You keep on trying," he says, "You keep on raising the bar, because in the race for quality, there is no finish line, so what we're looking for now to think about the next level, which is that we can be looked at as a blue ribbon school."

Having once retired, Bricker now says he'll stay as long as the PTA, the faculty and the superintendent want him there. "I just told my teachers this year, you know, 40 years ago today I was sitting at a meeting just like you, and I get excited every year, because in education we have an opportunity to start over and do it better. We get a new group of students and we get new energy, and we have a chance to be a positive role model."

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Since joining the Kinsella Magnet School of the Performing Arts as Principal in 2003, Pamela Totten-Alvarado has made built relationships with businesses, community organizations, local colleges and arts groups, including a partnership with Northeast Utilities to run a comprehensive afterschool tutoring and mentoring program for kindergarten through third grade. Five AmeriCorps tutors work with students to increase their achievement levels. Thanks to a partnership with the University of Connecticut, 40 education majors volunteer weekly to tutor students in math and literacy. Other joint ventures with businesses and community organizations have been undertaken to improve teaching strategies, improve instructional materials for the students and cultural opportunities. She also worked with the United Way to hold a yearly Day of Caring event at the school. Local businesses spend one day a year at the school planting trees, flowers, and cleaning up the yard. "Over the past four years, I've seen an amazing difference in the students at Kinsella," writes educator Lynn Vasquez, who notes an increase in student performance in reading and math.

LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

Wilson High School students have to serve a minimum of forty hours community service as a requirement of graduation, a requirement principal Lew Kerns enthusiastically supports, constantly reminding students to do their hours and turn in their reports.

“Lew has been an active leader in promoting the integration of service learning into the curriculum,” writes teacher Marty Axelson, the Wilson Service Learning Coordinator. “As an example, our marine biology students go down to the local lagoon, not just to do a clean-up. They collect trash in a scientific manner, do an analysis of the trash, determine the sources of the trash, develop plans for reducing the trash, and finally present their plans in a number of settings.”

Wilson students teach younger kids at an elementary school through the Future Teachers Class. Music students go to a nearby middle school to teach guitar. Students perform work in local hospitals, volunteer at the Red Cross, the Aquarium of the Pacific and raise money for the poor.

“Under Kern’s leaders, students learn firsthand what an important effect they have on the city,” notes Wilson teacher Devon Day. “By working together with mentors from the community, amazing good has transpired. One student, Era Hull, has donated over 1500 volunteer hours to the community.”

One student founded a service organization called the Patily Project and raised money for a local women’s shelter by making jewelry and selling it.

The principal is also an active member of the community. He attends meetings of the Recreation Park Neighborhood Association and has worked with students to deal with issues such as littering, trespassing, graffiti and other concerns. He helped organize an “Earth Day” for the city of Long Beach, encouraging students to volunteer for the event.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Two years ago, Linda Calvo was asked to be the principal of a new school in Arleta, California. A former principal at Sylmar High, she held several meetings to assess the needs of the community. She worked with community stakeholders to come up with the school’s name, colors and mascot.

For instance, she worked with the L.A. Mission College to establish the school’s early college program, which offers high school students the chance to earn college credit and possibly an A.A. degree before graduating. She has worked with local community agencies and the city attorney’s office to establish a network of intervention and services to support student attendance and public safety. She organized advisory committees consisting of parents, students and community members to build support for school programs.

The school is divided into three themed, small learning communities. Under the principal’s leadership, the academic teams were in place to develop the curriculum a year before the school opened. “There is a tremendous feeling of pride in this school,” writes Douglas Wilkin, who chairs the Arleta science department, “from the community, from the students, from the parents, and from the faculty.”

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

Anwatin Middle School Principal Beth Russell helped develop the “Read I Win!” summer reading program in partnership with the mayor’s office, city libraries, the parks and recreation department and local businesses. “It is a model for what schools and other community agencies can do when they work together to benefit all of our children,” writes Lee Galda, a professor at the University of Minnesota. Another idea fostered by Russell was the peaceful solutions program. The school has developed a strong anti-bullying curriculum. A group of students has agreed to volunteer in a Stop the Violence program, working on ideas to reduce violence in their neighborhoods.

Russell also encourages Anwatin students to take an active role in community service projects. What started as a hunger awareness program in the school’s developmentally and cognitively delayed (DCD) program developed into a full scale 7th grade “Empty Bowls” project. Students donate clay bowls to sell to the community to raise money for the Branch One Food Shelf in Minneapolis. Seventh grade media and technology students researched hunger and created informational brochures to be handed out with the bowls. Another group of students created a power point presentation that was shown before a band concert. DCD students wrapped up the bowls and helped to distribute them.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

The Cypress Hills Community School is a unique, parent-governed partnership between the school district and a local community development corporation in a low income, high crimes sections of the Brooklyn.

“The school grew out of parent anger and frustration with the overcrowded public schools that had tracked Latino children into failing bilingual education programs and relegated parent input to bake sales and raffles,” writes Michelle Neugebauer, executive director of the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. “In hiring our founding faculty, we sought fellow visionaries and progressive educators, who were not afraid to share power and try new approaches. “

Irene Leon was just that sort of educator. A graduate of Amherst College, she earned a master’s degree in bilingual education before joining the Peace Corps to do environmental education in Panama. Returning to the United States, she went to work at the community school. After a hiatus as an assistant principal at another local school, she returned to Cypress as the principal.

AT CHCS, parents are involved in hiring, curriculum decisions, and tracking student achievement at the school. Irene Leon has worked well with her parental co-directors in making the school a success. The local development corporation takes an active role on the

school leadership team and it runs a Beacon after school program, staffed with a Spanish speaking teacher for students and offers English language workshops for parents.

Irene Leon has helped turn her school into a community laboratory for learning by capitalizing on resources in the neighborhood. The school has developed a community garden and worked with the Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment to study local history and architecture. Students participate in an annual “Penny Harvest” to learn about civic responsibility and philanthropy.

A partnership with the Morningside Center for Teaching Responsibility is helping students learn about peer mediation and how to resolve conflicts more creatively. Although the school itself doesn’t have big problem with discipline and violence, the surrounding area has some of the highest crimes statistics in the city.

“One of the unique things about the school is that we have a co-directorship model,” says Irene Leon, who shares leadership duties with one of the student’s parents, co-director Maria Jaya-Vega. “Maria and I have known each other for ten years, and we have a similar vision. We both are focused on one goal and we work together wonderfully.”

Though it may seem an unusual arrangement, the co-directorship seems to be working. Last year, the school, which has a student population that is about 80 percent low-income, received an “A” grade from the New York district’s annual report card.

Leon attributes her success at Cypress Hills to three factors: the power of a grassroots movement, the importance of parental involvement (and not just running bake sales) and the power of collaboration. “It’s vital,” she says. “Our students have shown progress academically because of our strong collaboration with families. The students trust us and see us an extension of their homes, and so I think they are more motivated to learn.”

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Frick Middle School a safe haven for students and their families in one of the city’s most crime-ridden areas. Principal Jerome Gordine has organized computer trainings for parents and holds monthly coffee get-togethers so parents can meet regularly and talk informally about the school. He has established links to community organizations, including the county mental health service agency, the Lawrence Hall of Science, and several mentoring groups. Through a partnership with California Gear Up, he has provided parenting seminars in English and Spanish to help parents foster a “college bound culture” for their children. “Mr. Gordine has done a tremendous job in building partnerships with community organizations, parents and guardians,” writes Christopher Dobbins, an Oakland School Board director.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Edward Koch is described by one teacher as a “dynamic, creative, confidant and committed leader.” He has helped make Fairhill School one of the best in inner-city Philadelphia. He formed a partnership with Congresso, a community-based organization for families that need truancy intervention, maternal and child health programs and HIV/AIDS services. The school partners with Teach for America to run a six-week summer enrichment program. The school is located in an area of the city with 95 percent poverty levels. “One only has to spend a few hours at this school to see that this man is a strong leader,” writes Sue Serio, a weather anchor at a local news station who has visited the school on numerous occasions. “He has clearly managed to take limited resources and manage them.” The school is participating in a statewide pilot program called the Pennsylvania Achievement Gap Effort. Since 2003, Fairhill has increased proficiency in reading by 47 percent at the fifth grade level. For eighth graders the levels of proficiency have increased by 33 percent. In math, the number of proficient eighth graders increased by 54 percent during the same period. Ronald Steinbrook, a coordinator for the statewide program praises the school for its “exemplary performance.”

SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

Mel Carnahan Middle School was once plagued by problems such as student violence and vandalism. Police were regular visitors to the school and attendance was a dismal 50 percent. Neighborhood groups wanted to close the school and turn it into a community center. The middle school was instead converted into Mel Carnahan High School of the Future. Alice Roach was selected to head up a partnership between the St. Louis school district and Dell, Inc., AT&T and the University of Missouri. The plan was to open a new concept high school that would incorporate the latest technology to involve students, parents and the surrounding community into a “cohesive community of learners.” The goal is ambitious—100 percent graduation and 100 percent acceptance at institutions of higher learning. “With essentially the same student population,” writes educator Lee Beasley, “she counseled rather than punished, coached rather than scolded, and effectively raised the level of student, parent and community involvement.” Attendance rose to 95 percent and performance is on the rise, thanks in part to the leadership of Alice Roach.

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

To reach out to the community, Linda Marsh organized supper meetings in the school’s common area, allowing working parents to meet with teachers, counselors, college representatives, administrators and neighbors of the school. Topics of discussion included student performance, graduation requirements and college requirements and financial aid opportunities. The principal has personally taken students on tours of east coast colleges. More and more students are attending top tier universities. In 2007, 86 percent of the

graduating senior class was enrolled in two or four-year colleges. Brackenridge High has been listed by Newsweek as one of the top 500 high schools in the nation. The school has been recognized by the College Board with an Inspiration Award for its efforts to provide equity in access to higher education. Marsh has also worked with local neighborhood and community organizations to provide scholarships for Brackenridge students to attend local community colleges.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

“Elizabeth Rood has been a leader in supporting and institutionalizing Leadership High School’s commitment to connecting students to lead and learning to serve,” writes David Donahue, an associate professor of education at Mills College. Each student performs 35 hours of community service per year. During junior year, students pick projects based on a particular community issue and perform community service in ways that address that issue. Principal Elizabeth Rood created a community outreach program consisting of six school and community leaders. The team develops relationship with churches, youth organizations, civic groups, health care providers, libraries, and other schools to create a network of support for students. This year, Rood developed a Family Meetings program in which every school family met with their students and student advisor to develop a plan for how to support academic success. In February 2008, the school was recognized by the School Redesign Network at Stanford University as one of five urban high schools that graduate low income students at higher than average rates and send 80 percent of graduates to college.

TAMPA, FLORIDA

Robert Heilmann is a dedicated principal who leads a school that maintains a rating of “A” according to the state’s school accountability program. He has also been a strong partner with local charities and health organizations. The local chapter of the American Cancer Center’s Relay for Life fundraising event is hosted at Riverview High School. Tiffany Oestreicher of the American Cancer Society, writes that the principal has been instrumental in uniting the school in the Riverview community in the fight against cancer. The school also hosts an annual blood drive. “Not only does Mr. Heilmann welcome a total of 12 noisy blood mobiles to Riverview School grounds,” writes Debbie Jones, the community relations coordinator for the nonprofit Florida Blood Services, “he is the first in line to donate each drive.” The Greater Riverview Chamber of Commerce holds its biggest community event at the school, an annual Trick or Treat Street, a safe Halloween event for young people. Heilmann leads the Hillsborough County School District’s Senior High Principal Council. He

has also participated in planning of a road widening project near the high school. One example of Heilmann's dedication to helping communities, he personally drove a truck to New Orleans to deliver supplies he helped collect for victims of Hurricane Katrina. "Bob Heilmann is a principal with principle," notes a colleague. "He sets an example for all to follow."

TULSA, OKLAHOMA

Daniel Webster High School principal Phil Garland, writes Tulsa Board of Education President Gary Percefull, "exemplifies the outstanding characteristics of a high performing school community leader. Since taking the reins in 2004, he has helped "transform both the Webster school community and the community surrounding the school by actively encouraging collaborations between the two." He is an active member of a variety of community improvement efforts. He is on the board of directors of the Red Fork Main Street project, which sees economic revitalization and historic preservation in the school's area of the city. He also serves on the Southwest Tulsa Chamber of Commerce board of directors and is a member of the Southwest Tulsa Planning Committee. He worked with the Southwest Education Initiative to set up a Vision West Block Party to build relationships between local schools and the public to reverse declining enrollment patterns in local public schools.

WASHINGTON, DC

Because of Hardy Middle Schools reputation for safety and academic excellence, students attend from all over the city. Principal Patrick Pope has made outreach to parents a priority, with automated phone calls, newsletters, items on the school's website and fliers. Pope's "frequent communications with parents and guardians help to foster a closer sense of community at Hardy," writes parent and PTA president, Charlotte Brookins-Hudson. Focusing on the importance of the arts as a means of advancing student achievement, Pope looks for new ways to expose the wider community to the music and artistic talents of his students. He has developed a relationship with the Duke Ellington School of the Arts to prepare his students to apply for entrance in the school. Students have made visits to senior citizens homes to perform music. He organized an annual musical showcase featuring student musicians and dancers from all of the secondary schools in Hardy's cluster. All DC public school teacher, administrators and parents are invited to attend. He formed a partnership with the Washington Performing Arts Society to pilot a jazz curriculum for middle school students.

