

# Pay gap wide between rich, poor schools

Associated Press

In a world of high-stakes standardized tests and shrinking budgets, teaching high school art usually means long days of trying to inspire kids with the glories of Renoir and Monet for precious little compensation.

Not for Thom Ritenbaugh.

Next school year Ritenbaugh will take home a whopping \$90,000 for teaching high school art classes. That's more than many of the young accountants and lawyers in his upscale suburban Philadelphia neighborhood.

The big paycheck highlights a trend that education experts say is a potent threat to inner-city schools: Wealthy districts are quickly raising salaries to retain experienced teachers and scoop up new ones.

In many states, including New York, California and Texas, the gap between the highest- and lowest-paid teachers is widening. Similar trends exist in school systems in

Colorado, Michigan, Oregon and Massachusetts, education experts say.

"The problem is that school districts are having trouble keeping their most experienced, highly qualified teachers in the profession," said Richard Ingersoll, an education professor who researches teacher pay at the University of Georgia.

"So those who can afford it are making sure that they are in the best position to retain good teachers. They are putting down the big bucks and not paying attention to any past notions of what a teacher should be paid."

Down the highway from the spacious lawns and two-story houses of Council Rock School District in Newtown, where Ritenbaugh works, some experienced teachers in urban Philadelphia are making around \$35,000 — about the national average.

Although Ritenbaugh receives the highest pay in his district because he has a doctorate

and 20 years of experience, the median salary for teachers in Council Rock is \$85,000.

"I love what I do, and I value that the district sees my career as important enough to make a substantial investment," Ritenbaugh said.

Some experienced teachers in the New York City school system make \$32,500, while new teachers in the White Plains district in affluent Westchester County, N.Y., received a \$1,500 raise last year to make \$37,583.

In Los Angeles, teachers with five years' experience make \$29,500, while some teachers in Beverly Hills with similar experience recently received increases that brought their salaries to \$73,400.

Ingersoll said his research shows some veteran teachers are heading for the money.

Still, few in education begrudge districts the right to dole out big paychecks for highly qualified teachers.

Al Fondy, president of the Pennsylvania Federation of Teachers, said the solution is to find a way to pay teachers more across the board. "There is nothing wrong with what Council Rock is doing," Fondy said. "They are simply trying to take advantage of their resources to provide the best education possible for their students."

David Yates, the principal at Council Rock High School, said he believes other districts could pay better but choose to spend elsewhere.

"Other people think technology, textbooks and facilities are the way to improve education," Yates said. "Council Rock has put money into teachers. We believe you can build the Taj Mahal for education and with mediocre teachers, schooling will fail. Conversely, you could open a school on the third floor of a barn with great teachers and kids will learn."

## NASA investments resources in the black community

WASHINGTON (NNPA)—The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has been expressing interest in minorities by investing their time, money and resources into minority communities in order to bridge the gap in the digital divide.

NASA's examples of its commitment included an astronaut Internet chat, a grant to Hampton University, U.S. Air Force flight training for people of color and a new laboratory at a predominately Black college.

In conjunction with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, NASA on May 24 held a special discussion over the Internet between children living in HUD as-

sisted housing and the space shuttle Atlantis. The discussion was an attempt to breed inspiration in the less fortunate youths. This was the first in what will hopefully become a series of regular chat sessions between these children and with other NASA engineers and scientists.

In addition, NASA has also joined forces with the US Air Force to fund flight training for minority Air Force Reserved Officers Training Corps Candidates. NASA's Office of Safety and Mission Assurance will fund one of two three-week flight-training programs for 18 Air Force Cadets who plan to pursue engineering, mathematics, and sci-

ence degrees.

Cadets who complete this training period will receive solo wings — meaning they have met the Federal Aviation Administration's solo requirements for flying a single engine aircraft.

NASA and the French government have contributed a \$173 million grant to Hampton University to launch three weather satellites. The satellites would obtain data to aid scientists in more accurately predicting the planets and climate.

U.S. Rep. Major R. Owens, D-N.Y., assisted NASA in opening an aeronautics laboratory on the campus of the Medgar Evers

College in Brooklyn, N.Y. on May 22. NASA's Office of Equal Opportunity Programs provided the school with a \$200,000 grant for the partnership to establish the New Major Owens Aeronautics Education laboratory. The laboratory features the latest in computer hardware and software placed in the hands of students in college and pre-college programs.

"This laboratory will encourage our community partners and students to study in fields that lead to careers in aeronautics and aviation, fields where minorities have been under represented," said Medgar Evers College President Edison O. Jackson.

## United States to free funds for Sierra Leone growing peace effort

WASHINGTON (AP)—Sen. Judd Gregg agreed Tuesday to release \$50 million for U.N. peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone after receiving assurances from the administration that it no longer envisions a role for rebel leader Foday Sankoh in efforts to reach a peace settlement.

Sankoh and his allies are widely accused of committing numerous atrocities during long years of civil war in Sierra Leone. He signed a peace agreement 11 months ago that ensured him a role in government, then repudiated the accord this past spring when he took up arms again. He was arrested last month in the Sierra Leone capital of Freetown.

Gregg, who had been single-handedly holding up the money, announced his

decision in a speech from the Senate floor.

The New Hampshire Republican had drawn sharp criticism from the administration and from U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan for putting holds not only on funds for Sierra Leone but also for Kosovo, East Timor and Congo.

Earlier, Gregg released his hold on \$40 million for U.N. operations in Kosovo.

As chairman of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee overseeing State Department expenditures, Gregg used his power to block the funds even though the money had been appropriated by Congress. The combined total of the holds on the four peacekeeping operations was \$368 million.

State Department spokesman Philip Reeker welcomed

Gregg's action, calling it a positive development. "This will allow us to help invigorate the U.N. process there in Sierra Leone," he said.

Gregg decided to release the Sierra Leone money after receiving assurances from Richard Holbrooke, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, about U.S. policy toward Sierra Leone and toward Sankoh in particular.

In a letter to Gregg, Holbrooke said the United States does not believe that Sankoh "should play any role whatsoever in the future political process in Sierra Leone. ... He must be held accountable for his actions."

Holbrooke also promised U.S. support for efforts to seize Sierra Leone's lucrative diamond mines from the control of Sankoh's forces, known as the Revolutionary

United Front.

As recently as three weeks ago, the State Department said Sankoh had a "chance to play a positive role" in resurrecting the peace agreement that he signed almost a year ago and then violated.

The U.S. position on Sankoh began to harden days later following his arrest.

In his speech, Gregg said Holbrooke's comments on Sankoh and other aspects of the situation in Sierra Leone give him reason for hope.

"Now we will recognize him (Sankoh) for what he is, a war criminal, and treat him as such," Gregg said.

Gregg put the hold on the Sierra Leone money last month at a time when Sankoh's rebels were holding about 260 U.N. peacekeepers hostage. All have since been released. Gregg

had indicated he would tie release of the funds to release of the hostages.

Gregg's multiple holds drew the wrath of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who described the action as a "grave mistake."

"Troublemakers in these regions cannot simply be wished away, they must be contained, captured, convicted or converted, which, in every case, requires resources," Albright said in a speech last month.

## Nevada receiving \$250,000 for public housing help

Nevada will get \$250,000 of \$24.5 million in federal grants issued by the Housing and Urban Development Department to help public housing residents get jobs and become self-supporting.

"Job training and other services will help public housing residents transform their lives," HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo said. "With jobs, families can escape poverty and dependence and unlock the door to self-sufficiency and brighter futures."



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