

Spotlight: In Memorium – Dr. Brian Dassler

Brian Dassler was a distinguished educator and valued friend of the Council for Educational Change.



He began his association with the Council when he was a teacher in Broward County, at **Stranahan High School**. He was a star participant in our New Teacher Retention and Mentoring Initiative. Subsequently, he participated in Stranahan's Urban Teacher Leadership program. Throughout his educational career, Brian stayed connected with the Council.

His passion for education was evident in his first role as the high school student representative on the **Broward County School Board**. Brian embraced teaching and learning, and in 2006 he was honored as the **Broward County Teacher of the Year**.

One of Brian Dassler's favorite expressions was, "Smart is not who we are; it is what we do." He believed that struggle was normal – something we all experienced – and insisted that, with effort, we could all improve our abilities. Brian took the time to listen, and communicated with everyone he encountered. He believed in us, and encouraged each of us to do well... Council President & Executive Director Dr. Elaine Liftin said, "Brian ranks among the smartest educators I have had the pleasure of knowing".

Although Brian earned three degrees from the **University of Florida** (B.A. in 2001, M.Ed. in 2002, and an Ed.D. in 2016), his strength was in how he put "knowledge into practice". He was always in learning mode.

Brian was a doer... his actions spoke louder than his words. After hurricane Katrina, he used his talents to help students in New Orleans. He became the founding principal of the **KIPP Renaissance Charter School** at a time when the community faced overwhelming obstacles. Additionally, Brian created a Foundation and set a lofty vision for his students. By the year 2022, he expected one thousand Renaissance school alumni to become first generation college graduates. His leadership really mattered. Last year, his school was the first "State takeover school" to receive an "A" rating.

Brian moved up to serve as the Chief Academic Officer of the **New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA)**. Under his leadership there, the school received an "A" rating, and was one of the highest performing open enrollment high schools in Louisiana. Brian was amazing at finding and building upon peoples' strengths.

Upon his return to Florida, Brian became the Deputy Commissioner of Education where he reconnected with the Council for Educational Change. He played a significant role in our inaugural Commissioner's Leadership Academies, and Executive Partnership Programs – PASS[®] and Executive PASS[®]. Recently, the Council honored Brian in our "*Legacy of Leadership*" publication as a model of the "Council Effect", paying it forward to empower others to make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless students.

The **Florida Board of Education** had recently planned to recognize Brian for logging over 50 hours mentoring a student in the second half of 2016. He received many awards and honors, but his real legacy will be remembered in the meaningful interactions he had with students, parents, teachers, and educational leaders. He dedicated his career to the educational success of young people of all backgrounds. The effect of his all too short life will resonate through all those whose lives he touched.



Latin Builders Association Dedicates New High School Campus



The **Latin Builders Association Construction & Business Management Charter High School** is the Council's newest PASS school. The PASS kickoff event was held on March 4th at the dedication of their new campus in Hialeah. The theme focused high school is for students interested in careers related to building and construction, and was the brainchild of **Bernie Navarro**, former President of the **Latin Builders Association (LBA)**. He explained, "The school is designed to train the next generation of leaders in our community and industry."

A large number of parents, supporters, and dignitaries attended the event including Commissioner **Jose 'Pepe' Diaz**, **Miami-Dade School Board** member **Susie Castillo**, and **Home Depot** Regional Manager **Mark Ortiz**. The school has an incredible number of business partners supporting the school including Home Depot, **Networth Capital**, **TD Bank**, **Digital Alliance**, **Florida City Gas**, to name a few. All of the partners contributed to the success of the school. The Latin Builders Association announced the opening of the LBA Construction and Business Management Academy Charter High School in June of 2012. This is the first time that a business association such as the LBA, has partnered with **Miami Dade County Public Schools** to open and operate a district-managed charter academy. The LBA Construction and Business Management Academy Charter High School offers their students the opportunity to earn their diploma, industry certifications, college credits, and even own their own business, concurrently.

The mission of the school is to "ensure that all students complete a college preparatory curriculum and develop the necessary skills culminating into post-secondary education, career training, and entrepreneurship. The uniquely synergistic curriculum fosters student motivation, understanding, and retention of concepts which generates positive effects on our community."



Congratulations

- ❖ As proposed by board member **Mari Tere Rojas**, the Miami-Dade School Board recognized **Ponce De Leon Middle School** Principal **Martha Chang** on February 15th for being named the **2017 Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Central Region Principal of the Year**, and finalist for the **2017 M-DCPS Principal of the Year**. Ms. Chang is a participant in both the Council's PASS and Executive PASS programs.
- ❖ **Alice Jackson**, the Reading Pal partner at **Oriole Elementary School** in Broward received two prestigious recognitions: **NAIOP Life Achievement Award - Woman of Distinction**, and **Broward County's United Way, Magnolia Leadership Award**.
- ❖ What does it take to be considered a "great district" by the teachers who work there? "Substantial" salaries, ample professional development and coaching (tailored to the individual educators and include ample team planning time), and the opportunity for teachers to move into leadership roles. Also important are: efficient operations and evidence of decision-making that reflects school interest, and that are not district mandated. District support is vital in helping teachers meet the needs of their students. Two of the eight districts recognized by the **National Council for Teacher Quality** are in Florida. Congratulations to Superintendents **Michael Grego** (Pinellas) and **Robert Runcie** (Broward). Both of these districts participate in the Council's PASS and Executive PASS programs.
- ❖ Congratulations to **Steve Wasserman**, Council Board Chair and **Casandra Robinson**, Principal of **Dillard High School** for an outstanding Career Fair. Details of the event will appear in the May Update.

Leadership Broward

Participants in **Leadership Broward** recognize the importance of the work of the Council in bringing business leaders and their ideas into schools. One of the Cohorts adopted the Executive PASS program as their project for this year. On March 22nd, the group held a **Day of Mentoring and Networking** for business executives and educators at **Nova Southeastern University** utilizing the Council's framework.



Working leader to leader, to improve performance in public schools, business leaders were able to communicate career and job skills needed to fill currently available employment needs and build a mentoring relationship with school leaders. These relationships will benefit school principals and, subsequently, their teachers. Students will graduate better prepared for the job market and aware of career possibilities to explore post-secondary institutions.

PASS[®] and Executive PASS[®]

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- The **JM Family Enterprises Executive Partnership with Deerfield Middle School** is doing extremely well. Business partner **Dan Chait**, President of World Omni Financial Corp and Senior Vice President of Parent Company JM Family Enterprises, presented an overview of the company, JM Family Enterprises. A second career presentation was made in February, and students learned about specific career opportunities in the auto industry. Since October, the partnership has created and taught engaging literacy lessons on the auto industry to the eighth grade students during their first period class. The students also researched JM Family Enterprises, **Jim and Jan Moran**, and **Jim Moran Foundation**. The goal is to expose students to careers in the auto industry through literacy lessons, career presentations and field trips.
- **Stuart Rohatiner**, CPA/JD of **Gerson, Preston, Robinson, Klein, Lips & Eisenberg, P.A.** shared his financial expertise as a partner with the students at **Alonzo and Tracy Mournig Senior High**. After one of the successful presentations, **Tina Brown**, Executive Director at the **Overtown Youth Center (OYC)** suggested that he share the presentation with parents at the OYC. It was a great evening with all the participants exchanging ideas. Topics included: how do I save more, improve my credit, retirement, dividend reinvestment, how do I get a better job/make more.



New Executive PASS Partnerships in Miami-Dade

- **Carol City Elementary** – Principal **Thalya Watkins** and Business Partner **Cheretha Ferguson, Teachers Rock**;
- **Ruben Dario Middle** – Principal **Dr. Verona McCarthy** and Business Partner **Dr. Joshua Padron, West Coast University**;
- **Miami Gardens Elementary** – Principal **Kathleen John-Louissaint** and Business Partner **Kathy Imberman, Crest Awards**;
- **Miami Lakes K-8 Center** – Principal **Carlos Salcedo** and Business Partner **Sarah Suarez, Lindeman Group**;
- **Fairlawn Elementary** – Principal **Heather Tyler** and Business Partner **Remy Dou, MassMutual**.

Dates to Remember...

April 11 –Semi-Annual Board Meeting, Tampa

April 25 – Executive PASS Duval County Roundtable Discussion, Jacksonville