

## **PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release: Tuesday, December 13, 2011

### **City Schools Fills Key Leadership Posts**

*Hires Research and Policy Expert to Take Data and Accountability Work to New Levels;  
Taps Internal Leadership to Head Human Capital, Special Education and Student  
Support Offices*

(Baltimore, MD) — The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners approved tonight the recommendation of Baltimore City Public Schools CEO Andrés A. Alonso to fill two cabinet seats and two executive leadership posts.

With a background that spans education policy, research and statistics and classroom teaching, Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger comes from the New York City Department of Education to serve as City Schools' new Achievement and Accountability Officer, with a charge to maximize the district's use of data and accountability systems to strengthen student achievement. And Dr. Kimberly Lewis becomes the district's Chief Human Capital Officer, after serving both in that capacity on an interim basis since spring and as Executive Director of Special Education for the last three years.

The Board also approved the appointments of Karen Webber as Executive Director of Student Support and Safety, and Kimberly Hoffman as interim Executive Director of Special Education. Currently principal at the National Academy Foundation (NAF), Ms. Webber has spent the last four years working to turn what was a struggling high school into one of the district's highest performing secondary schools. And as Director of Data Monitoring, Compliance and Support in the Office of Special Education, Ms. Hoffman has played a critical role in helping oversee the Special Education office at a time when students with disabilities have made unprecedented achievement gains. In her new interim position she will replace Dr. Lewis until the position is permanently filled.

"Dr. Lewis, Ms. Webber and Ms. Hoffman have all played an important part in City Schools' transformation efforts to date. They have become leaders of this work, and their first-hand experience and institutional knowledge will be indispensable moving forward," Dr. Alonso said. "At the same time, Ms. Bell-Ellwanger's deep experience with and knowledge of data systems and assessment, as well as teaching and learning, will help push us to become a much smarter district—a district that truly knows its schools and, based on that deep knowledge, is able to deliver to students what they need to succeed. I look forward to working with all of them to improve the support we as a district provide our students and our schools."

Joining City Schools as its new Achievement and Accountability Officer on January 3, 2012, Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger is currently a senior advisor to the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education. In her capacity as senior advisor, Ms. Bell-Ellwanger oversees New York City's Research and Policy Support Group, the primary source of research, data reporting and analytics for the district; she also serves as the district's liaison to the State Education Department to improve alignment of New York City's education reforms and those at the state

level. She has spent the last 14 years working in the areas of assessment and accountability; before that, she helped lead the district's New Teacher Academy, after teaching 1<sup>st</sup> grade for six years.

In her new position with City Schools, Ms. Bell-Ellwanger will lead the district's efforts to make better use of data to inform the guidance and support it provides to schools. This includes strengthening and streamlining what are currently multiple and diffuse data systems, and making information about school and students more readily available to staff to inform their decisions around improving student achievement. City Schools' more strategic use of data is vital to strengthening teaching and learning in the classroom, and to holding adults throughout the district accountable to students.

"I am thrilled to have Ms. Bell-Ellwanger on the City Schools team," Dr. Alonso said. "She will help guide us in key areas of new work, including our focus on teacher effectiveness and our transition to the Common Core State Standards. Ms. Bell-Ellwanger has a deep understanding of the potential of data to direct necessary and meaningful change."

Dr. Lewis, who has served as City Schools' interim Chief Human Capital Officer since last spring, officially assumes the position on a permanent basis on January 3. Having overseen both the successful staffing of schools for 2011-12 and the reorganization of the district office that went into effect July 1, Dr. Lewis brings a record of administrative leadership to lead the office that serves City Schools' 10,800 employees. As the former Executive Director of the Office of Special Education, Dr. Lewis brokered the settlement of the Vaughn G. special education lawsuit on City Schools' behalf. Prior to joining City Schools three years ago, she served as a program manager in the Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, and for 20 years before that she was a special education teacher.

"Dr. Lewis has been integral to our reform efforts of the last few years. She has overseen tremendous academic growth among our students with disabilities, including a narrowing of the achievement gap with general education students," Dr. Alonso said. "And when the Chief Human Capital Officer position came open, she stepped forward to take on one of the most important jobs in the district, as we both position the district office to better support schools and implement four new professional contracts, including City Schools' landmark teacher contract that creates unprecedented opportunities for teachers to advance professionally and financially."

Ms. Webber replaces Jonathan Brice, who now oversees the Office of School Support Networks created this summer to provide supports to schools. As Executive Director of Student Support, Ms. Webber assumes responsibility for a large, wide-reaching office that spans attendance and truancy, counseling, enrollment, student records, health services, suspension services and school police. Ms. Webber has spent the last nearly nine years with City Schools, as a teacher and then a principal. As a graduate of the New Leaders for New Schools program, she served as resident principal at Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in 2006-07, before assuming the leadership of National Academy Foundation (NAF). Under her leadership, NAF raised standardized test scores and its graduation rate, and established the district's largest college/high school dual enrollment program. Also under her leadership, NAF created the district's only student-run credit union branch in a school, moved into a new location and created an expanded campus that included the absorption of a struggling middle school.

Prior to joining City Schools, Ms. Webber spent several years advocating for poor and underrepresented populations, both in Baltimore and New York. She served as Executive Director of the Public Justice Center here in Baltimore, and as Executive Director of the Open Housing Center in New York, a nonprofit dedicated to fighting housing discrimination across the city's

five boroughs. She was also Assistant Commissioner for the New York City Department of Homeless Services, and a director with the New York City Mayor's Office of Management and Budget. Her experience as an advocate, a non-profit executive and the leader of two high-performing Baltimore City high schools position her well to run the broad range of student support and services she will oversee, starting January 3.

And finally, replacing Dr. Lewis as interim Executive Director of Special Education is Kimberly Hoffman, who has spent the last 12 years working in the district's Office of Special Education, most recently as its Director of Data Monitoring, Compliance and Support. Ms. Hoffman spent a number of years overseeing implementation of the Vaughn G. consent decree before assuming her current position, which has included the critical work of improving the quality of City Schools' special education data and training district office and network staff to use that data to inform the guidance they provide to school-based staff and to monitor schools' progress in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Prior to joining City Schools, Ms. Hoffman worked in various capacities at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, primarily as a mathematician with a focus on working with new teachers and students who were behind and needed extra support. She begins her new position December 14.