

Superintendent Jenkins meeting with Obama to discuss school success

By [Lauren Roth](#) Sentinel School Zone



President Barack Obama meets with the Council of the Great City Schools Leadership in the Roosevelt Room of the White House on Monday. Orange County Superintendent Barbara Jenkins is at forefront in bright blue. (Olivier Douliery / TNS)
Orange's superintendent got an audience with the president today. Topic? School funding.

[Orange County](#) schools Superintendent [Barbara Jenkins](#) was able to take her concerns about federal education legislation straight to the top on Monday. Jenkins was among a group of 11 school leaders who met with President [Barack Obama](#) during the Council of Great City Schools legislative summit in Washington, D.C.

The group, along with U.S. Education Secretary [Arne Duncan](#) and Council of Great City Schools Executive Director Michael Casserly, took concerns about proposals that could cut funding to urban school districts to the president during a meeting in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. Jenkins is on the council's executive committee.

"We are concerned that there will be shortfalls that will be harm education," said Jenkins, citing ideas that would dilute spending per student by either allocating money for poor students directly to the states or by shifting dollars when a child moves. Those plans could make it difficult for schools to put initiatives in place that address poverty in the schools where it is concentrated, Jenkins said.

They also expressed concerns that groups including low-income students, English-language learners, students with disabilities and minorities could be left out if their progress isn't mandated by law. And the leaders said they support testing -- within reason.

"Urban districts are not in opposition to high standards and rigor," Jenkins said. "Our children have to be able to compete, but we need additional resources to get there." Reasonable annual measurement is part of tracking that progress, she said.

The superintendents didn't have to do a lot of convincing -- the president already agreed with them, Jenkins said.

They also took the chance to talk about some of the positive things going on in their districts, including a recent youth leadership summit by young males of color in Orlando.

Jenkins had met Obama when he visited [Valencia College](#) to talk about college affordability and also at the launch of the president's My Brother's Keeper initiative. But this was the smallest setting she'd ever met him in, Jenkins said.

"The president is so gracious and down to earth," she said. "It was certainly an inspiring moment."