



Council of the Great City Schools  
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## **New Year Marks 20-Year Tenure of Urban-School Group's Leadership**

*Michael Casserly Believed to Be Longest-Serving Chief Among National Education Groups*

### **Urban Coalition Makes Major Strides in Improving Public Schools**

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13 – January 2012 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Michael Casserly's appointment to head the Council of the Great City Schools and the beginning of a strategic plan on the part of the nation's urban school districts to revitalize and improve themselves after many years of neglect.

Called a "crusader" for city schoolchildren by *USA TODAY*, Casserly took the reins of the Council in January 1992 after serving as the group's director of legislation and research for 15 years. He is now believed to be the longest serving chief among the major national education membership organizations.

"When I was CEO of Chicago's schools, Mike was my advocate in Washington," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "Now that I am in Washington myself, I see what an effective advocate he is for urban education. Mike also has been a courageous leader on raising standards and holding schools accountable. Representing districts where leadership changes are frequent, Mike's own leadership has been constant throughout a period of systemic change in America's schools."

In a recent address on the state of urban education in America, Casserly indicated that he was more optimistic about the future of urban education than at any time during his long tenure with the organization because urban schools not only are making gains but are figuring out how to make more. "The nation's urban schoolchildren over the past several years have demonstrated significant progress in reading and math proficiency on federal assessments," he stressed.

"Every public school student in the country represented by the CGCS has a voice at the national level because of Michael Casserly's leadership," said New Mexico's Albuquerque Public Schools Superintendent Winston Brooks, chair of the Council's Board of Directors. "Michael understands the unprecedented complex challenges our anemic economy has created for public education, and more importantly has the skill set, energy and relationships to move our schools forward."

In 1992, the Council of the Great City Schools and its team of expert staff members began unifying big-city school districts around a vision for improvement and

reform that has helped produce significant academic gains for urban schoolchildren and created new momentum for urban schools.

To move urban education forward, the Council initiated the federal Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) for inner-city schoolchildren to take the rigorous national test known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), considered the *Nation's Report Card*.

TUDA now provides 21 major city school systems that volunteered to measure student progress on the nation's toughest benchmark with comparable academic data across state lines that yields unique and detailed information on how urban schoolchildren are doing academically.

In addition, to improve transparency of urban-school progress, the Council begun publishing the nation's first annual compendium of student performance on state-mandated tests in major cities with its continuing series of reports titled *Beating the Odds*.

### **Academic Achievement No. 1 Goal**

The Council has a special mission to educate the nation's most culturally diverse student body to the highest academic standards. Consequently, it was the first national education membership organization to call for what became the Common Core State Standards, and is now actively working in support of their implementation in urban school systems nationwide.

The Council also initiated and wrote ground-breaking studies of why some urban school systems improve faster than others in order to inform the improvement of all urban schools. And it has produced important studies on African-American males, Hispanic students, language acquisition strategies, bilingual education and dropout prediction.

To back up its academic priorities at the ground level, the Council initiated and launched more than 210 hard-hitting technical assistance teams in more than 50 major city school systems that invited help in improving instruction, special and bilingual education, budget and finance operations, food services, transportation and other services.

Moreover, the Council has taken national policy and legislative positions that consistently reflect bi-partisan urban school priorities for high standards, academic results, accountability and equity.

### **Other Major Initiatives in 20 Years**

In addition to spearheading academic reforms, the Council has worked to improve management operations in urban school systems. It initiated and developed the first nationwide educational performance-management system with comparable data on nearly 400 non-instructional key performance indicators. Results have saved urban school districts millions of dollars in non-instructional costs and improved efficiencies.

The Council has also worked to improve public confidence of urban schools. It produced three major public-service announcements on urban school progress and stereotypes of urban schoolchildren that were viewed some 310 million times over four years on broadcast and cable television.

It also convened the first-ever summit meeting of the nation's big-city mayors and school superintendents to improve collaboration. And since 1992, the Council has expanded its membership from 44 city school systems in 1992 to 65 urban districts today.

"The Council of the Great City Schools is not here to reflect or perpetuate the inequities under which too many of our urban students suffer but to overcome them. Our next 20 years will be devoted to making sure that all our children have the academic tools for success," noted Casserly.

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