



Council of the Great City Schools  
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. ♦ Suite 702 ♦ Washington, D.C. ♦ 20004  
<http://www.cgcs.org>

FOR RELEASE  
December 1, 2008

CONTACT: Henry Duvall  
(202) 393-2427

## **\$3.7-Million Project Aimed at Improving Urban Schools**

### ***Gates Foundation Supports Research by Great City Schools Council***

WASHINGTON, Dec. 1 – The Council of the Great City Schools today announced that it has received a grant of \$3.7 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The grant is aimed at improving student performance in reading, mathematics and science as part of the Council's initiative to accelerate academic gains in the nation's big-city schools.

The three-year project will assist urban school districts in their efforts to raise standards, improve academic performance, close racial and economic achievement gaps, increase graduation rates and improve student preparation for college and employment.

Titled *Improving Standards and Data Use in the Great City Schools*, the project will analyze urban school achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, examining alignment between NAEP frameworks and relevant state standards in urban districts participating in the Trial Urban District Assessment of NAEP.

It will also investigate factors shaping NAEP results, such as family, school and economic variables, as well as instructional progress to determine why some urban districts show faster gains than others.

The second part of the research project will zero in on the use of data in instructional improvements. It will investigate best practices in how quarterly or benchmark assessment data are used to inform instruction and target resources, and it will lay the groundwork for better urban district tracking of secondary school student progress.

“We will explore two important levers for change: raising achievement in core subjects through a focus on standards and instruction, and using student data to identify student needs and target support where it's most needed,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

The Council will be assisted in the research project by the American Institutes for Research. The research that will be done follows efforts over the last several years by the

Council to boost student achievement in the nation's urban schools, which have resulted in measurable academic gains.

“Thanks to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we can now expand our efforts to improve student outcomes dramatically, which are linked to the foundation's goal of ensuring that every student graduates from high school prepared for success in college, career and life,” Casserly points out.

Why is the research significant? “No national effort to enhance the quality of public education can succeed without substantial progress in the nation's major urban school systems,” he stresses. “Urban schools simply enroll too large a portion of the nation's children to ignore.”

# # #

**(The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition representing the nation's largest urban public school systems.)**