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

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**CONTACT:** Henry Duvall  
(202) 393-2427

**Urban Schools Expand Pioneering Efforts to Gauge Business Performance**

***First-of-Its-Kind Data, Trend Lines Present Tool to Compare Key School Services***

WASHINGTON, July 29 – The nation’s major urban public school districts have developed new measures to gauge performance of their financial, technology and human resource operations, expanding pioneering efforts to improve the business side of the house in conjunction with their academic reforms.

The Council of the Great City Schools has developed first-time key performance indicators and benchmarks in the areas of budget and finance, human resources and information technology, while establishing trend lines in the critical areas of school transportation, food services, maintenance and operations, procurement, and safety and security.

Launched for the first time last year, *Managing for Results in America’s Great City Schools: A Report of the Performance Measurement and Benchmarking Project* is being released today as an expanded resource to track and document best business practices.

“The project is intended to help urban school systems measure the effectiveness and efficiency of their business operations by comparing data to analyze how they can maximize performance in managing their resources,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

The multi-year study presents key performance indicators, modeled after those used in the private sector, to measure urban school performance on a range of operational and business functions. The study also presents comparable city-by-city data on those indicators that will enable districts to benchmark themselves against high-performing school systems and identify best practices in each of the business areas.

*Managing for Results* was developed during the Council's annual meetings of its chief operating, financial, human resource and information officers over the past five years, aimed at improving operational decisions and strengthening business practices in America's big-city school systems.

Among new results of the multi-year study, the findings from 66 big-city school districts show that—

- The final general fund expenditures of the average big-city school district varied only 2.8 percent from their original projections;
- The percentage of big-city school districts with no new “material weaknesses” or audit problems increased from 79 percent in their 2005 audits to 82 percent in 2006;
- The number of security incidents per 1,000 students dropped from 25.5 in FY05 to 17.9 in FY07;
- The average percentage of NCLB highly qualified teachers in big-city school districts was 81.8 percent in FY07;
- The average school custodian serviced 24,554 square feet in FY07, compared with 23,501 square feet in FY05;
- The average length of time needed to complete the procurement process and receive goods dropped slightly from 36 days in FY05 to 35 days in FY07;
- The median cost of transporting students in FY07 was \$1,120 a child, up from \$988 two years ago or 13.3 percent;
- The average school lunch participation rate was 61.1 percent in FY07, up from 59.6 percent in FY05; and
- The total annual cost of telecommunications services averaged \$32.71 per student in FY07.

Each of the 103 indicators in the new report includes information about why the measure is important, how it is defined and calculated, what the range of responses were, and how the indicators are affected by other school district practices.

The Council expects big-city school boards and superintendents will be able to use these indicators and the data gathered on them “to assess their own business operations, measure progress on operational reforms, and demonstrate greater transparency in district operations to the public,” Casserly emphasizes.

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*The Council of the Great City Schools is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. It is a coalition of 66 large city public school districts.*