



Council of the Great City Schools  
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FOR RELEASE  
February 9, 2010

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## **Urban Schools Support First Lady's Child Obesity Initiative**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 9 – Representing the nation's inner-city public schools, the Council of the Great City Schools applauds First Lady Michelle Obama's childhood obesity initiative unveiled today.

With some 70 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch, the nation's urban school districts particularly recognize the importance of schoolchildren getting a healthy meal, being physically fit, and ready to learn.

"We are especially sensitive to disadvantaged inner-city students who come to school hungry or without a nutritious meal, distracting them from their lessons," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

"We applaud and support First Lady Michelle Obama's efforts to promote good nutrition and physical fitness to reduce childhood obesity leading to healthier lives for our students," he stresses.

Three Council school districts – New Jersey's Newark Public Schools, Ohio's Columbus City Schools and Boston Public Schools – were recently ranked at the top of school breakfast programs nationally.

A report by the Food Research and Action Center found that these three school districts serve breakfast in the classroom at no charge to students in many or all of their schools.

The Council, a coalition of 66 of the nation's largest urban school districts, plans a number of efforts to promote the first lady's childhood obesity initiative to reach its 7.5 million schoolchildren. They include:

- Setting a goal of having all urban public schools nationally meeting the gold standard set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Healthier US School Challenge within the next five years;
- Collecting school food-service data and key performance indicators to assess urban school progress on the initiative;

- Disseminating information from the initiative on ways to combat childhood obesity to urban superintendents, school board members, and staff;
- Collaborating with grassroots organizations that can help provide ground-level assistance to urban schools and students;
- Providing a link on the Council's web site to the first lady's initiative and the Healthier US School Challenge; and
- Offering opportunities for speakers and guests to address urban school leaders about the initiative.

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