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Council of the Great City Schools
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Urban Schools Develop Performance Indicators Of Business Operations

First-of-Its-Kind Data Collected Comparing Key School Services

WASHINGTON, April 19 –The nation’s major urban public school systems have developed pioneering new indicators to gauge performance on a series of key operational areas to accompany their academic reforms.

The Council of the Great City Schools has developed 50 key performance indicators in five critical areas of operation in the nation’s big-city school districts: transportation, food services, maintenance and operations, procurement, and safety and security.

After embarking on a first-of-its-kind benchmarking effort to improve operational performance in big-city schools, the Council today released *Managing for Results in America’s Great City Schools: A Report of the Performance Measurement and Benchmarking Project*.

The multi-year study presents 50 indicators, modeled after those used in other public and private sectors, 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.

While the “business side” of urban education has always placed a strong emphasis on data, says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly, comparable indicators have never been available in public education in a way that would allow one school district to peg its performance to another.

“To be accountable, we must be able to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of our operations,” Casserly stresses. “Good comparative data give school districts the ability to analyze how well they manage their resources.”

Managing for Results was developed during the Council’s annual meetings of its chief operating and chief financial officers, who launched the Performance Measurement and Benchmarking Project in 2003.

The project aims to help the nation’s urban public schools measure their performance, improve their operational decisions, and strengthen their practices.

Among the initial results of the multi-year study, the findings from the 66 big-city school districts showed:

- The median cost of transporting students is \$988 a child;
- The average student-participation rate in food services is 59.6 percent;

- The average school custodian services 23,501 square feet;
- The average time to complete the procurement process and receive goods is 35 days;
and
- The percent of school buildings with alarm systems is 23.5 percent.

Each of the 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.

Later in the study, the project will develop indicators and benchmarks in the areas of budget and finance, human resources, and information technology. Trends will also be tracked, and best practices in high-performing districts will be documented.

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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.