

# Cleveland schools CEO Eric Gordon joins meeting with President Obama to press for continued aid for disadvantaged kids



President Barack Obama speaks during a meeting with the Council of the Great City Schools Leadership, Monday, March 16, 2015, in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington. From left are, Education Secretary Arne Duncan, the president, Cecilia Munoz, Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, and Budget Director Shaun Donovan. *(Jacquelyn Martin)*

By [Patrick O'Donnell, The Plain Dealer](#)

CLEVELAND, Ohio - [Cleveland schools](#) CEO [Eric Gordon](#) was happy to boast of Cleveland's improving graduation rate to President Obama today, while also pressing - along with representatives of nine other big-city districts - for continued funding for poor students and for testing that highlights those students' needs.

Gordon was one of 10 representatives of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#) to meet with the President at the White House today, urging reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, of the [Title I funds for disadvantaged students](#) that comes with it, and of some of the testing that came with No Child Left Behind.

The meeting lined up with a Council event all weekend in Washington and a White House announcement today [increasing graduation rates for black and Hispanic students](#).

After the meeting, Obama pointed to Cleveland as one of three districts that he sees as making improvements despite real challenges.

He said: "If you look at what's happened in the D.C. public schools, or you look at the efforts that are being made in places like Fresno, which it's a poor city in a poor school district, but despite that is seeing real strides; if you look at what's going on in Cleveland where I'll be visiting tomorrow [Wednesday] -- these are school districts that, despite enormous challenges, have made real progress."

Gordon said the visit was personally exciting - a "once-in-a-lifetime experience" that included a group photo in the Oval Office - but also an important one. In the one-hour meeting in the Roosevelt Room, school officials told the President and Education Secretary Arne Duncan that they want ESEA reauthorized and dread [proposed Republican cuts to Title I that would hit Cleveland especially hard](#).

Gordon said President Obama also made sure to hear from all 10 representatives. Gordon said he the administration is already aware of Cleveland's [PRE4CLE efforts to increase preschool seats](#) for young children, so he highlighted the district's graduation rate gains.

The [state still gives the district an F grade for its graduation rate, but it has risen](#) from 52.2 percent in 2009-2010 to 64.4 percent for 2012-13, as reported on last fall's report cards. Graduation rates are reported on a year's delay.

"It really was a very personal dialogue with each of us," Gordon said.

Gordon will see the President again Thursday when Obama speaks at the City Club. Gordon will attend with a table of students from Max Hayes vocational high school.

Attending the meeting were: Oakland School District board member Jumoke Hinton Hodge, San Francisco School District Superintendent Richard Carranza, District of Columbia Public Schools Chancellor Kaya Henderson, St. Paul Public Schools Superintendent Valeria Silva, Kansas City (Mo.) school board member Airick West, Fresno School District Superintendent Michael Hanson, Boston Public Schools board member Michael O'Neil, Milwaukee Public Schools Superintendent Darienne Driver, Superintendent Barbara Jenkins of Florida's Orange County Public Schools in Orlando and El Paso School District Superintendent Juan Cabrera.