

News...News...



News...News...

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

FOR RELEASE
July 13, 2010

CONTACT: Henry Duvall
(202) 393-2427 or hduvall@cgcs.org

**Statement by Michael Casserly
Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools**

On the 2010 D.C. Public Schools Test Scores

WASHINGTON -- The Council of the Great City Schools is pleased with the overall progress in the reform and improvement of the D.C. Public Schools and the upward movement in the district's secondary-grade level test scores announced today. It is clear to the national organization of large city school districts that the initiatives developed by the school system's leadership have put the district on the right track for long-term and substantial improvement.

What is the state of D.C. school reforms and are they the right ones for improving student achievement? The overall health of D.C. school reform remains excellent and robust despite any year-over-year changes in test scores. The school district and its leadership has put a number of important initiatives in place—including a cutting-edge teacher evaluation system (IMPACT), expanded professional development and instructional coaching aligned to the new Teaching and Learning Frameworks, better use of student assessments and technology, enhanced extended-time programs for students who need help beyond the school day, more defined accountability for results, more focused deployment of the district's scarce resources on instructional improvement, a new teachers contract with greater emphasis on student results, and the recruitment of talented new staff to help spur reforms alongside veteran educators. These reforms are either consistent with or at the forefront of reforms in other major city school districts across the country that are seeing significant progress in student achievement.

How does DC's improvement stack up to gains in other cities? It is clear from both NAEP and state data that the academic progress made by the D.C. Public Schools and driven by strong increases at the secondary level remains among the strongest in the nation, even with the dip in 2010 elementary-grade scores. NAEP scores showed significant improvement between 2007 and 2009 in both reading and math in DC—the only city school district to have made statistically significant improvement in both subjects in 4th and 8th grades over that period. In addition, proficiency rates on the DC-CAS have climbed by 65.4 percent in math and 18.9 percent in reading at the elementary school level between 2006 and 2010, well ahead of most cities.

Are the gains in DC's secondary grades significant or unusual? Yes, the gains in DC's secondary grade level reading and math scores are both unusual and important. The results indicate that proficiency levels on the state test have risen 91.3 percent in math and 48.3 percent in reading—among the fastest in the nation. In fact, D.C. is the only one of the major cities to see double-digit growth in both their state reading and math scores in grades 7, 8 and 10 over the most recent three years. To date, most big city school districts continue to show only modest gains in math in the secondary grades and insignificant gains in reading, so DC's improvements with this critical age group will be of substantial interest to other cities.

Do urban school districts pursuing reform see declines in student test scores? Yes, it is typical that big city school systems experience periodic dips in their test scores as they are working toward long-term improvement. Our analysis of big city school reading and math state-test scores shows that most urban school districts that have made significant academic improvements since 2006 have also shown periods where one or more grades declined before rising to—and sustaining—higher levels of achievement. Of the 65 big city school districts comprising the Council, 27 showed *reading* score gains between 2006 and 2009 in every grade between three and six. Twenty of those cities—or 74.1 percent—had one or more years where they saw a decrease in one or more grade levels prior to increasing to levels beyond their starting point. Only seven city districts—or 26 percent—showed no declines in any year or grade.

In addition, 37 major city school districts showed *math* gains between 2006 and 2009 in every grade between three and six. Some 27—or 73 percent—of those districts declined in one or more grades during that period before rising to—and sustaining—a level that exceeded the baseline. Only 10 districts—or 27 percent—showed no declines in any year or grade between 2006 and 2009. In other words, it is actually unusual to see urban school districts improve in a straight line.

What should the DC schools do next? The Council urges the school district to undertake a thorough analysis of the latest assessment results to determine possible causes and to formulate a plan based on the analysis for what it will need to do to ensure that the one-year dip does not turn into a trend. And we urge patience by the public as the district continues to bring about its long-overdue and badly needed reforms.

###