

Remarks at Common Core Publishers Criteria Event

By

Michael Casserly, Executive Director

Council of the Great City Schools

New York City

June 28, 2012

Thank you, one and all, for a terrific discussion. And thank you for coming today for this very important and unique announcement.

I am Michael Casserly, Executive Director, of the Council of the Great City Schools. And we are very pleased to host this event with Student Achievement Partners and the New York City Department of Education.

I do not have to tell anyone in this room that urban public education is under tremendous pressure to improve—maybe more pressure than any institution public or private in the nation.

Urban public schools are being told to produce results or get out of the way.

We are being told to improve or see the public go somewhere else.

We are being told to be accountable for what we do or let someone else do it.

Some of the criticism is justified. Some of it is not. Either way, we are being challenged in the court of public opinion and by history to raise student achievement to levels that America has never before asked of its schools.

Many groups might have folded under the pressure, giving up in the face of mounting criticism. But urban schools and school systems across the country are doing what a lot of people didn't think we were capable of doing.

We are rising to the occasion, teaching our children more effectively, and improving the academic attainment of our students at rates that are significantly greater than the nation at large.

But the pressure to improve is not on us alone. In order to continue our advancement, we need to put pressure on you—the educational publishers.

We are here today to announce a “purchasing pact”—a buyers cartel if you will. Our commitment is to stand together as a united front, and to leverage our collective weight in the education market to drive change and improve quality.

It was, after all, the nation's Great City Schools who first called for what became the common core standards.

We have an enormous stake in their success and a strong commitment to their future.

Now we need our partners in public education to heed these new guide posts, and to ensure that the instructional materials and tools we rely on are true to the promise of those standards by adhering to the Publishers Criteria.

I can also see a day in the not too distant future when we will use the strength of our urban alliance to say to the colleges of education that unless your graduates can teach to these standards, then we will not hire them.

The pressure on us is not one way. We need the companies who supply our goods and services to up their game as we are now elevating ours.

And we need their materials to better reflect the racial and language diversity of our communities

For too long, the standards that we've maintained and the materials and resources we've relied on to meet them have reflected grave, historical inequities.

They have been driven by ideas about who is valuable in this society and who is not.

Who we have high hopes for and for whom we have no hopes at all.

Who we hold to high standards and for whom we hold no great expectations.

But our job in urban public education is not to reflect, affirm, and perpetuate the injustices under which too many of our children suffer or to let them define us or hold our kids back. Our job is to overcome these barriers and teach all our children to the highest standards.

The common core standards will help us do this, not because we think this will be easy but because we know that it is right.

People are fond of saying that education is the new civil right, but no one fought the great civil rights battles over access to mediocrity. They fought them over access to excellence and the resources to achieve it.

Our job is to create that excellence and opportunity through common, high standards, and to make sure that education trumps poverty rather than letting poverty dampen education.

The presence of the Great City Schools here today reaffirms our commitment and determination to make things right for America's urban school children.

We need our partners to bring that same commitment to our classroom materials. We won't buy them if they don't.

Thank you so much for being here today.