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Council of the Great City Schools

1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. ♦ Suite 702 ♦ Washington, D.C. ♦ 20004

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

## **New Common Core Academic Standards Advancing in Nation's Urban School Districts, Report Shows**

WASHINGTON, Jan. 23 – Some 87 percent of big-city school districts nationwide plan to have fully implemented the Common Core State Standards in reading and mathematics, which have been adopted in 46 states and the District of Columbia, by the 2014-15 school year, according to a new report.

Forty-one percent of big-city school districts are using the English language arts criteria developed by the non-profit Student Achievement Partners, a group instrumental in writing the standards, in order to make purchasing decisions about textbooks and materials, and 53 percent of responding districts have delayed purchasing decisions.

The report – *Implementing the Common Core State Standards in Urban Public Schools* – was released today by the Council of the Great City Schools, which has launched a multi-year analysis of implementation trends in the 67 urban school districts the national coalition represents.

The survey was intended to measure a range of instructional and management factors to determine the status of Common Core State Standards implementation and progress in urban public school systems through the 2011-12 school year.

“Effectively implementing the new standards is among the highest priorities in urban schools today,” Council Executive Director Michael Casserly stresses. “The new benchmarks hold immense promise for elevating the quality of public education in urban school districts that serve large numbers of disadvantaged students.”

Thus far, more than half (58 percent) of urban school districts responding to the survey have drafted plans for implementing the standards, and another 39 percent are developing such plans. In fact, most urban school districts (56 percent) began implementing the English language arts (ELA) standards in some schools, subjects, and grades in either 2010-11 or 2011-12, and 54 percent began implementation of math standards in those years.

In general, implementation of both ELA and mathematics standards is proceeding faster in elementary grades than in secondary grades.

The survey also covers a wide range of implementation activities in the urban school districts, including professional development, data-collection and measurement strategies, and

communication methods to inform key community and education stakeholders of district Common Core initiatives and progress.

Other key findings in *Implementing the Common Core State Standards in Urban Public Schools* include:

- 100 percent of the responding districts indicated that they had involved their teachers to some degree in developing implementation plans. Fewer districts reported involving business leaders, city officials, or faith-based organizations.
- Some 87 percent of responding districts have analyzed the extent of alignment between their current ELA curriculum and the new standards or are in the process of doing so; 81 percent have done or are doing so in math as part of the implementation process.
- Some two-thirds of the districts surveyed were revising their reading and math curricula this school year.
- About 68 percent of the districts responding to the survey indicated that they are in the process of developing a system for monitoring implementation of the Common Core standards, while another 13 percent have already developed a measurement system.
- Some 55 percent of responding districts were developing new benchmark or interim assessments based on the standards, while 29 percent indicated that they had already developed such tests.
- Approximately 77 percent of the district respondents are currently in the process of developing communications strategies to make key education stakeholders, including parents, aware of the Common Core standards and how they will impact students, and another 10 percent have already done so.

Finally, the report makes preliminary predictions of how students in urban districts may perform on the assessments being developed around the Common Core academic standards based on student achievement levels on both the ACT college-admissions test and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The findings suggest that results will be similar to performance on NAEP, and that roughly a fourth of students in large cities will be able to meet college readiness benchmarks in the first year.

“While there is no direct method of predicting exactly how students will fare on the new Common Core assessments, tests of similar rigor can be used as proxies to predict how students might perform given current student achievement levels,” says Council Research Director Sharon Lewis.

Since 2011, the Council of the Great City Schools has coordinated a major initiative to assist urban school districts in effectively implementing the Common Core State Standards with the support from The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.