

MINUTES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS
MINUTES
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
West Palm Beach, FL
January 24 & 25, 2025**

Present:

Officers:

Marcia Andrews, Chair, Palm Beach County School Board
Sonja Santelises, Chair-elect, Baltimore CEO
Valerie Davis, Secretary Treasurer, Fresno School Board

Members:

Jill Baker, Long Beach Superintendent
Sabrina Bazzo, San Diego School Board
Margo Bellamy, Anchorage School Board
Sharon Contreras, North Carolina Central University
Brandon Craig, Cincinnati School Board
Shavonna Holman, Omaha School Board
Roger León, Newark Superintendent
Alex Marrero, Denver Superintendent
Christina Martinez, San Antonio School Board
Mary Skipper, Boston Superintendent
Joyce Wilkerson, Philadelphia School Board
Darryl Willie, Duval County School Board
Stacey Woolley, Tulsa School Board

Absent:

Jerry Almendarez, Santa Ana Superintendent
Stephanie Elizalde, Dallas Superintendent
Lewis Ferebee, District of Columbia Chancellor
Kelly Gonez, Immediate Past Chair, Los Angeles School Board
Aleesia Johnson, Indianapolis Superintendent
Kyla Johnson Trammel, Oakland Superintendent
Marty Pollio, Jefferson County Superintendent
Deborah Shanley, Brooklyn College School of Education

Marcia Andrews, Chair of the Board of Directors, called the meeting to order at 2:10 pm. A quorum was established. Members then introduced themselves and gave a short update on events in their districts.

Appointments and Nominations

There are currently two vacancies on the Executive Committee created by Rodney Jordan who retired from the Norfolk School Board on January 1, 2025 and Jenny Lam whose term on the San Francisco Unified School District School Board ended on January 8, 2025. The Nominations Subcommittee will meet next month to fill vacancies, approve 2025-26 officers, and renew terms and present these recommendations to the Executive Committee at the upcoming March meeting in Washington, DC.

Minutes

Ray Hart presented the minutes of the October 2024 meetings of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors in Dallas, TX.

A motion to approve the minutes passed without dissent by voice vote.

Bylaws

The Bylaws Subcommittee met to discuss the issue of membership criteria and recommended to the Executive Committee that the enrollment criteria be changed from 35,000 to 25,000.

A vote to amend the bylaws and change the enrollment criteria from 35,000 to 25,000 passed without dissent by voice vote.

Membership

The subcommittee will communicate over the coming weeks to discuss two current applicants who are now eligible given the new, lower enrollment criteria—Madison Metropolitan School District and Durham Public Schools. They expect to make a recommendation to the committee in March.

Audit

Ray Hart gave the report of the Audit Subcommittee. It was a completely clean audit. The Audit section of the Committee materials includes:

- Draft Independent Auditors report for 2023-24. *The final audit report will be presented to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors in March. This report includes a letter to this body and the board of directors that summarizes the audit findings.*
 - Statement of financial position. *Members should note that the grants line is up, due to a \$4 million grant from the Gates Foundation last year. We typically report total grant amount as revenue in the year we receive them, then spend the funds down over time.*
 - Statement of activities

- Statement of functional expenses. *Ray Hart highlighted the outside services line, explaining that about half of our staff are external consultants not based in the DC office. This is what that means.*
- Statement of cash flows
- Notes to financial statement. *A few things of note. Again, page 14 lays out the procedure for recording grants receivable. As we expense grants, we will have negative values since we are spending down the funds. On page 18 members will see that we have over \$13 million in investments. We continue to invest our dollars soundly. Page 21 provides notes on assets and revenue, and page 24 provides information on the availability and liquidity of funds available to the organization—roughly about \$15 million.*
- Supplemental information provided by auditors, including a schedule of project revenue and expenses and letter to the audit subcommittee and full board of directors.

2023-24 Report

- Combined Report, General Operations and Categorical Programs, Draft Audit Totals for 2023-24
 - Combined general operations and categorical programs. *Shows total revenues, revenues over expenses, and investments—the organization has about \$1 million in investment income. And our assets at yearend total to approximately \$18.5 million.*
 - Status of 2023-24 membership dues. *All districts paid their dues for 2023-24, with the exception of Puerto Rico and NOLA, whose dues are waived. This also shows that Toronto did not pay dues and is no longer a member.*
- General Operations Budget Report
 - General operating budget by function
 - General operating budget by expense line
 - Preliminary expenses for year ending June 30, 2024. *Again, Ray Hart noted the lines for salaries and outside services, which account for staff located throughout the country.*
 - Investment schedule. *Our investments are doing well.*
 - Investment portfolio by asset class, including asset class distribution
- Categorical projects budget report
 - Revenue and expense report, preliminary 4th quarter report ending June 30, 2024. *This shows expenses and revenue from Council meetings and conferences, strategic support team reviews, coaching and training of superintendents, and governance supports. Ray highlighted these to make the point that these are critical activities for the Council, and we continue to invest in this work. He also pointed out that we currently yield about quarter of a million dollars in revenue from our Professional Learning Platform (PLP).*

2024-25 Report

- General Operations Budget Report, for six-month period ending December 2024
 - Membership dues structure by tiers. *This shows a 3.1% increase in 2024-45.*
 - Status of membership dues. *There are a handful of districts who haven't paid dues yet. Two of these districts—Charleston and El Paso— have indicated they will not pay. A third, Bridgeport, has not paid but they (and their state agency) have reached out to us for support, so we expect to receive dues from them. Memphis has also not paid, and has had recent leadership turnover, but they paid their dues late last year so we still expect to receive payment. We have had extensive engagement with them over the last few months. St. Louis also has a new superintendent and is facing fiscal challenges, but again, we've been engaged with leaders in the district and still expect them to pay.*
 - General operating budget by function. *Most of our revenue has been received (97%), and we have incurred 53% of our budgeted expenses. We typically spend more in the second quarter of the fiscal year around the annual conference.*
 - General operating budget by expense line
 - Approved budget by functional area
- Categorical Projects Budget Report FY 2024-25
 - Revenue and expense report for the 2nd quarter ending December 31, 2024. *This section shows the expenses and revenue associated with our meetings and conferences. It also shows that we have closed out a Hewlett Foundation grant and a writing project with UC Irvine. And it shows the expenses incurred by hosting the CGCS Harvard ABC Institute. We had a loss this year, but we have renegotiated an agreement with Harvard that gives us added flexibility to cancel by April 1 if there are not enough registrations.*
- Investment policy and guidelines
- Asset allocations

Proposed budget for FY 2025-26

- Membership Dues Structure by Tiers. *This shows a proposed dues increase of 2.7%, based on the November 2024 consumer price index (CPI).*
- Review of District Enrollment. *Every five years we review and reclassify districts based on enrollment fluctuations. Several districts will be reclassified into a lower dues tier.*
- General Operating Budget by function
- General Operating Budget by expense line
- General Operating Budget by area
- History of CPI increases

A motion to approve the Audit report passed without dissent by voice vote.

Conferences and Meetings

Ray Hart reviewed the lineup of meetings and conferences for 2025.

The 2025 annual conference will be held in Philadelphia, and 2026 will be in Boston. We are now fielding applications for 2027. In the materials there is a letter from Denver Public Schools and the mayor of Denver offering to host in 2027. Others that informally expressed interest in hosting were Atlanta and Jackson but there has been no official follow-up.

A motion to hold our 2027 Annual Conference in Denver, CO passed by voice vote.

Later on in the meeting the Committee received invitations from San Diego to host the January 2026 meeting and Anchorage to host the July 2026 meeting. In addition, the group discussed a number of locations for 2027 committee meetings.

A motion to hold the January 2026 Executive Committee Meeting in San Diego and the July 2026 meeting in Anchorage passed without dissent by voice vote.

A motion to hold the January 2027 Executive Committee Meeting in San Antonio and the July 2027 meeting in Tulsa passed without dissent by voice vote.

Research

The research materials begin with a department overview. There is an update to the enrollment dashboard and a report on enrollment. There is no report on TUDA yet, as the data cannot yet be shared. Early results were shared with district leaders and staff two days ago, NAEP results will officially be released next week. Ray Hart recently recorded a video highlighting urban district progress. Historically the release of NAEP TUDA results has been held with NCES at the National Press Club. This year there won't be a formal release—they will release it virtually, so our video will be released at the same time. Ray Hart encouraged committee members and their communications team to use this opportunity to reinforce the need and value of continued investment in public schools, and to highlight the critical investments made with these federal funds.

The Education Recovery Scorecard will also be released over the coming weeks—about two weeks after the release of TUDA. This is an effort by Harvard and Stanford to report on districtwide and nationwide recovery. However, we expect somewhat limited media coverage of this report.

Communications

The communications section of the materials begins with press releases and a sample of media articles divided into subsections, including articles on Council awards, articles on Council reports and activities, articles on district leadership, and articles on general education issues where Council staff were quoted or the Council was mentioned. Following that there is a social media update, the latest copies of the *Urban Educator*, 2025 application guidelines for the Bernard Harris scholarship program, and a flyer for the 2025 PRE meeting.

Ray Hart also informed the committee that we have hired a freelance writer to act as a journalist to write stories on behalf of member urban districts. This writer might be reaching out to you and your district staff in the coming weeks and months. We are targeting the release of three to four articles a month. There will be a focus on highlighting district investments of ESSER funds and other federal funds on behalf of recovery and supporting student progress. This is part of an effort to be more proactive about telling our stories.

Saturday, January 25

Legislation

Ray Hart and Mary Lawson, General Counsel, provided an update on legal developments impacting urban school districts.

The group asked the Council staff to move forward in gathering information and monitoring the legal situation to determine the need/potential success of filing a legal injunction to protect the rights of immigrant students/families/staff. If events transpire that necessitate action, the Council will convene this body virtually.

Manish Naik then provided an update on legislative developments.

Strategic Plan

Our strategic plan was developed in 2018 and lays out a roadmap for the organization through 2024. There are quarterly updates on the work done to reach each of these goals, and we have adjusted as needed over the past few years.

The materials provide an update to this plan, outlining our goals and strategies for the next five years, from 2025 through 2030.

The group discussed the updated plan and praised the structure, clarity, and substance of the document. The next step is to submit this to the full Board of Directors for approval in March at the Legislative/Policy Conference.

Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development

Jill Baker gave the report of the Achievement and Professional Development Task Force. She highlighted a number of Council activities, current resources, and recent releases.

Ray Hart then discussed some recent academic reviews undertaken in Council districts.

Task Force on English Language Learners and Bilingual Education

Ray Hart then presented the report of the English Language Learners and Bilingual Education Task Force. The department overview provides information on the activities and resources offered in support of newcomer students and their families. Ray Hart also called the committee's attention to the resources available via the Council's Communities platform, including information/resources on safe and welcoming schools.

The materials also provide a social media update, information on writing courses/resources, and results from a survey on English learner supports and programming.

In response to a question concerning the work of the task forces, and the responsibilities of task force chairs and members, the group discussed the history and role of the task forces at length. The discussion touched on changing the names of these groups and briefing the chair upon each transition on what the expectations are. Given their function, a suggestion was made to rename the task forces "advisory committees," tasked with broad oversight and evaluation of the utility and impact of the Council's work and resources in the areas of academics and professional development; bilingual education; support for males and females of color; and leadership, governance, management and finance. This clarification/adjustment could be put forward as a motion to the Executive Committee at its summer meeting in Newark.

Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys

Alex Marrero gave the report of the Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys. He was pleased to note the great work of his team in Denver on the "La Raza Report," which was presented at the task force meeting back in March. Marrero then gave the Committee a brief history of this work.

Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls

Sharon Contreras gave the report of the Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls. She began by pointing out the task force goals. They have been trying to address issues such as health, pregnancy, mental health, and violence and trauma.

Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance

Joyce Wilkerson presented the materials provided in the Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance Task Force section of the Executive Committee materials. She lauded the strategic plan and its alignment to the work of the task force and raised the possibility of the task forces serving to assess the utility and quality of the resources and projects undertaken by the Council, such as the Casserly Superintendent Institute, the Harvard ABC program, Student Outcomes Focused Governance training, and board coaching. We need to regularly assess whether these endeavors are meeting the needs of members, and perhaps looking at outcomes and impact.

Ray Hart then discussed the current cohort of the Casserly Institute for superintendents. There are 11 cohort members this round. We also have a cadre of former superintendents that provide coaching for new and sitting district leaders.

This section of the committee materials also provides updates on the Council's governance and management services work.

Personnel

The Executive Committee then discussed the extension to Mike Casserly's contract as strategic advisor to the organization through December 31, 2025. The committee approved the extension.

Respectfully submitted:

Ray Hart
Executive Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
October 19, 2024

Marcia Andrews, Chair of the Board of Directors, called the meeting to order at 8:45 am ET. A quorum was established, and present members introduced themselves.

Minutes

Marcia Andrews presented the minutes of the March 2024 meeting of the Board of Directors meeting in Washington, DC and the July 2024 meeting of the Executive Committee in St. Paul, MN.

A motion to approve the minutes passed without dissent by voice vote.

Appointments and Nominations

A lineup of the Subcommittee and Task Force chairs and members is provided in the Board materials.

Audit

Ray Hart gave the report of the Audit Subcommittee. The Audit section of the Committee materials includes:

- Combined report on General Operations and Categorical Programs
 - Preliminary fourth quarter report for 2023-24. *As members can see, there are significant revenues. This is due to a large new Gates grant, which will be spent down over the next 4 years. Grants are recorded as total revenue in the year they are awarded, then recorded as expenditures in subsequent years.*
- General Operations Budget Report, Preliminary Totals for FY 2023-24
 - Dues information for 2023-24. *Dues make up roughly 40% of our revenue. All districts expected to pay have paid this year. Two districts have dues waivers—New Orleans and Puerto Rico, and the Executive Committee continues to monitor these districts and will make a determination of when they feel these districts will be in a position to begin paying dues. Toronto has officially dropped out of the Council.*
 - General operating budget for FY 2023-24, by function and expense line—*Members will see a loss of over 600K in categorical programs. This is due to paying out of grants—which show as revenues in the year they are received. Ray called the groups attention to a recent four-year gates grant. This is unusual- usually we have two-year grants.*
 - General operating budget for 2022-23 (audited expenses)
 - Approved Budget for FY 2023-24
 - Preliminary expenses for FY 2023-24

- List of operational expense types
- Categorical Programs Budget Report (Preliminary Totals for FY 2023-24). *A few things to note: 1) Account 26 is the new gates grant. 2) Account 20 is the \$3.3 million in sponsorship and registration fees for the past year, which was significantly up from the pandemic. We don't, however, expect to hit that number again this year. We are projecting smaller conference attendance this year, given budgetary and travel limitations in member districts. 3) For account 63, members will see a slight deficit. That is the Council's Harvard ABC institute.*
- Asset Allocations
 - Investment schedule
 - Investment portfolio by Asset Class
 - Asset allocation actuals vs. tactical range. *The organization's policy is to stagger our investments-- as investments mature, we pull them out and reinvest. All of our investment allocations are within their strategic targets.*
 - Wells Fargo Asset Allocation report
- General Operating Budget for FY 2024-25
 - Membership Dues Structure by Tiers (showing a 3.1% increase this year from 2023-24 dues).
 - Status of membership dues as of October 2024. *Ray Hart noted that El Paso couldn't pay their dues due to financial constraints, but the district has indicated they will absolutely renew for the following year. He explained for new members that we build in an assumption of five districts not paying their dues each year, so this will not negatively impact our financial stability or projections. Members don't lose membership until two years of nonpayment*
 - General Operating Budget by function and expense line. *We have received over 83% of our revenues at this time.*
- A copy of the Council's Investment Policy and Guidelines

Audit process has begun, and will be underway through November. We work with Marcum LLP as our external auditor.

A motion to approve the Audit report passed without dissent by voice vote.

By-Laws

No report.

Membership

No report.

Strategic Planning

Our strategic plan was developed in 2018 and lays out a roadmap for the organization through 2024. There are quarterly updates on the work done to reach each of these goals,

and Board members will find the latest update in the materials. The Executive Committee will be voting on extending the strategic plan at its upcoming January 2025 meeting in Palm Beach, and it will be presented to the Board in March.

Annual Report

The Council's 2023-24 Annual Report is provided in the Board materials.

Conferences and Meetings

Ray Hart reviewed the lineup of meetings in 2024 and 2025. The next annual fall conference will be held in Philadelphia, and in 2026 we will be in Boston. Following this conference we will be sending out a call for proposals to host future annual conferences, beginning with 2027.

Awards

Ray Hart congratulated the lineup of Green Garner Award finalists, and this year's winner Romules Durant, superintendent from Toledo.

Communications

The communications section of the committee materials includes a collection of the Council's latest statements and press releases. In particular, Ray Hart called the group's attention to a statement on the surgeon general's announcement on gun violence. There are also sections on media coverage of the Council's reviews, reports, and activities; articles on district leadership (and transitions); and articles on current issues in education where Council staff are quoted or cited.

There are also update reports on the organization's social media presence over the past few months and the most recent issues of the *Urban Educator*. Ray Hart recognized the Communications team for having earned an Award of Excellence from the NSPRA for a recent publication on managing crisis communications.

Finally, the communications section of the materials provides information on this year's Bernard Harris scholarship winners, and a new publication on managing superintendent transitions.

Legislation

Manish Naik and Mary Lawson gave the Board a brief overview of legal and legislative developments.

Research

Ray Hart thanked the research team, and called Board's attention to a number of new reports—listed in a one page-guide in the materials with a QR code. The research section of the Board materials begins with a department overview. He then reviewed the main findings of recent reports on school district superintendents and academic key performance indicators.

Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development

Deborah Shanley gave the report of the Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development. At the task force meeting on Wednesday we covered performance trends from the recent academic key performance indicators report. Several districts also shared work being done to address chronic absenteeism.

The overview document in the Board materials offers a valuable guide to the resources, tools, and support provided by the Council to assist districts in curriculum and instruction. Akisha and Nicole then gave an update on Council activities.

Task Force on English Language Learners and Bilingual Education

Jerry Almendarez gave the report of the Task Force on English Language Learners and Bilingual Education. He began by reviewing the agenda and presentations from the task force meeting Wednesday. The ELL section of the materials starts with an overview of the activities of the ELL department, and the task force meeting touched on all of this work. This includes resources for supporting newcomer students and their families, information on writing courses, 3Ls, and an agenda from the BIRE meeting in May, which featured two days of school visits in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Ray Hart then announced Gabi Uro's departure and recognized her decades of service at the Council.

Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys

Ray Hart gave the report of the Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys. The task force meeting yesterday touched on additional ways the Council can support the work districts are doing on the ground. This includes development of the data provided in the materials, as well as the dashboard and KPIs. The task force meeting also featured a presentation from DCPS on their work to support Black and Latino male students.

Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls

Shavonna Holman gave the report of the Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls. She reviewed the agenda and presentations from yesterday's task force meeting, including a presentation from Working on Womanhood (WOW), followed by a Q&A session.

We have been thinking of ways to restructure and revitalize the work of the task force to be of more use to districts in this area. One idea is to host a symposium. We are also considering developing a subcommittee on data collection – including health and mental health data.

Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance

Joyce Wilkerson gave the report on the Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance. She applauded the conversations that have been going on around diversity, and praised the work of the Council's Student Outcome Focused Governance (SOFG) coaches.

She also highlighted the Council's ongoing support and hands-on work with leaders and school boards through various professional development opportunities, learning cohorts, individual coaching, and networking opportunities. She then reviewed the agenda and presentations from the task force meeting.

The board materials also provide information on the Harvard ABC Institute (with an updated cost schedule). We will be soliciting participants for next year, but if not enough people sign up we will determine whether to cancel this year's ABC Institute.

Ray Hart then updated the Board on the work of the Casserly Institute and reviewed the materials included in the Leadership, Governance, and Management Services section of the materials.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Ray Hart
Executive Director