

MINUTES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS
MINUTES
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
July 10-11, 2020**

Friday, July 10, 2020

Present:

Officers:

Michael O'Neill, Chair, Boston School Committee
Barbara Jenkins, Chair Elect, Orange County Superintendent
Ashley Paz, Secretary/Treasurer, Fort Worth School Board
Eric Gordon, Immediate Past Chair, Cleveland CEO

Members:

Tom Ahart, Des Moines Superintendent
Siad Ali, Minneapolis School Board
Marcia Andrews, Palm Beach County School Board
Juan Cabrera, El Paso Superintendent
Richard Carranza, New York City Chancellor
Linda Cavazos, Clark County School Board
Sharon Contreras, Guilford County Superintendent
Susana Cordova, Denver Superintendent
Paul Cruz, Austin Superintendent
Valerie Davis, Fresno School Board
Kelly Gonez, Los Angeles School Board
Leslie Grant, Atlanta School Board
Guadalupe Guerrero, Portland Superintendent
Michael Hinojosa, Dallas Superintendent
William Hite, Philadelphia Superintendent
Sonja Santelises, Baltimore CEO
Deborah Shanley, Brooklyn College, CUNY Dean
Van Henri White, Rochester School Board
Sylvia Wilson, Pittsburgh School Board
Darrel Woo, Sacramento School Board

Absent:

Elisa Vakalis, Anchorage School Board

Michael O'Neill, Chair of the Board of Directors, called the virtual meeting to order at 3:00 pm ET. A quorum was established, and members introduced themselves.

Minutes

Michael O'Neill presented the minutes of the March 23, 2020 virtual meetings of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors, and the emergency session of the Executive Committee held on May 5, 2020. A motion to approve all minutes passed by virtual vote.

Appointments and Nominations

Michael O'Neill presented his appointments for various subcommittees and task forces.

A motion to approve all appointments passed by virtual vote.

Membership

Tom Ahart gave the report of the membership subcommittee. A new request for membership came from Aldine, Texas, outside of Houston. They have applied before and were denied given that they are not the primary district serving the city of Houston. The subcommittee again recommended denying the request.

A motion to accept the recommendation of the membership subcommittee to decline the membership request of Aldine, TX passed by virtual vote.

By-Laws

No report.

Audit

Barbara Jenkins, chair-elect, applauded Council staff for their careful financial stewardship of the organization. Ashley Paz, the new Audit Chair, started the report and yielded to the Executive Director. Michael Casserly, Executive Director, then presented the audit materials. The materials included—

- General operating funds for the financial year ending in June 2020. During this time, the organization ran a \$200K surplus, given that expenditures were lower than projected.
- Status of dues payments for last year. All members paid except Sacramento and those districts that are exempt.
- General fund budget for 2019-20 by function and expense. These data were preliminary estimates, as the staff had not yet closed the books on this budget cycle. Figures will have been closed in time for the next meeting.
- General operating expenses by function for 2018-19 and a revised budget for 2019-20. Again, these numbers may change slightly in the final report.
- A listing of items included in various expense categories and categorical funds.
- Investment policy and guidelines

- Investment funds and balances
- Investments by asset class, asset class targets, and actual investment amounts and percentages. The Council reported being within range in all target categories.
- The 2020-21 budget—approved in draft form in Long Beach in January, then approved by the full board at the virtual March meeting.
 - The 2020-21 budget assumes a deficit of 207,000.
 - Casserly called attention to two things that were not in this budget. First, the Council applied for and received a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan of \$457,411 from the third federal supplemental appropriations bill. Second, the Council has been doing fund-raising with various foundations and has received preliminary commitments from the Hewlett Foundation, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Schusterman Foundation. These funds should more than offset the projected \$207,000 deficit for 2020-21.
- Dues payments for this year so far. Staff are keeping a close eye on this, as we recognize everyone is under considerable financial strain. Thirteen districts had paid so far, a pattern that was consistent with past years.
- The formal request for an external audit, signed by new Secretary/Treasurer Ashley Paz, with our new external auditor.

The audit materials also provided a breakdown of conference revenues over the past five years to answer the question of how the cancelled meetings had affected the organization's finances. So far, the cancellations had not had much impact, but this may be driven by the fact that several meetings that were typically held in June were held in July last year at the beginning of this financial year. The full impact may not be felt until next year. Staff will continue to monitor and report on the financial impact of the pandemic on the organization.

Finally, materials included a copy of the liability insurance the organization carries for officers and directors of the organization.

A motion to accept the audit report passed by virtual vote.

Annual Report

Casserly presented the 2019-20 Annual Report and asked Eric Gordon, the immediate past chair, to comment. The materials also provided a sample individual member services report, provided to each Council district. A motion to accept the annual report passed by virtual vote.

Conferences and Meetings

Casserly then presented the lineup of meetings that had either been held or cancelled over the course of 2020. He indicated that there were early warning signs about the 2020 annual conference in Dallas that needed to be discussed. The materials included preliminary results of a survey of about 350+ regular conference attendees. About two thirds of respondents indicated they were unlikely or very unlikely to be able to attend. The second warning sign was the dramatic falloff in sponsorships for this conference. And finally, staff received very few proposals for breakout session presentations outside of Texas.

Casserly reported that staff had investigated moving the Dallas conference back a year, but the hotel was not be available until October of 2024—the final year of Michael Hinojosa’s contract. Casserly proposed keeping the 2021 conference in Philadelphia, the 2022 conference in Orlando, and the 2023 conference in San Diego, and holding the 2024 meeting in Dallas and moving the Boston conference to 2025.

So, three votes were needed.

- The first was a vote to not hold an in-person Fall conference in 2020. This motion passed by virtual vote.
- The second was a vote to hold the 2024 annual conference in Dallas. This motion passed by virtual vote.
- The third vote was to hold the 2025 annual conference in Boston. This motion passed by virtual vote.

The group then discussed whether to hold the annual fall conference virtually. The consensus of the committee was that the organization shouldn’t cede the time on the calendar, and should hold a streamlined conference that still features some of the things that make the annual conference so unique, including the town hall meeting, the Chair’s address, etc. Another member noted the desire to retain the task force meetings. While holding virtual breakout sessions might prove unwieldy, the group agreed that keeping some of the main features would be valuable. The group then discussed conference fees.

Members also discussed the need to retain our urban perspective in these events, and to focus on the dual crises at hand, i.e., the pandemic and issues of equity and race. The group agreed that this was an extraordinary time in our history, and that we needed to seize the moment. The conference should therefore focus on these issues. Members also discussed balancing their desire to cover an ambitious array of topics related to health and racial justice while at the same time remaining cognizant of the heavy lift of putting on the conference for Council staff, and the short time we have to pull it together. The possibility of hiring a consulting firm was floated.

Casserly asked the Committee for flexibility and time to meet internally with the staff to determine what and how the group can pull the meeting together.

Finally, the group discussed upcoming Executive Committee meetings. There had been several offers for hosting in January—including from Atlanta and Palm Beach. Given that the summer meeting in Portland this year was held virtually, Portland will be pushed back to July 2021 as a meeting location. Michael O’Neill recommended holding the January 2021 meeting in Palm Beach and holding a future winter meeting in Atlanta.

A motion to hold the January 2021 meeting of the Executive Committee in Palm Beach passed by virtual vote.

A motion to hold the July 9-10, 2021 meeting in Portland passed by virtual vote.

Awards

Cassery asked the group about whether we should proceed with the Green Garner award program at a virtual fall conference. The group indicated unanimous support for going ahead with the award process, citing that it was a particularly important year to honor the work of urban superintendents and to provide scholarship funding for a student. Members brought up the graduation ceremonies that were held virtually to honor the 2020 graduates and suggested that a virtual award ceremony would be greatly appreciated.

The committee then went into Executive Session.

Saturday, July 11, 2020

Legislation

Jeff Simering, Legislative Director, kicked off the morning with the Legislative report. Political battles over the reopening of schools have taken center stage in Washington. School funding has received more attention over the past week than since the beginning of the crisis. In federal funding bills so far this year, schools have been a secondary priority, receiving only some \$13 billion compared to the \$100 billion provided to schools under ARRA in 2009.

Materials in the legislation section of the briefing back cataloged the Council's push for increasing aid. The first two federal supplemental appropriations bills didn't address education at all, so the Council sent a letter to Congress to underscore the unfolding financial crisis in the nation's schools, as well as the fact that schools didn't have access to the payroll withholding tax credits given to the private sector. The CARES Act then came up with \$13 billion. The Council then joined a broad coalition of education groups in sending a letter asking for \$200 billion in support and stabilization funds. This letter was provided in the materials. The Council then followed that letter with another one signed individually by Council superintendents that underscored the request. This is when the media really started to pick up on the financial crisis facing schools, with potential furloughs, layoffs, and budget cuts. This resulted in additional funding in the HEROES Act, along with funding for school meals, infrastructure aid, and access to the payroll withholding tax break.

Simering then turned to Secretary DeVos' push to provide COVID-19 funding to private schools based on their entire student population rather than their numbers of low-income students. DeVos released her equitable services guidance on April 30. The impact would be to double the amount of funding to private schools compared to what they would have received under the Title I allocation formula. After widespread pushback, the U.S. Department of Education doubled down and released an Interim Final Rule requiring their approach with some revisions. The Council's Executive Committee approved the organization's filing suit against the Department to block the rules.

The Council and several of its members were expected to join several state AGs in filing for injunctive relief from the Interim Final Rule.

Casserly then updated the group on the events following the emergency Executive Committee session on May 5. After that discussion, New York City stepped forward to take the lead on the suit against the Department. The Council held discussions with the legal team in New York for weeks after. It was decided that a stronger case would be for the states and cities to file together. So, states filed on Tuesday, and several cities have prepared and submitted their interest statements. Their amended filing will be submitted next Friday. If additional districts want to join the filing, there is still time to do so. The Council expects a preliminary decision within a few weeks, so districts may want to hold off in allocating budgets to private schools at this point.

Finally, Simering indicated that the U.S. Department of Education has so far ignored district requests for IDEA waivers, making this another controversial issue.

Communications

Committee materials included recent press releases, statements, and numerous articles that have come out since the March meeting. These materials were mainly on the coronavirus pandemic, on funding bills, and on the reopening of schools. The Council's letter to Congress alone garnered over 60 articles.

The Committee indicated that the Council's approach to messaging accurately reflected the priorities and interests of the membership. In terms of the timing of statements—when we decide to draft and release comments in response to events or particular actions of the Administration—Casserly explained to the group that the Council does so when we have a unique urban education perspective to lend to an issue.

Moving on, the Bernard Harris scholarship award winners have been announced. The awards went to graduates in Dallas, Miami, Portland, and Washington DC.

Materials also included social media reports for April, May, and June. The Council's new communications director commissioned a social media audit, which was included in the briefing materials.

Research

Briefing materials included remarks by Casserly to the National Assessment Governing Board asking for a one-year delay in the 2021 NAEP testing. The recommendation was based on results from a Council survey of all 27 TUDA participants and concerns about the viability of both testing and test results.

The materials also included the latest draft of the NAEP district effects study. This study has been delayed as the organization was waiting for access to 2019 restricted NAEP data. Casserly indicated that he hoped that we would have a final version ready by the virtual fall conference. He then walked the group through the structure, additional narrative, and main findings of the report.

KPI data was also being collected, and the deadline had been extended to August. We hope to have these data ready for the virtual fall conference. Finally, Casserly reminded everyone about the wealth of data available on edwires (www.edwires.org). This site is password protected.

Coronavirus Resources

There are three sections in this part of the materials. The first was a screenshot of the public coronavirus resources page found on the Council's website. There was also a breakdown of weekly meetings that had been held since March with the various job-alike groups. This table showed which groups were most active and engaged. Members reaffirmed the value of the information shared and the opportunity to connect with peers on a weekly basis.

The second section provided copies of seven reports that the Council had released so far, including—

- *Assessing Language Proficiency During Extended School Closures*
- *Addressing Mental Health and Social Emotional Wellness in the COVID-19 Crisis*
- *IDEA Best Practices During the COVID-19 Crisis*
- *Operational Issues in the Reopening of Schools During the COVID-19 Crisis: Facilities, Transportation, and Security*
- *Ensuring a Data-Driven Approach to Reopening Schools after COVID-19*
- *Addressing Unfinished Learning After COVID-19 School Closures*
- *Financial Issues in the Reopening of Schools During the COVID-19 Crisis*

Finally, the materials included a series of Q&A interviews with Education Week, as well as a paper on the challenges and needs of member districts during the pandemic.

Committee members applauded the Council for engaging the membership and responding to member needs in new and innovative ways.

Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development

Committee materials provided an overview of the Council's academic and professional development work. As with other groups, the Council's academic team has been hosting virtual meetings of CAOs and instructional leaders. Addressing unfinished learning has been a focus of these conversations.

This section of the materials also included a principal supervisor report tracking changes in the role of principal supervisors over several years, a special education review of the Clark County school district, and an instructional review of Philadelphia.

Work on the professional development framework, which had been a focus prior to school closures, will now need to be reoriented to take into account the new realities of distance learning and new district and teacher needs in terms of support and training.

Members then discussed the strategic support team review process and the value of the results and reports to come out of these reviews.

Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys

Bill Hite and Michael Hinojosa gave the report of the Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys. Recent events have put a spotlight on the enduring challenges of race, and particularly of supporting and improving outcomes for our males of color. Dallas discussed a resolution they recently passed, and new budgetary allocations for investing in initiatives and resources for supporting males of color.

Ray Hart then shared a recent staff initiative—a blog created to provide an opportunity for urban educators to speak out against racism. To respond to the current situation, staff are also considering launching racial equity audits—reviewing a district for their capacity and work toward racial equity. Members overwhelmingly supported this idea, citing the fact that it was not only sorely needed, but that the Council, as a trusted source of critical review, was uniquely positioned to provide districts with much needed input and guidance.

Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls

Sharon Contreras and Kelly Gonez gave the report of the Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls. They received feedback on the task force’s draft goals. This feedback underscored the importance of goal 3, regarding the need for mental health supports, as well as the importance of addressing the systemic and structural barriers that girls face. This might begin with a review of policies that, whether intentionally or unintentionally, end up limiting lifelong outcomes of young women and girls.

In terms of data collection, the co-chairs proposed waiting for the Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys to update their goals so the two groups can launch a joint survey of data needs in the field.

There was also a need to lift up and integrate the work of equity staff and offices across member districts.

Task Force on Bilingual Education

Michael Casserly gave the report on the Task Force on Bilingual Education. There were two main informational items in the materials—one was an update on the professional learning platform, and the other was a status report on the joint procurement initiative. Casserly also asked Sharon Contreras to speak about Guilford County’s ELL program, which is helping to accelerate ELL exit rates. Contreras praised the Council’s ELL framework and efforts over the past several years, citing the impact of the work on the district.

The Council’s ELL team is now working to modify the PLP (in video form) and adapting it as an online tool.

In response to question about the joint procurement project, Casserly acknowledged that we had not had the kind of uptake we were expecting. From what we have heard, people are using the criteria the Council established, but not the contracts *per se*.

Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance

Barbara Jenkins, task force chair, gave the report of the Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance, starting with a review of task force goals.

The first item in the materials was an informational brochure on the Harvard leadership institute. This training was postponed this year because of the pandemic. For those signed up for this summer's institute, all registrations will be rolled over to next year.

The second item was an overview of the governance review team and process. These reviews provide hands-on support for school boards across the country. We are now expanding this work to include strategic support teams in the area of board management and governance.

The leadership materials also included information on a number of efforts that were started before the epidemic, including information on the issue of bonded indebtedness (which had to be put on hold), work on interoperability (which may have implications for us during this time), and a vaping survey (which was about to go out and has now been put on hold). Finally, the materials included a copy of a strategic support team review of the Columbus public schools.

Strategic Plan

A copy of the Council's strategic plan was included in the Committee materials, along with an update on various elements of the plan. We have folded in some of the coronavirus work, but the plan did not anticipate the current health crisis.

The Committee then went into executive session at 3:08pm (ET).

Respectfully submitted:

Michael Casserly
Executive Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 23, 2020**

Virtual

Eric Gordon, Chair of the Board of Directors and CEO of the Cleveland public schools, called the virtual meeting to order at 12:30 pm ET. Michael Casserly, executive director, informed the Board that he had closed the Council’s office because of the pandemic, and staff were working from home and handling all meetings and services remotely. Phone numbers for the staff were available. Casserly thanked the Board for its concern for the health and wellbeing of Council staff.

Minutes

Eric Gordon presented the minutes of the October 26, 2019 meeting of the Board of Directors at the Annual Conference in Louisville, KY and the January 24-25, 2020 meeting of the Executive Committee in Long Beach, CA. A motion to approve the minutes passed by voice vote.

Nominations

Larry Feldman, immediate past chair and Miami-Dade County school board member, gave the report of the Nominations Subcommittee. Feldman indicated that the Subcommittee reviewed the organization’s by-laws, attendance data, and informational materials on the demographic composition of the Board and current Executive Committee. The Subcommittee met by phone on March 3, 2020. In nominating new members for the Executive Committee, the Subcommittee aimed to balance race, gender, role, and geographic location. The Subcommittee’s recommendations include--

Officers to serve a one-year term:

Chair: Michael O’Neill, Boston School Committee
Chair-Elect: Barbara Jenkins, Orange County Superintendent
Immediate Past Chair: Eric Gordon, Cleveland CEO

New Officer to serve a one-year term:

Secretary/Treasurer: Ashley Paz, Fort Worth School Board

Vacancies on the Committee:

- 1) Linda Cavazos, Clark County School Board - to serve the expired term of Ashley Paz. Ms. Cavazos will serve a 1st three-year term through 6/30/23
- 2) Susana Cordova, Denver Superintendent – to serve the expired term of Raquel Reedy. Ms. Cordova will serve a 1st three-year term through 6/30/23

Renewal of terms:

- 1) Marcia Andrews, Palm Beach School Board – for 1st three-year term through 6/30/23

- 2) Juan Cabrera, El Paso Superintendent – for 2nd three-year term through 6/30/23
- 3) Sharon Contreras, Guilford County Superintendent – for 2nd three-year term through 6/30/23
- 4) Leslie Grant, Atlanta School Board – for 1st three-year term through 6/30/23
- 5) Michael Hinojosa, Dallas Superintendent – for 2nd three-year term through 6/30/23
- 6) Bill Hite, Philadelphia Superintendent – for 2nd three-year term through 6/30/23
- 7) Sonja Santelises, Baltimore CEO – for 1st three-year term through 6/30/23
- 8) Sylvia Wilson, Pittsburgh School Board – for 1st three-year term through 6/30/23
- 9) Van Henri White, Rochester School Board – for 1st three-year term through 6/30/23

A motion to approve all nominations passed by voice vote.

Conferences and Meetings

Casserly presented the meeting lineup for the remainder of 2020. At this point the legislative conference has been cancelled and the COO meeting is being rescheduled. The organization is now discussing options for rescheduling the May BIRE meeting. Staff have confirmed that there will be no financial penalty for rescheduling the COO meeting, but we have not heard back from the Mayflower Hotel yet concerning the legislative conference. There is a ‘force majeure’ clause in each of our contracts, but it is still unclear whether hotels will honor it. At this point, all Council meetings and conferences through May are cancelled or are being rescheduled.

The annual fall conference is still scheduled to be held in Dallas in October. The following year the conference will be held in Philadelphia, and Orlando will be the location for the conference in 2022. The Executive Committee has also approved applications from San Diego for 2023, and Boston for 2024.

In response to the pandemic, the Council has started regular weekly check-in calls with various member groups, including superintendents, bilingual education directors, Chief Academic Officers, special education directors, and others.

Communications

Casserly reviewed the Bernard Harris scholarship program. He indicated that the application due date was originally April 6, but the Council was moving this to May 4 given current circumstances. If a further extension is needed, staff will consider it.

Legislation

There will be a full virtual legislative briefing from 2:30-4:00pm today. But Casserly called attention to correspondence sent to Congress over the weekend to increase elementary and secondary education funding in a third stimulus bill. He urged members to immediately contact their congressional delegations to press them to make these increases. All Board members were copied on the letter the Council sent to the Hill, and talking points were emailed out last night. The superintendent from San Diego then related her outreach efforts and urged all Board members to follow suit.

The Council had also signed onto a joint letter, along with other educational organizations, on the issue of educational funding needs.

In the full briefing, Council legislative staff will touch on waiver applications, as well as issues around IDEA and other matters.

Research/Achievement and Professional Development Task Force

Casserly gave the report of the Achievement and Professional Development Task Force. He called the Board's attention to the following materials provided in its briefing book-

- An overview and a catalogue of resources and tools, including a recently-released curriculum quality rubric
- An early draft of a professional development framework, similar to the curriculum framework
- An update on the San Antonio literacy project, detailing ongoing work in augmenting balanced literacy programming
- Information on the College Board civic action project.
- A draft of a principal supervisor survey report, which provided a before and after look at how the role of principal supervisors had changed over the years
- A brief summary of results from the Council's science survey
- A recent staffing review for the Atlanta Public Schools

Casserly also called the Board's attention to the latest draft of the special NAEP analysis that the Council has been working on for some time. This report is still in draft form, and staff will be sending it to TUDA districts for their review before releasing it. The Council is also waiting on the restricted data set for 2019 before finishing the analysis. Casserly highlighted an additional section that had been added regarding the racial context of several Council districts and its likely effects on performance.

Moving on, Casserly indicated that the key performance indicator surveys were now in the field. The full report will be released in October at the annual conference.

English Language Learners and Bilingual Education

As mentioned earlier, Council staff is exploring options for rescheduling the annual BIRE meeting.

The briefing materials provided an overview of the ELL department's work, as well as a brochure on the professional learning platform, an update on the ELL materials procurement project, and a writeup of the new ELL writing project.

Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance

Casserly gave the report of the Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance Task Force. He indicated that the second Harvard Institute was scheduled for July and it was sold out once again. Casserly indicated that planning continued but that there was uncertainty about whether the event would need to be cancelled because of the pandemic.

Casserly then informed the Board that he had hired AJ Crabill as the organization's new Director of Governance to lead the Council's ongoing governance reviews. The group has conducted such reviews in several districts, including Philadelphia and Broward County. Jackson has recently asked for additional assistance.

The group then discussed state provisions on easing restrictions on virtual meetings of school boards during the COVID-19 crisis.

Audit

Barbara Jenkins, secretary/treasurer of the Council and superintendent of the Orange County Public Schools, applauded the Council staff for its sound financial management and gave a brief overview of the organization's financial condition. Casserly then went through the audit materials, indicating that the external audit was completely clean with no exceptions or material weaknesses. The materials provided a letter from our new accountants, Markham, as well as a summary of assets and liabilities, accounting practices, detail on assets and liabilities, etc. The Executive Committee had reviewed this report twice—today and in draft form in January.

A motion for the Board of Directors to accept the audit report passed by voice vote.

Casserly then reviewed the remaining audit materials, including the current and proposed budget, dues payments, and the organization's investment policy and guidelines. He pointed out to the group that most revenues for the year had already been received, so the organization was in a safe position now.

The Board was also asked to approve dues payments for 2020-21, including a CPI increase of 2 percent provided for in the by-laws. Casserly pointed out that three member districts had changed dues categories given increases or decreases in their enrollment. Dues payment categories are reviewed once every five years, per the by-laws.

A motion to accept the budget and dues for the upcoming year passed by voice vote.

The Executive Committee was then called into session to affirm the votes of the Board. A motion to ratify all votes passed by voice vote. The Executive Committee then adjourned, and the Board meeting continued.

In closing, Casserly thanked Board members for their heroic efforts to support and care for children during the pandemic. He also thanked Eric Gordon for his incredible leadership of the Council as Board Chair over the past year under extraordinary circumstances (crystal gavel forthcoming).

The Board then went into Executive Session at 1:50pm (ET).

Respectfully submitted:
Michael Casserly
Executive Director