

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRANSITION

Council of the Great City Schools Search for Executive Director *WORK PLAN*

Search Launch	Purpose	Scheduled Date(s)
<i>Search launch meeting with search committee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review search process and timeline – schedule key search dates • Discuss challenges, opportunities, and objectives for the position and begin developing a profile of the ideal candidate • Discuss plan for scoping meetings with internal/external stakeholders 	Mid-June
Scoping the Position, Crafting Position Profile	Purpose	Scheduled Date(s)
<i>Engaging staff and stakeholders to craft the position profile</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isaacson, Miller speaks with key constituents, internal/external stakeholders to discuss the challenges, opportunities, and objectives for the position. • Final approval of the position profile document. Confirm the search schedule. 	Mid-June through Mid-July (Meet with Executive Committee Mid-July) Early August
First Presentation	Purpose	Scheduled Date(s)
<i>Progress preview of preliminary networking efforts (2-3 hour meeting)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of active prospects to the search committee for feedback and calibration; sharing of insights gleaned from initial networking and review of models for the ideal candidate. 	October 12, 2020: 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. ET
Candidate Interviews by IM	Purpose	Scheduled Date(s)
<i>In-depth biographical interviews of top candidates</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isaacson, Miller interviews candidates in person or by video and notes impressions and recommendations for search committee in preparation for second presentation. 	<i>Ongoing</i>
Second Presentation	Purpose	Scheduled Date(s)
<i>Selecting the Semi-Finalists (3 hour meeting)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of full candidate pool to the search committee. • Search committee decides on pool of semi-finalist candidates to interview in person (typically 6-8). 	December 15, 2020: 12:00 - 3:00 p.m. ET
Semi-Finalist Interviews	Purpose	Scheduled Date(s)
<i>Semi-finalist Interviews (in-person, 2 full, consecutive days)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search committee interviews semi-finalist candidates (typically 6-8) in-person and selects finalists. 	January 20-22, 2021 (To coincide with EC meeting)
Checking References	Purpose	Scheduled Date(s)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isaacson, Miller conducts extensive, 360-degree references on each finalist and reports findings to the search committee. 	<i>Before and after finalist interviews/visits</i>
Finalist Interviews, Visits	Purpose	Scheduled Date(s)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CGCS and IM arrange site visits and/or meetings for finalists with the appropriate constituent groups and IM collects feedback via survey or other means. 	February
Negotiations/Offer/Acceptance	Purpose	Scheduled Date(s)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search Committee presents 1-3 finalists to Executive Committee for review and selection of hire. • Isaacson, Miller helps, as appropriate, with negotiations and the transition of candidate to employee. • Discussion of additional Executive Director transition support if desired. 	February New Executive Director announced at March Legislative Meeting



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Council of the Great City Schools
Washington, D.C.

SEARCH OVERVIEW

The Council of the Great City Schools (the 'Council' or CGCS), the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools, seeks an experienced and passionate leader to serve as its next Executive Director.

The Council is a coalition of 76 of the nation's largest urban public school districts, founded in 1956 and incorporated in 1961. The group was formed with 12 big-city school systems in a period in American history when the nation's cities and public schools were undergoing substantial transition and no formal national organization existed that could address the challenges ahead. The organization is guided by three broad goals: to educate all urban students to high standards; to lead, govern, and manage the nation's urban schools efficiently and effectively; and to bolster public confidence in urban education. Since its founding, the Council has been a leading and trusted voice behind national efforts to improve public education. It now serves 8.2 million students across approximately 13,800 schools. The Council is governed by a Board of Directors that is composed of the superintendent and one board of education member from each member district.

The next Executive Director will take the helm after a period of significant academic gains for urban schoolchildren due to the tireless advocacy and work led by 28-year Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. With the foundational belief that public education is the linchpin of democracy, it is critical that the next Executive Director focus on examining current structures and practices influenced by structural racism, confronting the issues that are most germane to urban districts. In particular, the Executive Director will be charged with maintaining the Council's reputation and influence; guiding and empowering a strong leadership team and staff; continuing to be an indispensable resource for and partner to district and school board leaders; integrating the Council's work across teams; and leveraging school systems and structures to advance

success. The Council consists of 24 talented and committed staff and the Executive Director stewards a budget of \$7 million. This is a tremendous opportunity for a leader who is motivated to improve systems for equity and justice across the country.

The Council of the Great City Schools has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of the Executive Director. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence as noted at the end of this document.

THE COUNCIL

The Council of the Great City Schools was formed in 1956 by Sargent Shriver, founder of the Peace Corps, who at the time was serving as president of the Chicago Board of Education. Initially created as an informal networking and study group of 12 urban school districts, the Council today is a prominent national research and policy organization. The Council informs the nation's lawmakers, the media, and the public of the progress of and problems facing big-city schools through legislative advocacy, research and publications, conferences, and online resources.

The organization also helps to build capacity in urban education with programs to boost academic performance and narrow achievement and opportunity gaps; improve professional development and curriculum; and strengthen leadership, governance, and management. The Council accomplishes its mission by connecting urban school district personnel from coast to coast who work in similar contexts. Staff with responsibilities for curricula, research and testing, finance, operations, personnel, technology, legislation, communications, and other areas confer regularly under the Council's auspices to share concerns and solutions, and discuss what works in boosting achievement and managing operations.

In addition, joint efforts with other national organizations, corporations, and government policymakers extend the Council's influence and effectiveness outside member school districts to the larger, interdependent world that will ultimately benefit from the contributions of today's urban students.

Since the organization's founding, geographic, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity has typified the Council's membership. That diversity propels the coalition forward to ensure that all children receive an education that will enhance the quality of their lives in a society changing with phenomenal speed and equip them with the skills and knowledge to compete successfully in the world marketplace. The wellspring of accomplishments and innovations rising from the U.S.'s biggest cities testifies to the resounding benefits of investment in the nation's urban centers and public schools.

NOTABLE MILESTONES

Throughout its history, the Council has played a vital role in American life. In 1969, during the education desegregation era, the Council helped initiate the original Office for Civil Rights in the

U.S. Department of Education and assisted its member schools with their court orders. In the late 1990s, when controversy emerged over who should run the nation’s big-city schools, the Council convened the first and only summit between mayors and urban school superintendents. In 2002, when the country needed to know if urban school systems were making progress, the Council initiated the Trial Urban District Assessment and identified the first city school districts to evaluate. When America needed to see its public schools running more efficiently, the Council developed the nation’s first automated performance management system with key performance indicators in 2004. As more of the nation’s schools enrolled English Language Learners (ELLs), the Council released the first major study in 2009 on why some systems made more progress with ELLs than others.

The Council published its groundbreaking report on the conditions of Black males in urban schools in “A Call for Change” in 2010. As part of this effort, 60 member school systems signed a pledge to improve education outcomes for boys and young men of color. The pledge was praised as “extraordinary” by President Barack Obama at a 2014 town hall meeting with superintendents and school board members.

In 2017, in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, the Council led a team of urban school leaders to Puerto Rico, assessing damaged school buildings and conducting repairs to reopen schools. In the wake of the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida’s Broward County public schools, the Council passed a sweeping resolution urging immediate federal action against school shootings and a ban on the sale, purchase, possession, and use of assault weapons.

In 2019, the Council offered the Accelerating Board Capacity Institute at Harvard Business School, a first-of-its-kind professional development program for urban school superintendents and board members. The Council has a proven track record of providing tangible aid to schools and supporting innovative and ambitious solutions to the nation’s most pervasive and divisive issues in order to improve education for children in urban America.

MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES

The Council is united behind the central mission of America’s urban public schools—educating the most diverse student body to the highest academic standards and preparing them to contribute to the nation’s democracy and the global community. As the primary national institution responsible for weaving the strands of American society into a cohesive fabric, the leaders of the Great City Schools envision a future in which the nation cares for all children, expects their best, values their diversity, invests in their futures, and welcomes their participation in the American dream.

This vision becomes tangible and those ideals are put to the test in the Great City Schools. The ongoing work of the Council is built on the following values and commitments that are embraced both for and with students:

Leadership. The Council of the Great City Schools is the nation’s premier leader in urban public education.

Improvement. The Council and its members embrace continuous improvement in the instructional and non-instructional services provided by the membership and the organization.

Accountability. The Council seeks ways to demonstrate accountability for results and foster a culture of shared responsibility for the education of urban children.

Equity. The Council is a strong and outspoken voice for equity, equality, opportunity, and social justice.

High Expectations. The Council is unwavering in its demand for quality work from itself and its students.

Integrity. The organization is uncompromising in its veracity, consistency, and truthfulness in the pursuit of its mission—including the ability to self-critique.

GOVERNANCE

The Council is overseen by a Board of Directors that is composed of the superintendent and one board of education member from each member district, making the Council the only national educational organization so constituted and the only one whose purpose and membership is solely urban. It elects a 24-member Executive Committee, which meets four times per year to discuss and determine policies for ratification by the full Board during its semi-annual meetings. The Board is led by four officers—the Chair, Chair-Elect, Secretary/Treasurer, and immediate past Chair; the Chair serves as chief communicator to the Executive Director.

Three subcommittees of the Executive Committee provide support in financial and organizational areas:

- **By-Laws:** Defines the Council’s mission, responsibilities, and composition within the framework of applicable laws and regulations.
- **Audit:** Reviews and studies budgetary matters and ensures that revenues are properly managed.
- **Membership:** Determines eligible cities for membership and recruits, screens, and recommends new members.

In addition to these governing bodies, the Board has established five special task forces to address major issues facing the membership, and a network of deans of the Great City Colleges of Education and staff liaisons from various school district departments encourage information exchange with counterparts in other cities.

STRATEGIC PLAN

In late 2017, the leadership of the Council initiated a strategic planning process to guide the organization over the next five years. The process involved an extensive survey of the membership, an Executive Committee retreat, and a detailed analysis of organizational assets and liabilities by the group's senior staff members. Based on the membership survey results, several critical needs and priorities were identified, including:

- Increasing the level of academic achievement throughout and across districts to ensure that students are graduating college and career ready
- Turning around the lowest performing schools
- Closing achievement gaps
- Balancing budgets while delivering quality instruction
- Strengthening the pipeline of effective educators
- Increasing public confidence in public schools

Building on a legacy of continuous improvement and collective action it has constructed over the years to expand opportunities for all children, the Council proposed to remain faithful to three main goals between 2019 and 2024:

1. To educate all urban school students to the highest academic standards
2. To lead, govern, and manage urban public schools in ways that advance the education of students and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of institutions
3. To bolster the public's confidence in urban education and build a supportive community for raising children and enhancing their future

The Executive Committee unanimously voted in 2020 to reaffirm these priorities, anticipating the need to adjust tactical efforts as appropriate to ensure that it can address any new or foreseeable challenges.

CURRENT WORK

National advocacy, service, and capacity building shape the Council's activities on behalf of urban school districts across the country as prioritized in the strategic plan. The organization's work is divided into several areas, each led by a Director:

Legislative provides legislative advocacy for urban schools before Congress and the executive and judicial branches of the federal government, bringing millions of dollars in extra federal support to urban school districts each year. This includes providing amicus briefs in the Supreme Court for many education-related cases. The team also advises and implements legislative and regulatory interventions on behalf of member urban school systems and organizes an annual legislative and policy conference in D.C.

Research conducts statistical analysis and surveys on conditions, successes, and challenges of urban schools, publishes evidence-based reports on why some urban school districts see faster improvements than others, and conducts studies on issues that are critical to urban districts such as turnaround schools, principal supervisors, school tests, and demographic shifts.

Communications publishes the “Urban Educator,” a monthly digital newsletter providing updates on the latest national, state, and city developments in urban education. The communications team informs policy makers, the media, and the public of the successes and challenges of schools in the nation’s great cities. The team also operates and maintains the Council’s website and social media presence.

Curriculum and Instruction assesses the instructional programs of member districts and provides strategic support for professional development to improve them. This team spearheads and supports the implementation of college and career readiness standards in member urban school districts. In the area of Bilingual, Immigrant, and Refugee Education, the Council provides support, materials, analysis, and tools to highlight and address the academic needs of ELLs. It provides a professional learning platform to assist member districts with struggling readers. The team also launched a national purchasing consortium, the first effort to harness the joint purchasing power of the nation’s major city school systems to purchase high-quality ELL materials. In addition, it advocates for students with special needs, conducting strategic support teams and research to advise members how to leverage resources and systems to improve student achievement.

Management Services supports non-academic management functions including child nutrition, school safety and security, information technologies, human resources, and financial functions. The Management Services team also coordinates the collection, communication, and use of a wide variety of key operational performance measures to aid member districts in improving their business operations.

Administration works to manage the Council’s resources and ensure the integrity of its programs. It conducts an annual external spending audit, coordinates travel for all staff and Board meetings and retreats, and maintains the Council’s database. The team hosts the major annual conferences and maintains the online conference registration and hotel reservation system for all meetings.

Governance provides on-site technical assistance and formal professional development on effective governance to numerous member boards of education and superintendents.

Strategic Support Teams provide on-site district assessments and technical assistance to the Council's members and, as a result of these peer reviews, hundreds of reports have been written on the instructional, management, organizational, and operational functions of urban school districts.

Staff and Liaison Groups are networks of senior managers who meet annually to discuss best practices and address common problems in areas of instruction, research, legislation, public relations, technology, human resources, and finance and operations. These meetings connect urban education personnel from member cities and give them the opportunity to share ideas and experiences.

Finally, the Council convenes two major conferences each year: the Legislative and Policy Conference held in Washington, D.C. in March featuring leading legislators and federal policy makers and the Fall Conference held in October in one of the Council's member cities, which gives educators the opportunity to share information and best practices on how to improve outcomes for urban students. Attendees also hear from prominent guest speakers and attend a national town hall.

Leadership Transition

In December 2019, Michael Casserly announced his decision to step down from his role as Executive Director and transition into a strategic advisor for the Council until 2024. Casserly has been with the Council for 43 years and has held the Executive Director position since January 1992. Before assuming this position, he served as the organization's Director of Legislation and Research.

As head of the Council, Casserly unified urban schools nationwide around a vision of reform and improvement; launched an aggressive research program on trends in urban education; convened the first Education Summit of Big City Mayors and Urban School Superintendents; led the nation's largest urban school districts to volunteer for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); led the first national study of common practices among the nation's fastest improving urban school districts; and launched national task forces on achievement gaps, leadership and governance, finance, professional development, and bilingual education.

Casserly has also written numerous studies, reports, and op-ed pieces on urban schools, including "Beating the Odds"—the nation's first look at urban school performance on state tests. His legislative work has been the subject of a college textbook on how Capitol Hill really works. He is considered by many to be one of Washington's best education advocates and lobbyists, and an expert on urban education, governance, finance, and federal legislation and policy. *Washington*

Almanac listed Casserly as one of Washington D.C.'s 400 most powerful individuals, and *USA Today* calls Casserly a "crusader" for city schoolchildren.

ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors and has overall fiduciary and managerial responsibility for all Council activities. The Council has an annual budget of approximately \$7 million and assets totaling \$12.2 million. The Executive Director leads a diverse 24-person team who share a deep commitment to racial and social justice. Reporting to the Executive Director are seven Directors and the Manager of Special Projects.

The Executive Director will take charge of a highly respected organization with substantial strengths, including an exceptional internal team, a deeply dedicated Board, and a track record of influence and impact. More specifically, the next Executive Director will address the following opportunities and challenges:

Maintain the Council's reputation and influence

The Council has increased its influence over the years and plays a leading role in the reform and improvement of urban education nationally. The Council is widely regarded as the premier voice for the unique needs of large urban school districts and the children they serve. Through its unwavering commitment to equity and justice in urban public education, the Executive Director will ensure that the Council remains viewed as an honest broker in voicing its proposals and ideas to Congress and other federal policymakers. The Executive Director will also seek to increase the Council's visibility while providing the public and the press a balanced and accurate view of the challenges, developments, and successes of urban public schools. In addition, the Executive Director will support burgeoning social media and communications strategies to enhance the Council's digital presence and inform the public of its work.

Guide and empower a strong leadership team and staff

The quality of the Council's staff is a critical strength. Their extensive knowledge and passionate commitment to the organization's core values, beliefs, and mission are enormous assets. Indeed, many often wonder how such a small organization can make such a big impact. The answer is found in the expertise, relentlessness, and assertiveness of Council staff and the collaboration of its members around shared priorities. The Executive Director must continue to nurture the creativity and longevity of the staff and develop junior staff to lead as the next generation of the organization.

Continue to be an indispensable resource for and partner to district leaders

Council meetings provide a special and unique venue in which board members and superintendents can network and share perspectives on neutral ground, a unique environment

that larger associations often cannot provide. The value of this convening has been seen most recently in response to the challenges emerging from Covid-19. The Council launched weekly conference calls with school board members, superintendents, chief academic officers, chief operating officers, chief financial officers, bilingual directors, special education directors, testing and research directors, communications directors, and others to share ideas and talk through solutions. The Executive Director will continue to create spaces for leaders to convene and benefit from Council expertise.

Another notable feature of the Council's work has been its use of rigorous data and solid research as it takes positions on behalf of the nation's urban school systems and helps its membership improve. Much of the organization's research over the decades has propelled member districts forward and shed light on important trends, developments, and challenges facing urban public education. It also serves as the foundation and impetus for the Council's legislative, academic, management, and communications services.

Integrate the Council's work across teams

With its laser-like focus on urban education, the Council has a well-defined purpose, direction, and mission. Its size also allows the organization to create a culture of support for its members and boost its expertise on the challenging issues that member districts face. The Executive Director should promote coordination among the programmatic functions, ensuring that internal systems and structures support well-integrated Council efforts and encourage collaboration. The Executive Director must inspire and engage staff to further align and integrate efforts so the Council can maintain its flexibility to respond to challenges and situations quickly.

Leverage school systems and structures to advance excellence

Another key distinction of the Council's work is its commitment to working with existing districts to improve student performance and close achievement and opportunity gaps. The Executive Director should have the interest and imagination to envision new ways of leveraging these structures, with particular attention toward the implications of changing technology and shifts in funding patterns.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The search committee will consider the below factors in evaluating candidates for this important leadership role. While no single individual will possess all the desired experiences and qualifications, the successful candidate should possess many of the following characteristics:

- A deep personal interest in and commitment to the Council's mission of educating the nation's most diverse student body; working knowledge of the organizational functions of the Council is a plus;

- Proven record of persuasive, inspirational, and ethical leadership with an open and inclusive management style;
- Setting direction, setting tone, and initiating activities on behalf of the organization to help it meet its goals;
- Exposure to public policy, conviction, and demonstrated commitment to educational justice along with a nuanced understanding of power, enfranchisement, and equity;
- Experience with or understanding of the complexities and challenges of urban school systems and leadership;
- The ability and desire to lead and develop a team of professionals, and work transparently and inclusively with talented, mission-driven staff;
- A passionate and compelling advocate with outstanding communication and presentation skills, as well as the interpersonal ability to be an effective spokesperson;
- The ability and desire to align all aspects of the Council's work, including development, communications, and operations, with the organization's race equity mission and values;
- Experience or demonstrated capacity to work successfully with a board of directors;
- Excellent skills communicating with all organizational stakeholders, including the media, policymakers, funders, staff, board, and the general public;
- A demonstrated ability to be a strategic thinker who can look beyond the immediate to forecast challenges and opportunities, take calculated risks, and work with staff to continue to evolve the organization to realize its core values and mission;
- Proactive steward of organizational mission and identity;
- Courage, ethical integrity, humility and seriousness of purpose that inspires others with a sense of possibility, progress, and hope.

TO APPLY

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: www.imsearch.com/7559. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Ericka Miller, Partner
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