

MINUTES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS
MINUTES
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Washington, D.C.
March 22, 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:

Sabrina Bazzo, San Diego School Board
Sharon Contreras, North Carolina Central University
Stephanie Elizalde, Dallas Superintendent
Lewis Ferebee, District of Columbia Chancellor
Shavonna Holman, Omaha School Board
Roger León, Newark Superintendent
Deborah Shanley, Brooklyn College School of Education
Mary Skipper, Boston Superintendent
Joyce Wilkerson, Philadelphia School Board

Absent:

Jerry Almendarez, Santa Ana Superintendent
Jill Baker, Long Beach Superintendent
Margo Bellamy, Anchorage School Board
Brandon Craig, Cincinnati School Board
Kelly Gonez, Immediate Past Chair, Los Angeles School Board
Aleesia Johnson, Indianapolis Superintendent
Kyla Johnson Trammel, Oakland Superintendent
Alex Marrero, Denver Superintendent
Christina Martinez, San Antonio School Board
Marty Pollio, Jefferson County Superintendent
Darryl Willie, Duval County School Board
Stacey Woolley, Tulsa School Board

Marcia Andrews, Chair of the Board of Directors, called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm. Members then introduced themselves and gave a short update on events in their districts. There was no quorum, so no votes can be taken at this time. Votes will need to be ratified at the Board of Directors meeting on Sunday, where we will have a quorum of the Executive Committee because of virtual participants.

Minutes

Ray Hart presented the minutes of the January 2025 meeting of the Executive Committee in Palm Beach, FL. The motion to approve the minutes passed without dissent.

Bylaws

No report.

Membership

Shavonna Holman gave the report of the Membership Subcommittee. Given the new membership criteria—applicants must now have a student enrollment of 25,000 or more— the subcommittee approved the acceptance of the three new districts at the January meeting: Madison Metropolitan School District, Durham Public Schools, and Jersey City Public Schools.

This recommendation will be taken up at the Board of Directors meeting for final approval.

Appointments and Nominations

Ray Hart presented the lineup of officers, nominations to fill vacancies, and term renewals.

2025-26 Officers

- Sonja Santelises, Baltimore CEO, confirmed as CGCS Chair
- Valerie Davis, Fresno School Board Member, confirmed as Chair-elect
- Jill Baker, Long Beach Superintendent, nominated and confirmed as Secretary/Treasurer
- Marcia Andrews, Palm Beach School Board Member, confirmed as Immediate Past Chair

Vacancies for FY25-26

- Sara Elaquad (Cleveland School Board) nominated to serve the unexpired term of Rodney Jordan (Norfolk School Board), whose term was set to expire June 30, 2026.
- Deanna Kaplan (Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School Board) nominated serve the unexpired term of Jenny Lam (San Francisco School Board), whose term was set to expire June 30, 2026.
- Joe Gothard (Madison Superintendent) nominated to serve the unexpired term of Martin Pollio (Jefferson County Superintendent) whose term was set to expire June 30, 2027.
- Matias Segura (Austin Superintendent) serve the unexpired term of Jill Baker (Long Beach School Board), whose term was set to expire June 30, 2026 and will now serve as Treasurer/Secretary.

Renewal of Terms

- Lewis Ferebee (DCPS Chancellor), to serve a second three-year term ending June 30, 2028
- Alex Marrero (Denver Superintendent), to serve a first three-year term ending June 30, 2028
- Mary Skipper (Boston Superintendent), to serve a first three-year term ending June 30, 2028
- Darryl Willie (Duval County School Board Member), to serve a first three-year term ending June 30, 2028
- Stacey Woolley (Tulsa School Board Member), to serve a first three-year term ending June 30, 2028
- Joyce Wilkerson (Philadelphia School Board Member), to serve a second three-year term ending June 30, 2028

The motion to approve the slate of Nominations passed by voice vote without dissent. In the absence of a Quorum, the votes will be ratified at the Board of Directors meeting on Sunday.

Audit

Ray Hart gave the report of the Audit Subcommittee. It was a completely clean audit. The Audit section of the Committee materials is the same report that the Committee reviewed a few weeks ago at the January 2025 Executive Committee meeting in Palm Beach, except that the Audited Financial Statements are now final. This report will be presented to the full Board at tomorrow's meeting. In terms of our response to the current economic climate, we are still positive in our investments as of a week ago, although we have shifted our investments somewhat. As we accumulate funds, and funds mature, we reinvest that money.

Conferences and Meetings

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

The summer meeting of the Committee will be held in Newark, NJ. The 2025 annual conference will be held in Philadelphia, 2026 will be in Boston, and 2027 will be in Denver.

Strategic Plan

Our new strategic plan will be shared with the full Board tomorrow.

Respectfully submitted:

Ray Hart
Executive Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
March 23, 2025

Marcia Andrews, Chair of the Board of Directors, called the meeting to order at 8:45 am ET. All members introduced themselves. A quorum of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors was established later in the meeting after virtual participants were counted.

Minutes

Marcia Andrews presented the minutes of the October 2024 Board of Directors meeting in Dallas, TX and the January 2025 meeting of the Executive Committee in Palm Beach, FL.

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

By-Laws

The Bylaws Subcommittee met to discuss the issue of membership criteria and recommended to the Executive Committee that the student enrollment criteria be changed from 35,000 to 25,000 (keeping the city population requirements of 250,000 the same). The executive committee approved the recommended change at their January 2025 meeting in Palm Beach, FL.

Ray Hart provided some background information for this change. Looking at the current Council membership enrollment dashboard, we found that 23 of our districts fall below enrollments of 35,000—almost a third (a chart is provided in the Board materials).

Changing the enrollment criteria would therefore reflect our changing membership profile. There would be thirteen additional districts across the country that would be eligible for membership, and they represent big cities that seem very much in line with the current Council membership.

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

Membership

There are currently three applicants who are now eligible for membership given the new, lower enrollment criteria—Madison Metropolitan School District, Durham Public Schools, Jersey City Public Schools.

A motion to accept Madison Metropolitan School District, Durham Public Schools, and Jersey City Public Schools as new members passed without dissent by voice vote.

After the vote, Chair Andrews invited the Durham superintendent, Anthony Lewis and Board Chair, Millicent Rogers to join the board of directors at the table.

Appointments and Nominations

Ray Hart presented the lineup of officers, nominations to fill vacancies, and term renewals.

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Vacancies

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- Stacey Woolley (Tulsa School Board Member), to serve a first three-year term ending June 30, 2028
- Joyce Wilkerson (Philadelphia School Board Member), to serve a second three-year term ending June 30, 2028

The motion to approve the slate of Nominations was approved by voice vote without dissent.

Audit

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

- Final Independent Auditors report for 2023-24. *This report included a letter to 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 funds as revenue in the year the signed grant documentation is received, then spend the funds down over time.*
 - Statement of activities. *Ray Hart noted that we provide a significant investment toward our mission driven work. This means that our SSTs, our superintendent preparation work via the Casserly Institute, our governance support work—these projects all function at a deficit because while we charge members a small fee, it doesn't cover the full expense of conducting this work.*
 - 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.*
 - In reporting Grants and Contributions Receivable the total is reduced by a discount on multi-year pledges, which this year is 4.64%.
 - Notes to financial statement. *A few things of note. This section again lays out the procedure for recording grants receivable. As we expense grants, we will have negative values since we are spending down the funds. Members will also see that we have over \$13 million in investments. We continue to invest our dollars soundly. This section also provides notes on assets available and provides information on the availability and liquidity of funds available to the organization—roughly \$15 million.*

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 2024-25.*
 - Status of membership dues. *Four districts have indicated that they will not pay dues—Charleston, El Paso, Bridgeport, and St. Louis. In our budget we plan for 5 districts not paying, so this is already budgeted. 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 next year. 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 next year.*

- General operating budget by function. *We typically spend more in the second quarter of the fiscal year around the annual conference.*
- General operating budget and expenses shown by expense line
- General operating budget and expenses shown 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, 2025 if there are not enough registrations.*
- Investment policy and guidelines
- Asset allocations with balances as of December 31, 2024

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 were reclassified into a lower dues tier.*
- General Operating Budget by function
- General Operating Budget by expense line
- History of CPI increases

A motion to approve the Audit report and membership dues for FY25-26 passed without dissent by voice vote.

Strategic Planning

The materials provide an update to our strategic plan, outlining our goals and strategies for the next five years, from 2025 through 2030. Ray Hart pointed out a number of updates, including a theory of action and more clarity around our outreach and advocacy work. He also pointed out that language around supporting diversity will not be taken out, as it remains one of our core values.

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.

Ray Hart then provided information on several partnerships the Council is involved in.

A motion to accept the updated strategic plan passed without dissent by voice vote.

Conferences and Meetings

Ray Hart reviewed the lineup of meetings in 2025 and 2026. The next annual fall conference will be held in Philadelphia, and in 2026 we will be in Boston. We have received an invitation from Denver to host our 2027 annual conference, which will require a Board vote.

A motion to hold the 2027 Annual Fall Conference in Denver, CO passed without dissent by voice vote.

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 dismantling of the Department of Education. The Council makes very few statements, as we try to be judicious in what we comment on.

Ray Hart then called the group's attention to press coverage of NAEP TUDA results, which were released since the last time this body met. 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 reports on media coverage and updates on the organization's social media presence over the past few months.

Finally, the communications section of the materials provides the most recent issues of the *Urban Educator* and information on our upcoming meeting of Public Relations Executives. The next one will be on July 17-19, 2025 in Washington, D.C.

Legislation

Ray Hart explained that the remainder of the conference is devoted to providing information and updates on legislative and legal developments in Washington, DC.

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. This includes a report on school discipline trends and disparities, a survey report on superintendent characteristics and salaries, a report on NAEP TUDA trends, enrollment trend data, and ASDP survey data.

Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development

Deborah Shanley gave the report of the Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development. 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.

All of the materials covered at the task force meeting yesterday are available in the Board materials. The Curriculum and Research meeting will be held this summer in Detroit, MI.

Ray Hart pointed out that the materials also include SST reports from Memphis and Puerto Rico, as well as an update on the Council's work in the area of literacy.

Task Force on English Language Learners and Bilingual Education

Ray Hart 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 yesterday.

The ELL section of the materials provides 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 Ray Hart asked members to review this report and let the team know if there is anything missing or they would like to see added.

Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys and Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls

Ray Hart gave the report of the Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys. The task force meeting yesterday featured district presentations on the La Raza report launched by Denver Public Schools and on the Working on Womanhood (WOW) program. These presentations are available in the materials.

Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance

Joyce Wilkerson introduced the report on the Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance.

Ray Hart 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. The board materials provide information on the Harvard ABC Institute, and Ray Hart noted that the Deadline for applications is coming up in April.

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.

In closing, Ray Hart alerted the Board of Directors that in the coming months we may need to reach out to solicit their input, participation, and authority to take certain steps (including legal action) as necessary.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Ray Hart
Executive Director