EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Present:

Officers:

Barbara Jenkins, Chair, Orange County Superintendent
Kelly Gonez, Chair-Elect, Los Angeles School Board
William Hite, Philadelphia Superintendent
Michael O’Neill, Immediate Past Chair, Boston School Committee

Members:

Tom Ahart, Des Moines Superintendent
Marcia Andrews, Palm Beach County School Board
Marcelo Cavazos, Arlington Superintendent
Sharon Contreras, Guilford County Superintendent
Talisa Dixon, Columbus Superintendent
Joe Gothard, St. Paul Superintendent
Leslie Grant, Atlanta School Board
Guadalupe Guerrero, Portland Superintendent
Michael Hinojosa, Dallas Superintendent
Shavonna Hollman, Omaha School Board
Jesus Jara, Clark County Superintendent
Megan Kerr, Long Beach School Board
Pedro Martinez, Chicago CEO
Sonja Santelises, Baltimore CEO
Sylvia Wilson, Pittsburgh School Board
Darrel Woo, Sacramento School Board

Absent:

Siad Ali, Minneapolis School Board
Valerie Davis, Fresno School Board
Diane Porter, Jefferson County School Board
Van Henri White, Rochester School Board
Deborah Shanley, Brooklyn College, CUNY Dean

Barbara Jenkins, Chair of the Board of Directors, called the meeting to order at 4:30pm ET. A quorum was established. Members then introduced themselves and gave a short update on events in their districts.
Minutes

Barbara Jenkins presented the minutes of the July 9 and 10, 2021 meeting of the Executive Committee in Portland, OR.

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

Appointments and Nominations

The Chair then introduced appointments to Task Forces and Subcommittees. It was necessary to appoint a third co-chair to a number of committees to proactively address members who are imminently leaving the committee. For example, this is the final meeting for Leslie Grant, and Barbara Jenkins thanked her for her years of service to the Executive Committee and Council. Van White from Rochester will also be leaving the Executive Committee.

Audit

Bill Hite, Chair of the Audit Subcommittee, asked Ray Hart to give an update on the budget. According to the latest update on dues payments, all districts, with exception of Chicago and Pittsburgh, have paid their dues. In addition, Toronto and Providence have paid, although this isn’t reflected in the materials (as the payments arrived today). Ray Hart then called the groups attention to the budget for 2021-22. He noted that there is a credit in revenue that reflects the PPP loan the organization received last year. This loan has been officially forgiven and doesn’t need to be paid back. We’ve also slightly reduced our projections for revenue from our investments. Finally, there are a number of offsets that will be received in the coming weeks and months. Ray explained that as grant funding comes in, we offset the costs of staffing and other expenses. This still includes the increases in staff salaries. We are now projected to have roughly $1 million in revenue in the coming year. We have also received a $1.5 million grant for work we are doing with Chiefs for Change and CCSSO, which is not reflected in any staff offsets, given that we are a subcontractor. In addition, we have just received word today concerning another $1.75 million grant—also not yet included in offsets.

The budget report also includes detailed information on asset allocation. All of our asset allocations are within the range stipulated.

A motion to accept the Audit Subcommittee status report passed without dissent by voice vote.

Membership

Sharon Contreras gave the report of the Membership Subcommittee. Fayette County Public Schools has applied for membership. This district meets the criteria of membership, and data is provided in committee materials. The Subcommittee recommends accepting this district.
Another application has been received from the Phoenix Union High School District, but this came in too late to be considered at this meeting. There is a slight complication with this membership request though, given that Phoenix is one of the only districts in the country that splits the elementary schools from high schools. So together they would have qualified, but they do not meet the enrollment requirement on their own. However, if we do make an exception, we wouldn’t have to worry about setting any sort of precedent. Given that they are unique in this structure, this exception wouldn’t apply to any other district. The Subcommittee will meet on this and make a recommendation for the next meeting.

A motion to accept the membership application of Fayette County passed without dissent by voice vote.

Conferences and Meetings

At this point we are planning on returning to in-person meetings in 2022, starting with the Executive Committee meeting in January in Palm Beach, Florida. There are a number of meetings that have been moved due to cancellations in 2021. Ray Hart called the group’s attention to the biggest change, which involves the lineup of annual conferences. In negotiations with the conference hotel in Philadelphia, we found that the terms of our contract would not allow us to reschedule further out than 2025. So, they have allowed us to roll over to 2025 and incur only a $10K penalty rather than a $500K penalty. But this means that Boston has once again been pushed back, now to 2026. For that meeting we are now discussing hotel options in Boston. Updates will be given at the next meeting.

A motion to accept the lineup of conferences passed without dissent by voice vote.

Strategic Plan

We have secured a number of grants to allow us to support our members in ARP spending and Covid relief and recovery efforts. We have also received grant funding to improve our website and improve dissemination of materials. At the same time, we have worked to keep a number of projects and initiatives on track. The materials include a new report released in coordination with SAP on shifting early reading practices. This was part of a two-year grant that was suspended due to Covid. The materials also include information on the Harvard leadership training institute. We did hold a second Harvard institute virtually this summer, with 66 participants. We also released our operational and academic KPI reports this week. These reports reflect data from spring 2020, just as schools were closing. This is a valuable baseline, so we’ve decided to keep the KPIs as they are to be able to track patterns and provide longitudinal data on the impact of the pandemic. We will continue to monitor progress.

For other projects and programs, such as the Casserly Institute, a progress update isn’t included. Work on this program is still underway, but we are not in a place where we can make it public.
The Committee then discussed the changing priorities and tactics of the organization. Barbara Jenkins reminded the group that this is a living document, so some topics have become more pressing while others are less of an immediate priority, given limited resources.

Sharon Contreras pointed out the need to do a deep dive review of the KPI data being collected from districts. This would help to identify and address participation gaps among districts. Ray Hart agreed. In January we can send out a compiled look at the data being requested, so leaders are aware of the schedule and can ensure data submission.

Barbara Jenkins pointed out that where there are tactics that say no progress, we may want to reassess whether this is still a priority, given current circumstances and the need to shift attention to more urgent matters.

Kelly Gonez and Bill Hite lifted up the priority of supporting superintendents and efforts to strengthen governance capacity. The group agreed that amidst the current political climate support for district leaders is critical. There are also a number of things that leaders have to do differently in interacting with their boards. No one had any immediate ideas, but this is important to keep thinking about.

Marcelo Cavazos suggested that we should incorporate references to accelerating learning and spending ESSER funds in a strategic manner in the goals/strategies to reflect the primacy of these priorities in the current circumstances. Ray Hart agreed. We are building support around ARP spending support into our work and grant projects, so this can and should certainly be added to the document.

Finally, the goals include an item on conducting strategic support visits to help districts improve their communications functions and work. The challenge here is that SSTs are conducted by request, on a voluntary basis—we do not approach districts on specific topics to meet our own goals but respond to districts’ requests for assistance where they need it. Barbara Jenkins suggested that this would be a prime candidate for something that could be removed.

Respectfully submitted:

Ray Hart
Executive Director
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Barbara Jenkins, Chair of the Board of Directors, called the virtual meeting to order at 11:00 am ET. A quorum of the Executive Committee was established. A quorum of the Board was established later in the meeting.

**Strategic plan**

The materials include strategic plan and an update on status.

We have undertaken a number of new elements related to the pandemic and supporting recovery and student learning. We have also added additional governance elements, which incorporate the board chair, new board member, board secretary, and board coaching cohorts we have established. We have designed a professional learning series to provide training this Spring and Summer for both our board chairs and new school board members. Moreover, we are going to pull together a series of sessions that will allow us to build out a curriculum for our coaching work.

Other additional elements include the support we are providing for strategic ARP spending, support for the effective use of instructional technology, interoperability, and cybersecurity elements/support. Although some of these items are not new goals as much as new tactics.

**Coronavirus Resources**

This section of the materials provides an updated list of conference calls held for various job-alike groups to provide weekly/biweekly support, a screenshot of the Council’s coronavirus resource web page, and copies of all the resources released to assist districts in Covid recovery. The website now has a detailed section that provides a single access point for all of our resources for districts, including those related to social-emotional learning and mental health.

This section also includes a copy of a combined resource for the strategic spending of ARP funds. This resource has been widely disseminated across the country. The document details our recommendations (coming from a high-level advisory committee of district leaders) across a number of topical areas. Through grant support, we are now in the process of taking this report and creating rubrics for implementation, so districts can assess where they are.

**Nominations**

Barbara Jenkins presented her appointments to subcommittees and task forces, including the chairs of each group.
Annual report

Ray Hart presented the annual report, highlights of the past year. Immediate past chair Michael O’Neill and former Executive Director Michael Casserly both addressed the group, praising the achievements of the organization, Council members, and staff over the course of a challenging year. Barbara Jenkins then introduced Eric Gordon, chair of the ED search committee, and thanked him for his leadership. Gordon then addressed the group.

Conferences and Meetings

Ray Hart reviewed the lineup of upcoming meetings in 2022, which will be held in person.

The fall conference in 2022 will be held in Orlando, the 2023 conference will be held in San Diego, the 2024 conference will now be held in Dallas (this was postponed from 2020), and the 2025 conference will now be held in Philadelphia. Boston has been pushed back to 2026 to accommodate this change.

Communications

Ray Hart gave the report on the Council’s communications activities. This section begins with statements on a number of topics, including Mike Casserly’s final statement as Executive Director on critical race theory.

The materials then provide a sample of articles that feature quotes from Council staff or highlight Council activities and resources, press releases that have come out since our last meeting in March, a survey of public relations executives, the latest Urban Educator (which is now all digital), the organization’s monthly social media report, and information on the Bernard Harris scholarship program, including a list of winners and applicants.

Ray Hart thanked the communications team for their incredible work on these programs and resources, and for the annual conference.

Legislation

Ray Hart introduced the legislative team of Jeff Simering and Manish Naik, as well as our general counsel Julie Wright Halbert.

Simering then provided a brief update on legislative developments. According to the Treasury Department the US has spent more money this fiscal year than any other time in history. Interestingly, the deficit was slightly smaller given the rebound of the economy. But with a razor thin majority in the House and Senate, what we’re seeing is very little political consensus in Congress on anything. We were recently on the brink of a government shutdown, which was only narrowly avoided with a Continuing Resolution. There are serious disagreements even within the Democratic party which are holding up President Biden’s agenda. Given the need for a 60 vote super-majority to pass legislation
in the Senate, some degree of bipartisan compromise is necessary, and we’re just not seeing it. The only congressional actions that don’t require super-majority are budget reconciliation votes and some departmental specific actions.

Unfortunately, school facilities funding is not in the current Bipartisan Infrastructure bill, although it is in the proposed budget reconciliation bill. Passing the reconciliation bill will require consensus among Democrats as all votes are needed and getting this consensus will require paring back the House bill by 40-50%. So, the current issue is what programs will be pared back and what will remain. And unfortunately, school programs and investments don’t have the same support as programs or direct subsidies that put money into families’ pockets directly, particularly in the lead up to a midterm election year. But for fiscal year 2023 another budget reconciliation bill is possible. This will be considered sometime next year. Amidst this backdrop of legislative warfare, the Biden administration is churning out a host of additional initiatives, guidance, requirements, and rules (common with Democratic administrations), so it falls on us to ensure and counsel that these initiatives and requirements should be carefully crafted.

Simering then reiterated the point that the annual appropriations bill will need a super majority to pass, so there is a possibility that there will be so much gridlock that we end up with a continuing resolution that keeps current funding levels in place, which would place pressure on districts.

The legislation section of the Board materials includes letters to Capitol Hill, summaries of key administration proposals and agency initiatives/guidance, and comments on the FCC connectivity program, OSERS special education guidance, immigration, and maintenance of effort reporting requirements.

There is also a copy of an award for best education brief, awarded to the Council and Husch Blackwell by the American Law Association for our amicus brief opposing DeVos’ private school funding effort. The compelling analysis and arguments made in the brief allowed us to prevail, saving hundreds of millions of dollars for urban schools. This is the second time we’ve won this award.

Simering then discussed the issue of states offsetting COVID relief aid to districts, particularly in Florida, in violation of federal law on Maintenance of Effort. This has resulted in a warning from the Department of Education.

Research

Ray Hart then introduced the research team, including the Council’s new Director of Research Akisha Sarfo, and announced the departure of Research Manager Renata Lyons.

The research section begins with an overview of the Council’s current research activities. The materials include updates on our work with NAGB, including comments and presentations. In response to a letter petitioning NAGB not to hold NAEP in 2021,
assessment was postponed to 2022. The materials provide a list of upcoming assessments, which will now be administered on even-numbered years.

There is also a copy of a Rand survey on updates during pandemic, and a copy of the Council’s latest report, *Mirrors or Windows*. This report presents a unique analysis of NAEP results that provides a picture of how urban districts are helping to overcome the impacts of poverty and discrimination for urban students. Ray Hart then discussed the results and main findings in detail with the group, including standout districts and patterns over the study period.

Akisha Sarfo then introduced herself to the group. Members praised the *Mirrors* report, and the accompanying dashboard.

**Minutes**

Barbara Jenkins presented the minutes of the March 21, 2021 virtual meeting of the Board of Directors and July 9-10, 2021 meeting of the Executive Committee in Portland, Oregon.

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

**Audit**

Ray Hart gave the Audit Report. The materials provide an update on dues payments. All districts, with the exception of Chicago and Pittsburgh, have paid their dues. In addition, Toronto and Providence have paid, although this isn’t reflected in the materials (the payments arrived today).

Ray Hart then called groups attention to the approved budget for 2021-22, compared to the revised budget. There are two things to note. Our revenues are now $457,411. This reflects the PPP loan we took out last year, which has been officially forgiven, and doesn’t need to be paid back. In addition, offsets from external grants are now reflected in this revised budget. We are now projected to have roughly a million in revenue in the coming year. This doesn’t include several forthcoming grants in excess of $2 million.

Our asset allocations are within strategic targets, and the materials provide details on these allocations for this quarter. We’ve also reduced slightly down our projections for revenue from our investments.

A motion to accept the Audit Subcommittee status report passed without dissent by voice vote.

**By-Laws**

Darrel Woo gave the report of the By-Laws Subcommittee. During a May call of the By-Laws Subcommittee, there was a recommendation to specifically add HBCU’s as ex officio representatives of colleges of education to the language in the by-laws concerning membership (article IV). However, since the language in the by-laws does not include a
specific number, there is nothing in the by-laws that prevents additional colleges/universities from serving as ex officio representatives.

Therefore, the question to the By-laws Subcommittee was: Do we amend the language to include specific reference to HBCU’s/MSI’s or do we advise that there is nothing in the by-laws that prevents additional representation?

The bylaws sub-committee is recommending adding language specific to HBCU’s/MSI’s

The original text is as follows:

Section 4.04 Colleges of Education. Colleges of Education located in or serving cities that are members of the Council of the Great City Schools may be represented ex officio on the Executive Committee and Board of Directors and may meet and confer with the Council on issues of joint concern as necessary.

And the recommended revision would be as follows:

Section 4.04 Colleges/Schools of Education. Colleges or schools of Education, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and/or Minority Serving Institutions, located in or serving cities that are members of the Council of the Great City Schools, may be represented on the Executive Committee and Board of Directors by a maximum of two ex officio members, who may meet and confer with the Council on issues of joint concern as necessary.

A motion to approve the update to the membership language of the by-laws passed without dissent by voice vote.

Chair Jenkins stated the next step is to reach out to HBCUs and MSIs for interest in serving as ex-officio on the executive committee, and recommendations should be brought back to the executive committee for a vote. Mike Casserly concurred with the next step and stated recruitment can be done in a number of ways at the prerogative of the executive director.

Membership

Sharon Contreras gave the report of the Membership Subcommittee. Fayette County Public Schools, the school district serving Lexington, Kentucky, has applied for membership, and was approved by the executive committee on October 21, 2021. The district meets all membership criteria (data is provided in the membership section of the materials).

Another application has been received from the Phoenix Union High School District, but this came in too late to be considered at this meeting. There is a slight complication with this membership request though, given that Phoenix is one of the only districts in the country that splits the elementary schools from high schools. So together they would have qualified, but they do not meet the enrollment requirement on their own. However, if we
do make an exception, we wouldn’t have to worry about setting any sort of precedent. Given that they are unique in this structure, this exception wouldn’t apply to any other district. The Subcommittee will meet on this and make a recommendation for the next Executive Committee meeting.

A motion to accept the membership application of Fayette County passed without dissent by voice vote.

**Achievement and Professional Development**

Sonja Santelises gave the report of the Achievement and Professional Development Task Force. She thanked her co-chairs and invited Deb Shanley to discuss the recent Task Force meeting. Many of the topics covered in the Task Force agenda have already been discussed today. The Task Force covered the *Mirrors* report. Districts also now have access to 2019 KPI data, allowing them to benchmark their work and to chart the impact of the pandemic on instructional outcomes. In our conversation we also focused on the importance of providing access to high-quality grade level content and addressing unfinished learning. In our efforts to support students in the aftermath of school closures we should be cautious about the misuse of remediation when it removes students from grade-level learning. Shanley then highlighted the work of Broward County and San Diego in addressing unfinished learning.

The materials provide an overview of the various projects and resources coming from the academic team. One of the newest documents is a professional development framework. Our regular meetings and Zoom call with instructional staff have also continued to be very impactful, and we are continuing to provide districts with strategic support team reviews. For example, the materials include a copy of a recent review of special education services conducted at the request of Norfolk Public Schools.

In terms of upcoming projects, the team will be working on updating the curriculum framework to reflect pandemic priorities and lessons learned. We will also be conducting an SST review of Atlanta Public Schools’ Office of Student Support Services.

The materials provide details on a project on early reading accelerators. This is a partnership between the San Antonio Independent School District, Student Achievement Partners, and the Council with funding from the Kellogg Foundation, and the continuation of work begun with Metro Nashville. Robin Hall then gave a brief background of the project.

Finally, you will find a flyer for a new convening specifically for Chiefs of Schools. This is going to be a biweekly meeting.

**Task Force on English Language Learners and Bilingual Education**
Siad Ali and Jesus Jara gave the report of the Task Force on English Language Learners and Bilingual Education. He thanked districts for their work welcoming refugees and immigrants from around the world. He also thanked his co-chairs and asked them to say a few words.

Gabi Uro updated the group on the Task Force meeting. It is not clear that investments currently being made with federal funds specifically target the needs of ELs. Staffing shortages was another area of discussion for the Task Force. These shortages are only exacerbating pre-existing shortages of bilingual support staff and teachers. The group also discussed the challenges of virtual instruction, which creates difficulties in addressing student needs. Assessment is another challenge.

Finally, during the Task Force discussion Guilford County presented data on their work with the 3Ls approach for ELs and other students struggling with reading.

**Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys**

Bill Hite gave the report of the Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys. In our Task Force meetings we have been discussing disproportionality and its impact on student outcomes. Data provided in the materials show that this impact is widely felt across all key performance indicators. During the fall conference we had the opportunity to hear from the Houston Independent School District and Wichita Public Schools about their work in this area. We want to continue to hear from and highlight the work of our colleagues who are making inroads.

Ray Hart then informed the Board that we are currently working to extend data collection to young women and girls of colors, so that we will have complimentary data sets. And we’ve begun conversations about providing opportunities for connecting networks of those doing this work across member districts.

**Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls**

Sharon Contreras and Shavonna Holman gave the report for the Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls. During the meeting Oakland Unified School District gave a presentation on strategies for raising black and Latina academic outcomes. We also heard a presentation from Atlanta Public Schools on safety, which included a map showing hotspots for human trafficking. This includes nearly all of our districts. We covered some warning signs and discussed preventative policies and community outreach strategies. We’d now like to develop strategies and training materials to be shared throughout the Council membership and would recommend future sessions on this topic.

Ray Hart suggested that we could host a special webinar on the issue, to be publicized widely.
The group then discussed what types of data should be collected and how to inform necessary partnerships with stakeholders to protect and raise up our girls of color. We are also looking to survey districts on what is working across districts to support girls of color. The Task Force chairs asked for help from the Council’s Research Director Akisha Sarfo on what data points could be collected as part of this effort.

**Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance**

Guadalupe Guerrero gave the report of the Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance. He thanked his co-chairs. The materials include an agenda from the Task Force discussion. School board governance and leadership development have been an emphasis for us. Governance coaching cohorts are currently being developed and overseen by AJ Crabill. This coaching is focused on student outcome-oriented leadership. As a result of this support many participants have reported a marked shift in their focus and an evolution in their work.

This section of the materials also provides information on the Harvard leadership institute. We held the institute virtually this year, but attendance was good and participants indicated that it succeeded in making an impact on their work. We hope to return to an in-person format for next year’s institute.

On the management and finance side, it is important to recognize the impact of the regular meetings of operational, financial, and other role alike meetings throughout pandemic. This has provided an invaluable opportunity to share challenges and ideas and hear from peers about promising practices and emerging lessons.

The ongoing collection and sharing of operational key performance indicators has also been extremely helpful during this time. Whether it is concerning the allocation of finances, the deployment of technology, or facilities issues such as ventilation and air quality procedures, it helps to be able to benchmark our work.

Strategic support teams have also been ongoing over the past year. We continue to be available to members who want to avail themselves of this process, which is rigorous and hard-hitting but designed to provide concrete, actionable guidance.

**Wrap up**

Chair Barbara Jenkins acknowledged that this is the final meeting for Leslie Grant from Atlanta and Van Henri White from Rochester and thanked them for their service. She then commended Council leadership and staff for hosting a successful meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 1:42pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Ray Hart, Executive Director