STRATEGIC PLAN

Council *of the* Great City Schools

THE NATION'S VOICE FOR URBAN EDUCATION

Strategic Plan, 2019-2024

Strategic Plan
Of the
Council of the Great City Schools
2019-2024

Organization

The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 72 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 at a period in American history when the nation's cities and their public schools were undergoing substantial transition and there was no formal national organization that could help address the challenges ahead.

The organization is governed by a board of directors that is composed of the superintendent and one school board member from each city. The Chair alternates each year between a superintendent and school board member. The board of directors elects a 24-member executive committee that is equally composed of superintendents and school board members and that oversees the operation, rules, and finances of the organization when the board is not in session.

The organization has been guided over the last 25 years by three broad goals: to educate all urban students to high standards; to lead, govern, and manage our urban schools efficiently and effectively; and to bolster public confidence in urban education.

Strategic Planning

In late 2017, the leadership of the Council of the Great City Schools initiated a strategic planning process to guide the organization over the next five years. The process involved an extensive survey of the membership, a retreat by the organization's executive committee, and a detailed analysis of organizational assets and liabilities by the group's senior staff members. From survey results, the membership articulated several critical needs and priorities, 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

These priorities are consistent with the Council's long-standing vision, mission, values, and goals.

Vision of the Great City Schools

Urban public schools exist to teach students to the highest standards of educational excellence. As the primary American institution responsible for weaving the strands of our society into a cohesive fabric, we—the leaders of America's Great City Schools—see a future where the nation cares for all children, expects their best, values their diversity, invests in their futures, and welcomes their participation in the American dream.

The Great City Schools are places where this vision becomes tangible and those ideals are put to the test. We pledge to commit ourselves to the work of advancing empathy, equity, justice, and tolerance, and we vow to do everything we can to vigorously resist the forces of ignorance, fear, and prejudice, as we teach and guide our students. We will keep our commitments, and with society's support, cities will become the centers of a strong and equitable nation with urban public schools successfully teaching our children and building our communities.
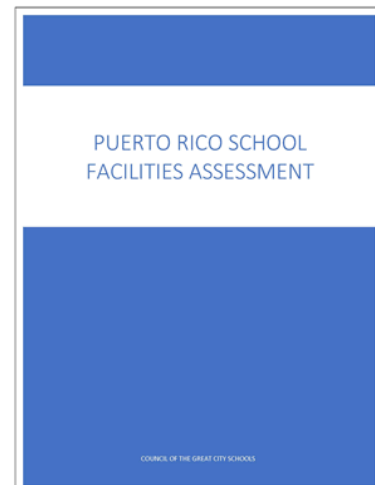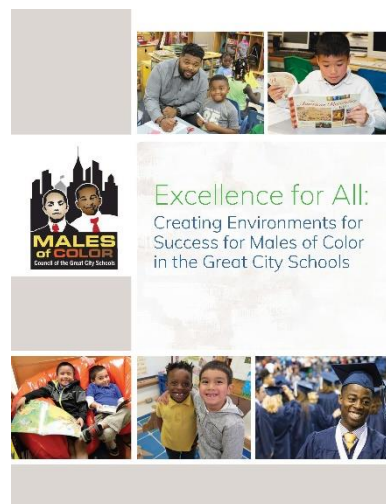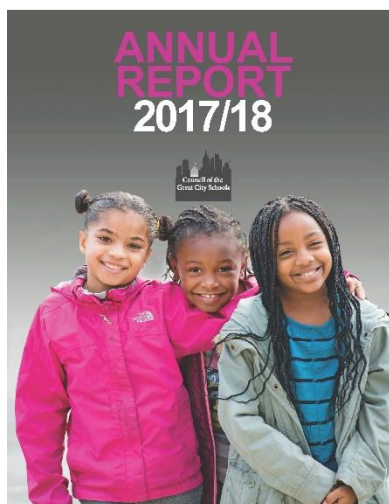
Mission of the Great City Schools

It is the special mission of America's urban public schools to educate the nation's most diverse student body to the highest academic standards and prepare them to contribute to our democracy and the global community.

Values and Commitments of the Great City Schools

The ongoing work of the Council is built on the following values and commitments that we embrace both for and with our students:

1. *Leadership.* The Council of the Great City Schools is the nation's premier leader in urban public education. This is true not only because the organization is unrivaled in the field in terms of the quality and innovation of its work, but because it seeks to make its schools the best in the country. In addition, the organization's leadership is defined by its unwillingness to wait for anyone else to improve the quality of public education for us, instead harnessing the expertise of urban education practitioners across cities—as well as the voices of our communities and students— to take charge of our own, shared future and to show what is possible in our big-city public schools.

2. *Improvement.* The Council and its members embrace continuous improvement in the instructional and non-instructional services provided by the membership and the organization. In many ways, this long-standing commitment sets the organization apart from other national education associations who simply represent and defend their memberships or constantly change priorities. Over the years, the Council has pursued those traditional roles, but also sought to improve public education in the nation's urban areas using the expertise of member districts in unique and collaborative ways.

3. *Accountability.* The Council has sought ways to demonstrate accountability for results and foster a culture of shared responsibility for the education of urban children. One can see this in its annual reports, district-specific services and return on investment reports, its policy positions on legislation like No Child Left Behind, its initiation of the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment, its hard-hitting Strategic Support Team reviews of districts, its research reports, and other activities and efforts.

4. *Equity.* The Council is a strong and outspoken voice for equity, equality, opportunity, and social justice. Over the years, the organization has repeatedly spoken out on the education-related issues of the day when others did not, and it has imbedded these values of equity into ongoing policy discussions, legislative positions, conference agendas and speakers, initiatives, reports and resources, and other activities.

5. *High Expectations.* The Council is unwavering in its demand for quality work from ourselves and our students. The organization strives in all its efforts to reflect the highest standards of expertise and performance in both students and adults. This commitment sets the organization apart from others and is evident in the group's personnel, products, reports, research, conferences, recommendations, and communications.

6. *Integrity.* The organization is uncompromising in its veracity, consistency, and truthfulness in the pursuit of its mission—including the ability to self-critique. These qualities have helped build the organization's reputation for forthrightness with the public, the media, and government. The group works from the assumption that if one builds a reputation for high quality and integrity then the organization attracts the right kind of attention and support.

The Challenges Ahead for the Great City Schools

The nation's urban public schools face an extraordinarily difficult landscape over the next five years. These challenges might best be characterized as falling into the following categories—

➢ *Pressure for Better Academic Performance*. Despite improvements, the nation's urban school systems and the Council will encounter ever greater pressure to advance further. This pressure will come from many sources and will have multiple agendas, but ultimately the health and welfare of the nation depends on our ability to raise student achievement and close achievement gaps. The challenge to urban school systems will be to improve our outcomes as student needs remain high.

➢ *High Student Needs and Scarce Funding*. The needs of urban school students are expected to remain high over the next several years. There is no reason to think that poverty, language needs, disability status, and other challenges that students bring to school will fade over the next several years. In fact, even with a pull-back in immigration, there are likely to be substantial numbers of English learners, students living in poverty, and students with disabilities in urban schools. This dynamic may be further exacerbated by the rising gentrification and increasing polarization of the population.

➢ *Dominance of State Policy and Governance*. State authority in educational policy making has waxed and waned over the decades, but it is now resurgent and is expected to remain a prevalent force for the foreseeable future. This prevalence was codified in the latest authorization of the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, which essentially pulled the federal government back from any leading role in educational decision making. The challenge to urban schools will be to maneuver around or create common ground with a governing entity that may sometimes be hostile to urban interests. Either way, the historic bonds between the federal government and the nation's major urban areas is steadily eroding.

➢ *Rising Polarization and Partisanship*. The political landscape both in Washington and in state capitols has become debilitatingly partisan and antagonistic to public entities of every type. This partisanship is fed, in part, by rising distrust of public institutions and government *writ large*. The challenge for urban schools will involve remaining as bipartisan as possible and maintaining good relations with supporters in both political parties.

➢ *Appeal of Choice and Charters*. Choice and charter schools have been backed by a bipartisan base of proponents for some 25 years. Despite evidence of mixed efficacy, there is little indication that support will end anytime soon. While the Council supports effective charter schools—with appropriate local oversight and accountability, choice advocates and critics of public education have sought to portray them as a replacement—rather than a partner—for traditional public schools, essentially weaponizing them in an effort to dismantle the public-school system. In reality, our district public schools will remain the primary institution for serving the full range of diverse learners in urban areas for years to come. The challenge for districts, then, will be communicating the vital and enduring role public schools play in advancing educational, social, and economic opportunities.

➤ *Changing Press Imperatives*. Economic pressure on the media has resulted in substantial cuts in funding and staff for newspapers and television stations across the country. One of the consequences is a rise in sensationalized coverage of the perceived failures of government institutions in general—and public schools in particular— in order to build audience share. Journalists and news organizations are also increasingly partisan in their coverage, allowing their reporting of news to reflect underlying political agendas or allegiances. Finally, another consequence of funding and staffing cuts to traditional media outlets is the rise of alternative forms of media (including blogs and various social media platforms). This has meant an explosion in the sheer numbers and varieties of people who are now considered part of the press—a palpable challenge for communications directors and staff charged with building and maintaining relationships with the media and ensuring fair and accurate coverage of public schools.

➤ *Increasing Racial Divisions and Hostilities toward Immigrants*. Underneath many of the challenges already articulated is an emerging division in the American population defined by race, income, native language, class, national origin, and sense of victimization. These divisions are being fanned and encouraged in ways that are more open now than ever, and they show little sign of ebbing. This climate can be felt acutely in urban areas and big-city schools, which serve the highest numbers of diverse and immigrant students. The support for public education, moreover, requires a sense of shared responsibility for the nation's future. This sense of common purpose appears to be fracturing, and the lack of unity will challenge public education and the nation in ways that are hard to predict.

➤ *Other challenges*. The nation's urban public schools are also faced with challenges around the scarcity of diverse educators who are ready and willing to work in urban education, the waning of community partnerships in some locales, and pushback on high standards, standardized tests, and accountability.

Goals and Strategies of the Great City Schools

The Council pledges to build on the legacy of continuous improvement and collective action it has constructed over the years to expand opportunities for all our children. The Council proposes to remain faithful to its three main goals between 2019 and 2024, adjusting its tactical efforts from time to time to ensure that it can address any new or foreseeable challenges. The strategies and tactics to be employed to achieve the organization's goals include the following.

GOAL 1. TO EDUCATE ALL URBAN SCHOOL STUDENTS TO THE HIGHEST ACADEMIC STANDARDS.

Strategy:

Build the capacity of the membership to implement high standards and improve student achievement. This strategy will have three prongs: an emphasis on continuing *districtwide* academic improvements; a focus on turning around our chronically low-performing *schools*; and a concentration on supporting the academic growth of *student groups* that have been historically underserved, including males of color, English learners, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty.

Tactics:

1. Enhance and protect federal financial support and regulatory flexibility for urban school systems. Ensure continued targeting of federal aid for major urban school systems, protect major civil rights protections, and support local flexibility in program operations. Continue strong urban school advocacy in the nation's capital.

2. Lead and support the continuing implementation of challenging college- and career-readiness standards. Maintain emphasis on successful implementation of common core standards or similar college- and career-readiness standards, high-quality assessments, and support for high standards of academic attainment for urban students.

3. Conduct continuing research on why and how some urban school *systems* improve faster than others, draw lessons, identify high-leverage approaches, and imbed emerging findings into the Council's technical assistance, resources, conferences, and professional development. Synthesize lessons learned from the many Strategic Support Teams and technical assistance that the Council has provided over the years to help build member capacity to improve student achievement.

4. Support and improve *schools* in our cities that are identified as the lowest performing. Conduct additional research on strategies that districts are using to

improve their lowest-performing schools, draw broad lessons, provide technical assistance to districts with these schools, and track trends.

5. Identify, develop, and emphasize effective initiatives for improving the academic attainment of males of color, English learners, students living in poverty, and *students* with disabilities. Track which member districts make the most progress for each student group, identify reasons for the improvements, and build member support around lessons learned.

6. Pilot test methods of augmenting balanced literacy in urban schools and assess the effects of these strategies on reading performance. (The Council has piloted a new approach to balanced literacy in Nashville that showed promising results. The pilot is being expanded to San Antonio in the fall of 2018.)

7. Track our performance on the Trial Urban District Assessment, state assessments, and the organization's Academic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to gauge progress and identify where additional emphasis is needed. Automate the academic KPIs for improved district access and usage. Begin tracking core-course participation rates among urban students and build strategies for enhancing the numbers of students successfully completing these courses, particularly in math.

8. Pressure commercial organizations to improve the quality of their instructional products, particularly for struggling students and English learners, and enhance member use of Council tools, such as the Professional Learning Platform and Curriculum Framework, to improve academic achievement.

9. Encourage social services and wrap-around supports for urban students—but not as a substitute for higher standards of instruction. Conduct research on district use of social-emotional and social support strategies and help assess the effects on academic attainment. Retain academic achievement as the organization's primary goal.

10. Conduct research on the numbers and percentages of educators of color in member districts and begin developing strategies for increasing those numbers and percentages. Document and disseminate promising practices and lessons learned from educator pipeline programs in districts around the country.

11. Partner with colleges of education in the Great Cities in preparing the next generation of educators and diversifying the teacher force in urban schools.

12. Create a new urban school executive management training program for district instructional leaders to help improve academic leadership and programming.

13. Continue to convene regular meetings of chief academic officers, bilingual education directors, directors of teaching and learning, research directors, and special education directors to foster and enhance collaboration, mutual support, and ability to act collectively. Increase the numbers of member staff participating in these meetings and coordinate the agendas of the meetings with priorities of the executive committee and board of directors.

Metrics:

The Council will monitor and gauge progress on this goal by using the following metrics.

Outputs	Outcomes
1. Guidance and data to Congress on the need, value, and use of federal dollars in urban school systems.	Continued targeting of federal financial aid for urban school systems.
	Changes to regulatory language indicating increased flexibility for urban school districts.
2. a) A report analyzing factors contributing to urban school improvement.	Improved district performance on NAEP, state assessments, the Council's academic key performance indicators, and other indicators of academic improvement.
b) A report synthesizing lessons learned across strategic support teams in academics and instruction.	Higher graduation rates and levels of college and career readiness.
3. Technical assistance and support for low-performing schools in the ten districts participating in the Wallace Foundation turnaround initiative.	Higher student performance in struggling schools across the ten Wallace Foundation turnaround initiative districts.
4. A report identifying and analyzing the characteristics and strategies of districts that have made strong progress improving outcomes for males of color, ELLs, students living in poverty, and students with disabilities.	Improved academic outcomes for historically underserved student groups, including males of color, ELLs, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty.
5. An evaluation of the effects of the Balanced Literacy initiative in pilot districts, and dissemination of lessons learned.	Higher reading performance in Balanced Literacy pilot districts.
6. a) Annual reporting on district performance on NAEP, state assessments, and academic key performance indicators.	Improved district performance on NAEP, state assessments, the Council's academic key performance indicators, and other indicators of academic improvement.
b) An automated system of academic KPIs for member use.	Improved district performance on NAEP, state assessments, the Council's academic key

	performance indicators, and other indicators of academic improvement.
7. a) Greater number of companies and organizations producing high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials for ELLs and struggling students.	Improved academic outcomes for ELLs and struggling students.
b) An online Professional Learning Platform providing professional development for effective instruction of struggling students.	Improved academic outcomes for ELLs and struggling students.
8. Survey of district practices around social-emotional and social support strategies.	Appropriate metrics and linkages to academic achievement and completion.
9. a) A survey of the numbers and percentages of teacher of color in member districts.	Increased number of educators of color in member districts.
b) Summaries of promising teacher and leader pipeline programs across the country.	Stronger human capital strategies for identifying and developing educators in urban school systems.
10. Revitalized network of Great City Colleges of Education and boost participation.	Improved local collaboration, pipelines, and joint initiatives.
11. A new urban school executive management training program for district instructional leaders.	Stronger, more effective instructional leadership.
12. Annual meetings of chief academic officers, bilingual education directors, research directors, and special education directors.	A strong and growing network of academic leaders and staff across urban school districts.

GOAL 2. TO LEAD, GOVERN, AND MANAGE OUR URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN WAYS THAT ADVANCE THE EDUCATION OF OUR STUDENTS AND ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF OUR INSTITUTIONS.

Strategy

Build the capacity of urban school boards, superintendents, and managers to lead, govern, and manage our districts; improve the academic and operational performance of our school districts; and bolster the tenures of effective urban school leaders.

Tactics:

1. Expand the organization's work to strengthen the governing capacity of member school boards and bolster the working relations between boards and superintendents. This will involve new professional development and more technical assistance to sitting school boards and cross-district support of board teams, school board presidents, and new school board members on both effective governance and their roles in improving student achievement.

2. Provide technical assistance, ongoing mentoring, and support for member superintendents through a cadre of successful former superintendents. The Council will pursue additional financial support to provide mentors for new superintendents in the organization's membership, participate on new superintendent transition teams, and provide on-site orientation for new superintendents.

3. Revamp and expand the Council's urban school executive's management training program to include chief operating officers, chief financial officers, human resource directors, chief information officers, and key academic leaders. Coordinate this effort with the Casserly Institute.

4. Sustain and improve the Council's performance management system and its non-instructional key performance indicators. Analyze urban districts with exemplary governance and operations and use the results to track and improve school board governance, organizational and process effectiveness, cost-efficiency, and return-on-investment. Conduct additional analysis of progress on operational key performance indicators across districts and strategies that produce better results.

5. Continue to provide Strategic Support Teams (SSTs) and technical assistance to member school systems on management and operational issues. SSTs will focus on in the areas of organizational structure, staffing levels, human resources, facilities operations, maintenance and operations, budget and finance operations, information technology, safety and security, procurement, food services, and transportation.

6. Begin synthesizing the results of the Council's many SSTs over the years to articulate lessons learned and best practices. The Council has conducted some *300* SSTs over the last 20 years. The results, in combination with the key performance indicators, have significantly improved operations across the Great City Schools. The Council will begin synthesizing lessons learned and best practices to allow the membership to sustain and improve the gains made over the years.

7. Convene regular meetings of operational and finance staff to foster and enhance collaboration, mutual support, and the ability to act collectively. Coordinate agendas of job-alike meetings of the human resource directors, chief operating officers, chief financial officers, and information technology directors with priorities of the executive committee and board of directors.

8. Continue responding to ongoing information requests, providing data and best practices, sharing data, and conducting customized research for member district staff.

Metrics:

The Council will monitor and gauge progress on this goal by using the following metrics.

Outputs	Outcomes
1. a) Cross-district professional development for board teams, school board presidents, and new school board members on effective governance.	Stronger, more effective urban school board leadership and increased board and superintendent tenure.
b) On-site technical assistance to sitting school boards on effective governance and their role in improving student achievement.	Stronger, more effective urban school board leadership and increased board and superintendent tenure.
2. Support for new urban district superintendents.	Stronger, more effective district leadership and increased superintendent tenure.
3. A re-envisioned urban school executive management training program for chief operating officers, chief financial officers, human resource directors, and chief information officers.	Stronger, more effective operational leadership.
4. a) An online performance management system and annual	Increased operational efficiency on key performance indicators across member districts.

report on operational data and trends across districts.	
b) Analysis of operational practices among effective urban school districts.	Increased operational efficiency on key performance indicators across member districts.
5. Technical assistance through Strategic Support Team reviews of district financial and operational functions.	Increased operational efficiency on key performance indicators across member districts.
6. A report synthesizing lessons learned across strategic support teams in the area of finance and operations.	Increased operational efficiency on key performance indicators across member districts.
7. Annual meetings of human resource directors, chief operating officers, chief financial officers, and information technology directors.	A strong and growing network of financial and operational leaders and staff across urban school districts.
8. On demand research and information on district management practices.	Increased operational efficiency on key performance indicators across member districts.

GOAL 3. TO BOLSTER THE PUBLIC'S CONFIDENCE IN URBAN PUBLIC EDUCATION AND BUILD A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY FOR RAISING OUR CHILDREN AND ENHANCING THEIR FUTURE.

Strategy:

Improve the public's perceptions of, support for, and confidence in public education by making progress academically and operationally, letting people know about that progress, and celebrating success. Negative is always louder than positive, so in service of this goal it will be necessary to listen to our critics and address our challenges but avoid spending much time or energy trying to persuade opponents. In sum, our strategy is to make progress and build the capacity of districts to communicate it; it's hard to fight success.

Tactics:

1. Enhance the Council's outreach efforts to the public, placing more explicit emphasis on the successes and progress of urban public schools, and our members' role in strengthening our communities. Place additional priority on finding and sharing examples of district, school, and student success across a broader public audience at the national level.

2. Develop and provide member districts with additional communications tools, platforms, and strategies for improving the public's perception of urban schools at the local level. In addition, create a prototype for districts to use to better communicate with the public in crisis situations, manage negative news, and build the capacity of the membership to tell their own stories of progress and success.

3. Assist districts in developing strategies and models for more effectively engaging parents and community stakeholders. Design a prototype for how urban school leaders could reconceive and enhance their public engagement initiatives and strengthen public trust in the institution.

4. Provide additional Strategic Support Teams to member districts to help improve their capacity to communicate with the public. These teams would consist of expert communications staff from peer districts that have particularly strong programs and initiatives.

5. Conduct polling on the public's perceptions of urban public schools and where and how targeted messaging might prove effective. Seek external funds to support polling like what the Council has done in the past to gauge the public's evolving confidence in urban public education.

6. Expand the Council's social media presence to reach a wider audience when

communicating the progress of urban public education. Step up the organization's daily postings on social media (Twitter and Facebook) and the numbers of 'followers' it has on social media outlets. Expand social media presence into Instagram. Increase use of memes, videos, and photos. Expand use of the Council's #GreatCityGrads hashtag and connections to the #mybrotherskeeper hashtag.

7. Provide more comprehensive information to national and local community-based groups on the social services that our schools deliver to parents and the community. Distribute this information through national and local parent groups to help build support for their local public schools.

8. Continue conducting the biennial survey of member communications departments, their staffing levels, functions, responsibilities, funding, and the like. Moreover, expand the representation of districts at the annual meeting of the Council's public relations executives.

9. Strengthen contacts with mainstream media, alternative media, and ethnic media and their reporters to ensure that the Council is called when they are writing stories relevant to urban education.

10. Carefully vet partnerships with external organizations around critical priorities identified by the membership.

Metrics:

The Council will monitor and gauge progress on this goal by using the following metrics.

Outputs	Outcomes
1. Identification and dissemination of stories on the successes and progress of urban public schools through *The Urban Educator* and other outlets.	Enhanced public support and confidence in urban public schools.
2. A guide for district communications leaders and staff on managing crisis communications.	More effective district messaging and management of crisis situations.
3. A guide for district communications leaders and staff on community, parent, and media engagement.	More effective district communication and engagement of stakeholders, and stronger customer satisfaction.
	Stronger parent and community buy-in and support for public schools.

4. Technical assistance through Strategic Support Team reviews of district communications and community engagement functions.	More effective district communication and engagement of stakeholders.
5. A survey of the public's perceptions of urban public schools.	More effective Council and district communications and messaging to improve public perception of urban public schools.
6. Increased social media presence for the Council.	Enhanced public support and confidence in urban public schools.
7. Tools for districts for increasing parent understanding and access to the social services provided by public schools.	More effective district communication and engagement of stakeholders.
	Stronger parent and community buy-in and support for public schools.
8. Biennial survey of member communications departments, including their staffing levels, functions, responsibilities, and funding.	More effective district communication and engagement of stakeholders.
9. Information and input into mainstream and alternative media coverage of education issues and urban school trends and progress.	Enhanced public support and confidence in urban public schools.
10. Approved partnerships that enhance the Council's support and services for member districts and students.	

Officers of the Council of the Great City Schools

Larry Feldman, Chair of the Board
Miami-Dade County School Board Member

Eric Gordon, Chair-elect of the Board
Cleveland Metropolitan Schools Chief Executive Officer

Michael O'Neill, Secretary/Treasurer
Boston School Committee Member

Felton Williams, Immediate Past Chair
Long Beach School Board Member

Michael Casserly, Executive Director

STATUS UPDATE

Status of Strategic Plan
2019-2024
Council of the Great City Schools

March 2024

GOAL 1. TO EDUCATE ALL URBAN SCHOOL STUDENTS TO THE HIGHEST ACADEMIC STANDARDS.

To gauge progress on this goal, the Council will track student achievement trends and the closure of the performance gaps between students in Large City Schools and the Nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Strategy:

Build the capacity of the membership to implement high standards and improve student achievement. This strategy will have three prongs: an emphasis on continuing *districtwide* academic improvements; a focus on turning around our chronically low-performing *schools*; and a concentration on supporting the academic growth of *student groups* that have been historically underserved, including males of color, English learners, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty.

Tactics:

Proposed Tactics to Meet Goals	Summary Status of Tactics to Meet Goals
1. Enhance and protect federal financial support and regulatory flexibility for urban school systems. Ensure continued targeting of federal aid for major urban school systems, protect major civil rights protections, and support local flexibility in program operations. Continue strong urban school advocacy in the nation's capital.	• Filed successful amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court to block addition of citizenship question. April 2019 • Held three legal webinars for members on the 2020 Census. May and October 2019 • Disseminated Census material to members to encourage counts. Throughout 2019 and 2020 • Convened annual town hall meeting on ideas for spurring 2020 Census participation. October 2019 • Set up website with resources for members. May 2019 • Collaborated with other educational organizations to prevent cuts to Medicaid, Title II, 21st Century Grants, and other programs. March 2019 – February 2020 • Filed detailed regulatory comments on E-Rate (July 2019, August 2019, September 2021, April 2022, May 2022, September 2022, February 2023), supplement/supplant

	(February 2019), school meals (September 2019, March 2020, March 2022), equitable services (April 2019, July 2021, December 2022), Title IX (January 2019, June 2021, September 2022), and school discipline (July 2021). • Remained vigilant to efforts to amend the Title I formula to dilute targeted funding. Ongoing • Successfully organized national education organizations in support of higher annual education appropriations. March 2019 • Initiated letter signed by member superintendents supporting new federal spending to cover COVID-19-related costs. April 2020 • Aggressively supported and lobbied House and Senate for additional supplemental appropriations to cover COVID-related costs. March 2020 – February 2021 • Gave multiple press interviews making the case for greater federal education spending. March – April 2020 • Filed successful suit against the U.S. Department of Education on their rules to redistribute CARES Act funds to private schools. June 2020 • Recommended to the Biden transition team and the new Secretary of Education that ED should enforce state MOE requirements. February 2021 Sent a second letter on the issue. May 2021 • Successfully advocated in Congress to use the Title I formula to district American Rescue Plan funds. January – March 2021 • Published *Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively* to help districts plan for using new federal COVID-relief aid. June 2021 • Secured support from the Wallace Foundation to provide technical assistance to members on use of ARP funds. July 2021 • Successfully advocated with the Biden-Harris Administration for additional Federal COVID resources for urban school districts. June – December 2021 • Successfully advocated for expanded FEMA reimbursements for district COVID expenses. December 2021

	• Advocated for an assault weapon ban and school-based mental health supports. Spring 2022 • Successfully advocated for large annual increases in federal appropriations for Title I resulting in an additional $1.9 billion over FY 2022 and FY 2023. December 2022 • Filed an amicus brief with the US Supreme Court arguing that narrowly-tailored race-conscious admissions policies remain necessary in higher education. July 2022 • Submitted comments to the US Department of Education on recent Title IX regulations urging the removal of burdensome and inflexible requirements in a K-12 environment. September 2022 • Hosted the 2023 Annual Legislative/Policy Conference with remarks from Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona and updates from Congressional staff, Department of Education staff, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. March 2023
2. Lead and support the continuing implementation of challenging college- and career-readiness standards. Maintain emphasis on successful implementation of common core standards or similar college- and career-readiness standards, high-quality assessments, and support for high standards of academic attainment for urban students.	• Developed report outlining the features of a high-quality curriculum. June 2017 • Developed a self-assessment tool for the membership to assess their curriculum. December 2019 • Drafted new professional development framework. April 2021 • Testified before the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) on the alignment between NAEP and college- and career-readiness standards. Submitted detailed written comments. Effort was successful. • Testified again before NAGB on postponing the 2021 NAEP testing. • Maintained overall support for college- and career-readiness standards. Ongoing • Met quarterly with Student Achievement Partnership on status of standards. Quarterly • Prepared and disseminated guides for the members on "unfinished learning" and data-driven school opening in the wake of COVID-19. June 2020 • Recommended to the Biden transition team that accountability requirements on spring 2021 testing results be waived. Winter 2021 • Collected data from the membership on what commercial reading and math materials they

	were using in the elementary grades. Spring 2019 and ongoing
	• Submitted recommendation on the new NAEP reading frameworks and testified before the NAGB board.
	• Submitted comments on the Chair's draft of the NAEP reading framework.
	• Conducted a national reading summit with the Institute of Education Sciences.
	• Updating our report describing the features of a high-quality curriculum to include lessons learned about unfinished learning, the use of technology in instruction, and the inclusion of culturally responsive pedagogy and social emotional learning during instruction. Expected July 2023
	• Conducted a national mathematics summit in September 2023 with the Institute of Education Sciences. September 2023
	• Presented at various sessions during the National Mathematics Summit across 3 weeks in September 2023, with the Institute of Education Sciences. September 2023
	• Hosted monthly Instructional Spotlight webinars to build a shared understanding of a high-quality curriculum. Monthly through 2022-23 and 2023-24 school year
	• Released *Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality Curriculum (Second Edition)*. September 2023
	• Released the brief, *The Role of Race in College Admissions Applications Q&A* to provide guidance and practical tips for counselors and other school staff as they support students applying to college. October 2023
3. Conduct continuing research on why and how some urban school *systems* improve faster than others, draw lessons, identify high-leverage approaches, and imbed emerging findings into the Council's technical assistance, resources, conferences, and professional development. Synthesize lessons learned from the many Strategic Support Teams and technical assistance that the Council has provided over the years to help build member capacity to improve student achievement.	• Finished a series of site visits to Council districts to determine what they were doing to make progress on NAEP. Write up of findings are in draft form.
	• Finalized the analysis of NAEP data on TUDA districts that were overcoming the effects of poverty and other barriers. Spring 2021
	• In the process of conducting a detailed statistical analysis to determine which districts are out-performing expectations. June 2021
	• Conducted Strategic Support Teams on special education in Albuquerque, Stockton,

	Clark County, Omaha, and Norfolk. SSTs pending in Norfolk and Puerto Rico.
	• Conducted Strategic Support Teams on bilingual education in Puerto Rico and Providence.
	• Conducted Strategic Support Team on instructional programming in Philadelphia, Little Rock, and Aurora; and staffing in Atlanta.
	• Published major survey results on status of English learners in member districts. April 2019
	• Finished data collection on efforts in member cities to improve math and science results.
	• *Published Mirrors or Windows: How Well Do Urban Schools Overcome the Effects of Poverty and Other Barriers?* June 2021
	• Conducted Strategic Support Team in Atlanta and East Baton Rouge to support improved educational outcomes for students with disabilities and English language learners. Spring/Summer 2022
	• Conducted Strategic Support Teams in Boston, San Antonio, and Washoe to review Special Education services and processes. Fall 2022, Winter 2023, and Fall 2023
	• Special Education Strategic Support Team reviews have occurred in Fresno and Puerto Rico. February 2024
4. Support and improve *schools* in our cities that are identified as the lowest performing. Conduct additional research on strategies that districts are using to improve their lowest-performing schools, draw broad lessons, provide technical assistance to districts with these schools, and track trends.	• Have collected data on the numbers of CSI schools in member districts.
	• Participated in a Wallace Foundation effort focused on turnaround schools in over 40 member districts. July 2021 – June 2023
	• Are collecting preliminary data on district turnaround school efforts.
	• Have collected preliminary data on the effect of the increased state set-aside for turnarounds on urban school funding.
	• Are participating in a Wallace Foundation Equity Centered Pipeline Initiative to grow our implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices across member districts, including expanding the principal pipelines and support to principal supervisors. November 2020 and ongoing
5. Identify, develop, and emphasize effective initiatives for improving the academic attainment of males of color, English learners, students living in	• Set up internal system with NAEP and KPI data to track districts making substantial progress with males of color. Spring 2021

| poverty, and *students* with disabilities. Track which member districts make the most progress for each student group, identify reasons for the improvements, and build member support around lessons learned. | Continue to analyze data on the value-add of urban school districts. Ongoing Established a females of color task force and convene meetings at the Legislative and Annual Fall Conference. June 2019 and ongoing Collected new data on the status of males and females of color. Ongoing Drafted goals for females of color task force. Spring 2020 Conducted Strategic Support Teams to review special education programming in Omaha, Norfolk, Atlanta, East Baton Rouge, and Boston. Ongoing Conducted Strategic Support Teams to review academic programming in Aurora, Little Rock, and Philadelphia. Spring 2023 Published new data analysis specifically focusing on the needs of males and females of color in large urban districts. March 2022 and ongoing Created research consortia to analyze assessment results in districts to better understand where progress among traditionally marginalized student groups is improving fastest. Spring 2022 Released *District Considerations for Universal Dyslexia Screening: Ensuring Appropriate Implementation and Instruction for English Learners* to provide guidance and considerations for dyslexia screening for English learners November 2022 Released data dashboards to compare NAEP performance over time across participating TUDA districts. June 2023 Released *A Framework for Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction for English Learners* to share foundational literacy skills development for English learners and criteria for selecting quality instructional materials that address the needs of English learners. May 2023 Released *Between the Lines: Large City Performance on NAEP Over the Last 20 Years (2002-2022)* to understand differences in student performance between large cities and students nationally over the past 20 years, as well as the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. October 2023 |

6.	Pilot test methods of augmenting balanced literacy in urban schools and assess the effects of these strategies on reading performance.	• Launched initiative in San Antonio to test theory about how to produce better literacy results in the early grades with balanced literacy approaches. • Collaborated with Student Achievement Partners to publish the report *Shifting Early Literacy Practices: The Story of an Early Reading Pilot in San Antonio Independent School District* May 2021
7.	Track our performance on the Trial Urban District Assessment, state assessments, and the organization's Academic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to gauge progress and identify where additional emphasis is needed. Automate the academic KPIs for improved district access and usage. Begin tracking core-course participation rates among urban students and build strategies for enhancing the numbers of students successfully completing these courses, particularly in math.	• Have augmented KPIs to collect additional data on special education and staff demographics. Fall 2021 • Have automated the Academic KPIs and launched the newest round of KPI data collection for 2021. October 2022 • Have augmented KPIs to collect additional data on English language learners March 2020 • Have augmented the KPI data to collect additional data on the diversity of teachers and administrators March 2022 • Have not yet expanded into course-participation rates beyond AP course-taking. • Participated in discussions and planning with the National Assessment Governing Board and National Center for Education Statistics in preparation for the release of the 2022 TUDA results in fall 2022. Summer and Fall 2022 • Participated in the release of the 2022 TUDA results in October 2022, providing support to the participating districts with their releases and speaking at the national release event with NCES and NAGB. October 2022 • Renewed contract with NAGB to continue to convene a TUDA Task Force with members from district leadership, NAGB staff, and NCES staff and contractors. September 2023
8.	Pressure commercial organizations to improve the quality of their instructional products, particularly for struggling students and English learners, and enhance member use of Council tools, such as the Professional Learning Platform and Curriculum Framework, to improve academic achievement.	• Launched the ELL math materials joint procurement initiative. May 2019 • Expanded number of videos in the Professional Learning Platform and increased participation rates. Ongoing • Have begun preliminary tracking of district results using the PLP. Results in Guilford County are particularly encouraging. Ongoing • Have collected commercial instructional product information from members for grades K-5. Spring 2019 • Secured additional foundation support to continue work to improve curriculum and materials. September 2021

	• Started a virtual webinar series to connect publishers to districts directly to better articulate the instructional materials needs of students and teachers. May 2019 and ongoing • Hosted an in-person convening with district staff to review instructional materials for English learners. July 2023
9. Encourage social services and wrap-around supports for urban students—but not as a substitute for higher standards of instruction. Conduct research on district use of social-emotional and social support strategies and help assess the effects on academic attainment. Retain academic achievement as the organization's primary goal.	• Published a guide for the membership on best practices in mental health and social-emotional learning in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Spring 2020 • Published three Spotlight reports on various aspects of social/emotional and mental health needs of students and staff as a result of COVID-19. May 2021
10. Conduct research on the numbers and percentages of educators of color in member districts and begin developing strategies for increasing those numbers and percentages. Document and disseminate promising practices and lessons learned from educator pipeline programs in districts around the country.	• Have collected preliminary data from the membership on demographics of superintendents, principal supervisors, principals, assistant principals, and teachers. • Have completed a final draft of the Council's new professional development framework. April 2021
11. Partner with colleges of education in the Great Cities in preparing the next generation of educators and diversifying the teacher force in urban schools.	• Added a representative from a Historically Black College or University to the Executive Committee as a non-voting member. Fall 2022 • Outreach to institutions serving a large number of Hispanic students to encourage membership. January 2023 and ongoing
12. Create a new urban school executive management training program for district instructional leaders to help improve academic leadership and programming.	• Sketched out the preliminary components of the Casserly Institute for district instructional leaders. Fall 2022 • Finalizing funding to create training courses for staff at various levels of the organization to expand the Casserly Institute. Fall 2022 • Hired Michael Hinojosa as Superintendent-in-Residence to lead our work with district superintendents across the country. July 2022 • Held a Superintendent convening to gather feedback from current Great City superintendents on how best to support incoming, current, and experienced district leaders and their teams. June 2022 • Conducting inaugural cohort of Aspiring Superintendents with in-person meetings from February to October 2023. Group graduated in October 2023. February, March, May, June, July, September, and October 2023

	• Planning for second cohort of the Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute for Superintendents, to begin in Feburary 2024. Ongoing • Announced members of the second cohort of the Michael Casserly Institute at the Annual Fall Conference. October 2023
13. Continue to convene regular meetings of chief academic officers, bilingual education directors, directors of teaching and learning, research directors, and special education directors to foster and enhance collaboration, mutual support, and ability to act collectively. Increase the numbers of member staff participating in these meetings and coordinate the agendas of the meetings with priorities of the executive committee and board of directors.	• Have continued regular meetings of chief academic officers, chiefs of schools, bilingual education directors, directors of teaching and learning, and research directors. Ongoing • Have not yet explicitly tied agendas for meetings to executive committee priorities. • Held calls every week with job-alike groups since mid-March 2020 to coordinate COVID-19 responses and strategy. Held nearly 3,000 Zoom calls between mid-March 2020 and Decemer 2023. Ongoing • Significantly expanded our support calls to include curriculum leads in mathematics, science, English language arts/reading, and social studies. Ongoing • Expanded calls to include mental health/SEL and equity leaders across districts. Ongoing • Facilitated joint monthly instructional spotlights with CAOs, content directors, equity leaders, SEL leaders, and chiefs of schools to focus on the key features of a high-quality curriculum. Ongoing

*To gauge progress on this goal, the Council will monitor the tenure of superintendents in urban
member school districts.*

Strategy

Build the capacity of urban school boards, superintendents, and managers to lead, govern, and
manage our districts; improve the academic and operational performance of our school districts;
and bolster the tenures of effective urban school leaders.

Tactics:

Proposed Tactics to Meet Goals	Summary Status of Tactics to Meet Goals
1. Expand the organization's work to strengthen the governing capacity of member school boards and bolster the working relations between boards and superintendents. This will involve new professional development and more technical assistance to sitting school boards and cross-district support of board teams, school board presidents, and new school board members on both effective governance and their roles in improving student achievement.	• Launched the Harvard-Great City Schools Accelerating Board Capacity Institute. First sold-out cohort met on July 28-31, 2019. Second cohort for 2020 was postponed because of the pandemic but rescheduled for 2021. The 2022 session was held in July 2022 with 65 representatives from 12 member districts. The 2023 session was held July 16-19, 2023, with over 60 representatives from 12 member districts. The 2024 session will be held July 21-24 and recruitment is ongoing. Ongoing • Sketched out new school board audit service for the membership. Fall 2021 • Provided on-site technical assistance to school boards in some 30 cities since January 1, 2019. Winter 2019 and ongoing • Hired a new Director of Governance. • Hired a Governance Coach. Winter 2023 • Have expanded the organizations governance work and technical assistance to member boards of education. Ongoing • Currently supporting cohorts of school boards in 18 member districts. Ongoing • Currently supporting member school boards in 19 districts with full governance support. Ongoing • Currently reviewing plans to support member school boards in 6 districts. Ongoing • Provided technical assistance, professional development, and coaching to 27 member

		district school boards during the 2023-24 program year. Ongoing
		• Developed a nine-month professional development program for new school board members, school board chairs, school board secretaries, and school board coaches. Ongoing
2. Provide technical assistance, ongoing mentoring, and support for member superintendents through a cadre of successful former superintendents. The Council will pursue additional financial support to provide mentors for new superintendents in the organization's membership, participate on new superintendent transition teams, and provide on-site orientation for new superintendents.		• Conducting bi-weekly support calls for all superintendents with targeted support for new and interim superintendents. Ongoing • Incorporating within the Casserly Institute support for superintendents from a cadre of leadership coaches. Began Summer 2022 and ongoing • Providing support to several Council superintendents and cabinet members, through cadre of coaches. Ongoing • Hosting a superintendent-only meeting to provide additional technical assistance and support to new and experienced Council superintendents. October 2023
3. Revamp and expand the Council's urban school executive's management training program to include chief operating officers, chief financial officers, human resource directors, chief information officers, and key academic leaders. Coordinate this effort with the Casserly Institute.		• Launched a revamped urban school executive management program under the Casserly Institute banner in Spring 2019 with IT directors and CFOs. Have not yet included COOs and HR directors. (Program was delayed during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 program years because of the global pandemic.) • Launched Casserly Institute to develop and support a cohort of Superintendent candidates with in-person sessions held in February, March, May, June, July, September, and graduation in October 2023. Winter/Spring/Fall 2023 • The second cohort of the Casserly Institute was announced in October 2023, and met in February, with additional meetings scheduled for March, April, May, June, July, September, and October 2024. Winter/Spring/Summer/ Fall 2024
4. Sustain and improve the Council's performance management system and its non-instructional key performance indicators. Analyze urban districts with exemplary governance and operations and use the results to track and improve school board governance, organizational and process effectiveness, cost-efficiency, and return-on-investment.		• Conducted the 2019 data collection on the Council's non-instructional KPIs and released the results at the annual fall conference in Louisville in 2019 and the virtual fall conference in 2020. Have not conducted any additional analysis on results. October 2019 and October 2020

Conduct additional analysis of progress on operational key performance indicators across districts and strategies that produce better results.	• Continued collection and analysis of operational KPI data through the fall of 2023. Fall 2023 • Published Operations and Academic KPI reports in October 2021. October 2021 • Initiating post-pandemic revision of the operations key performance indicators to reflect new expectations for school district divisions. Spring 2021 • Captured feedback from COOs and their teams on potential revisions to the KPIs, to be enacted for the 2023-24 school year. November 2022 • Published *Managing for Results in America's Great City Schools, 2023, Results from Fiscal Year 2021-2022* with operations KPI data and *Academic Key Performance Indicators, 2023 Report* with the academic KPI data from the 2021-22 school year. October 2023
5. Continue to provide Strategic Support Teams (SSTs) and technical assistance to member school systems on management and operational issues. SSTs will focus on in the areas of organizational structure, staffing levels, human resources, facilities operations, maintenance and operations, budget and finance operations, information technology, safety and security, procurement, food services, and transportation.	• Have conducted numerous SSTs since January 1, 2019, including facilities (Buffalo, Broward County, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, and Rochester), IT (El Paso, Guilford County, Aurora, Kansas City, Broward County, Columbus, Charlotte, and Cleveland), business operations (Clark County, Rochester, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg), transportation (Boston, Seattle, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and Rochester), human resources (Milwaukee, Birmingham, Columbus, Kansas City, St. Louis, Rochester, Sacramento, Cincinnati, and Anchorage), organization and finance (Hawaii, San Antonio, Hillsborough County, Houston, Philadelphia, Duval, and Rochester), safety (Cleveland, Boston, and Houston) and others. Ongoing • Strategic support team reviews are scheduled in Birmingham (Finance), and Boston (HR). Spring 2024 • Expanded the Council's support of information technology to begin sharing best practices in cyber security and interoperability to build on the lessons learned about the important role IT plays across our systems. Ongoing • Published the *K-12 Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) Readiness Checklist*, in partnership with the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) to provide district leaders with a comprehensive list of factors to

	consider before implementing Gen AI solutions in their districts. October 2023
6. Begin synthesizing the results of the Council's many SSTs over the years to articulate lessons learned and best practices. The Council has conducted some *350* SSTs over the last 20 years. The results, in combination with the key performance indicators, have significantly improved operations across the Great City Schools. The Council will begin synthesizing lessons learned and best practices to allow the membership to sustain and improve the gains made over the years.	• Have begun preliminary drafting of this synthesis. Ongoing • Published guides for the membership on school reopening in the wake of COVID-19 in the areas of transportation, facilities, security, IT, and budget. June and December 2020
7. Convene regular meetings of operational and finance staff to foster and enhance collaboration, mutual support, and the ability to act collectively. Coordinate agendas of job-alike meetings of the human resource directors, chief operating officers, chief financial officers, and information technology directors with priorities of the executive committee and board of directors.	• Have continued regular meetings of HR directors, COOs, CFOs, CIOs, Risk Mangers, Internal Auditors, and directors of Transportation, Facilities, Food Services/Nutrition, and Procurement. Ongoing • Have not yet explicitly tied agendas for meetings to executive committee priorities. Ongoing • Continue to hold regular Zoom calls with CFOs, COOs, and others to strategize on school opening in the wake of COVID-19. Ongoing • Held in-person CIO and CFO/HR Directors meetings in February and March, respectively, after a two-year hiatus due to the global pandemic. Spring 2022 • Held COO and Directors of Support Services meeting in New Orleans. November 2022 • Held in-person CFO/CHRO meeting in February and CIO meeting in June. February and June 2023 • Held meeting of CFOs, Purchasing, Internal Auditors, Risk Managers, and mini-meeting of COOs in Phoenix. November 2023 • Held meeting of CHROs in Louisville. February 2024 • Planning for the April meeting of COOs and Directors of Transportation, Facilities, Food Services, and Safety and Security in Phoenix. Ongoing • Planning for the June meeting of the CIOs in Portland. Ongoing
8. Continue responding to ongoing information requests, providing data and	• Have continued responding to ongoing information requests. Ongoing

best practices, sharing data, and conducting customized research for member district staff.	- Have conducted a survey of membership on interoperability challenges. - Have conducted a survey of the membership on bonding policies and issues in the membership. - Have conducted over 95 surveys of membership about a variety of operational, facilities, and safety requests from other member districts, sharing findings with the membership. Ongoing - Have recruited 21 member districts to participate in the Council's interoperability project. - Have created research consortia for districts using the same benchmark assessments – NWEA's MAP, Curriculum Associates' iReady, and Renaissance Learnings' Star assessments. Spring 2022 - Launched *CGCS Communities*, an online collaboration space for member district staff to share resources and engage in discussions around role-alike topics. May 2023 - Published *Building Safer Schools and Communities: Findings and Recommendations from the Joint Task Force on School Safety and Justice*, in partnership with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) to share approaches to reducing incidents of violence in schools and communities and reframe relationships and practices related to schools, police, and communities. November 2023

GOAL 3. TO BOLSTER THE PUBLIC'S CONFIDENCE IN URBAN PUBLIC EDUCATION AND BUILD A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY FOR RAISING OUR CHILDREN AND ENHANCING THEIR FUTURE.

To gauge progress on this goal, the Council will monitor the recruitment and retention of teachers and leaders in large city school districts, with a particular focus on teachers and leaders from traditionally underrepresented populations.

Strategy:

Improve the public's perceptions of, support for, and confidence in public education by making progress academically and operationally, letting people know about that progress, and celebrating success. Negative is always louder than positive, so it will be necessary to listen to our critics and address our challenges but avoid spending much time or energy trying to persuade opponents. In sum, our strategy is to make progress and build the capacity of districts to communicate it; it's hard to fight success.

Tactics:

Proposed Tactics to Meet Goals	Summary Status of Tactics to Meet Goals
1. Enhance the Council's outreach efforts to the public, placing more explicit emphasis on the successes and progress of urban public schools, and our members' role in strengthening our communities. Place additional priority on finding and sharing examples of district, school, and student success across a broader public audience at the national level.	• Have prioritized success stories in both communications and research functions. Ongoing • Had members share methods at the PRE conference on how they spread good news and progress with their communities. July 2022 and July 2023 • Beginning efforts to better disseminate Council products. Ongoing • Commissioned an external audit of Council social media practices. • Received grant funding and in-kind services to develop a new Council website to provide greater access to products and resources. • Launched a redesigned Council website (*https://www.cgcs.org/*) with streamlined and updated formatting and information. June 2023 • Highlighted district successes as a part of the National Coalition to Advance Student Success, in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers and Chiefs for Change. Ongoing • Contracted with the Hatcher Group to lead a 12-month digital-focused marketing campaign around our district investments in Federal ARP resources. Spring 2022

	• Sharing member district ARP investment successes through communications campaigns across agencies in Washington, DC and through the nation media. Ongoing
2. Develop and provide member districts with additional communications tools, platforms, and strategies for improving the public's perception of urban schools at the local level. In addition, create a prototype for districts to use to better communicate with the public in crisis situations, manage negative news, and build the capacity of the membership to tell their own stories of progress and success.	• Digitized *Urban Educator* and described dozens of success stories in the beginning-of-the-year newsletter. Ongoing • Developed a communications guide for TUDA districts with advice on how to approach and frame messaging of the 2022 results. October 2022 • Published *Crisis Communication: Before, During, and After an Active Shooter Event; A Guidebook for Public Relations Executives in the Council of the Great City Schools* to help district communication leaders plan for and be ready to manage communications during crises. December 2023
3. Assist districts in developing strategies and models for more effectively engaging parents and community stakeholders. Design a prototype for how urban school leaders could reconceive and enhance their public engagement initiatives and strengthen public trust in the institution.	• Wrote a report on communicating with parents, the public, and stakeholders on COVID-19 and district strategies. September 2020
4. Provide additional Strategic Support Teams to member districts to help improve their capacity to communicate with the public. These teams would consist of expert communications staff from peer districts that have particularly strong programs and initiatives.	• No action yet on this tactic.
5. Conduct polling on the public's perceptions of urban public schools and where and how targeted messaging might prove effective. Seek external funds to support polling like what the Council has done in the past to gauge the public's evolving confidence in urban public education.	• No action yet on this tactic.
6. Expand the Council's social media presence to reach a wider audience when communicating the progress of urban public education. Step up the organization's daily postings on social media (Twitter and Facebook) and the numbers of 'followers' it has on social	• Have dedicated one staff person in the office to post social media messages every day. Have seen uptick in followers, although the list is still modest in size. Ongoing • Have conducted a third-party audit of Council social media practices with recommendations for next steps.

media outlets. Expand social media presence into Instagram. Increase use of memes, videos, and photos. Expand use of the Council's #GreatCityGrads hashtag and connections to the #mybrotherskeeper hashtag.	• Hosting a graduate student as a social media intern to boost the Council's presence and posting on social channels. Fall 2023 and Winter 2024
7. Provide more comprehensive information to national and local community-based groups on the social services that our schools deliver to parents and the community. Distribute this information through national and local parent groups to help build support for their local public schools.	• Sharing examples and district highlights with Advisory Group members of the National Coalition to Advance Student Success. Ongoing • Planning for a district-led presentation from Indianapolis Public Schools and St. Paul Public Schools on *Investment to Impact: Leveraging ESSER and Keeping What Works* at the Coalition to Advance Student Success, in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Offices, Chiefs for Change. March 2024
8. Continue conducting the biennial survey of member communications departments, their staffing levels, functions, responsibilities, funding, and the like. Moreover, expand the representation of districts at the annual meeting of the Council's public relations executives.	• Finalized the 12th Biennial Survey of member communications offices and released the results at the 2019 Public Relations Executive's meeting. July 2019 • Saw record attendance at the Council's most recent in-person PRE conference. July 2022 • Host the 2023 Public Relations Executive's (PRE) meeting in St. Louis. July 2023 • Release the findings of the 13th Biennial Survey of member communications offices at the 2023 PRE meeting. July 2023 • Have launched a survey of Council-member communications operations. • Planning for the July 2024 PRE meeting in Seattle. Ongoing
9. Strengthen contacts with mainstream media, alternative media, and ethnic media and their reporters to ensure that the Council is called when they are writing stories relevant to urban education.	• Reviewing and updating mailing lists of mainstream and alternative media. Ongoing • Conducting brown bag sessions with national media outlets to share background on the needs and concerns of urban school districts. Ongoing
10. Carefully vet partnerships with external organizations around critical priorities identified by the membership.	• This continues to be done on an ongoing basis, particularly with input from the executive committee. Ongoing • Held a Zoom call with member PRE's and the Department of Education communications and marketing staff. • Held conference calls with communications staff from the US Department of Education. Ongoing • Hold regular conference calls and meetings with staff from the US Department of

	Education, the White House, and Congress. Ongoing
	• Hired a new Director of Strategy and Partnerships to support growing the Council's partnerships with at the national level with organizations that support schools locally. November 2021
	• Hired a new Partnerships Specialist to assist with partnerships and provide support to key Council staff members. December 2022
	• Initiated a new partnership with the International Association of Chiefs of Police to develop guidelines for interactions between school districts, local police departments, and the community. January 2022
	• Began initial outreach to the Housing and Urban Development Department to see how we can support Public Housing Authorities serving Great City School students. Winter 2022 and ongoing
	• Had initial discussions with Kaplan about their request to provide SAT tutoring and college counseling services to Council members at no charge. November 2022 and ongoing
	• Beginning pilot program with Baltimore City and Kaplan to bring SAT prep materials to students. Ongoing
	• Having initial discussions with College Board about how to support member districts. Summer and Fall 2023

MEMBERSHIP OVERVIEW MATERIALS

SUPPORTING AMERICA'S GREAT CITY SCHOOLS:

A Summary of Member Benefits, Services, and Products

Council *of the* **Great City Schools**

THE NATION'S VOICE FOR URBAN EDUCATION

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

The Council of the Great City Schools brings together the nation's largest urban public school systems in a coalition dedicated to the improvement of education for children in the inner cities. The Council and its member school districts work to help our schoolchildren meet the highest standards and become successful and productive members of society.

The Council keeps the nation's lawmakers, the media, and the public informed about the progress and problems in big-city schools. The organization does this through legislation, communications, research, and technical assistance.

The organization also helps to build capacity in urban education with programs to boost academic performance and narrow achievement gaps; improve professional development; and strengthen leadership, governance, and management.

The Council of the Great City Schools accomplishes its mission by connecting urban school district personnel from coast to coast who work under similar conditions. 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 in 1956, geographic, ethnic, language, and cultural diversity has typified the Council's membership. That diversity propels the coalition forward to see that all citizens receive an education that will equip them with the skills and knowledge to compete successfully in the world marketplace and to enhance the quality of their lives in a society changing with phenomenal speed. The wellspring of accomplishments and innovations rising from our inner cities testifies to the resounding benefits of investment in the nation's urban centers and in their public schools.

OUR VISION

Urban public schools exist to teach students to the highest standards of educational excellence. As the primary American institution responsible for weaving the strands of our society into a cohesive fabric, we—the leaders of America's Great City Schools—see a future where the nation cares for all children, expects their best, appreciates their diversity, invests in their futures, and welcomes their participation in the American dream.

The Great City Schools are places where this vision becomes tangible and those ideals are put to the test. We pledge to commit ourselves to the work of advancing empathy, equity, justice, and tolerance, and we vow to do everything we can to vigorously resist the forces of ignorance, fear, and prejudice, as we teach and guide our students. We will keep our commitments, and as we do and as society supports our endeavors, cities will become the centers of a strong and equitable nation, with urban public schools successfully teaching our children and building our communities.

OUR MISSION

It is the special mission of America's urban public schools to educate the nation's most diverse student body to the highest academic standards and prepare them to contribute to our democracy and the global community.

OUR GOALS

- To educate all urban school students to the highest academic standards.

- To lead, govern and manage our urban public schools in ways that advance the education of our children and inspire the public's confidence.

- To build a confident, committed and supportive urban community for raising the achievement of urban public schoolchildren

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

School districts located in cities with populations over 250,000 and student enrollments over 35,000 are eligible for membership in the Council of the Great City Schools. Membership is also open to those districts serving a state's largest city, depending on its urban characteristics.

The **Board of Directors** 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.

The board meets twice a year to determine and adopt policies. It elects a 24-member executive committee, which exercises governing authority when the board is not in session.

The Board of Directors has established five special task forces to address major issues facing the membership. These include **English Language Learners and Bilingual Education Task Force** to focus on issues around the education of English language learners.

A **Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development** was established to eliminate gaps in the academic achievement of traditionally marginalized communities (e.g., race/ethnicity, disability status, English learner status). A **Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance** addresses concerns about issues surrounding urban school leadership and management. **Black and Latino Young Men and Boys Task Force** works to implement the pledge the membership took to improve conditions and outcomes for these students. And the organization has recently initiated a **Black and Latina Young Women and Girls Task Force** to strengthen its commitment to equity.

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.

The Executive Committee is also made up of representatives from **Historically Black Colleges and Universities** and deans from the **Great City Colleges of Education**.

WHAT MEMBERS GET FOR THEIR DUES

Access to the Council's network of urban public school leaders and staff to gain insights, get answers to questions, and share successes. This includes access to a member-only website with resources.

Access to the Council's team of experts in education legislation, policy, and regulations to ensure member districts have the updated information on federal policy developments and can address special advocacy needs.

Access to coaching and technical assistance to school boards to support their governance role in the district.

Access to leadership support for Superintendents and their executive teams to improve leadership and management.

Access to Council award programs and scholarships honoring special achievements in urban education, presented at conferences and meetings throughout the year.

Access to timely updates and summaries on key policies issued or under consideration by the U.S. Congress, the White House, and federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Assessment Governing Board, Centers for Disease Control, Department of Homeland Security, Federal Communications Commission, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and others.

Use of the Council's strategic support teams to review instructional programs, special education, bilingual education, budget and finance operations, business services, and other functions of member district school systems to ensure they are operating effectively and efficiently.

Access to the role-alike conferences and Zoom meetings held throughout the year with Great City Schools' superintendents, school board representatives and chairs, chief academic officers, chief financial officers, chief operating officers, bilingual education directors, special education directors, general counsels, transportation directors, food service directors, facilities directors, chief information officers, security directors, chiefs of schools, chiefs of curriculum for core content areas, equity officers, social and emotional learning directors, and others.

Access to the Council's digital monthly newsletter, *Urban Educator*, reporting the latest developments in urban schools across the country and providing an outlet for member districts to showcase their successes and progress. Click here to subscribe to *Urban Educator*.

Representing urban schools to ensure a strong voice for urban public education on national task forces, commissions, advisory groups, and meetings of other K-12 organizations.

Access to the Council's unique performance management system and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), allowing districts to compare operations and academic outcomes on over 500 measures with peer districts.

Access to the Council's online jobs board, allowing members to advertise their vacant administrative positions.

Ability to participate in the Council's research projects and have access to all the organization's analyses, special reports, case studies, research briefs, surveys, and data.

Technical assistance and guidance for member districts participating in the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment.

Receipt of a district-specific annual report that itemizes services that the Council provides to the member district and the return-on-investment districts get for their dues.

Voting rights for the superintendent and one school board representative on the Council's Board of Directors, which meets twice each year during our Legislative Conference in the spring and our Annual Fall Conference.

Complimentary registration for the superintendent and school board representative to the Council's Annual Legislative Meeting and Fall Conference.

Guidance and technical assistance to solve operational problems with federal grant programs.

The Wisdom of Nahíd

End-of-Grade Reading

Name
Teacher
School
City
Date of Birth

Practice One
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DETAILED OVERVIEW OF COUNCIL SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

COUNCIL SERVICES

We help member districts with **Legislative and Advocacy Services by:**

- Providing legislative advocacy for urban schools before all branches of the federal government, bringing millions of dollars in extra federal support to urban school districts each year.

- Providing ongoing briefings on the status of federal funding, updates to federal regulations and waivers, and other key legislative policies and actions at the federal level impacting member districts.

- Hosting exclusive legal webinars with external counsel, Husch Blackwell, on issues affecting urban school districts, including navigating the conversations on race and First Amendment considerations in the age of social media.

- Submitting comments to federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education, to advocate for maximum funding and flexibility for member districts.

- Intervening in federal court cases on behalf of member school districts, including submitting amicus briefs to the U.S. Supreme Court when appropriate.

- Creating partnerships, as needed, with other advocacy groups to promote issues facing urban education.

We help member districts with **Research Services by:**

- Conducting statistical analyses, research, and surveys on the conditions, successes, and challenges of urban schools, to inform policy and decision-making in member districts. Recent research topics include teacher recruitment and retention; teacher workforce diversity; and the impact of federal relief funds in member districts.

- Serving as a clearinghouse for research, data, and information on issues concerning urban schools, including publishing reports on why some urban school districts see faster improvements than others.

- Advancing the effective use of assessment and performance data in urban schools.

- Supporting districts participating in TUDA by conducting analyses of NAEP data to identify effective strategies that led to improvements on NAEP scores and convening meetings of the TUDA Task Force to advise the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

- Providing technical assistance to member districts on assessment systems, student information systems, research and evaluation practices, data visualizations and dashboards, and the strategic use of data

in districts. This includes convening regular meetings with member districts using three of the leading formative assessments.

- Providing research and guidance for the Council's Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys and the Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls.

- Analyzing results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Academic Key Performance Indicators (KPI) data, and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) data to assess disproportionality and academic progress among young men and women of color across Council member districts.

📢 We help member districts with Communication Services by:

- Developing major public relations initiatives that focus attention on urban education priorities, rally public support, and articulate the needs and direction of urban schools. This includes issuing press releases on Council activities as well as statements on critical current events impacting the lives of urban students.

- Highlighting member district achievements through Council publications, websites, and social media channels.
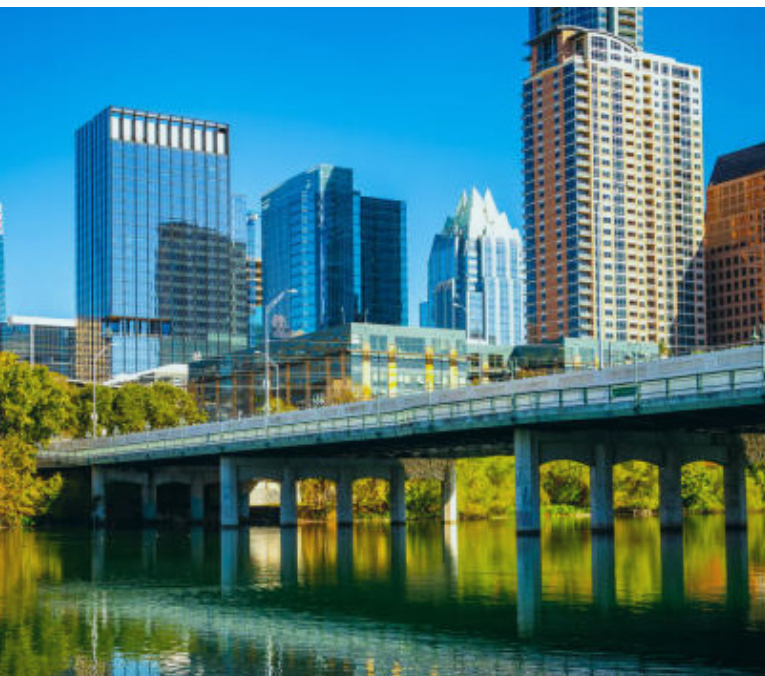
- Writing articles and opinion pieces in nationally circulated newspapers and magazines, as well as generating broadcasts and commentary on television, radio, and social media in support of urban schools.

- Creating and disseminating Public Service Announcements to highlight the progress of urban schools and to inform the public on issues critical to member districts.

- Offering technical assistance to member school districts on working effectively with the press and establishing successful communications operations.

- Hosting an annual National Town Hall Meeting on urban issues of the day, as part of the Annual Fall Conference.

- Providing a social media toolkit for member districts to share messages about district successes.

We help member districts with Achievement and Professional Development Services by:

- Assessing the quality of the instructional program of our member districts with a focus on improving Tier 1 instruction by providing strategic support and professional development.

- Reviewing special education programs to ensure equitable access to high

quality instruction in the least restrictive environment.

- Convening meetings with district representatives and educational publishers to build a shared understanding of district needs and the gaps in current resources.

- Collaborating with district staff and external partners to design and implement tools to support curriculum and instruction in member districts.

- Providing support to districts on curriculum initiatives using the Council's resource *Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum* and its accompanying curriculum quality assessment rubric.

- Connecting the work of the Council to the work done by leading mathematics, science, history/social science, and literacy organizations to keep the membership informed and to help shape the work of those organizations in addressing urban education.

- Developing key academic performance indicators to allow districts to benchmark instructional progress and to promote effective instructional investments.

- Supporting member districts with scaling the use of diverse and complex texts and tasks during core instruction within and outside the classroom.

💬 **We help member districts with Bilingual, Immigrant, and Refugee Education Services by:**

- Providing support, materials, analyses, and tools to highlight and address the academic needs of English learners (Els).

- Providing updates and summaries of various policies regarding grading and promotion for English learners and instruction in foundational skills.

- Developing a series of hybrid courses through our Professional Learning Platform (PLP) to support professional development and elevate instruction for Els in ELA/ELD, mathematics, and writing.

- Providing annual opportunities for district El staff to meet with educational publishers to review and provide feedback on instructional materials for Els.

- Providing technical assistance to Council member districts on how to support newcomer students, including refugee students and students with interrupted formal education.

- Meeting with officials from federal agencies to communicate member district needs related to serving Els, including welcoming refugees into member districts and communities.

We help member districts with Leadership, Governance, and Management Services by:

- Providing technical assistance and professional development to improve the management and operations of member districts.

- Hosting the annual Harvard/CGCS Accelerating Board Capacity Institute, providing professional development and leadership and governance training to delegations of member district leaders and school boards.

- Providing training, coaching, and guidance to district leaders and school board members as a part of the Dr. Michael Casserly Urban School Executive Leadership Institute.

- Providing School Board training, support, and guidance to cohorts of school board members, board chairs, board support staff, and board coaches.

- Providing coaching and other supports for superintendents in member districts, under the direction of the Council's Superintendent-in-Residence.

- Providing specialized professional development to urban school executives to build the pipeline of rising district administrators.

We provide Strategic Support Teams for districts.

The Council provides in-depth district assessments, technical assistance, and peer reviews to its members. For each Strategic Support Team, the Council assembles a group of experts, including Council staff and current or retired member district staff. The Teams conduct on-site and virtual interviews with key district staff and may also visit schools and classrooms. At the end of the review, the district receives a comprehensive report with findings and recommendations. A sample of past reports is available on the Council's website. Reviews are conducted in the following areas:

- Curriculum and Instruction (e.g., reading and math programming; instructional strategy and organization; professional development; low performing schools; accountability systems; special education; bilingual education; and other areas as requested);

- Management and Operations (e.g., organizational structure; staffing levels and personnel operations; procurement; finance and budget operations; management information systems; technology; interoperability; facilities management; governance; transportation; food services; and other areas as requested);

- Research and Assessment (e.g., testing; research department structure; data

collection and use; program evaluation; and other areas as requested);

- Communications (e.g., department structure; marketing; internal communications; community outreach; publications; and media relations); and

- Federal Programs (e.g., Titles I, II, III, IV; afterschool programs; use of federal funds; and program alignment).

We host member districts at Convenings and Conferences.

The Council convenes two major conferences each year: the spring Legislative and Policy Conference and the Annual Fall Conference of the Great City Schools. For these two meetings, all conference registration fees are waived for Council member superintendents and the school board representative to the Council.

Spring Legislative and Policy Conference: a forum held in Washington, D.C., each March for the membership to discuss recent developments in federal legislation and funding and to advocate the policy positions of urban public schools.

Annual Fall Conference: a general forum held each fall in one of the member cities for the entire membership to discuss special issues in urban education and to share information and best practices across districts to improve outcomes for urban students.

Additionally, the Council hosts a series of job-alike meetings. These meetings are held in Council member cities and member district staff are invited to learn from outside experts and share best practices among their colleagues.

- Bilingual, Immigrant, Refugee Education Directors
- Chief Financial Officers
- Chief Human Resources/Talent Development Directors
- Chief Information Officers
- Chief Operating Officers
- Curriculum, Research, and Instructional Leaders
- Public Relations Executives

COUNCIL PRODUCTS

Throughout the year, the Council publishes reports and periodicals to inform the membership, highlight best practices, and share research findings. Additionally, press releases are issued to call attention to major releases or provide Council input on major issues. Examples of recent publications are listed below.

Research
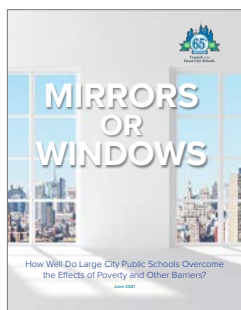
Mirrors or Windows: How Well Do Large City Public Schools Overcome the Effects of Poverty and Other Barriers? Over the last twenty years of district-level assessments on the Nation's Report Card, the participating urban school districts have narrowed the achievement gap in mathematics and reading by about 50 percent. The *Mirrors or Windows* study found that urban students are making significant progress academically, despite having to overcome the effects of poverty. *June 2021*
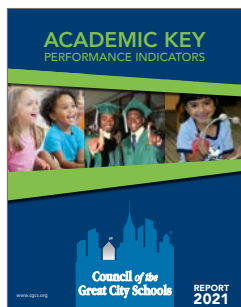
Academic Key Performance Indicators, 2021 Report. The 2021 report presents an updated set of data through school year 2019-20. This report presents several different ways that member districts can analyze the data themselves by disaggregating results, showing trends, and combining variables. This year, a companion online dashboard was released to members that added the ability to conduct several comparisons and analysis beyond what is presented in the printed report. *October 2021*
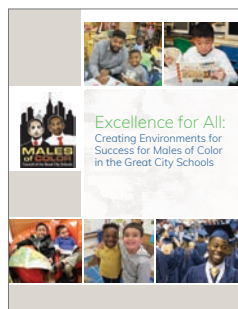
Excellence for All: Creating Environments for Success for Males of Color in the Great City Schools. This report contributes to the ongoing dialogue of raising our expectations for males of color and provides a resource for school districts seeking to build or recalibrate their initiatives to improve the academic outcomes of young men and boys of color. Throughout the report there are exemplars of initiatives from across the nation's big cities as well as promising practices in various areas. *October 2017*

Call for Change: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcome of Black Males in Urban Schools. The purpose of this study is to bring much-needed attention to the comprehensive challenges of Black males in the United States. *October 2010*

[Today's Promise, Tomorrow's Future: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Hispanics in Urban Schools](#).
The study focuses on the lives of Hispanic students in big-city schools from early childhood to adulthood and analyzes distinctions between Hispanic and Latino English language learners. *October 2011*

Additionally, the Research Department has presentations on the following topics, available upon request:

- Black and Latina Young Women and Girls Task Force. As part of this Task Force, the Council provides annual reports on trends in student performance and engagement among Black and Latina young women and girls in our districts. *September 2021*

- The State of Unfinished Learning and Student Recovery. These presentations provide updates to member districts on the academic recovery students are making since the pandemic-related school closures during the spring of 2020 and parts of the 2020-21 school year. *March 2022*

- American School District Panel Reports. Custom reports are provided for member districts showing how they responded in aggregate to a series of surveys seeking feedback on education policy and practice. *April 2022*

Achievement and Professional Development
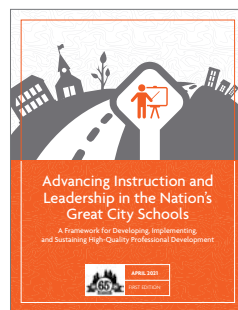
[Advancing Instruction and Leadership in the Nation's Great City Schools: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining High-Quality Professional Development](#).
This guide aims to present district instructional leaders and staff with a core set of criteria for what high-quality professional development entails. It focuses on practical issues of district-level implementation in multiple teaching and learning environments and provides clear, concrete guidance for district leaders in selecting, designing, implementing, and sustaining high-quality professional development. *April 2021*
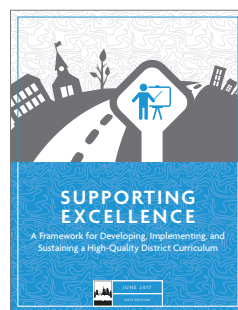
[Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Development, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum](#).
A framework that provides instructional leaders and staff with a core set of criteria for what a high-quality curriculum entails. This guide annotated samples and exemplars from districts across the country. It also provides actionable recommendations for developing, implementing, and continuously improving upon a district curriculum, ensuring that it reflects shared instructional beliefs and

common and high expectations for all students. *July 2017 (Second Edition coming October 2022)*
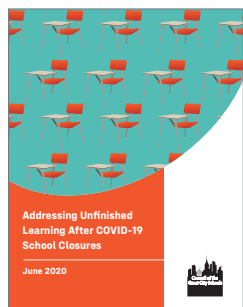
[Addressing Unfinished Learning After COVID-19 School Closure.](#) This resource highlights how to address unfinished learning by focusing on key transition grades and the importance of identifying the essential content for the grade. This approach provides the space and opportunities to provide just in time supports for all students while they engage in grade level work, and acquire facility with academic language demands, skills and concepts to accelerate their learning. To illustrate these approaches, the document provides examples of just-in-time scaffolds to accelerate student learning in mathematics and English language arts. *June 2020*

[Shifting Early Literacy Practices: The Story of an Early Reading Pilot in San Antonio Independent School District.](#) This publication is the result of a collaboration between CGCS and Student Achievement Partners and includes reflections, guidance, and tools developed during a school district pilot focused on "Early Reading Accelerators." The work has the potential to shape literacy vision and transform reading practices across the country. *May 2021*

Communications

[Communications Toolkit for Reopening Schools after COVID-19: Recommendations for Communication Departments.](#) Provides sample communication materials drawn from urban school districts across the country, and recommendations for effective messaging during the COVID-19 crisis, from initial reopening through the challenges that will arise during the 2020-21 school year. *September 2020*
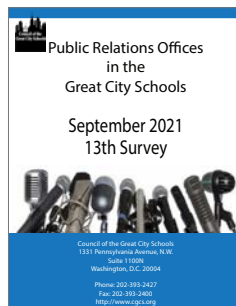
Public Relations Offices in the Great City Schools. In an effort to determine the structure and function of Public Relations offices in member districts, the Council distributes a survey every other year requesting information on these offices. The first one was published in 1997, and the reports are available upon request. *September 2021*
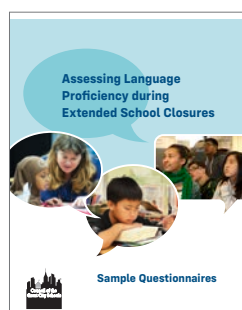
English Learners

**Connecting 3Ls™ to English Language Development Standards and Frameworks.** This publication makes explicit connections between the 3Ls™ (Learning, Language, and Literacy) approach to instruction for English learners (Els) and the English Language Development (ELD) standards and frameworks adopted to guide instruction for ELs. *September 2021*

Assessing Language Proficiency during Extended School Closures. This document provides sample questionnaires across grade bands that are designed to provisionally identify students as English learners (Els) during the COVID-19-related school closures, which impede the administration of face-to-face screening protocols. *May 2020*
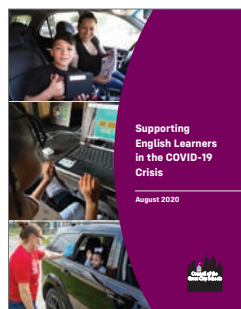
Supporting English Learners in the COVID-19 Crisis. This guide is the ninth in a series developed by the Council of the Great City Schools to help districts as they prepare to reopen schools in the 2020-21 school year. *August 2020*
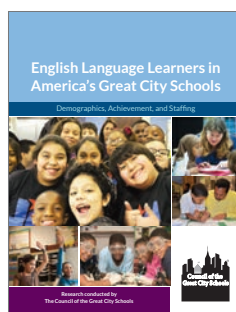
English Language Learners in America's Great City Schools. This report presents the results of a two-year study to gather data on the fastest-growing demographic group in the nation's schools. It updates most of the data presented in the Council's first-ever study on English language learner (ELL) programs that was released in 2013. *April 2019*

Re-envisioning English Language Arts and English Language Development for English Language Learners. Presents the Council's criteria for determining whether English language arts materials are compatible with college and career standards and appropriate for English language learners. *May 2017*
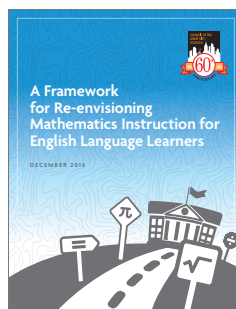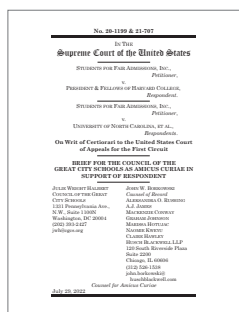
**A Framework for Re-envisioning Mathematics Instruction for English Language Learners.** The overarching purpose of this document is to define a vision for mathematics instruction that explicitly attends to the needs of ELLs, addressing the interdependence of language and mathematics. *December 2016*

Legislative

[CGCS Amicus Brief in the United States Supreme Court on the Higher Education Admissions Cases: Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College and Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. University of North Carolina, et al](). An Amicus Brief submitted to advocate for the Council members before the Supreme Court. *August 2022*
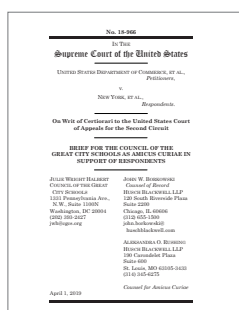
[CGCS Amicus Brief in the United States Supreme Court on the Citizenship Question: United States Department Of Commerce, et al. v. New York, et al](). An Amicus Brief submitted to advocate for the Council members before the Supreme Court. *April 2019*

Governance and Management
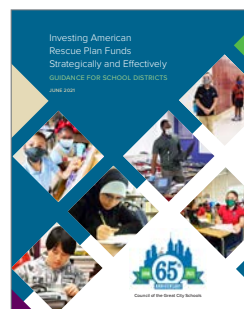
[Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively: Guidance for School Districts](). This document lays out a framework for the nation's large city school systems to spend federal relief funds strategically and effectively. It sets out overarching goals for the use of funds; articulates broad investment strategies; defines principles for the effective use of funds; and asks a series of questions that leaders and stakeholders should ask themselves as they embark on planning, implementation, and evaluation efforts. *June 2021*
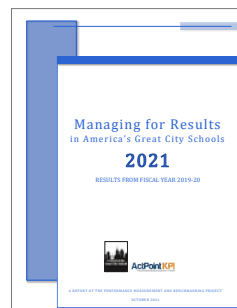
[Managing for Results in America's Great City Schools, 2021, Results from Fiscal Year 2019-2020](). This annual report, first released in 2002, tracks performance measures across member districts, allowing members to benchmark their work and improve business operations. *October 2021*

[Student Outcomes-Focused Governance: A Continuous Improvement Framework](). The framework is built around six research-informed competencies that describe school board behaviors and the degree to which they create the conditions for improvements in student outcomes: Vision & Goals; Values & Guardrails; Monitoring & Accountability; Communication & Collaboration; Unity & Trust; and Continuous Improvement. *October 2021*

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Green-Garner Award is the Council's annual urban education award for outstanding leadership by a superintendent or school board member.

Queen Smith Award for Commitment to Urban Education is the Council's annual award for outstanding service to urban education among professional educators and teachers.

Dr. Michael D. Casserly Educational Justice and Courage Award is the Councils' annual award to a person who has made outstanding contributions in the field of K-12 urban education by taking a courageous and passionate stance on the issue of educational justice and equality. As a part of this award, the recipient identifies one student from a member district to receive a $10,000 scholarship to pursue higher education.

Dr. Shirley S. Schwartz Urban Education Impact Award is the Council's annual award for exemplary partnerships between universities and urban school districts.

CGCS – Bernard Harris Scholarships in Math and Science are the Council's annual scholarships to graduating African American and Hispanic seniors in member school districts who plan to pursue college majors in STEM fields (in collaboration with the Harris Foundation).

Research and Assessment Leadership Award is the Council's annual award for an outstanding urban school official who exemplifies leadership, innovation, and commitment to improving student achievement.

Making Strides Together Award is the Council's annual award to an outstanding urban school official who exemplifies leadership, innovation, commitment, and professionalism in improving instructional quality and raising student achievement.

Valeria Silva Award for Outstanding Contributions to ELL Achievement is the Council's award for an outstanding district administrator or school principal who has made significant and lasting contributions to improving the academic achievement for English learners (Els).

Distinguished Service Award is the Council's annual award to a chief operating officer in a member school district who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in a non-instructional operating area.

Bill Wise Award is the Council's annual award to a Chief Financial Officer in a member school district who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in financial management.

Information Technology Leadership Award is the Council's annual award to a Chief Information Officer for outstanding leadership in the area of information technology and/or management information services.

Award for Excellence in Financial Management: the Council's award to recognize Council member districts that meet the highest standards of financial accountability and performance.

COUNCIL STAFF

Administration

Raymond Hart, *Executive Director*

Alka Pateriya, *Director of Strategy and Partnerships*

Teri Trinidad, *Director of Administration, Finance & Conferences*

Amanda Corcoran, *Special Projects Manager*

Alisa Adams, *Finance Manager*

Alexis Vann, *Manager of Conferences*

Michell Yorkman, *Manager of Conferences and Partnerships*

Gregory Bacon, *Administrative and Conference Specialist*

Eric Vignola, *Manager of Software Engineering*

Marilyn Banks, *Administrative Assistant*

Michael Casserly, *Strategic Advisor*

Communications

Tonya Harris, *Director of Communications*

Joanne Coley, *Communications Manager*

Kalin Hicks, *Communications Specialist*

Curriculum and Instruction

Karla Estrada, *Chief Academic Officer*

Denise Walston, *Chief of Curriculum*

Robin Hall, *Chief of Schools*

Ricki Price-Baugh, *Senior Advisor*

Legislation and Policy

Manish Naik, *Director of Legislative Services*

Moses Valle-Palacios, *Manager of Legislative Services*

Julie Wright Halbert, *General Counsel*

Gabriela Uro, *Director of ELL Policy & Research*

David Chi-Wai Lai, *Special Projects Manager*

Governance and Leadership

AJ Crabill, *Director of Governance*

Michael Hinojosa, *Superintendent-in-Residence*

Management Services

Willie Burroughs, *Director of Management Services*

Robert Carlson, *Senior Advisor*

Research

Akisha Osei Sarfo, *Director of Research*

Brian Garcia, *Research Manager*

Chester Holland, *Research Manager*

LIST OF MEMBER DISTRICTS

Albuquerque

Anchorage

Arlington

Atlanta

Aurora

Austin

Baltimore

Birmingham

Boston

Bridgeport

Broward County, FL

Buffalo

Charleston

Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC

Chicago

Cincinnati

Clark County, NV

Cleveland

Columbus

Dallas

Dayton

Denver

Des Moines

Detroit

Duval County, FL

East Baton Rouge

El Paso

Fayette County, KY

Fort Worth

Fresno

Guilford County, NC

Hawaii Department of Education

Hillsborough County, FL

Houston

Indianapolis

Jackson

Jefferson County, KY

Kansas City

Long Beach

Los Angeles

Memphis-Shelby County, TN

Miami-Dade County, FL

Milwaukee

Minneapolis

Nashville

New Orleans

New York City

Newark

Norfolk

Oakland

Oklahoma City

Omaha

Orange County, FL

Palm Beach County, FL

Philadelphia

Phoenix Union

Pinellas County, FL

Pittsburgh

Portland

Providence

Puerto Rico

Richmond

Rochester

Sacramento

St. Louis

St. Paul

San Antonio

San Diego

San Francisco

Santa Ana

Seattle

Toledo

Tulsa

Washington, D.C.

Washoe County, NV

Wichita

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County, NC

**Council of the
Great City Schools**

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Memo

To: Council Member Superintendents
From: Raymond C. Hart, Executive Director
Date: September 8, 2023
Re: Role-Alike Meeting Schedule

Please reach out to apateriya@cgcs.org with any questions. Please note all times below are ET.

Superintendents - Every other Thursday at 1pm

Academic
- EL Directors – last Thursday of the month, 2pm
- Chief Academic Officers – 2nd Thursday, 3pm
- Chiefs of Schools– 2nd Wednesday, 1pm
- Principal Supervisors – 2nd Thursday, 4:15pm
- Mathematics Directors – 3rd Tuesday, 5:15pm
- Science/STEM Directors – 2nd Tuesday, 5:15pm
- Social Studies Directors – 2nd Thursday, 5:30pm
- English/Language Arts Directors – 3rd Thursday, 5:15pm
- Special Education Directors/Legal Counsel (Instructional/Compliance) – 1st Tuesday, 3:00 pm
- Early Learning Directors (Birth – Pre-K) – 3rd Tuesday, 1:00 pm (Every other month)

Communications
- Public Relations Executives – 3rd week of each month; day varies

Legislative
- Legislative Liaisons – 2nd Monday, 1pm
- General Counsels – 2nd Thursday, 3 pm; (alternate 1st Wednesday, 1 pm)
- Special Education Directors/Legal Counsel (Instructional/Compliance) – 1st Tuesday, 3:00 pm

Operations
- Chief Operating Officers – 3rd Thursday, 12pm
- Chief Financial Officers – 3rd Thursday, 2pm
- Chiefs of Human Resources – 3rd Wednesday, 2pm
- Chief Information Officers/Chief Technology Officers – 3rd Friday, 11am
- Transportation Directors – 4th Tuesday, 12pm
- Food Service Directors – 4th Tuesday, 2pm
- Safety and Security Directors – 1st Friday, 11am
- Facilities Directors – 4th Thursday, 12pm
- Procurement Directors – 3rd Monday, 12pm
- Risk Management – 3rd Monday, 2pm
- Internal Auditors – 2nd Wednesday, Quarterly, 2pm

Research
- Research Directors – 1st Tuesday, 1pm
- Chief Performance Officers - 2nd Friday, 2pm
- NWEA/MAP Assessment Consortia – 3rd Wednesday, 3pm
- Curriculum Associates/iReady Consortia – 2nd Wednesday, 3pm
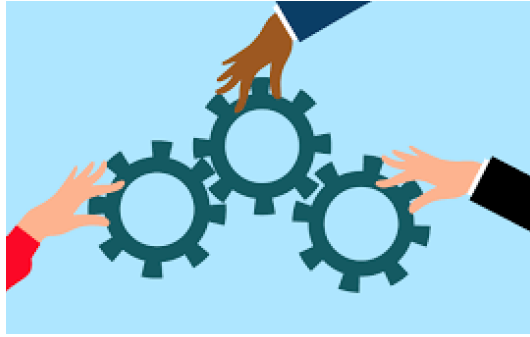- Renaissance/STARR Consortia – Last Wednesday, 3pm

School Board/Governance
- Chiefs of Staff – 1st Friday, 12pm
- Board Supports Staff – 1st Friday, 3pm
- Board Members – Every other Friday at 1pm

Student Services/Equity
- Chief Equity Leaders – Second Tuesday, 2pm
- Social Emotional Learning / Mental Health – Third Tuesday, 3:00pm

JOIN US!

The Council of the Great City Schools continues to host and expand role-alike Zoom meetings for our member districts to provide a safe space to share effective practices, common challenges, and solutions for issues that impact the safety, wellbeing, and success of staff and students.

Monthly Role-Alike Meetings to include:

- Research Directors
- Assessment Consortia Meetings
    - Curriculum Associates/iReady Assessment Consortia Meetings
    - NWEA/MAP Assessment Consortia Meetings
    - Renaissance/Star Meetings
- Chief Equity Officers & Equity Directors
- Chief Academic Officers
- Chief of Schools
- Principal Supervisors
- District Content Directors Monthly Meetings
    - English Language Arts & Literacy District Leaders
    - Mathematics District Leaders
    - Science District Leaders
    - History/Social Science District Leaders
    - Early Learning (Birth to PreK)
- Special Education (SPED) Directors and General Counsels (working with SPED)
- Social-Emotional Learning, Mental Health, and Restorative Justice Directors

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Monthly Research Meetings

Meetings with Research Directors

During this time, research, assessment, and evaluation directors convene on common problems of practice and share best practices across the membership and the professional field.

Monthly on the 1st Tuesday @ 1:00 pm Eastern until June 30, 2024.

Monthly Assessment Consortia Meetings		

NWEA/MAP Assessment Consortia Meetings	*Renaissance/Star Meetings*	*Curriculum Associates/iReady Assessment Consortia Meetings*
A collaborative of research and assessment directors from districts that administer the NWEA Map Growth assessments. This time is used to share assessment practices, product development and enhancements and student performance using the assessment. **Every other month through August 30, 2024.** **Please reach out to Akisha Osei Sarfo at asarfo@cgcs.org, if you're interested in joining the consortia.**	A collaborative of research and assessment directors from districts that administer the Renaissance Star assessments. This time is used to share assessment practices, product development and enhancements and student performance using the assessment. **Every month through August 30, 2024.** **Please reach out to Akisha Osei Sarfo at asarfo@cgcs.org, if you're interested in joining the consortia.**	A collaborative of research and assessment directors from districts that administer the Curriculum Associates iReady assessments. This time is used to share assessment practices, product development and enhancements and student performance using the assessment. **Every other month through August 30, 2024.** **Please reach out to Akisha Osei Sarfo at asarfo@cgcs.org, if you're interested in joining the consortia.**

Joint Quarterly Instructional Spotlight Meetings

Address highly relevant curriculum and instruction topics that instructional leaders have surfaced as areas of interest and need. All CAOs, Chief of Schools, Principal Supervisors, Instructional Leaders, Content Directors, Social Emotional Learning Directors, Directors of Special Education, Equity Directors, and English Language Learner directors and leaders are invited to attend.

*Instructional Spotlight Dates: (Thursdays, 3:00 – 4:15 PM ET)
- **November 16**
- **January 18**
- **March 21**
- **May 16**

Council of the Great City Schools

Academics Monthly Meetings

Chief Academic Officers

Adapting curriculum guidance for teachers using essential instructional content, acceleration versus remediation, addressing unfinished learning by building on student assets, developing coherence between Tier 1, 2, and 3 instruction, supporting the needs of diverse learners including English language learners and students with disabilities. Implementing systems and structures to ensure coherence across the district and sharing best practices.

Monthly on the 2nd Thursday @ 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM ET until June 13, 2024.

Chief of Schools

Providing opportunities to share approaches and practices for providing support to principal supervisors in various stages of leadership development, as well as guidance and programing for the principal pipeline. Sharing processes, procedures and/or protocols for formalizing expectations and setting priorities for school improvement that include quality of instruction, culture, and climate, and student outcomes.

Highlighting districts that demonstrate intentional collaboration between the Chief of Schools and the Chief Academic Officer to build a shared understanding of the curriculum, instructional materials, formative and benchmarks and teaching and learning expectations that should be observed in the classroom across the PK-12 grade levels to accelerate school improvement.

Monthly on the 2nd Wednesday @ 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM ET until June 12, 2024.

Special Education (SPED) Directors and General Counsels (working with SPED)

Sharing best practices in special education programming, assessment, instruction, accountability, and external partnerships. This includes addressing the supports and scaffolds needed so students can access grade-level learning in the least restrictive environment. Discussing legislation and current compliance topics impacting the effective and timely provision of services. Legal counsel working with their SPED Directors are also included in this new joint instructional/compliance format.

Monthly on the 1st Tuesday @ 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM ET until June 4, 2024.

Principal Supervisors *NEW

Sharing effective practices for supporting principals as instructional leaders, strengthening collaborations, and leveraging assistance from the department of teaching and learning in supporting teachers in addressing unfinished learning by building on student assets, and investigating and bolstering programs/offerings showing promising results. Discussing recruiting and retaining teachers and equitable principal pipeline and programs for recruiting and retaining principals that represent the diversity of the students and communities they serve.

Monthly on the 2nd Thursday @ 4:15 PM - 5:15 PM ET until June 13, 2024.

Chief Equity Officers & Equity Directors

Provide ongoing opportunities for districts leaders to co-learn and deepen their shared understanding on critical topics and issues related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging that impact students on the margins and those who are historically underserved. Additionally, district leaders will share best practices, strategies, and relevant resources.

Monthly on the 2nd Tuesday @ 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM ET until June 11, 2024. Please reach out to Farah Assiraj at fassira@cgcs.org, if you're interested in joining the Equity meetings.

Social-Emotional Learning, Mental Health, and Restorative Justice Directors

Provide ongoing opportunities for districts leaders to co-learn and deepen their shared understanding on critical topics and issues related to Social Emotional Learning, Mental Health, and Restorative Justice by sharing best practices, strategies, and relevant resources.

Monthly on the 3rd Tuesday @ 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM ET until June 11, 2024. Please reach out to Farah Assiraj at fassira@cgcs.org, if you're interested in joining the SEL/MH/RJ meetings.

Council of the Great City Schools

Academics Monthly Meetings	
English Language Arts & Literacy District Leaders	***Mathematics District Leaders***
Provide ongoing opportunities to share strategic and systemic approaches to meet and exceed today's teaching and learning expectations in English Language Arts and Literacy. This includes applying the research on the science of reading to effective instructional practices in literacy within a comprehensive English Language Arts Program. Facilitate discussions and share best practices for developing district curriculum guidance that illustrate the key features of a high-quality curriculum provided in the Second Edition of the **Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework** and working collaboratively across districts to effectively use instructional resources to support instruction and optimize student learning. **Monthly on the 3rd Thursday, 5:15 PM – 6:30 PM ET, until June 20, 2024**	Provide ongoing opportunities for districts to embrace the systemic change required for both teaching and student learning to meet and exceed today's expectations in mathematics. This includes designing equitable structures and implementing equitable practices, developing quality district curriculum guidance, leveraging high-quality instructional materials, and working collaboratively to support teachers in effectively implementing resources that optimize student learning. Additionally, the group will work across districts to consider essential standards, big ideas in PK-12, and how to support students in developing identity, agency, and voice in mathematics. **Monthly on the 2nd Thursday, 5:30 PM-6:45 PM ET until June 13, 2024.**
Science District Leaders	***History/Social Science District Leaders***
Provide ongoing opportunities for districts to collaborate on increasing opportunities to learn, overhauling the work in science to create equitable structures and practices so all students engage, learn, and experience the joy and wonder of science to advance excellence. Additionally, this will include criteria for high-quality instructional materials for high school science, state requirements for science versus district requirements for high school graduation, pathways for students in science, STEAM careers, and Integration of engineering design into science. **Monthly on the 2nd Tuesday, 5:15 PM – 6:30 PM ET until June 11, 2024.**	Provide ongoing opportunities for districts to collaborate and build a strong history and social science program as a window and sliding door into our world, foster civic engagement and discourse, understand the past, make connections to the present, and consider implications for the future. Additionally, this will include how to support teachers in engaging students in reading historical texts, making inferences from primary source documents, thinking about them in creative ways, and engaging students in discussions while encouraging multiple perspectives. **Monthly on the 3rd Tuesday, 5:15 PM – 6:30 PM ET, until June 18, 2024.**
Academics Bi-Monthly Meetings	
Early Learning Directors (Birth-Pre-K) *NEW	

Provide ongoing opportunities for districts to collaborate on increasing opportunities to learn about systemic changes occurring in urban school districts required in the early learning years to ensure our youngest students are Kindergarten ready across all developmental domains. This includes designing equitable structures and practices both internally and externally, developing district curriculum guidance, leveraging high-quality instructional materials and professional learning, working collaboratively to effectively implement developmentally appropriate practices to support teachers and optimize student learning across all developmental domains.

Bi-Monthly on the 3rd Tuesday @ 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM Eastern until May 2024.

Council of the Great City Schools

PARTNERSHIPS

Council of Great City Schools Partnership Proposal

Vision: The Council of Great City Schools aims for its work *TO EDUCATE ALL URBAN SCHOOL STUDENTS TO THE HIGHEST ACADEMIC STANDARDS.* The College Board shares this mission and proposes a partnership to b*uild the capacity of the membership to implement high standards and improve student achievement* through a focus on Advanced Placement.

Rationale: AP Computer Science Principles changed the invitation and broadened access to a more diverse group of students. Since the course's introduction, participation in AP Computer Science Principles has more than tripled from 58,000 to 212,000 exams, transforming the pipeline to the study of computer science and STEM with career-relevant, project-based work.

Our experience with AP Computer Science Principles has taught us important lessons on expanding access and participation across more of AP:

1. **What we offer:** AP Computer Science Principles invites students to solve a problem they are interested in.

- In the five years since the launch of AP Computer Science Principles, participation among young women, African Americans, and Hispanic students has more than tripled.
- AP Computer Science Principles students are now 3 times more likely to major in computer science in college.

2. **How we assess:** In AP Seminar, students do short research projects, work in teams, and present their findings. The chance to do research and work in small groups engages students to connect with their own interests. As a result:

- A more diverse group of students take AP Seminar and exam scores are more similar across White, Black, and Hispanic students than among many other AP courses.
- 10th graders who take AP Seminar go on to earn higher scores on AP English, history, and government exams taken in 11th and 12th grades.
- In first-year college GPA, AP Seminar students outperform students who did not take AP. Moreover, AP Seminar students have a higher likelihood of persisting to the second year in college than students with no AP Seminar.

3. **When we begin:** Starting in 10th grade gives students time to consider new paths of study. Taking AP Computer Science Principles in 10th grade opens the pathway not only to computer science but also to STEM more broadly.

- In 2019, AP Computer Science Principles became the first AP STEM course in which more than half of students were in tenth grade at the time they took it, and that proved true for even more African American, Latino, and first-generation students.

4. **Who gets a chance:** The typical number of AP course sections in a school is one. This coming year, we will introduce AP Precalculus as a new course to expand access and make more STEM-ready students visible to colleges.

- AP Precalculus is designed for any student who has taken Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2.
- Students ready for precalculus have all the prerequisites they need to succeed in AP Precalculus.

- That means any precalculus student can be an AP Precalculus student.

Getting Started: Our partnership would galvanize member districts around an approach to Advanced Placement to make high school as vibrant as possible for more students. We would start with a focus on two AP courses with clear metrics for adding sections and making these two courses a common pathway for many students in member districts. To do this, member district would:

- Transition existing English 10 classes to AP Seminar. This move will allow more students to engage in meaningful research, work in teams and apply their learning. This course will support student success throughout high school, including students interested in other high school pathways as well as AP.
- Enable all students now in Precalculus to take AP Precalculus to secure college credit and broaden access to STEM. We have designed our new AP Pre-calculus course not as an advanced version of Pre-calculus but to value the work students are already doing to gain college credit and be seen.

Schools can easily implement these AP courses using the resources that already exist within their schools. We would work jointly to set targets and track progress towards metrics. For example, a metric in year one might see us adding 1000 sections of each in member districts and high schools.

How we will partner:

We will collaborate closely in several ways to combine the power of organizations and support member needs. Options for our collaboration include:

- **Data Access.** College Board (CB) will provide aggregate CGCS member district data. CGCS member districts will share data so that information can be compiled to determine how each district's data compares to the average. Member districts can make the appropriate data driven decisions to increase AP course, and section availability, and support for their schools with support from CGCS and College Board.
    - AP courses currently offered, and the number of students registered by subgroups.
    - AP Potential data illustrating the number of students who are qualified/ready to take and succeed in AP courses available by subgroups.
    - AP exams taken and performance on those exams YOY.
- **Data Driven Inquiry.** College Board will host strategy training for district leaders on effective use of data and lead discussions on achieving equity with an emphasis on AP platform courses (English 10: AP Seminar, AP Computer Science Principles, AP Precalculus for seniors).
- **Continuous Improvement.** CGCS districts and CB will work together to track successes, growth areas, discuss barriers to increasing access and brainstorm potential solutions to test together.
- **Recognition.** CB will work with CGCS to determine what incentives or recognition can be provided to member districts that focus on increasing student access and success. We will highlight success stories of both leaders and those who experience the greatest gains to support continuous growth towards Goal 1 through this partnership initiative.
- **Case Studies and Champions:** Build and showcase champions through case studies and other recognition moments /showing success models of member districts who are leading with broadening access and increasing student success.

- **Free Professional Learning for Teachers:** When districts convert whole sections of courses, AP will provide free teacher training either through existing summer institutes or through train the trainer models.

Appendix:

Course codes.

- 26 states have approved course codes for English 10: AP Seminar - Alabama, California, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont and Wisconsin.
- 4 states have local control and can issue course codes for English 10: AP Seminar - Alaska, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio.

College Credit.

- AP Seminar was created in response to college admissions leaders' request for an AP course that would help students develop skills of collaboration, research, writing, and presentation. Because there are many other AP courses widely used for college credit—from Biology to U.S. History— admissions leaders wanted AP Seminar to focus purely on skills needed in every college major, not the content of one specific college class.
  - Accordingly, colleges do not typically award college credit for AP Seminar scores, and when they do, it is most often general elective credit (See list of colleges that offer credit for AP Seminar here: AP Seminar College Credit Policies – AP Students – College Board). The true value for AP Seminar is that it is the ideal booster of subsequent AP scores and a powerful indicator of college readiness on a student's transcript. Research has found that students who take AP Seminar in 10th grade achieve higher scores on AP English, history, and government exams taken in grades 11 and 12. They're also more likely to persist in college and earn higher first year.
- For students who score a 3 or higher, they would receive elective credit for AP Computer Science Principles; some colleges may offer credit in subject depending on major (See the list of colleges that offer credit for AP Computer Science Principles here: AP Computer Science Principles College Credit Policies – AP Students – College Board).
- Both AP Seminar and AP Computer Science Principles are college level AP courses.

KAPLAN®

January 4, 2023

Dr. Raymond C. Hart
Executive Director
Council of Great City Schools
1331 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W., Ste. 1100N
Washington D.C., 20004

Dear Dr. Hart,

Kaplan was founded more than 80 years ago for the purpose of helping the underserved gain access to education, and throughout its history has been committed to helping all learners bridge the gap to the next best step in their academic and career journey. To that end, we would like to explore partnering with the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) and providing all students of member districts with *free* access to the kinds of powerful tools wealthy schools and districts often have to support their students gain admission to higher education.

We are envisioning a deep partnership in which Kaplan invests meaningfully over a multiyear period in a suite of offerings, developed with input from CGCS, member districts, and existing college counseling teams, that together help students and families from middle school through high school progressively
- gain awareness of their higher education options, including universities, colleges, trade schools, and short programs,
- understand what will make them attractive applicants to the various program options,
- develop a strategy for admission into preferred programs,
- learn which specific colleges or programs might be good fits,
- succeed on admission tests and in the admission process, and
- understand what it will take to be successful in higher education.

In time, we would wish to add advising programming on options outside of higher education, including employment, military, and other alternatives. All of these programs would supplement and work in partnership with existing counseling programs in schools.

Kaplan would develop the detailed program with input from CGCS and its districts, but some elements of the program could be launched quickly from among Kaplan's valuable suite of existing programs. For example:

SAT Prep
As an immediate partnership benefit, all students of CGCS district schools could be granted free access to SAT On Demand, Kaplan's asynchronous SAT prep course, which retails for $199. SAT On Demand is a flexible course allowing students to study at their own pace. It comes with

over 50 instructional videos covering test content/strategy and over 1,000 practice questions. Students in CGCS member districts would receive free, asynchronous SAT Prep for the entirety of our collaboration.

College Advising Webinars

Kaplan could also work in the near term with CGCS on a programming schedule for live college advising webinars. These webinars would be led by Kaplan experts and would help both students and parents understand the landscape of college admissions and develop a roadmap. Sample webinar topics include:

- College planning for first generation students
- Common Application guidance
- Financial aid considerations
- Essay writing strategy
- Course rigor and testing strategy
- Demonstrated interest planning
- Demystifying test optional policies

These webinars would also give students the opportunity to ask questions in the chat and receive live feedback.

Advising Platform

The third prong of our proposed partnership construct is collaboration on an advising platform that is optimized for the evolving post-secondary landscape. Frustration with existing platforms has been a consistent theme in our conversations with high school administrators. At the school level, we have been hearing about platform stagnation and poor customer service. At the district level, we have been hearing about the need to reduce the number of platforms in use across schools.

Kaplan could work with CGCS to provide a platform that is responsive to the current needs of district administrators, counselors, and students. Below is a list of core features that we would hone in collaboration with districts:

- An intake form, collecting information such as GPA, course rigor, test scores, etc.
- A college/workforce planning roadmap for every year of high school
- The ability to build a balanced college list
- Insights about likelihood of acceptance, cost considerations, and scholarship opportunities
- Instructional videos highlighting the most important considerations in choosing the next step after high school
- Career interest surveys and exploration tools

Kaplan is also committed to easing the burden on high school counselors who are navigating a complex landscape and juggling a national average of 430 students per counselor. To ensure the platform meets counselor needs, we would build and iterate tooling based on their feedback and learnings.

Additional Services

Families and schools who want additional support will also be able to purchase test prep services and one-on-one or group admissions counseling with a Kaplan Coach at preferred rates. For test prep, we would offer CGCS schools and students preferred rates on Live Online test prep courses as well as 1:1 Tutoring sessions. For admissions counseling sessions, families and schools could purchase bundles of 1:1 sessions that will help students develop a customized plan based on their individual grade level and goals.

Outcomes

Kaplan's outcomes research shows that SAT On Demand students of all starting score levels saw notable score improvements. Notably, students with an initial test score at or below the median (50th percentile) score level saw the largest percentile gains.

As segmented by starting score, our findings show:
- a percentile gain of 25 points (33rd percentile to 58th percentile) for students with a starting score between 400 and 1040.
- a percentile gain of 5 points (68th percentile to 73rd percentile) for students with a starting score between 1050 and 1260.
- a percentile gain of 2 points (92nd percentile to 94th percentile) for students with a starting score between 1270 and 1600.

Kaplan Partners

Kaplan works with urban schools and districts across the country with our college and career preparation programs. Several of our partners overlap with CGCS members, including current programs with the New York City Department of Education, Denver Public Schools, and Chicago Public Schools. We are committed to programs that meet the needs of students from all backgrounds and foster equitable and inclusive learning environments and outcomes.

We work with Chicago Public Schools as a preferred vendor, providing our full range of prep courses. Through Denver Public Schools, we provide SAT prep courses that run both after school and during school hours. Our work with the NYC Department of Education includes prep courses as well as the curriculum for the district-wide DREAM program. This critical program prepares students who meet low-income eligibility requirements for the SHSAT, the test that determines admission to NYC's specialized high schools. Due to the success of the DREAM program and the positive impact on student outcomes, NYCDOE has grown our partnership for several years and this last year served around 5,000 students.

Student Voice

One of the primary ways that Kaplan works with large districts and Title I schools today is by providing live SAT classes at significantly discounted rates. Students access these classes for free and learn skills that are helpful not only for the SAT but also for their general coursework. As evidenced by the post-course feedback below, students feel well supported throughout the course and are set up for success after it.

"This course was free through my school and extremely helpful. The resources were amazing and the class keeps your studying on track."

"I am extremely grateful for these resources! I now feel ready to take on the SAT head on without feeling as much concern and anxiety as before. I have also been taught many other skills that are useful not just for the SAT but for general studying and test taking. Once again, thank you for all of the help and support!"

"The teachers were extremely helpful and helped me improve my test taking skills as well as timing. Although the program was virtual, they still made it feel as if we were in person. They made sure that we understood the concepts and always reached out to us if we needed extra help. It was truly a wonderful and informative experience…"

"The quality of the lessons makes every minute worth it. Kaplan presents a unique environment where everyone is welcome to provide feedback or ask questions."

Next Steps
As a next step, we propose a deeper exploration phase, in which Kaplan would (i) connect with CGCS and a subset of its districts, (ii) understand their specific pain points and problems to be solved, and (iii) develop a framework for a pilot program.

Sincerely,

Steven Marietti
Chief Commercial Officer of Supplemental Education, Kaplan, Inc.
steven.marietti@kaplan.com

CGCS/IACP JOINT TASK FORCE BLUEPRINT FOR SAFER SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Contact:
www.theiacp.org
1.800.THE IACP
International Association of Chiefs of Police
info@theiacp.org

Tonya Harris
Director of Communications
Council of the Great City Schools
tharris@cgcs.org

New Report Identifies Ways to Build Safer Schools and Communities

WASHINGTON, November 14 – The Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) today jointly released a report that provides schools and police new and innovative approaches aimed at improving student safety in schools and communities.

Building Safer Schools and Communities presents findings and recommendations from the Joint Task Force on School Safety and Justice, launched in February 2022. Composed of district superintendents, school police leaders, and community police chiefs, the task force worked together over the course of one year to develop, identify, and share effective practices, tools, and resources. The report is both a culmination of this work and a joint action plan for moving forward with a focus on shifting mindsets and reframing relationships and practices related to schools, police, and communities.

Building Safer Schools and Communities proposes a framework for action built on the following three pillars:

- Expand mental health support and social emotional skills development for students, families, and communities.

- Rethink school discipline policies and practices to ensure fair and equitable practices for all students.

- Promote community partnerships and broad-based collaboration to ensure student safety and support.

Recommendations to Improve Student Safety

- School districts should support the mental health of students, staff, and communities by adopting or developing a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and related materials. These types of curriculums provide a roadmap to students and parents/caregivers for social emotional wellbeing and academic success.

- School districts should review restorative practices and consider implementing them as an approach to conflict resolution and an alternative to out-of-school suspensions.

- School districts, communities and law enforcement should work in unison to ensure student support and safer communities. This can include establishing relationships with community

organizations, such as local PTAs, and convening regular meetings with city leadership (the mayor, city council chair, etc.), the police chief, and the school district superintendent to discuss and review community safety and violence prevention efforts on an ongoing basis.

"With firearm-related injuries as the most common cause of injury-related death for children and youth ages 1 to 24 in the United States, the Council and its member school districts cannot reduce gun violence in the nation's urban schools and communities alone," said Council Executive Director Ray Hart. "We believe the joint findings and recommendations we propose with the IACP offer a roadmap for the nation's education and law enforcement leaders to work together to navigate the complex challenges of improving school and community safety. These efforts will not only help change the lives of the 7.8 million urban schoolchildren and families we serve, but—ultimately—will improve the future of our country's public education system—and our entire nation."

"As violent crime, gangs, drugs and bullying continue to plague our youth, they are faced with insurmountable challenges both within their schools and surrounding communities," said IACP President Wade Carpenter. "In partnership with CGCS, the IACP is pleased to provide this blueprint for the field to aid in providing a safer environment for our schoolchildren to learn and grow. It is my hope that this is just one of many steps to come as police and school districts continue working together to serve and protect our future generations."

The Joint Task Force on School Safety and Justice created *Building Safer Schools and Communities* to serve as a foundation for dialogue and joint action. As a next step, the members invite national, state, and local leaders to create coalitions focused on implementing solutions to reduce crime and violence in their communities.

Download the report.

About CGCS

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. Composed of 78 large city school districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban schools and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research and media relations. The organization also provides a network for school districts sharing common problems to exchange information, and to collectively address new challenges as they emerge in order to deliver the best possible education for urban youth. www.cgcs.org

About IACP

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is the world's largest and most influential professional association for police leaders. With more than 33,000 members in over 170 countries, the IACP is a recognized leader in global policing, committed to advancing safer communities through thoughtful, progressive police leadership. Since 1893, the association has been serving communities by speaking out on behalf of law enforcement and advancing leadership and professionalism in policing worldwide.www.theiacp.org/

BUILDING SAFER SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Findings and Recommendations
from the Joint Task Force
on School Safety and Justice

NOVEMBER 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

Gun violence and school shootings have become more prevalent in recent years, and beginning in 2017, firearm-related injuries became the most common cause of injury-related death for children ages 1 to 24[1]. Students also face the threat of bullying, gangs, racism, drugs, and abuse. In recognition of the need for collective action, the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) established a joint task force early in 2022 centered on identifying models for collaboration between police and school districts to address the safety of students in communities and schools throughout the United States.

The impact of crime and violence in schools and communities goes beyond the immediate threats to student safety. Students who experience or witness crime and violence often face lasting trauma that may impact their long-term mental health and academic achievement. For instance, researchers have found a relationship between students who witness violence and physical aggression[2], and have connected living in communities of violence with negative student outcomes, including lower course completion rates, lower standardized test scores, increased student absenteeism, and lower school engagement.[3]

In response to these threats, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act was passed into law by Congress in the summer of 2022.[4] The Act seeks to help keep schools safe and reduce the threat of violence across the country. Included in the Act are: funds to encourage the creation and administration of state laws that help keep deadly weapons out of the hands of individuals deemed to be a danger to themselves or others; protections for the victims of domestic violence and a clarified definition of 'federally licensed firearms dealer'; enhanced processes for people under 21 years of age to purchase firearms; funds for community-based violence prevention initiatives; and investments in mental health services for children and families. While this legislation provides needed funding and support, additional plans and actions are essential to improve safety in our communities and schools.

This document proposes new and innovative approaches to reducing incidents of violence in schools and communities with a focus on shifting mindsets and reframing relationships and practices related to schools, police, and communities.

> **TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL SAFETY AND JUSTICE MISSION STATEMENT**
> *To work together to build safer and more just schools and communities for school children so all students have opportunities to learn and thrive.*

The Joint Task Force on School Safety and Justice

The issues of crime and violence facing our students go well beyond the school day and school building. The dangers they face in schools are a reflection—and often a continuation—of the dangers they face in their homes and communities, and vice-versa. Therefore, an effective blueprint for mitigating crime and violence will require the perspective and insight of community leaders, local law enforcement, and education leaders.

The IACP-CGCS Task Force is composed of district superintendents, school district police leaders, and community police chiefs working together to develop, identify, and share effective practices, tools, and resources. Over the course of one year, the Task Force met to articulate the challenges facing students and communities and identify approaches to improve student safety in areas across the country. The resulting blueprint is both a culmination of this work and a joint action plan for moving forward and building safer communities and schools for our students and their families.

About CGCS

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. Composed of 78 large city school districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban schools and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research, and media relations. The Council's member districts serve almost 8 million students across 14,000 schools. Over 70% of students are Black or Hispanic, and over 70% are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch. The organization also provides a network for school districts sharing common problems to exchange information, and to collectively address new challenges as they emerge to deliver the best possible education for urban youth.

About IACP

The International Association of Chiefs of Police is the world's largest and most influential professional association for police leaders. With more than 33,000 members in over 170 countries, the IACP is a recognized leader in global policing, committed to advancing safer communities through thoughtful, progressive police leadership. Since 1893, the association has been serving communities worldwide by speaking out on behalf of law enforcement and advancing leadership and professionalism in policing worldwide.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

The members of the IACP-CGCS Task Force:

- **Todd Axtell,** *Chief of Police (Retired July 2022), St. Paul Police Department (MN)*

- **Cerelyn (CJ) Davis,** *Chief of Police, Memphis Police Department (TN)*

- **Mitchell Davis,** *Chief of Police, Hazel Crest Police Department (IL)*

- **Joe Gothard,** *Superintendent, St. Paul Public Schools (MN)*

- **Pedro Lopez,** *Chief of Police, Houston Independent School District (TX)*

- **John Mina,** *Sheriff, Orange County Sheriff's Office (FL)*

- **Rodolfo Perez,** *(Left district in May 2023) Adjutant to the Chief of Police, Los Angeles School Police Department (CA)*

- **Leslie Ramirez,** *Chief of Police (Retired July 2022), Los Angeles School Police Department (CA)*

- **Maria Vazquez,** *Superintendent, Orange County Public Schools (FL)*

A LOOK AT THE DATA:
Prevalence, Impact, and Responses to Crime and Violence in Communities and Schools

Prevalence

The prevalence of guns, weapons, and violence in schools often mirrors what is seen in the broader community. While violent crime rates in large US cities have been steadily declining over the past two decades, the decline has been uneven. Some major cities and neighborhoods continue to experience violence at disproportionate rates, with little change in rates of violence over time.[5]

Gun violence, specifically, continues to be of great concern across America, particularly among young adults and Black males. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, males were six times more likely to die by gun violence than females, making up 86% of gun deaths in America in 2019.[6] Black males are disproportionately impacted by gun violence and have the highest rate

of gun death, nearly twice as high as the second-highest rate of gun death among American Indian/ Alaska Native males.[7]

In addition, Black males were more than twice as likely to die by guns than white males. In terms of age, young adults (ages 15-34) are most impacted by gun deaths. As noted earlier, gun-related injuries have surpassed car crashes and are now the leading cause of death for children and teens in America. According to a study published in the American Academy of Pediatrics:

> In 2021, firearms continued to be the leading cause of death among US children. From 2018 to 2021, there was a 41.6% increase in the firearm death rate. In 2021, among children who died by firearms, 84.8% were male, 49.9% were Black, 82.6% were aged 15 to 19 years, and 64.3% died by homicide. Black children accounted for 67.3% of firearm homicides, with a death rate increase of 1.8 [percentage points] from 2020 to 2021. [Black children make of 13.9% of the population of children in the US.] White children accounted for 78.4% of firearm suicides. From 2020 to 2021, the suicide rate increased among Black and white children, yet decreased among American Indian and Alaskan Native children. Geographically, there are worsening clusters of firearm death rates in Southern states and increasing rates in Midwestern states from 2018 to 2021. Across the United States, higher poverty levels correlated with higher firearm death rates.[8]

As of September, 2023, there have been 30 school shootings this year, with 16 people killed and 32 people injured (Exhibits 1 and 2).[9] These numbers do not account for the shootings, deaths, and injuries in the communities around the country.

There are also increased reports in the 2019-2020 school year, compared to the 2009-10 school year, of students being threatened or injured; being offered, sold, or given an illegal drug; or being afraid of attack or harm at school than away from school.[10] More students also reported avoiding places in school because they thought someone might attack or harm them. In 2017-18, NCES found that nearly 80 percent of public schools recorded incidents of violence, theft, or other crimes, which equates to a rate of 29 incidents per 1,000 students enrolled (Exhibit 3). In 2019, data collected from students ages 12–18 revealed that a higher percentage of students experienced more nonfatal criminal victimization, and this has been particularly problematic in the return to learning after pandemic school closures.
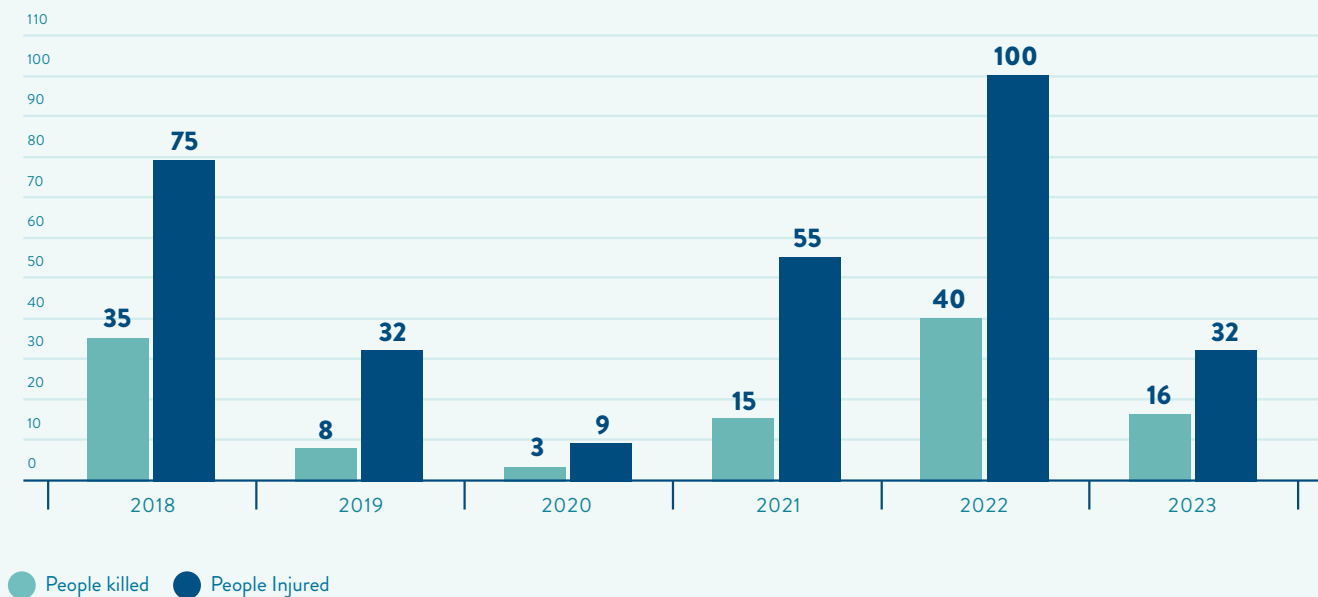
In addition, according to a recent federal report on school crime and safety, cyberbullying was on the rise in the 2019-20 school year, with the number of cyberbullying reports doubling from what was reported a decade ago.[11] This is consistent with the corresponding rise in social media and student access to handheld devices and the internet.

Exhibit 1. Number of School Shootings Since 2018 by Year

Year	School Shootings
2018	24
2019	24
2020	10
2021	35
2022	51
2023	30
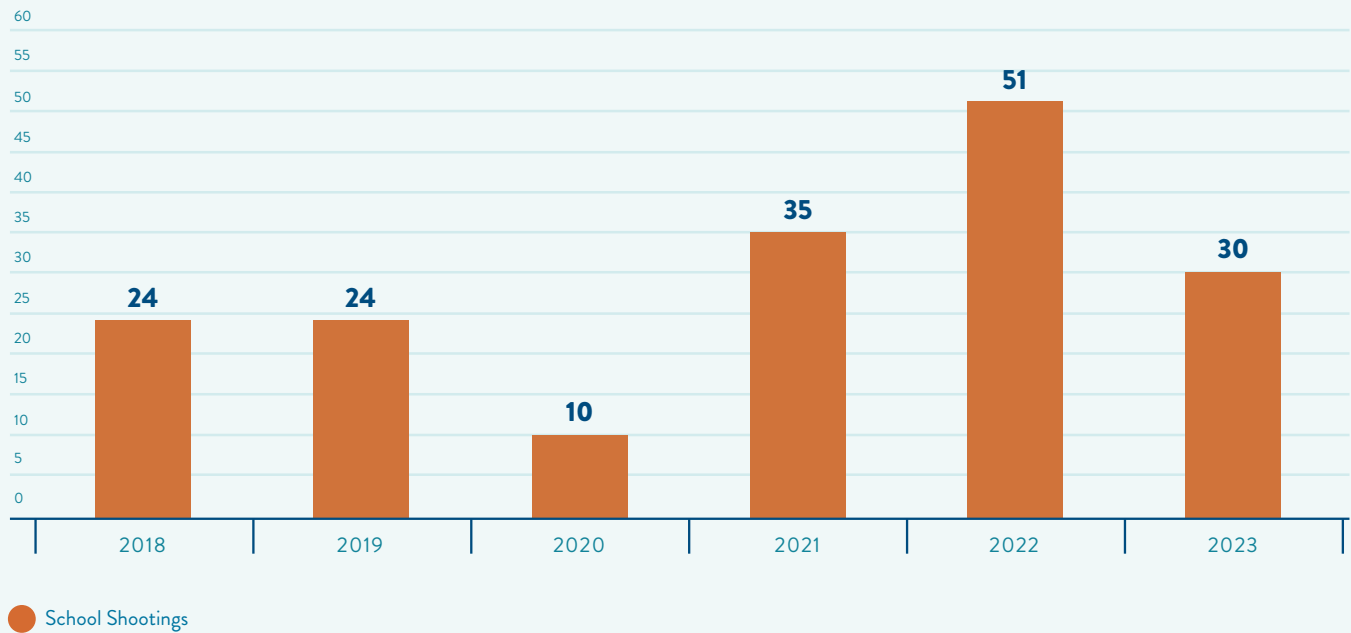
● School Shootings

*Source: *Education Week*, September 2023*

Exhibit 2. Number of People Killed or Injured in School Shootings since 2018 by Year

Year	People killed	People Injured
2018	35	75
2019	8	32
2020	3	9
2021	15	55
2022	40	100
2023	16	32

● People killed ● People Injured

*Source: *Education Week*, September 2023*

Exhibit 3. Percentage of public schools recording incidents of violence, theft, and other crimes at school; Percentage reporting these incidents to the police (2017-18)

Percent of public schools

Recorded
Reported to police

Type of incident
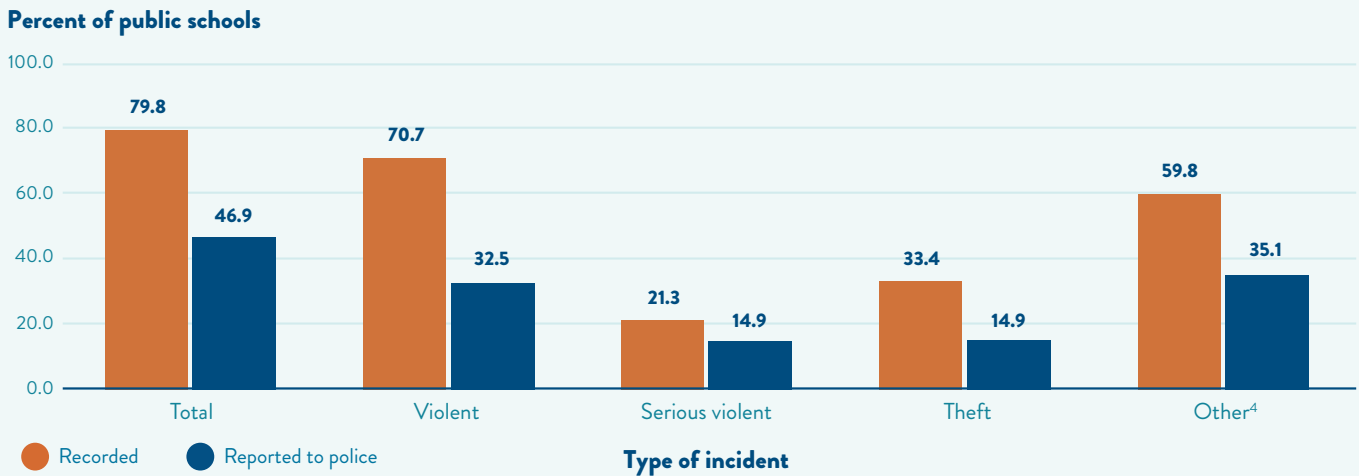
*Source: Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021

The data show that these issues of violence and crime disproportionately impact students of color—particularly African American and Latino males. These students often already face the challenges of poverty, racism, and marginalization, creating exponential obstacles to learning and perpetuating longstanding gaps in academic achievement and social and economic opportunity.

Data from cities across the country show that Black and Hispanic students are disproportionately impacted by school discipline policies.[12] Specifically, Black and Latino males are suspended at rates far exceeding their peers.[13] The data presented here reinforce the need for joint support between schools and local law enforcement to address the needs of our children.

The Impact of Violence and Trauma on Student Learning

We know that violence in schools has profound short- and long-term impacts on student outcomes. For example, students in schools that have experienced gun violence are more likely to be chronically absent from school or repeat a grade, and less likely to graduate high school, enroll in college, earn a bachelor's degree, or hold a job as an adult,[14] and NCES has connected the presence of physical violence in schools to lower scores in reading, mathematics, and science.[15]

The data are also clear about the effects of wider community crime and violence on student outcomes. Researchers have connected exposure to violence with a variety of negative student outcomes, including lower course completion rates, lower standardized test scores, lower school engagement, and increased student absenteeism.[16] According to NCES, the top reported problems in school neighborhoods in 2016 were crime, selling or using drugs or excessive drinking in public, neighborhood violence or gangs, and tensions based on racial ethnic or religious differences.[17] Students in communities where these problems were largely or somewhat concerning had lower scores in reading, mathematics, and science.

Students often bring the trauma of being exposed to crime and violence at home into schools and classrooms. For example, researchers have found a bidirectional relationship between witnessing violence and physical aggression, and between witnessing violence and negative life events.[18] Overall, the findings highlight the need for interventions that break the connection between exposure to violence and aggression during adolescence.

School and Law Enforcement Responses

Issues of crime and safety in schools are often handled through disciplinary actions imposed upon students. In recent years, schools have also increasingly implemented various security measures including the hiring of school resource officers (SROs)/security staff or the use of security cameras and metal detectors in schools. In fact, there has been an increase in the percentage of public schools using security cameras, up from 19 percent in the 1999-2000 school year to 83 percent in the 2017-18 school year.[19] Public schools have seen an increase in the use of security staff and/or SROs present at least once a week from 42 percent in the 2005-06 school year to 61 percent in the 2017-18 school year, with a greater presence in high schools (84%) and middle schools (80%) compared to elementary schools (51%).[20]

As crime and violence among children within schools and in the community have evolved over the years, so has the interaction between school districts and law enforcement personnel. While methods of response have varied, common challenges impacting effectiveness have emerged. Examples include:

- Inconsistent guidelines regarding student infractions, causing confusion about/around when discipline warrants a response from school administrators versus law enforcement personnel.

- Fragmented reporting of incidents between school districts and law enforcement personnel.

91

- Vaguely-defined role and purpose for school resource officers (SROs).

- The need to expand early intervention strategies, proactive mental health support, and prosocial skills for the community.

DEFINING A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Any comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing violence in schools and communities must begin with a focus on providing mental health support, helping students develop critical social emotional skills and characteristics, and building resilience, mindfulness, and self-regulation. It will also take the combined and coordinated efforts of a range of community stakeholders to provide the ideas, supports, services, and resources necessary to build safe, nurturing schools and communities.

In sum, we propose a framework for action built on the following three pillars:

I. Expand mental health support and social emotional skills development for students, families, and communities.

II. Rethink school discipline policies and practices to ensure fair and equitable practices for all students.

III. Promote community partnerships and broad-based collaboration to ensure student safety and support.

I. Expand mental health support and social emotional skills development for students, families, and communities.

The adoption of proactive instructional strategies helps students better regulate their behavior, resolve conflicts, and employ other behavioral skills, and equips them with the essential tools for personal growth, academic success, positive social interactions, and overall well-being. These pro-social skills are invaluable for their present and future lives, enabling them to navigate challenges, build healthy relationships, and contribute positively to society.

Specific action steps to support students, staff, and communities may include:

▪ Adopt or develop a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and materials that are age-appropriate across K-12— K-2; 3-5; 6-8; 9-12. Begin to provide lessons and support students, families, and community members with developing the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to significantly reduce community and school violence. There are many examples across Council member districts of SEL implementation.

❯ IN PRACTICE

- Atlanta Public Schools provides an overview video on their SEL implementation throughout the district.

- St. Louis Public Schools provides an online toolbox with resources for implementing SEL at elementary, middle, and high schools. They also include resources for families and school staff and administrators.

- Los Angeles Unified School District provides an overview of SEL, an instructional unit on SEL for students, and a parent/caregiver roadmap for social-emotional well-being and academic success.

- Clark County School District developed a site with resources that include a framework for Developmental Assets, an approach to positive youth development. These checklists are available for elementary, middle, and high school students.

- Tulsa Public Schools incorporated SEL into their school reopening plans during the COVID-19 pandemic. This article describes how they incorporated SEL strategies into the reopening and how they worked to engage students and families during school hours and out-of-school time.

- Establish processes and systems that allow school leaders to identify early warning indicators and proactively support the most at-risk students. Consider deploying school-based mental health staff to each campus to facilitate early invention and targeted support for at-risk students. Also consider enlisting community-based mental health providers to fill gaps in district staff capacity. Grant opportunities from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act may provide funding for these programs.

- Connect students and their families who are involved in or witness violent crimes to local community resource organizations to assist with post-traumatic stress and other mental and physical health issues. Providing support services to victims, friends, and family that address the need to retaliate, and equip them with strategies for coping through other means, can help to avoid escalating community violence. Students who are exposed to trauma in their community may also need additional support to ensure their needs are met and they do not turn to inappropriate responses.

  ### ❯ IN PRACTICE

  - Handle with Care is a trauma-informed collaboration between local law enforcement, schools, and the Juvenile Assessment Center in the state of Colorado. The program ensures that designated school personnel are notified when a child is exposed to a traumatic event, and appropriate interventions and support is provided.

- Promote conflict resolution, resilience, and mindfulness for students, staff, and families.

  ### ❯ IN PRACTICE

  - Metro Nashville Public Schools provides de-escalation spaces for high school students.

  - Memphis-Shelby County Schools provides presentations with embedded videos and links to additional resources for staff on de-escalating challenging behaviors.

  - Conflict Resolution Education Connection has curated a list of resources for teaching and promoting conflict resolution in K-12 schools. Sample classroom activities, videos, and conference presentations are included for review.

  - See pages 17-18 for examples of districts implementing Restorative Practices, an approach to conflict resolution.

- Build a broad-based coalition to provide opportunities for pro-social skill development for students and parents outside of school. These sessions and activities may be provided or led by community organizers, faith-based leaders, social service agency staff, community-based social workers.

- The [Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches](#) leads initiatives to support the community with programming around well-being, youth development, and food insecurity. The initiative includes working with community members to improve their lives.

- The [Faith-Based Mental Health Initiative of Atlanta](#) provides opportunities for community members to access mental health supports, with the goal of promoting recovery from trauma and providing a positive outlook.

- [Detroit Public Schools Community District](#) launched a faith-based initiative to support students, families, and school communities.

Historically, public schools have recognized the importance of nurturing well-rounded citizens— of developing essential social skills and behaviors alongside academic proficiency. Educating students on self-regulation, conflict resolution, and other behavioral skills is essential for several important reasons:

1. Personal Development: With these skills, students become responsible, self-aware, and emotionally intelligent individuals. Self-regulation skills enable students to manage their emotions, control impulsive behaviors, and make thoughtful decisions. Conflict resolution skills teach students how to handle disagreements, negotiate compromises, and find peaceful solutions, fostering healthy relationships and personal growth.

2. Academic Success: Behavioral skills are closely linked to academic success. When students can regulate their emotions, concentrate on tasks, and manage their time effectively, they are better equipped to engage in learning and excel academically. Conflict resolution skills also contribute to a positive learning environment, allowing students to focus on their studies.

3. Social Interaction: Behavioral skills are essential for successful social interactions. By teaching students how to regulate their behavior and emotions, schools empower them to navigate social situations effectively, form healthy relationships, and collaborate with others. Conflict resolution skills enable students to resolve disputes peacefully, communicate assertively, and appreciate diverse perspectives, fostering empathy, tolerance, and teamwork.

4. Life Skills: Self-regulation, conflict resolution, and other behavioral skills are crucial life skills that extend beyond the school environment. Students who learn these skills are better prepared to handle the challenges and conflicts they may encounter throughout their lives. They develop the ability to manage stress, adapt to changing circumstances, and maintain positive relationships.

5. Bullying Prevention: By educating students about self-regulation and conflict resolution, schools can play a vital role in preventing bullying, including cyberbullying. Students who have strong self-regulation skills and can empathize with others are less likely to engage in aggressive or bullying behaviors. Additionally, conflict resolution skills teach students how to address conflicts productively, reducing the likelihood of escalating bullying.

6. Emotional Well-Being: Learning behavioral skills contributes to students' emotional well-being. Self-regulation skills help students manage stress, anxiety, and other emotions, promoting mental health. Conflict resolution skills empower students to express themselves assertively and deal with interpersonal conflicts constructively, leading to healthier emotional experiences.

II. Rethink school discipline policies and practices.

Ill-designed and inappropriately implemented school safety and disciplinary policies can have negative impacts on students.

In order to address disproportionality and reduce exclusionary discipline practices, it is recommended that schools, law enforcement, and communities take the following steps:

▪ Conduct an analysis of district policies and student behavior data across all schools and grades, to identify any disproportionality that may be based on student age, race/ethnicity, school location, grade level, etc. Partner with the district's research department to visualize the data and analyze trends.

▪ Establish a working group that includes principals, parents, teachers, and secondary students to engage in discussions around how any disparities in district policies and student behavior data could be mitigated. Some items to consider:

  - Are there student groups disproportionately impacted by exclusionary discipline practices that remove students from the classroom environment?

- How might staffing allocations and other resources be implemented to mitigate observed trends?

- Have you partnered with your special education/exceptional student department to gather their feedback and suggestions?

- How will you gather feedback from students, families, and teachers ahead of redesigning or restructuring discipline policies?

▪ Survey students, staff, and families annually to capture feedback on school discipline policies and practices. (These items can be embedded within existing stakeholder surveys.)

▪ Implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) school-wide, an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting students' behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. When implemented with fidelity, PBIS improves student outcomes and teacher health and well-being.

❯ IN PRACTICE

- St. Paul Public Schools provides an overview of PBIS for their schools.

- Portland Public Schools provides an overview of their behavioral health program, including Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), PBIS, and Restorative Practice.

- Clark County School District provides an overview of their framework for MTSS, including PBIS.

- Cleveland Metropolitan School District provides an overview of their PBIS framework.

- Jefferson County Public Schools has a video explaining PBIS and why they use it in their district. They also have web pages that describe their implementation.

▪ Review restorative practices and consider implementing them in your district as an approach to conflict resolution and alternative to out-of-school suspensions and other exclusionary discipline models.

❯ IN PRACTICE

- Dallas Independent School District piloted Reset Centers as an alternative to suspensions during the 2021-22 school year. Preliminary data showed promising outcomes, with few students returning more than once to the Reset Centers. Continued expansion in additional schools for

the 2022-23 school year and further analyses of data will provide additional insights. This local news story highlights the Reset Centers.

- Atlanta Public Schools (APS) has instituted restorative practices in their schools in partnership with the APS Police Department. All officers receive extensive training and contribute to the establishment of a positive school environment.

- St. Paul Public Schools provides an overview and the four core objectives of their restorative practices program.

- Pinellas County Schools describes how to introduce and conduct restorative circles in K-8 schools in this video.

- Kansas City Public Schools shows how they use restorative discipline practices in their schools in this PBS news story.

- Jefferson County Public Schools provides an overview of restorative practices in the district.

- San Francisco Unified School District has a video describing the restorative practices being implemented across all grades in the district.

- Denver Public Schools has developed an implementation guide for restorative practices.

- Succeed Boston is a Boston Public Schools (BPS) program that provides a comprehensive approach to bullying and violence prevention and intervention. Since 1986, Succeed Boston has provided support to more than 35,000 students through restorative alternatives to out-of-school suspension including opportunities to connect with caring adults, reflect, and develop coping strategies through individual and group counseling. Reports have shown that these programs and reforms have contributed to a decrease in BPS' suspension rate.

▪ Develop memoranda of understanding/intergovernmental agreements between the school district and local police departments to distinguish between school-based disciplinary behavior and actions that warrant juvenile justice referrals. Ensure there are policies and procedures established that provide guidance on when law enforcement is to be called by school staff. Consider policies that allow opportunities for student misbehavior to be corrected and redirected as a learning experience, rather than an

"Make additional resources the consequences for poor behavior."

— TASK FORCE MEMBER

interaction with the juvenile justice system. As one Task Force member noted —*"Make additional resources the consequences for poor behavior."*

❯ IN PRACTICE

- Los Angeles Unified School District provided schools a guide with "Frequently Asked Questions" about when to engage law enforcement for the 2021-22 school year. That was the first year the schools did not have school-based resources officers.

- In Durham, North Carolina, a diversion program for offenders under 21 allowed any first-time misdemeanor offense by someone 21 and under to be diverted, with no record. The offender had to submit to a 12-month program facilitated by a juvenile court judge. In the first year, of the 360 offenders, 99% of them did not re-offend. A key to success was collaboration with the school system, where many of the monitoring tasks were conducted. More information on the program is available [here](#).

▪ Create innovative opportunities for collaboration between law enforcement, teachers, and students. For example, Atlanta Public Schools pairs school officers with district SEL staff to provide training and lessons on conflict resolution, de-escalation, and other prosocial behaviors.

▪ Develop protocols to allow students to declare and dispose of weapons without criminal punishments. For example, drop boxes can be provided for students to turn in weapons anonymously before they enter the school building. When students voluntarily turn in weapons brought to school accidentally, consider lesser consequences than when these weapons are discovered through searches or weapons detection.

▪ If not already in use, create anonymous tip lines that include not only phone lines, but also app-, text- or other non-call-based ways for tips to be provided.

III. Promote community partnerships and broad-based collaboration to ensure student safety and support.

The Task Force discussed the relationships between communities and law enforcement and identified ways that schools, community leaders and law enforcement could begin to strengthen these relationships. However, the need for action and collaboration goes well beyond the school and law enforcement sectors. Keeping students safe and ensuring their long-term health and well-being will require a multi-stakeholder approach by all members of the community. This includes parent groups, local government agencies and social services, community organizations, business leaders, local philanthropies, faith-based groups, and out-of-school-time providers (such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, etc.).

To ensure broad-based collaboration on behalf of students and communities, the following steps are recommended:

▪ Identify ways in which preventive and collaborative communication can occur. Engage community members in stakeholder meetings about policies and procedures relating to community safety.

▪ Establish relationships with community organizations – local PTAs, Healing Streets, and others – to promote safer communities and stem the spread of gun- and gang-related violence.

▪ Conduct outreach and advance communication to build stronger partnerships among community leaders, the school district, and local law enforcement agencies. These relationships can be leveraged for safe passage programs, wraparound social services, and other anti-gang and anti-violence campaigns.

❯ IN PRACTICE

- In Philadelphia, the school district is expanding funding for a Safe Passages program, where community members are paid to keep children safe on their way to and from schools. Additionally, the district is providing grant funding to expand and enhance police safety zones around the schools most affected by gun violence. This article discusses the expansion of the program in February 2023.

- Jefferson County Public Schools has curated a list of community organizations that offer outreach and education services for students. Included are organizations offering conflict resolution and other prosocial behavior trainings.

- Faith and Blue is a nationwide initiative that aims to re-calibrate police-community relations through solutions-focused, in-person, activities that are organized jointly by faith-based or other community groups and law enforcement agencies. They seek to create safer, stronger, more just and unified communities.

▪ Ensure the district's family and community engagement strategy effectively supports students and families and fosters strong school communities.

> **IN PRACTICE**

- The Office Family and Community Engagement in The School District of Philadelphia has resources for families, including workshops, videos, and recorded webinars.

- Cleveland Metropolitan School District provides a range of resources and support for families.

▪ Collaborate with community groups and students to address truancy issues, identifying supports that students may need to attend school regularly.

> **IN PRACTICE**

- Orange County Public Schools has a process for identifying, addressing, and mitigating truancy that involves early truancy intervention procedures, parental notifications, and a range of sanctions that are designed to avoid over-criminalizing students or families.

- The Los Angeles Unified School District offers parent education and incentives for students to reduce truancy.

- In St. Paul Public Schools, credit recovery is routinely offered so students do not fall insurmountably behind in their coursework. Additionally, students can repeat specific parts of missed classes, rather than having to repeat the entire course. These actions seek to reduce dropout rates and encourage students to remain enrolled in high school.

▪ Convene regular meetings with city leadership (the mayor, city council chair, etc.), the police chief, and the school district superintendent to discuss and review community safety and violence prevention efforts on ongoing basis.

▪ Establish policies and protocols for incident command in the case of emergency response between schools and law enforcement, including developing protocols for outside agencies engaging with

schools and regular drills to practice emergency response plans for each school. The protocols should be known by all stakeholders – school leaders, local law enforcement agencies, school security, and community members. Particularly where multiple agencies may be involved, clear communication is essential.

❯ IN PRACTICE

- In Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), there are over twenty law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction. There is a process in place to ensure a unified message when incidents occur – communications are coordinated with the municipal agency, the LAUSD school police, and the LAUSD district office.

- In Orange County Public Schools (OCPS), there is a protocol for communications related to incidents. There is a script for principals to use. The district communications team and police department are informed. The Executive Policy Group of OCPS pushes out an alert.

▪ Promote safe storage of legal weapons in the home. Develop and launch a communications campaign aimed toward students and parents to encourage safe and proper storage of weapons at home and discuss gun safety and violence prevention.

❯ IN PRACTICE

- Houston Independent School District shares a form with every family about gun safety at the beginning of each school year or upon student registration midyear.

- A group in Texas has a website with more information about safe gun storage, with a Toolkit and set of Resources for districts to use when informing families about safe gun storage.

- An organization in Texas offers free gun locks to local residents.

- Brady United has a program to "End Family Fire," including a video about safe storage and responsible gun ownership.

- The Be SMART for Kids program offers a framework and additional resources for families.

CONCLUSION

The problems facing our students and communities were not caused overnight. Exposure to domestic and community violence, the uptick in crime and drug abuse, and enforcement and discipline policies that negatively impact students of color have affected our schools and communities for decades. It will take long-term planning and work to address them. However, by fostering communication and collaboration between schools, law enforcement, students, and families; rethinking school security and discipline policies; building stronger community relationships; and focusing on resilience, mindfulness, and restorative practices, we can and will improve the lives of our students and their families.

A reduction in neighborhood crime rates, reduced access to lethal weapons, an increase in mental health supports, and the implementation of fair school discipline policies leading to improved outcomes for students will take the collective support of the entire community. This will require a coalition of community leaders including mayors, city council members, grassroots community leaders, parents, families, and others, in addition to the superintendents and law enforcement leaders.

As a next step, national, state, and local leaders are invited to create coalitions focused on implementing solutions that work best for reducing crime and violence in their contexts. The solutions provided here may serve as a foundation for dialogue and joint action.

If you would like to learn more about any of the initiatives or information shared, please feel free to reach out to the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) or the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). We stand ready to build on our work together and advance local and nationwide efforts on behalf of students and communities.

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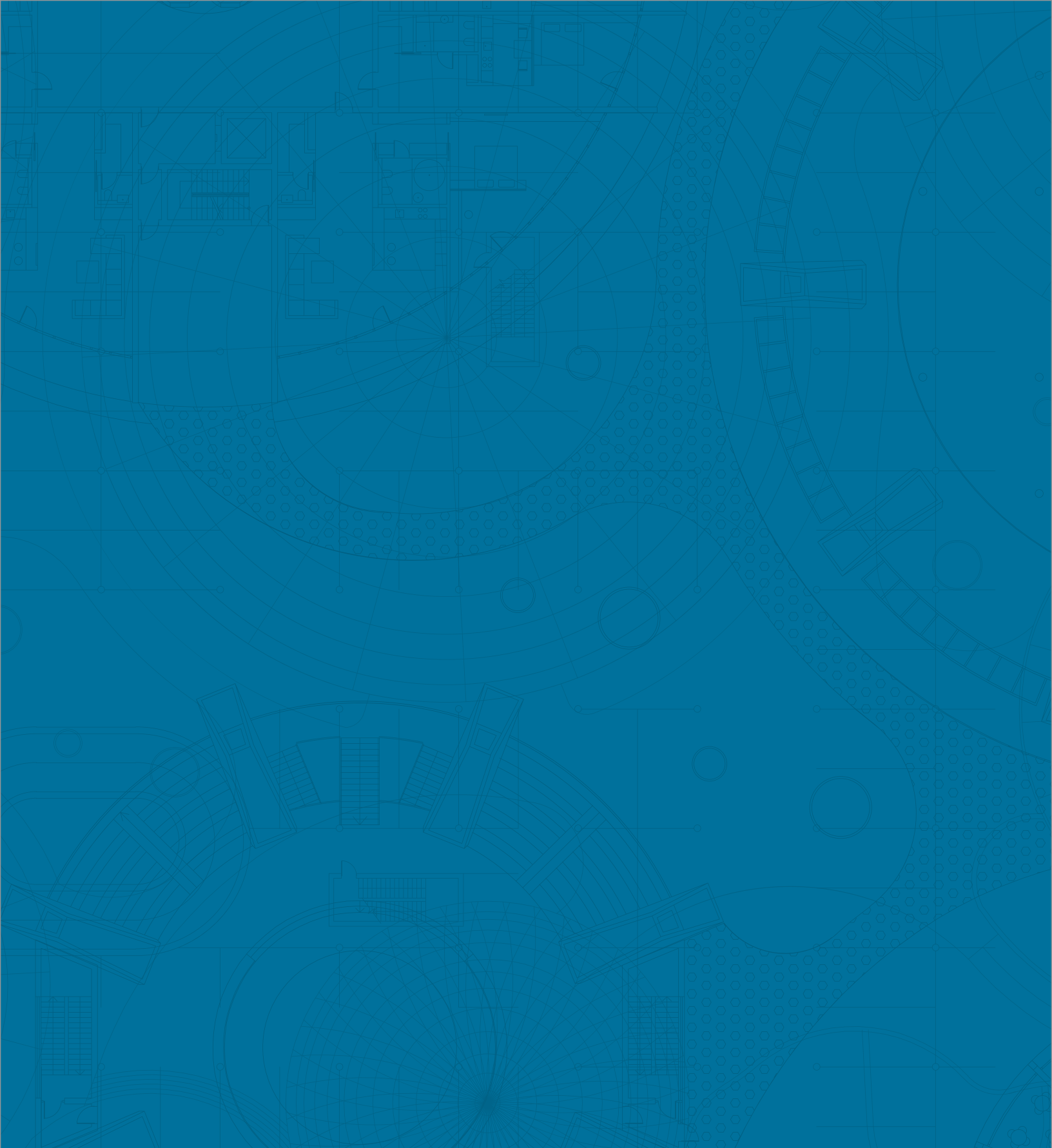
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