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Council of the Great City Schools

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FOR RELEASE

October 24, 2022

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Students in Most Urban Districts Hold Steady in Reading on National Test

*The Nation's Report Card Shows Score Changes for Large City School Districts
Mirror National Trends in Math*

WASHINGTON, Oct. 24 – The 2022 Nation's Report Card for the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) shows most participating districts held steady in fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mirrored national trends in math.

Fourth-grade reading scores in 65 percent of participating districts remained unchanged from 2019, compared to 42 percent of states and territories taking the test.

Similarly, 85 percent of TUDA districts held steady or improved their scores in eighth-grade reading from 2019 to 2022, compared to 37 percent of states and territories.

In mathematics, most participating urban districts saw significant declines, mirroring the pattern seen nationally in the wake of the global pandemic.

In general, large city schools lost ground on the nation in only one of four subject/grade combinations (fourth grade math) while two of four areas (fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math) showed performance that mirrored the nation. National public-school scores declined significantly in eighth-grade reading from 2019 to 2022, while large city schools performance held steady.

“Declines on NAEP scores because of the pandemic are a *national phenomenon*, not just a large city phenomenon,” said Ray Hart, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools. “The pandemic took a heavy toll on our schools and communities, but the reading results from our TUDA districts indicate that the investments and the support from teachers, staff, parents, and the community are bearing fruit.”

The Council and its member districts have been working to address the unfinished learning that the pandemic caused over the last three years. In June 2021, the Council released a guide on investing American Rescue Plan funds strategically and effectively. Every week, the Council hosts virtual meetings for superintendents, school board members, chief academic officers,

bilingual directors, special education directors, and others to strategize on how to accelerate learning. Additionally, the Council released a handbook on how to keep students on grade level while addressing unfinished learning. The Council disseminated tips for how to modify district curriculum, provide professional development, and monitor progress.

Our Great City School districts have developed a portfolio of strategies to mitigate the impact the pandemic has had on student achievement, including intensive grade-level classroom instruction, high-dosage tutoring, targeted summer school programming, other extended learning time opportunities to address unfinished learning and provide mental health support.

Examples include Dallas Independent School District, which is using ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funds to create Reading Academies designed to implement professional development on the science of teaching reading for kindergarten to third grade teachers and administrators. The district is also using ESSER funds to provide high-quality tutoring to help students accelerate learning. The funds were used to purchase software, secure curriculum, and hire tutors.

Tennessee's Memphis-Shelby County Schools is using federal funding to provide technology and tutoring sessions to children before, during, and after the school day. Funds are also being used to hire specialized education assistants in the classroom to support teachers and help keep students engaged.

New York City, the nation's largest school district, is using federal pandemic relief funds to pay for a variety of academic supports, including expanding its free pre-K program and buying devices for remote learning.

And Miami-Dade County Public Schools is using ESSER funds to provide students with K-12 interventionists and tutors, expansion of afterschool enrichment programs, reading and math coaches for Tier 1 schools for two years, and extended summer school programming.

Early results from state and interim testing since NAEP was given in January through March of this year indicate that classroom, tutoring, and summer-school strategies are starting to alleviate the effects of COVID-19 on student performance. Still, these efforts will take time.

“We improved faster than the nation in reading and math, fourth and eighth grades between 2003 and 2019, and we studied what it took to make those gains,” said Hart. “We have made up lost ground before; we will do it again. With a continued focus on addressing unfinished learning through high quality classroom instruction and just-in-time support, districts can ensure that all students remain on track to graduate college and career ready.”

Despite the immense challenges that urban schools faced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the nation's large urban schools are determined and committed to improving the achievement of all our students. The skill and hard work of teachers, staff, parents, and communities over the next several years will recreate the trajectory of improvement across big cities seen before the pandemic.

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NEWS... NEWS... NEWS... NEWS



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FOR RELEASE
January 17, 2023

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Council of the Great City Schools Welcomes Farah Assiraj As Chief of Teaching and Learning

WASHINGTON, January 17 – Farah Assiraj, a national leader in race/equity and immigrant education, has been named the Council’s new Chief of Teaching and Learning. In this position, she will work to advance rigorous standards in the nation’s large urban schools by supporting Council member districts in implementing high-quality professional learning, curriculum, and instruction that ensures all students are able to attain their greatest potential and thrive.

Assiraj joins the Council after serving most recently as Deputy Chief Academic Officer for Boston Public Schools where she led the district’s Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to redefine equitable tiered academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports; student-services; Student Success Teams; data; and professional learning.

In addition to serving in a variety of roles in the Boston school system, including Interim Superintendent of the Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education, Assiraj founded cairEDucation consulting where she developed a Schooling Justice Framework focused on anti-racist, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically affirming practices.

As a Moroccan immigrant who arrived in the United States at the age of 10 and graduated high school as an undocumented student, Assiraj shares the Council’s desire to address academic inequities among student groups and help all students succeed, especially students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and historically underserved students.

“With her 20+ years of experience in urban education, we are pleased to welcome Farah Assiraj as the Council’s new Chief of Teaching and Learning,” said Council Executive Director Ray Hart. “She is a proven leader, with a keen understanding of assessing and identifying systemic inequities and structural barriers in education who will help us tremendously in our efforts to improve the educational experiences for urban students across the country.”

Assiraj is a recipient of the Fulbright Distinguished Award in Teaching, holds a Bachelor of Arts in sociology, a Master of Arts in Teaching in linguistics, and is completing her Ph.D. in Research and Evaluation in Education.

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About The Council of the Great City Schools

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 to deliver the best possible education for urban youth. www.cgcs.org

**ARTICLES: CURRENT EVENTS AND ISSUES IN
EDUCATION**

Education Week

The Top Issues for District Leaders in 2023

By [Caitlynn Peetz](#) — January 13, 2023

The past year (or two or three) was incredibly busy in K-12 education.

COVID-19 continued to take its toll on districts, on top of students' urgent academic and mental health needs. Divisive political debates overtook school board meetings and staffing shortages hamstrung some schools' operations. Districts facing talent shortages and supply chain problems struggled to spend a windfall of federal cash.

Many of those issues are sure to spill over into 2023, says Ray Hart, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, an organization that represents many of the country's largest urban districts.

But with all of the challenges also comes opportunity, Hart said—for improvement, creative thinking, and embracing change.

Hart outlined his expectations and hopes for 2023 in a recent conversation with Education Week. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

What do you think will be the top issue in education in 2023?

The primary issue this year is really addressing the unfinished learning that students experienced during the pandemic.

We're really looking forward to understanding how well we've done this year with addressing those learning outcomes for students, particularly as we get into state test results, and then addressing those gaps.

I think the other areas ... are just addressing some of the needs around staffing that we've experienced, as most of our districts have struggled with staffing shortages, particularly in the areas like mathematics, special education. We just have to manage those and make sure we give kids the support that they need throughout the school year.

Obviously, budget and finance will likely come up toward the end of the year, and we're really looking closely at our state legislatures this year to see to what extent they support the schools across their states. This year, of all years, the [\[National Assessment of Educational Progress\]](#) data as well as the challenges that we're facing coming out of the pandemic, are clear indicators that the state and local investments in education are really, really paramount to make sure our kids have the long-term support that they need and to stabilize education.

What did districts learn last year that can help them address or prepare for those issue?

I think it would be a mistake for us to go into 2023 and think that the pandemic is not still weighing on the mental health of our students and on their social-emotional learning.

The lesson learned is that in order for us to really address the academic needs of our students, we need to make sure they're in a really solid place from a mental health standpoint.

Many of our districts are following through on that and making sure they're putting in those supports for kids, investing in bullying-prevention programs and restorative justice and all of the other things their students need.

We have to make sure we're addressing those social-emotional needs of students as we move forward. It's critical.

How prevalent will the school safety debates be this year?

Safety is on the top of mind for most of our superintendents and school districts, given what's happening in their broader communities.

In Philadelphia, for example, the superintendent recently shared that safety in the community is a top priority—ensuring that kids can get to school safely, that they go home to environments that are safe and conducive to making sure they come to school prepared to learn. That's not unique to Philadelphia by any stretch of the imagination.

Firearms are a challenge for all of our school districts across the country, and so making sure that we keep kids safe I think is absolutely going to be an area of focus moving forward

Are districts better prepared now to handle public health crises this year?

We built a great deal of muscle during the pandemic in responding to the medical and mental health challenges that our students face, and I don't think that's going to go away.

I think the lessons that we learned about how to handle those situations, while tough lessons, taught us how to really provide support to our students. Obviously, the pandemic was an extreme circumstance, but it taught us about providing support to our students, even when they're having challenges at home, being able to connect kids to the

classroom in ways that we hadn't before, ensuring that we're not only utilizing technology to the greatest extent possible, but we're also taking advantage of new technologies.

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I think all of those things are lessons learned from the pandemic that will be carried forward, not only this year but also in the years to come.

What is your greatest hope for education in 2023?

Our focus as an organization is always on student outcomes. So I'm hopeful that the unfinished learning that our students are coming out of the pandemic with will be addressed.

I think a lot of districts and the nation is going to react to [artificial intelligence] being built and think about how to make sure that doesn't influence students writing exam papers and other things like that.

I think the opposite actually is true. What I'm hoping for in the course of the year is that we can actually begin to sit down and think through how to leverage AI and other technologies in ways that benefit educational opportunities for all of our students [and] to begin to close some of the opportunity gaps that they might have with their peers around the country.

What I'm hopeful of is that new technologies will help us engage students in new ways and help us provide opportunities to students that they may not have had in the past.

EDUCATION WEEK

4 Things to Know About the Affirmative Action Showdown Before the Supreme Court

By [Mark Walsh](#) — October 28, 2022

With Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson joining the court in June, upon the retirement of Justice Stephen G. Breyer, she made it clear that she would recuse herself from the Harvard case. (She served on Harvard’s Board of Overseers until early this year.)

But she is participating in the North Carolina case. That led the court to separate the cases into two, distinct arguments. And based on its traditions, the court will hear the North Carolina case first on Monday, allowing Jackson to take the bench with her colleagues. Then, before the Harvard case is called, Jackson will slip out and return to her chambers, and her eight colleagues will remain to consider more recent versions of the “Harvard plan.”

The U.S. Supreme Court hears arguments Oct. 31 in two cases that may well hold the future of race in school admissions in the balance, both for K-12 and for higher education.

The cases of [Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina](#) (No. 21-707) and [Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College](#) (No. 20-1199) have been years in the making. But the justices have been flooded with briefs from legal scholars, educators at all levels including K-12, including teachers’ unions, public officials, corporations, generals, and other military experts, and students.

Here are four things to consider as the high court takes up these important cases.

The legacy of ‘Brown v. Board of Education’ continues to be debated

The Supreme Court’s landmark 1954 decision in [Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka](#), which held school facilities separated by race to be “inherently unequal,” is widely considered the court’s most important decision of the 20th Century, if not more. Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh called *Brown* “the greatest moment in Supreme Court history” during his 2018 confirmation hearings.

But in the legal briefing for the Harvard and North Carolina affirmative action cases, the parties and their allies are engaged in a vigorous debate about the meaning of *Brown*, specifically whether the desegregation decision broadly requires schools and colleges to be “colorblind” when it comes to considering race and ethnicity.

“The position that prevailed in *Brown* is that the Constitution denies any authority to use race as a factor in affording educational opportunities,” Students for Fair Admissions [argues in its merits](#)

[brief](#).

Harvard [responds in its brief](#) that “no equivalence can sincerely be drawn between the segregation *Brown* rightly condemned and a university’s limited consideration of race among many characteristics to assemble a diverse class with many different backgrounds.”

The University of North Carolina, [in its merits brief](#), also takes issue with Students for Fair Admission’s reading of *Brown*. The university says the landmark decision held that “the arbitrary separation of students based on race violates equal protection. Institutions like UNC that seek to bring students of diverse backgrounds together are the rightful heirs to *Brown*’s legacy.”

Meanwhile, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the same legal organization that won the *Brown* decision under its then-leader Thurgood Marshall, [argues in a brief](#) that “*Brown* did not espouse [SFFA’s] version of ‘colorblindness,’ which would require decisionmakers to willfully ignore ongoing racial inequality. ... To the contrary, *Brown* explained how the racial caste system established through chattel slavery demeans and subordinates Black people and thus promised to secure their equality in our educational system and as citizens of our democracy.”

Brown was based on the 14th Amendment’s equal-protection clause. At an oral argument earlier this month in a case about race consideration in congressional redistricting, Jackson, the court’s newest justice expressed her view that the drafters of the post-Civil War 14th Amendment intended the equal protection guarantee to be “race neutral” or “race blind.”

“And even more than that, I don’t think that the historical record establishes that the founders believed that race neutrality or race blindness was required, right?” Jackson said during the Oct. 4 arguments in [Merrill v. Milligan](#).

K-12 groups highlight the importance of racial and ethnic diversity in schools

As [Education Week has reported](#), numerous K-12 groups have filed briefs in the case, emphasizing the pipeline between high schools and colleges and that importance of diverse student enrollments is not limited to higher education.

“While this issue is not before the court in these consolidated cases, diversity is also a compelling interest in elementary and secondary schools,” says the friend-of-the-court [brief of the Council of the Great City Schools](#), the association of the nation’s largest urban school systems.

The brief makes detailed arguments about the persistence of racial segregation at the K-12 level, citing [a Government Accountability Office report](#) from earlier this year showing that in 2020-21, “more than a third of students (about 18.5 million) attended a predominantly same-race/ethnicity school—where 75 percent or more of the student population is of a single race/ethnicity.” Approximately half of all Black and Hispanic students attended schools with predominantly—75 percent or more—minority enrollment, the council says in the brief. “Because of racial isolation and educational inequality, race-neutral higher education admissions procedures are often inadequate to produce diverse college and university enrollments,” it says.

And there continues to be a need for narrowly tailored but race-conscious remedies for student assignment at the K-12 level, as permissible under the Supreme Court’s 2007 decision in [*Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District*](#), the council’s brief says.

That decision barred most voluntary race-conscious measures for assigning students to schools, but did allow (under Justice Anthony M. Kennedy’s controlling concurrence in the case): strategic selection of sites for new schools; attendance boundaries drawn with “general recognition of the demographics of neighborhoods”; allocation of “resources for special programs”; “targeted” recruiting of students and faculty; and “tracking enrollments, performance, and other statistics by race.”

“As Justice Kennedy pointed out in his concurrence, the Constitution does not mandate that public schools sit idly by as the problems of segregation and racial isolation continue to grow,” the council’s brief says.

One brief examines the quirks of racial and ethnic classification in U.S. education

Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., who has been skeptical of race-conscious government actions in education and other contexts, wrote in a 2006 redistricting case, “It is a sordid business, this divvying us up by race.”

A provocative brief filed on the side of challengers to affirmative action focuses on some of the details of the “divvying.” The brief raises questions about the racial and ethnic classifications used in American education.

“Harvard and UNC use racial and ethnic categories that are arbitrary and irrational in the context of pursuing diversity” and thus fail scrutiny under the U.S. Constitution, argues the [brief of David E. Bernstein](#), a professor at George Mason University’s Antonin Scalia Law School and the author of a forthcoming book, *Classified: The Untold Story of Racial Classification in America*.

Harvard and UNC classify students based on five racial categories: (1) Asian; (2) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; (3) Hispanic; (4) White; (5) African American; and (6) Native American, says Bernstein’s brief.

The categories are not unique to those schools, as they match the classifications used by the U.S. Department of Education, though the federal government has also offered “two or more races” in Census forms and other surveys for years now. Bernstein says these classifications stem from a 1970s effort by the federal Office of Management and Budget to standardize race and ethnicity data collected across the federal government.

“The racial and ethnic categories that Harvard, UNC, and universities across the country use in their admissions policies were created by executive-branch bureaucrats who specifically warned that they were not scientific or anthropological in nature and should not be used to determine eligibility for benefits in race-conscious policies,” Bernstein’s brief says. “The categories are imprecise, over- and underinclusive, and are not narrowly tailored to achieve educationally

beneficial diversity.”

Bernstein also makes the point that applicants self-report their racial and ethnic identities, and that Harvard and UNC, as well as other colleges, do not make any attempt to verify such selections.

“The problem with relying on self-identification is that it invariably results in inaccuracies and disparate treatment of similarly situated applicants,” the brief says. “This is due to fraudulent and exaggerated claims of minority ancestry, confusion about how to self-identify, and inconsistent classification of multiracial applicants.”

The North Carolina case is stealing some of the spotlight from Harvard

Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr. wrote the controlling opinion in [*Regents of the University of California, v. Bakke*](#), the 1978 decision that rejected racial quotas in student admissions but allowed for some consideration of race to promote diversity in higher education. He pointed to Harvard College’s plan as a constitutional means to achieve that goal. The “Harvard plan” used race or ethnicity as a plus factor in some admissions decisions but did not employ racial or ethnic quotas.

So some legal observers have viewed it as fitting that the Supreme Court would decide the future of affirmative action in education based on a challenge to Harvard’s more recent iteration of assigning “a plus factor” to underrepresented racial and ethnic minority group members in admissions.

But Students for Fair Admissions, the nonprofit group that challenged Harvard’s use of race, also sued the University of North Carolina at the same time. That case was moving slower than the Harvard case, and was awaiting a hearing in a federal appeals court (after a federal district judge upheld UNC’s use of race) when the Harvard case reached the high court.

But the justices accepted the invitation of SFFA to take up the North Carolina case alongside the one from Harvard. It seems likely that the justices wanted to consider the issue under both Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bars race discrimination in federally funded educational programs (covering Harvard and UNC), as well as under the 14th Amendment’s equal-protection clause, which governs a state university such as UNC but not a private institution such as Harvard.

Initially, the two cases were consolidated for argument and the Harvard case would have likely taken much of the attention.

With Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson joining the court in June, upon the retirement of Justice Stephen G. Breyer, she made it clear that she would recuse herself from the Harvard case. (She served on Harvard’s Board of Overseers until early this year.)

But she is participating in the North Carolina case. That led the court to separate the cases into two, distinct arguments. And based on its traditions, the court will hear the North Carolina case

first on Monday, allowing Jackson to take the bench with her colleagues. Then, before the Harvard case is called, Jackson will slip out and return to her chambers, and her eight colleagues will remain to consider more recent versions of the “Harvard plan.”

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Experts Expect K-12 Ripple Effects as Supreme Court Considers Race in Admissions

Conservatives want decisions to be merit-based, but others say losing affirmative action could ‘derail’ teacher diversity efforts in K-12

By Linda Jacobson

October 30, 2022

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments Monday in a pair of closely watched cases that could determine whether universities can continue to consider race in student admissions.

While it is focused on higher education, the court’s ruling in those cases is bound to filter down to K-12 schools.

“Despite the best efforts of school districts ... to create more diverse schools, racial segregation has increased over the last two decades. As a result, educational inequities persist,” according to a brief filed by the **Council of the Great City Schools** in defense of admissions policies at Harvard University and the University North Carolina.

At least 18 million students attend K-12 schools where more than three-quarters of the enrollment is of a single race, a recent Government Accountability Office report showed, and 14% of students attend schools where at least 9 out of 10 of students are of the same race.

Students for Fair Admissions, the plaintiffs in the case, are challenging admissions criteria at those universities they claim discriminate against Asian students. Admissions, they say, should be based on merit.

They want the court to overturn a 2003 opinion in *Grutter v. Bollinger* that upheld race-based admissions at the University of Michigan Law School. In that ruling, former Justice Sandra Day O'Connor foresaw a nation in which "the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary." The Biden administration, Democrats in Congress, and advocates for Black and Hispanic students argue that affirmative action is even more essential today because schools are still segregated and the promise of integration under *Brown v. Board of Education* "remains unfulfilled."

Supporters of affirmative action expect the court's six conservative justices to side with the plaintiffs. While this will be the first time Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson hears an education case, she's one of just three liberal justices. And she'll only sit on the bench for the UNC arguments, having recused herself from the Harvard case because she served on the school's Board of Overseers until this past June.

"I think it is highly likely that the court takes a position that disallows the use of race whatsoever in higher education admissions," said Stefan Lallinger, a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, a progressive think tank. Such a ruling, he said, could put "a final nail in the coffin of efforts by colleges and universities around the country to directly ensure that all of their students benefit from a racially diverse student body."

Most experts see two routes for the court to take in this case. First, it could follow the precedent set for K-12 schools in a 2007 case against Seattle Public Schools and the Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky.

In *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District*, the court ruled that school districts couldn't explicitly use race in their efforts to create more diverse schools. But separately, former Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote that districts still had a "compelling interest" to pursue racial integration. Since then, districts have moved toward voluntary integration programs based on family income.

Noting the court's recent decision to overturn the constitutional right to abortion, many predict that the six conservative justices won't be bound by precedent.

"It should be noted that the only reason the court salvaged any use of race in the [*Parents Involved*] case was the moderation of Justice Anthony Kennedy," Lallinger said.

That's why he thinks it's possible the court could take a second approach and rule as unconstitutional all efforts to achieve diversity.

"The current court does not have an Anthony Kennedy," Lallinger said.

'Pressure to discriminate'

In the wake of the *Parents United* opinion, many conservatives continue to hold that some of the admissions policies K-12 schools use for competitive schools are discriminatory.

In the Fairfax County, Virginia, schools, for example, the libertarian Pacific Legal Foundation is representing plaintiffs who sued the district over changes to acceptance criteria at the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology. The district dropped a rigorous admissions test and a \$100 application fee, and reserved seats for the top 1.5% of 8th graders in each middle school. Board members expressed hope that the changes would increase representation of Black and Hispanic students at the school, which the plaintiffs argued was illegal "racial balancing."

"We're all entitled to each be judged on our own individual characteristics, not on the basis of our membership in a group," said Wen Fa, a senior attorney at the law firm, which is also challenging similar admission policies in New York City, Boston and Montgomery County, Maryland.

In its brief supporting Students for Fair Admissions, the nonprofit

Parents Defending Education wrote that the 2003 decision in *Grutter v Bollinger* has “spawned increasing racial discrimination” that has spread to the K-12 system.

“As long as *Grutter* remains the law, K-12 schools will face an inexorable pressure to discriminate based on skin color,” the brief said.

But even those challenging the university policies point to integration efforts based on family income as the direction for higher education, said Richard Kahlenberg, a researcher who wrote a book on the issue. He served as an expert witness for the plaintiffs when the case was in a lower court, and he doesn’t think the justices have hinted that they would rule out all efforts to achieve diversity.

“Not a single Supreme Court justice has indicated that they entertain that extreme position,” he said.

He pointed to Clarence Thomas’s confirmation hearings in 1991, in which the justice defended programs that give preference to students who overcome obstacles.

“The kids could come from any background of disadvantage,” Thomas said. “The kid could be a white kid from Appalachia, could be a Cajun from Louisiana, or could be a Black kid or Hispanic kid from the inner cities or from the barrios, but I defended that sort of a program then and I would defend it today.”

But the court has grown far more conservative since Thomas joined. Most experts don’t expect different outcomes from the two cases, but note that Jackson is likely to raise questions in the UNC case that might not surface in the Harvard hearing.

There’s one clear difference between the two. Harvard is a private university and therefore subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which applies to any institution receiving federal funds. But UNC is a public university and is guided by the Constitution, specifically the 14th

Amendment's guarantee of equal protection.

Kahlenberg said that by taking both cases, the court can issue rulings based on both laws.

Impact on recruiting

Education advocates in North Carolina are already assessing the possible impact if the court ends affirmative action. Black and Hispanic students in the state may have fewer opportunities to attend the flagship university, according to researchers at the Hunt Institute, an education think tank.

Just look at California, where voters banned affirmative action in 1996, wrote Madeline Smith and Erica Vevurka, directors of higher education and K-12, respectively, at the institute.

“The ban [on] affirmative action made it more difficult for the state’s public institutions of higher education to explicitly recruit students of color,” they wrote. “It also restricted the access that students of color had to information around financial aid options.”

After 1996, the enrollment of freshman from underrepresented minority groups dropped by at least 50%, according to a brief that the University of California submitted to the Supreme Court in support of Harvard and UNC.

Even though the state has implemented diversity efforts targeting low-income families and first-generation college students, the university system “struggles to enroll a student body that is sufficiently racially diverse to attain the educational benefits of diversity,” the brief says. Beyond college admissions, some experts say the case has implications for efforts to create a more diverse teacher workforce, especially in the wake of the pandemic.

A ruling for the plaintiffs could “derail the progress” made in grow-your-

own programs and teacher residencies that target Black and Hispanic college students, said Jerell Hill, dean of the School of Human Development and Education at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena.

The college participates in an educator preparation program that targets universities serving large numbers of minority students. “It is difficult to measure a court decision that could delay social, economic and educational opportunities for decades,” he said.

Christopher Nellum, executive director of The Education Trust-West said if the court rules for the plaintiffs, there are still strategies to increase diversity in teaching. They include building strong teacher education programs at historically Black colleges and universities and expanding affordable housing for teachers.

“To have diverse professions like teaching, you’ve got to have a pipeline of folks who are coming out of undergrad who are also diverse,” he said. “We know diverse teachers are good for all students.”

Al Dia

Latinos among the most segregated in schools

A new report shows that Latino students are among the most segregated student groups in the U.S.

By

Renata Kaminski

November 29, 2022

In October, the U.S. Supreme Court listened to arguments regarding race-conscious college admissions. The discussion has brought to attention also the disparities between races and ethnicities in K-12 schools, which impact higher education.

EducationWeek cited a brief by the Council of the Great City Schools, the coalition of the nation's 76 largest urban school district, which argues that racial segregation in the nation's schools persists and has been getting worse. The document contains information from a 2019 report from the Civil Rights Project (CRP) at the University of California, Los Angeles. It appointed that Latino, along white students, were the most segregated groups.

Latino students attended a school in which 55% of the students were also Latino. As for White students, they attend schools in which 69% of the students had the same race/ethnicity.

Black students, who represented 15% of public school enrollment at the time of the report, attended schools where Black students made up an average of 47% of enrollment. Asian American students were attending schools where 24% of students had also an Asian background.

Black students attended schools with a combined Black and Latino enrollment averaging 67%, and Latino students attended schools with a combined Black and Latino enrollment averaging 66%.

“The data in this report shows a disconcerting increase of Black segregation in all parts of the country,” says the report.

The CRP report indicates that the proportion of “intensely segregated minority schools” — with an enrollment of 90% or more of non-white students — increased from 14.8% of schools in 2003 to 18.2% in 2016.

Data from the [U.S. Government Accountability Office](#) (GAO) about K-12 diversity also showed that more than one-third of U.S. public school students, about 18.5 million, attended a predominantly same-race/ethnicity school, defined as one where 75% or more of the student population is of a single race/ethnicity.

While the 38% proportion of K-12 public school students attending a predominately same-race/ethnicity school had declined slightly since 2014-15 school year (42%), still nearly half of white students attended schools predominantly with students of their own race/ethnicity compared to nearly a third of Hispanic students and nearly a quarter of Black students in 2020-21, the GAO found.

Such segregation in schools also contributes to a racial gap in academic achievement, cited the CRP report. According to a 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress data, and [more national achievement data recently released](#), comparing the first time students took the NAEP test since the start of the pandemic, average reading scores for 4th grade Black, Hispanic, white, and Native American students fell from 2019 to 2022.

To learn more about the CRP report, click [here](#).

Boston 25 News

New Boston Public Schools superintendent questioned about school safety

By [Ted Daniel, Boston 25 News](#) October 27, 2022 at 6:30 pm EDT

BOSTON — The new leader of Boston Public Schools said she is reevaluating the way the district handles incidents of bullying and violence. Superintendent Mary Skipper spoke at the Boston City Council Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice. She officially began her new role in late September.

The hearing was in response to a docket filed by City Councilor, At-Large Erin Murphy to, “assess and discuss how the Boston Public School Administration reports and responds to incidents of bullying and violence.”

At the beginning of the school year, 25 Investigates reported that BPS administrators failed to report violent incidents including a stabbing that occurred at Up Academy Charter School last May. The student’s grandmother told investigative reporter Ted Daniel the school notified family members but when she arrived, “the ambulance is nowhere to be found. No cops were called.”

Councilor Murphy cited several recent incidents of violence in and around Boston Schools including a stabbing at the Jeremiah E. Burke High School last month and said a report from the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education found that BPS does not ensure a safe environment for students. Murphy said some families are leaving BPS over concerns about safety.

City Councilor, At-Large Michael Flaherty echoed those concerns. He said families, “get totally frustrated, that they don’t think they’re getting heard and the problem continues to exist.” He spoke of one incident where a student was allowed to return to class just days after he, “tried to cut someone’s ear off.”

Both Council members said most of the issues pre-date Skipper’s arrival and they expressed their support for her.

Skipper said the impact of violence on the school community is devastating and she has been in contact with principals across the district to make sure all educators are trained to evaluate and support student safety concerns.

“We are reviewing everything as a team and we’re listening. We are examining what’s working for students and families and assessing what we need to do better,” she said.

The Council of the Great City Schools is currently conducting a safety audit of Boston Schools. A report with recommendations for safety improvements are expected to be released later next month.

Boston.com

Report: BPS special ed program putting Black and Latino boys at educational risk

"It's going to take time, but we have to act with urgency wherever we can in the suggestions and recommendations in the report."

Mary Skipper, superintendent, Boston Public Schools, speaking at podium with a sculpture of Abraham Lincoln on her right. A new report of Boston Public School's special education program indicates that students of color are being disproportionately referred to the program.

David L. Ryan/Globe Staff

By **Gwen Egan**

November 20, 2022

Boston Public Schools over-refer students to special education programs in general, but Black and Latino boys and students learning English are disproportionately referred to the program, **according to a review from the Council of the Great City Schools.**

The 129-page review of BPS's special education program, called "sobering" by Superintendent Mary Skipper, includes a laundry list of concerns about the program.

"Long-standing premises/biases triggering disproportionately high special education eligibility rates, especially for male students of color and English learners (ELs)," read one line about the review's themes.

According to the report, Black and Latino boys make up 53% of students with disabilities while only representing 35% of all BPS students. Students learning English represent 30% of the student body but 47% of students identified to have a hearing impairment, 46% of students with a communication impairment, and 55% of students with multiple impairments.

Michael O'Neill, a member of the school committee, **told WBUR** that this review was "a wake-up call to us on a critical issue."

BPS's "substantially separate placement rate", or the rate of students who are sent outside of their home district due to a disability, is more than double the national average of 13% at 29%. The review also noted that a small number of schools are tasked with helping students with individualized education programs, or IEPs.

The review included a list of recommendations for the school district to begin to remedy these flaws in their programming.

This list includes: addressing the district's overall high rate of disabilities in students, offering support before referring the student to the special education program, hiring experts, making sure students with disabilities aren't sent to a smaller proportion of schools, and other suggestions.

"It's going to take time, but we have to act with urgency wherever we can in the suggestions and recommendations in the report. It has to be done because our students cannot wait any longer for it not to be done," Skipper said according to WBUR.

WBUR

New 'sobering' review of BPS special education program highlights disparities

November 17, 2022

[Suevon Lee](#)

Boston Public Schools refers a disproportionate number of Black and Latino boys and English language learners to special education, increasing the likelihood they will be placed in separate environments that restrict their access to educational opportunities, a new report concludes.

The state's largest school district must revamp how it determines special education eligibility to reduce disparities by race, gender and English learner status, and ensure such classifications are appropriate and consistent, the report adds.

The findings come from a new [129-page review](#) of BPS' special education program from the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), a coalition of urban public school systems that conducts reviews of school system operations around the country.

An overview of the report was presented at the Boston School Committee meeting Wednesday night. BPS is undergoing a [systemic improvement plan](#), in which it must hit certain targets and show progress in key areas flagged by state education officials, such as transportation, special education and student safety.

Superintendent Mary Skipper, who [began in the role](#) in late September, called the report "sobering."

"Many of the findings, they confirm what we thought," she said at the meeting. "We see this as a way for us to look holistically at the district and more importantly, at a set of solutions — short term and long term — what we need to do in BPS."

The Council's report noted key areas of concern with BPS' special education system — namely, its high rate of identifying students with disabilities and over-identification of certain students.

While Black and Latino males combined represent 35% of all BPS students, they comprise 53% of students with disabilities, according to the report. And while English learners represent 30% of the BPS student body, they constitute 47% of students

identified as having a hearing impairment, 46% of those with a communication impairment and 55% of those with multiple impairments.

“It’s critical you look at the rates. How are those rates different from the nation, how are you looking at disabilities for students across grades, and by race, ethnicity and gender?” Ray Hart, executive director of the council, said.

What is "particularly alarming," Hart said in his presentation, is BPS' slow pace of providing supports to students in least restrictive environments where they can learn alongside their peers: "It hasn't changed over the course of a number of years while your peers across the country have transitioned," he said.

Boston places special education students in a "substantially separate" setting at a 29% rate, compared to a 14% statewide rate and 13% rate nationwide. That means many students are being sent to schools outside their home district based on a disability, limiting their opportunity to receive general education instruction and appropriate supports in an inclusion setting that fosters learning.

That also means a small number of schools are shouldering instruction for students with individualized education programs, or IEPs.

Michael O’Neill, a school committee member, said this was “a wake-up call to us on a critical issue," adding, these are "issues we've talked about for years in Boston but failed to correct."

“We need to increase our students in inclusion settings and we’ve had challenges making that happen,” he said, noting a high turnover among senior leadership, superintendents and city staff.

Of BPS' roughly 46,500 students, 22% are in special education, compared with 19% statewide and 14.5% nationwide.

To compile its report, the Council of the Great City Schools visited Boston schools from Aug. 23 to 26 and conducted interviews in late September and October with members from the Special Education Parent Advisory Committee, Boston School Committee, Boston Teachers Union and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

It also reviewed documents and analyzed data. It last performed a review of BPS’ special education system [in 2009](#).

The report offered [a set of recommendations for BPS](#): improve the consistency and appropriateness of special education referrals, offer students support before they are identified as requiring special education, analyze data, establish key performance indicators for students with IEPs, create better cross-functional teams across special education and English learner departments, create a broad vision of inclusion across the district, hold people accountable and seek out experts in the field.

School committee members acknowledged the scope of the task ahead.

Linda Chen, senior deputy superintendent for academics, said the district has begun work [by hiring](#) new assistant directors with disability expertise, creating an inclusion working group and committing around \$17 million in federal funds to support school inclusion efforts.

“It’s going to take time, but we have to act with urgency wherever we can in the suggestions and recommendations in the report,” Skipper said. “It has to be done because our students cannot wait any longer for it not to be done.”

State launches investigation into whether BPS violates education rights of students with disabilities

3:21



By **Adria Watson** Globe Staff, Updated October 25, 2022, 11:25 a.m.



Boston Public Schools has struggled to get its buses to run on time for more than a decade. Under a state improvement plan, the district needs to achieve on-time bus arrival rates of 95 percent or see improvements each month districtwide. DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

The state has opened an investigation into whether Boston Public Schools is violating the educational rights of students with disabilities [following a complaint](#) filed last week, Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley announced Tuesday.

The complaint, filed by advocates representing six students, alleges untimely buses run by BPS have caused students with disabilities to miss therapy sessions and academic instruction.

Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Greater Boston Legal Services filed a complaint on Oct. 14 with the state Education Department, alleging BPS transportation services are “inadequate, in complete disarray, and disproportionately impact students of color and students with disabilities.”

The advocates said the state is not doing enough to monitor the district’s progress on a recent state improvement plan, which includes a requirement that BPS provide timely transportation services for its students. They asked the state to intervene.

“The complaint has been opened and we are in the process of investigating,” Riley said during Tuesday’s state education board meeting. “Under federal law we have 60 days to investigate and either issue a letter of finding or a letter of closure, depending on the circumstances.”

If the state finds any violations, corrective actions could include training or changes to policies and procedures.

Riley added during Tuesday’s meeting that the district is also not meeting the requirements set by the improvement plan to have 95 percent of school buses arriving on-time each month — the most recent data show the average on-time performance for school buses in the morning for October was 88 percent, according to the district.

BPS Superintendent Mary Skipper said Tuesday the district met with Massachusetts Advocates for Children and is working to address the challenges the organization raised in the complaint.

The complaint details various issues BPS families have been dealing with when it comes to transportation.

One family’s 11-year-old twins, who are on the autism spectrum and have been diagnosed with epilepsy, haven’t taken the bus since the school year started because BPS hasn’t provided them with a required monitor trained to handle seizures so they can safely ride,

according to the complaint. The mother has been taking an Uber to and from school with

according to the complaint. The mother has been taking an Uber to and from school with her kids each day, which costs about \$30 a trip.

“Some of these issues are technical and more straightforward to implement,” Skipper said in an e-mail. “Others will require cross-sector collaboration to resolve, and we’ve begun having those critical conversations in partnership with DESE.”

3:21



Additionally, BPS will be receiving formal recommendations from the Council of Great City Schools in December, which Skipper expects to help the district “inform our policy decisions moving forward.”

BPS has struggled to get its buses to run on time for more than a decade. The state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [released a review of BPS](#) earlier this year that found students with disabilities were disproportionately impacted by late buses in the district. The review also found widespread systemic problems with the students in special education often receiving inadequate services.

State officials and BPS came to a [last-minute agreement](#) in June that averted a state takeover or labeling the district as underperforming but demanded immediate improvement.

“We’ve been in touch with BPS regarding their transportation challenges, particularly as it relates to students with disabilities,” Riley said on Tuesday. “We have encouraged the district to work with families and advocates to resolve this issue.”

Jakira Rogers, who leads the racial equity and access program at Massachusetts Advocates for Children, said she and other group representatives met Monday with Skipper and district administrators from BPS’s special education and transportation office.

“It was a great introductory conversation, but there’s still more work to do,” Rogers said. “We hope to see a lot more actions and next steps as a follow-up to that meeting.”

The complaint follows a letter penned to Skipper last month from Massachusetts

The complaint follows [a letter penned to Skipper last month](#) from Massachusetts

Advocates for Children, Greater Boston Legal Services, and nearly a dozen other

organizations, that raised families' concerns with transportation problems and urged the district to take immediate action and work with the organizations on solutions.

3:21



Rogers said she wants BPS to take seriously their recommendations — including options, such as offering taxi vouchers instead of reimbursement, when BPS fails to provide transportation — and determine which they are capable of implementing.

“The complaint was a follow-up, really after the long systemic issue has really blown up and families are struggling with transportation,” Rogers said, emphasizing the unreliability creates barriers to special education support and services and hinders parents’ ability to maintain employment. “Transportation is just not about school buses, it’s about access to education, and access to a free and appropriate education. That’s what all students deserve, and that’s what we will continue to fight for until we get there.”

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BostonGlobe.com

New special education report raises questions about bias against Boston's Black and Latino boys

By **James Vaznis** Globe Staff, Updated November 20, 2022, 1 hour ago

Black and Latino males make up more than half of all students receiving special education services in Boston Public Schools and are most likely to be segregated from the rest of their peers, according to an outside review that raises questions about the potential of racial and gender bias.

The disproportionate representation of Black and Latino males is a symptom of a much larger problem facing BPS, which funnels students with disabilities of all races and genders into separate classrooms at rates much higher than the state and nation, according to [the review](#) by the Council of the Great City Schools, a membership organization that represents the nation's largest school districts, including Boston.

Raymond Hart, the council's executive director, called the disproportionate representation of Black and Latino males in special education programs "glaring" and said BPS falls well behind the nation's other large districts in integrating students with disabilities into general education classrooms. Most other urban districts have made inclusive classrooms routine practice.

Specifically, the report found that 29 percent of BPS students with disabilities are taught in "substantially separate" classrooms — a rate more than twice that of state and national averages.

"I know there's going to be pressure from the community and others to change immediately, but taking time out to plan before implementing changes will be important and making sure the community understands that will be critical," Hart said in an interview. "The challenges have been decades in the making and you can't flip a switch and immediately change systems that have been in place for as long as these ones have."

BPS commissioned the review as part of a [state-mandated district improvement plan](#) to address wide-ranging problems with operations, management, and instruction, including the disproportionate segregation of students of color with disabilities. The state over the years has repeatedly found BPS special education programs in violation of state and federal laws. A 2020 audit of the

district concluded that its special education services were in “systemic disarray” and hamstrung by high turnover in leadership that has continued since then.

Reviewing special education in BPS is somewhat familiar territory for the Council of the Great City Schools, which conducted a [similar evaluation for BPS in 2009](#). That evaluation found many of the same problems. .

Problems with special education go well beyond the lack of inclusive classrooms and include long delays in evaluating students for services and a high concentration of students with disabilities in low-performing schools, according to the report.

Yet once students with disabilities receive the services they are entitled to, many still struggle in classrooms, especially those who are not native speakers of English and are not fluent yet.

Superintendent Mary Skipper told the School Committee Wednesday night that she and her team are reviewing the recommendations and are committed to making improvements in special education. She said the report was “sobering to read.”

“We really need to work with urgency, but also to think about a multiyear process so that we get this right and that we really truly shift our mindsets and our practices in the field,” she said.

In one step toward progress, BPS this summer negotiated a [new contract](#) with the Boston Teachers Union that calls for all classrooms to be inclusive. The effort will take years and includes ramping up training for teachers so they can gain certification to work with students with disabilities and creating implementation plans to ensure all students will be well-served in classrooms.

Edith Bazile, an education advocate and retired BPS special education administrator, said BPS needs to move more quickly.

“There needs to be immediate transformational change so learning can occur now,” she said. “These students can’t wait until you train the current cadre of teachers over the next two or three years.”

The review included numerous recommendations, both big and small. Among them: phasing in the expansion of inclusive classrooms, noting the effort will

take years; improving the consistency and appropriateness of referrals, assessments, and eligibility decisions for special education by the beginning of the next school year; and developing key performance indicators for students with disabilities and a separate set for English learners with disabilities that include annual targets to measure growth.

Roxi Harvey, chair of the Boston Special Education Parent Advisory Council, said she hopes the recommendations will lead to long overdue changes.

“It is a good start to at least get to the bare minimum of serving some of the most vulnerable students in BPS,” she said.

Harvey has experienced the shortcomings of the system. When she enrolled her son, who is Black and Latino, a few years ago for preschool, BPS initially offered a placement in a substantially separate classroom, but Harvey refused to accept it. She fought to get him into a classroom with the rest of his peers. She said a friend had a similar experience with her son who is Black Cabo Verdean and Haitian American.

“It indicates a pattern of systemic racism of not servicing Black and Latinx students well with early preventative interventions,” she said. “If you believe a student/community doesn’t want to learn, you teach them in a manner for it to be self-fulfilling and reinforce bias.”

John Mudd, who serves on the School Committee’s English learners task force, said he was pleased the report stressed the need to provide English learners with disabilities access to instruction in their native language and called for a separate strategic plan for English learners with disabilities, noting they are “they are neglected as a group” and have unique needs.

But Mudd questioned BPS’s capacity to implement the changes — at least for now.

“Can BPS attract the leadership that is necessary to guide the systemic change that must occur if these kids are going to be given an opportunity to learn?” he asked, “and can BPS recruit hire and develop the teachers and paraprofessionals and administrative staff that is bilingual and competent to provide the support these students need?”

The Advocate

Baton Rouge public schools likely not identifying many children with disabilities

BY CHARLES LUSSIER | STAFF WRITER

NOV 26, 2022 - 2:30 PM

The East Baton Rouge Parish school system currently educates about 4,000 children with disabilities, roughly 10% of the students in the district. A team of outside educators, however, say that number is well below both the state and the nation, suggesting that hundreds, even thousands of children in Baton Rouge are not getting the help they need.

This is one of the many findings of [an outside evaluation of special education in the parish school system](#) conducted earlier this year by the [Council of the Great City Schools](#).

Ray Hart, executive director for the Council, said the state average for children receiving disability services is 12.5% and 14.4% for the nation. The average among the 78 urban school districts that the Council counts as members — East Baton Rouge is one of them — is 16%.

“So you are significantly smaller in terms of your identification,” Hart told the parish School Board [in a recent presentation](#).

If East Baton Rouge met the national average, it would be providing special education services to 1,700 more children than it is now. If it met the average of its peer districts in

the Council of Great City Schools, the school system would be identifying another 2,300 children in Baton Rouge for disability services.

This finding is part of [a 219-page report](#) completed this past summer by a six-member strategic support team provided by the Council as a perk of being a member. In the spring, the Council conducted [a similar evaluation of the school system's Human Resources department](#).

The Council's evaluation teams are made up of school administrators who work for urban school districts in the fields being evaluated.

The special education team visited Baton Rouge in late January and early February, presented an early report to Supt. Sito Narcisse and his staff in the spring and then completed a final report over the summer. Hart [gave a short presentation on the findings](#) at the School Board's Nov. 17 meeting.

In his School Board presentation, Hart hit on a few other big findings.

One involved whether the school staff are identifying the right disabilities and whether they are catching them early enough.

For instance, in the early elementary grades there's a relatively high number of children who educators say suffer from speech language impairment, yet many students later determined to have specific disabilities, such as reading problems, aren't diagnosed in large numbers until around fifth grade.

Hart said the results make his team wonder “might there be an opportunity to identify children earlier to provide additional supports to them.”

Board member Mike Gaudet was not surprised and inquired as to why.

“I’ve heard constantly we have a backlog at Pupil Appraisal,” Gaudet said.

Hart said his team did not take a deep dive to figure out why that has been happening, but he said some of the delay appears to be on purpose. He suggested further internal inquiry.

“If I’m not mistaken there is a grade level point where a number of appraisals are done, they’re done at a targeted point,” Hart said. “At that point, we did see a spike in the number of students who were identified.”

Another issue Hart highlighted is that many children with disabilities are not spending enough time in the regular education classrooms, which he defined as at least 80% of their day. About 70% of students with specific disabilities spent 80% or more of their day in regular education classes, but only 10% of children with intellectual disabilities and 12% of children with autism are in their classes as much. Only Baton Rouge children with emotional disabilities outpace the nation when it comes to percentage of time in the classroom.

“Students outside the classroom are missing grade-level instruction. They are pulled out,” Hart said. “They are missing instruction in either in mathematics, reading, English language arts, science, social studies for additional support services but they miss that instruction.”

The report offers detailed recommendations for how to fix the problems outlined, some of which are already under way. A big fix is for the school system to improve a districtwide shift instituted by Narcisse to what's known as "multi-tiered systems of support," or MTSS, which merges into one a couple of common school improvement strategies that have strong bases in education research.

The approach is new to most Baton Rouge educators. The Council conducted focus groups where they found that this transition so far "has been difficult for EBRPSS school personnel."

The Advocate

Baton Rouge public schools land \$3.5 million grant to improve math instruction nationwide

- **BY CHARLES LUSSIER | STAFF WRITER**

NOV 3, 2022 - 7:54 PM

The East Baton Rouge Parish school system’s approach to math instruction will soon become the subject of intensive investigation, particularly how well it is helping minority children and those living in poverty, thanks to a \$3.5 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Once this research project is complete, the prominent Seattle-based foundation plans to share its findings widely.

“This will provide math teachers in EBR and nationwide the tools they need to learn as we progress mathematically in our country,” said Superintendent Sito Narcisse.

Narcisse said accelerating math achievement is important given the “unfinished learning” that students suffered during the pandemic.

Narcisse spoke Thursday at a press conference to highlight the grant.

New York City public schools was the only other school district to land this competitive “math equity” grant. It was competing in a field of 17 applicants.

The Gates Foundation developed the competitive grant program with input from the Council of Great City Schools, of which East Baton Rouge is a member.

Ray Hart, executive director of the Council, spoke at the press conference.

“When we worked with them to develop what would help all of our students get better, learn and grow, I couldn’t think of a better place where we can begin to learn and make investments in our young people here in East Baton Rouge,” said Hart.

LSU’s Social Research & Evaluation Center is in charge of the research and is in the process of devising the research design behind this project. They will be watching progress in math of East Baton Rouge Parish schoolchildren as they use online software the school system subscribes to called DreamBox Learning.

The grant, which will last 33 months, will follow how students perform on their DreamBox math lessons over the next 33 months as well as accompanying classroom math instruction to identify what out of all that leads to better student engagement and results. LSU will work with a network of experts throughout the research.

“It’s not just a research team on the side. We are part of a research infrastructure,” said LSU Social Research & Evaluation Center Director Judith Rhodes

DreamBox’s chief learning officer, Tim Hudson, also spoke. He said DreamBox is designed not only to help children improve their math schools, but also improve the motivation and interest in math, thereby overcoming the stigma against math that so many children develop at an early age.

“Our goal is to inspire children think for themselves,” Hudson said.

DreamBox was first used in East Baton Rouge in fall 2021. Hudson said East Baton Rouge is on the right track.

“East Baton Rouge is a district with an innovative leader, with innovative ideas, with a bold vision for the community,” Hudson said.

ARTICLES: DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

WKSU

Cleveland school board settles on some goals for next CEO as search process ramps up

Conor Morris

November 7, 2022

WKSU

The next Cleveland Metropolitan School District CEO is going to have their work cut out for them.

The CMSD Board of Education had [a lengthy discussion](#) Saturday morning to review the state of the district's trajectory over the last two decades and set goals for the next CEO. This comes as following the [announcement](#) earlier this year by CEO Eric Gordon that he was stepping down, with his tenure set to end at the end of the school year.

The top-line takeaways from the meeting were the board landing on some tentative student outcome goals for the next CEO to work toward:

- Pursuing more racially equitable outcomes for students by eliminating achievement differences between students of different races (white versus Black versus Hispanic, for example).
- Improving academic achievement for third graders, with a big focus on literacy and reading.
- Improving quality of pre-kindergarten programming.
- Improving the quality of students who graduate from CMSD, as measured in part by fewer students needing remedial courses if they go on to post-secondary options like college.

The board was shepherded through the goal-setting process by Ray Hart, executive director of the national advocacy organization the Council of Great City Schools. CMSD is a member of that organization and Gordon was former chair of its Board of Directors.

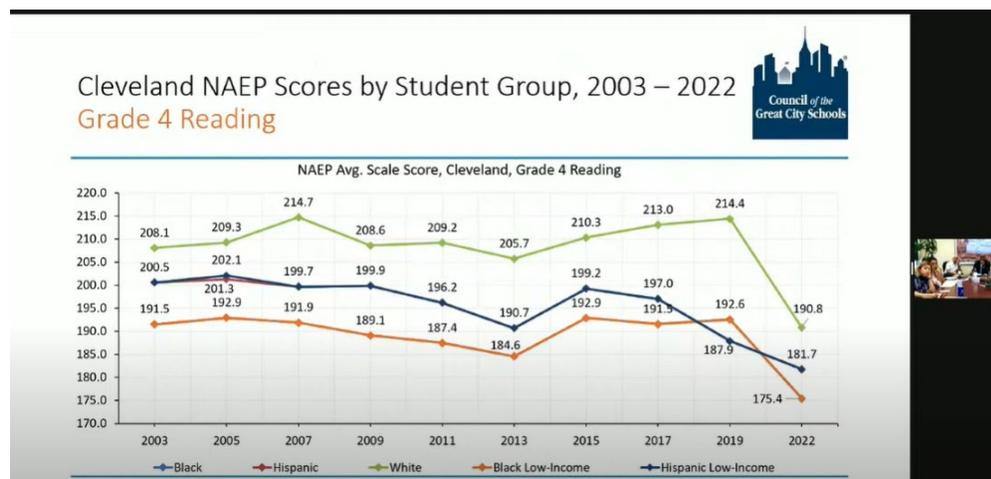
Hart showed a series of graphs measuring the poverty level of the district's students versus data on their academic performance. One graph he presented showed that CMSD had the second-highest percentage of households with incomes below about \$25,000 of any district in the U.S., second only to U.S. territory Puerto Rico's department of education.

And Hart said that means a greater number of students who are "at-risk," identified as homeless, in foster care, with families who qualify for food stamps and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and/or are over-age for their grade level. Those students struggle the most with their academics.

“The challenge of educating students who are in poverty is the challenge that you’re asking your superintendent to take on,” he said.

The pandemic-related school closures also were a major setback in progress for CMSD, Hart said; he provided graphs showing fourth-grade math and reading scores that dipped significantly once the pandemic hit and schools across the country closed.

But even before the pandemic, the trend lines of test performance for those fourth graders did not show sustained, long-term improvement across three different CMSD CEOs' tenure, from 2003 to 2022.



A graph of CMSD students' performance on National Assessment of Educational Progress tests over the years presented by the Council of the Great City Schools during a CMSD Board of Education meeting on Saturday, Nov. 5.

There were some positives, however. Hart said students' scores are recovering after the pandemic-related school closures at a faster rate than the rest of Ohio on a number of metrics, mostly in grades 5 through 8, and in a few subjects in high school. But they are not recovering at a faster rate in the lower grades, especially in third and fourth grades, which was cause for concern among the board members. Hart said part of the reason for that is that it was hard for students to learn how to read, and learn other basics, through online classes.

“Everybody had to log on virtually, so who are these third graders and fourth graders? Where were they two years ago? Kindergarten, first grade, second grade,” Hart said.

Robert M. Heard Sr., vice chair of the board, said the board has been pleased with a lot of the progress the district has made under Gordon's tenure. CMSD's graduation rates have improved drastically from 64% to 80.1% between 2012-2013 and 2019-2020, along with the number of students enrolled in high-quality preschools, for example.

“We're moving a lot of things in the right direction,” he said. “It has always been a conversation about how fast, and I think we all agree that, not fast enough.”

Board members, through further discussion, landed on the goals listed above, which resulted from distillation of priorities the board members shared. Other priorities board members mentioned included improving education outcomes for students with disabilities and English-language learners; increasing mental health supports for students; and reducing summer learning losses while expanding after-school and summertime learning opportunities. Hart asked the board to limit their main student achievement goals to a small number, between three and five, in order to ensure the next CEO's full attention to improving each outcome.

Board members also discussed other issues facing the district as it looks to craft a better future for all Cleveland students. Leah D. Hudnall, the board member recently appointed by Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb, said she “struggles” with the idea of the lottery system for students to get into some of CMSD’s higher-performing schools like the John Hay School of Science and Medicine, considering CMSD is an open-enrollment district that any student can attend.

“If I have a child from Glenville who wants to be a ballerina, how do I make sure she’s actually in the (Cleveland) School of the Arts with the child that had 8 years worth of private training from Shaker that wants to train at School of Arts as well?” she said.

That issue – preserving quality school options for Cleveland-specific students – could become what Hart described as a “guardrail” set out for the next CEO, which Hart explained as an issue the board could identify for the CEO to be careful of or avoid. Determining those will be one of the next steps for the board, in addition to determining further priorities and “levers,” or specific theories and constituencies to rely on in attempting positive change.

The meeting comes as Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb revealed Thursday the [results of a listening tour](#) on education conducted earlier this year by the city, which suggested ways the city would like to work with CMSD and other partners to accomplish further improvement in education across the city.

The district issued a request for proposals (RFP) to find a search firm to provide candidates for the next CEO earlier this fall, and the deadline for firms to apply passed late last month. CMSD spokesperson Tom Ott said the board hopes to hire a firm by the end of November.

Las Vegas Review-Journal

NEVADA VIEWS: Make-up of school boards must be secondary to student success

By Irene Cepeda Special to the Review-Journal

October 29, 2022 - 9:01 pm

Our community has been discussing the makeup of school boards for many years. Recently, the lieutenant governor suggested that some members of such boards be appointed. Currently, all are elected.

No matter what ideas are discussed and debated, our focus as the governing board of the nation's fifth-largest school district must be on the success of our students. Five of our School Board members attended the Council of Great City Schools' 66th Annual Conference. We engaged with school board members from 77 large urban districts. The composition of these boards all differ. Some boards are appointed, some hybrid and some are elected.

Still, all school boards face the same issues: board dysfunction, governance issues, disruptive public meetings and disruptive board members.

Focusing on student outcomes is the most critical challenge every school board faces. It is a challenge because board members run their election campaigns on the inputs (e.g. more cameras in schools, or curriculum issues) but rarely do they run

on improving student outcomes. Once they become board members, they focus on pushing forward the issues on which they ran, many of which are not the duties of a school board member.

For most, it is a difficult paradigm shift from the politician who advances a personal agendas to the board member on a team of seven focused on student outcomes. Meanwhile, our students suffer and student outcomes never change.

Changing the composition of school boards is admirable. However, the core issues are still not being addressed.

Members with a strong understanding and experience in board governance can make a positive change. They understand that setting the vision for the community is critical. They understand the importance of setting and monitoring student-centered goals. They understand systemic change takes a long term and focused commitment from multiple parties.

We know, from experience and research, these tasks require basic organizational management actions, and this year the board has refocused our energy on this work.

Research repeatedly demonstrates that districts with constant superintendent turnover fail to address long-standing challenges. For the first time in decades, the Clark County School District is addressing the lack of systems and structures. We are building a foundation upon which future student success hinges.

As we dig deeper to address historically negative practices, special interests advocate for their own interests. The same individuals who welcomed change when an external superintendent was hired are now the ones pleading for the status quo.

Aside from elections, there is little anyone can do to hold board members accountable. The board has tried multiple paths to address destructive board member behavior. But some members would rather pursue their political paradigm. In four years they can do a lot of damage to what is the most important public institution in our community.

The children in this community deserve our undivided attention. Student outcomes will never change until adult behaviors change. Our students deserve leadership that will place students and student outcomes above adult issues.

Irene Cepeda is president of the Clark County School Board.

SOCIAL MEDIA



COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS:

Monthly Update: October 2022

KEY MESSAGES

- » 66th Annual Fall Conference
- » Green-Garner Award Finalists

SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

- » 71.9 K Impressions
- » 12.6 K Profile Visits
- » 375 Mentions
- » 3 Link click per day
- » 125 Retweets
- » 737 Likes
- » 127 New Followers (~9,179 followers total)

MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA POST:

Congratulations to @ClarkCountySch Superintendent, @SuptJaraCCSD for being named a Green-Garner Award Finalist! Jara has been a beacon of excellent leadership in Urban Education.



ANALYSIS:

We held our first in-person Fall Conference since the COVID-19 pandemic in October. The 66th Annual Fall Conference had over 30 breakout sessions and three keynote speakers, including Jose Antonio Vargas, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, filmmaker, and advocate for immigration, Sanjay Gupta, CNN Chief Medical Correspondent, and Brittany Packnett Cunningham, social justice activist, educator, and writer. The conference also featured a National Town Hall meeting on “Politics and Public Education” moderated by Beth Frerking, the editor-in-chief for Education Week.



COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS:

Monthly Update: October 2022

BROADCAST AND PRINT MEDIA

8 Media Mentions

- » *New York Times*, Math Scores Fell in Nearly Every State, and Reading Dipped on National Exam (October 24, 2022)
- » *Education Week*- With NAEP Scores in Hand, Schools Double Down on 'Urgent' Recovery Efforts (October 25, 2022)
- » *NewsNation*- While Test Scores Fall, Schools Try to Curb Learning Loss (October 25, 2022)
- » *KPBS*- Report card: SDUSD reading scores steady, math scores decline (October 25, 2022)
- » *The Boston Globe*- State launches investigation into whether BPS violates education rights of students with disabilities (October 25, 2022)
- » *Boston 25 News*- New Boston Public Schools superintendent questioned about school safety (October 27, 2022)
- » *Education Week*- 4 Things to Know About the Affirmative Action Showdown Before the Supreme Court (October 28, 2022)
- » *74*- Experts Expect K-12 Ripple Effects as Supreme Court Considers Race in Admissions (October 30, 2022)

URBAN EDUCATOR HEADLINES

- » Nine Finalists Named for Top Award in Urban Education Leadership
- » Council Town Hall Meeting to Focus on Politics; Social Justice Activist to Address Conferees
- » Omaha Superintendent Receives Top Education Prize
- » Urban School Districts Make Academic Gains Despite the Pandemic
- » 2022 Blue Ribbon Schools Named
- » L.A. School District Partners with Actor George Clooney to Open Film and TV Academy
- » Clark County Opens New Center to Support Newcomer Students

TOP DIGITAL MEDIA POSTS

- » Congratulations to @ClarkCountySch Superintendent, @SuptJaraCCSD for being named a Green-Garner Award Finalist! Jara has been a beacon of excellent leadership in Urban Education.; **13,518 impressions, 57 likes**
- » Congratulations to @JCPSKY Superintendent, Marty Pollio for being named a Green-Garner Award Finalist! Pollio has been a dedicated leader in Jefferson County and continues to pave the way for Urban School Leadership. ; **8,088 impressions, 140 likes**
- » Congratulations to @HoustonISD Superintendent, Millard House II for being named a Green-Garner Award Finalist! House has stood out as an outstanding leader in Urban Education.; **7,207 impressions, 107 likes**
- » Congratulations again to @Detroitk12 Superintendent Nikolai P. Vitti for being selected as the 2022 Urban Educator of the Year.; **4,048 impressions, 62 likes**



COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS:

Monthly Update: October 2022

HIGHLIGHTS



Congratulations to [@JCP SKY](#) Superintendent, Marty Pollio for being named a Green-Garner Award Finalist!

Pollio has been a dedicated leader in Jefferson County and continues to pave the way for Urban School Leadership.



Congratulations again to [@Detroitk12](#) Superintendent Nikolai P. Vitti for being selected as the 2022 Urban Educator of the Year.

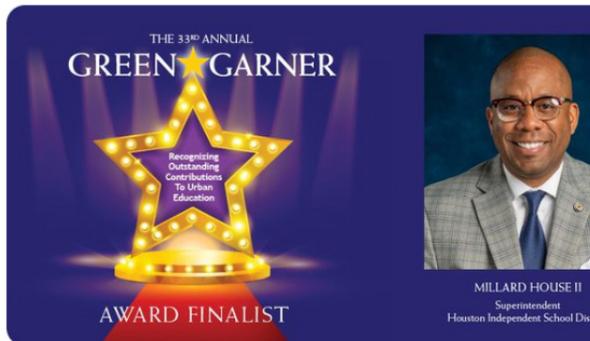


[#CGCS22](#) sessions are underway. Sessions like boosting student performance, recruiting and retaining teachers, and identifying future school leaders are some sessions taking place this morning.



Congratulations to [@HoustonISD](#) Superintendent Millard House II for being named a Green-Garner Award Finalist!

House has stood out as an outstanding leader in Education.



Congrats to [@OCPSnews](#) and [@UCF](#) for winning the Dr. Shirley Schwartz Urban Education Award at [#CGCS22](#) for their programs preparing STEM teachers to effectively serve all student populations.



First meeting of the day at [#cgcs22](#) and there's standing room only in our Task Force Meeting on Black & Latina Young Women & Girls.





COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS:

Monthly Update: November/December 2022

KEY MESSAGES

- » COO Conference
- » 66th Annual Fall Conference Recap
- » ESSR Funds Campaign
- » Council Year in Review

SOCIAL MEDIA STATS (combined)

- » 13.3 K Impressions
- » 3,702 Profile Visits
- » 120 Mentions
- » 0 Link click per day
- » 22 Retweets
- » 77 Likes
- » -119 New Followers (~9,060 followers total)

MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA POST:

Congrats to @ebrpschools for winning a \$3.5 million grant from the @gatesfoundation. "I couldn't think of a better place where we can begin to learn and make investments in our young people here in East Baton Rouge." said Council Executive Director Ray Hart



ANALYSIS:

In November, we held our Chief Operating Officer Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. We also did a recap of the fall conference, highlighting the conference sessions, keynote speakers, award winners, and the National Town Hall meeting. In December, as we reached the end of the year, we highlighted the Council's accomplishments for 2022.



COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS:

Monthly Update: November/December 2022

BROADCAST AND PRINT MEDIA

7 Media Mentions

- » *The Advocate*, Baton Rouge public schools land \$3.5 million grant to improve math instruction nationwide (November 3, 2022)
- » *WKSU*- Cleveland school board settles on some goals for next CEO as search process ramps up (November 7, 2022)
- » *WBUR*- New 'sobering' review of BPS special education program highlights disparities (November 17, 2022)
- » *Boston.com*- Report: BPS special ed program putting Black and Latino boys at educational risk (November 20, 2022)
- » *The Boston Globe*- New special education report raises questions about bias against Boston's Black and Latino boys (November 20, 2022)
- » *The Advocate*- Baton Rouge public schools likely not identifying many children with disabilities (November 26, 2022)
- » *Al Dia*- Latinos among the most segregated in schools (November 29, 2022)

URBAN EDUCATOR HEADLINES

- » Students in Most Urban Districts Hold Steady in Reading on National Test
- » CNN Correspondent, Immigration Advocate & Social Justice Activist Address Council
- » Politics and Public Education Focus of Town Hall Meeting
- » Detroit Superintendent Named Urban Superintendent of the Year
- » St. Paul Leader Tenure Extended; Omaha, Columbus, Wichita, Aurora Leaders to Depart
- » Philanthropist Donates Millions to Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Fresno and Louisville
- » Voters Decide on Ballot Measures
- » Legislative Column: Right Down the Middle

TOP DIGITAL MEDIA POSTS

- » Congrats to @ebrpschools for winning a \$3.5 million grant from the @ gatesfoundation. "I couldn't think of a better place where we can begin to learn and make investments in our young people here in East Baton Rouge." said Council Executive Director Ray Hart ; **1,405 impressions, 19 likes**
- » Ashford Hughes of @MetroSchools, Gabriella Duran-Blakey of @ ABQschools, Alishia Jolivette, @ HoustonISD, and Kristen Howard of @UMich, formerly @Detroitk12 on a panel earlier today at the CGCS #COO Conference; **956 impressions, 14 likes**
- » The complexity of the literacy trajectory of #ELLs needs to be considered prior to screening for dyslexia. For questions to ask prior to screening, read the new brief at: <https://bit.ly/3f8Mz1i> ; **646 impressions, 3 likes**
- » On behalf of the Council of the Great City Schools: We wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year!!; **602 impressions, 3 likes**



COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS:

Monthly Update: November/December 2022

HIGHLIGHTS



Ashford Hughes of @MetroSchools, Gabriella Duran-Blakey of @ABQschools, Alishia Jolivet, @HoustonISD, and Kristen Howard of @UMich, formerly @Detroitk12 on a panel earlier today at the CGCS #COO Conference.



On behalf of the Council of the Great City Schools: We wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year!!



Did you know that @dallaschools used ESSER funds to create Reading Academies for professional development on the science of teaching reading for K-3 teachers.

#CGCSARP

Transforming Literacy in Dallas ISD

DALLAS ISD CREATED READING ACADEMIES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE SCIENCE OF TEACHING READING FOR K-3 TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS TO TRANSFORM LITERACY ACROSS THE DISTRICT.

Council of the Great City Schools
DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



The complexity of the literacy trajectory of #ELLs needs to be considered prior to screening for dyslexia. For questions to ask prior to screening, read the new brief at: bit.ly/3f8Mz1i

Sample Questions to Consider Before Screening ELs for Dyslexia (Linan-Thompson, 2014)

When did the student learn English?

When did the student learn to read and write in English?

Did they receive reading and writing instruction in their first language (L1)? If currently receiving foundational skills instruction in English, for how long, and what do formative assessments reveal?

What are the differences and similarities between the syntactic structures of the L1 and English?

What is the alphabetic structure of the L1?

How consistent is the orthography of the L1?

Is there any overlap in vocabulary? Are there cognates?

THE URBAN EDUCATOR

Urban Educator

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 CIJADALUPE CUERRERO Superintendent Portland Public Schools	 MILLARD HOUSE II Superintendent Houston Independent School District	 JESUS F. JARA Superintendent Clark County School District
 SEAN McDANIEL Superintendent Oklahoma City Public Schools	 MARTY POLLIO Superintendent Jefferson County Public Schools	 NIKOLAI P. VITTI Superintendent Detroit Public Schools Community District

Nine Finalists Named for Top Award in Urban Education Leadership

Nine standout superintendents have been selected to compete for the nation's top award in urban education leadership. But only one will be named the Urban Educator of the Year.

[Read More](#)



Town Hall Meeting to Focus on Politics and Public Education

With the midterm elections approaching, the Council of the Great City Schools will feature a discussion on "Politics and Public Education" at its annual town hall meeting on Oct. 21 in conjunction with the coalition's 66th Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 19-23, in Orlando, Fla.

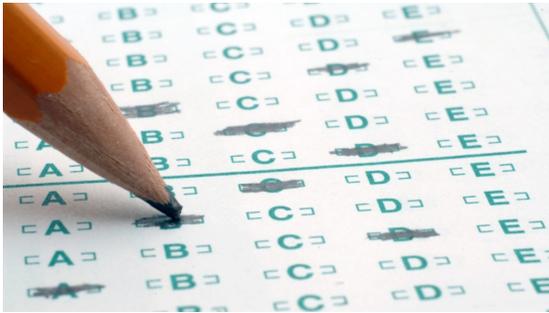
[Read More](#)



Omaha Superintendent Receives Top Education Prize

Cheryl Logan, superintendent of Omaha Public Schools, has been awarded the 2022 Harold W. McGraw, Jr., Prize in Education in the category of Pre-K-12 education.

[Read More](#)



Urban School Districts Make Academic Gains Despite the Pandemic

Several big-city school systems – Birmingham, Charleston County (S.C.), Dallas, and Nashville – are reporting improved performance on recent state assessments. And two of those districts, Birmingham and Dallas, show performance levels higher than pre-pandemic levels.

[Read More](#)



2022 Blue Ribbon Schools Named

Three schools in Hawaii were recently recognized as [2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools](#) by the U.S. Department of Education. The three schools were among 297 across the nation honored for their overall academic performance or progress in closing the achievement gap among student subgroups.

[Read More](#)



L.A. School District Partners with Actor George Clooney to Open Film and Television Academy

The nation's second largest school district recently opened a school designed to build a more inclusive pipeline of historically underrepresented, college and career ready students interested in the film and television industries.

[Read More](#)



Clark County Opens New Center to Support Newcomer Students

In an effort to help newcomer students and their families transition to life in Nevada, the Clark County School District in southern Nevada, recently opened a Family Support Center.

[Read More](#)

Upcoming Events



Council of the Great City Schools' 66th Annual Fall Conference

The Council will be holding its 66th Annual Fall Conference in Orlando, FL.

When:

Oct 19 - Oct 23, 2022

Where:

Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress
1 Grand Cypress Blvd
Orlando, FL 32836

[Register Link](#)



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Urban Educator



Students in Most Urban Districts Hold Steady in Reading on National Test

The 2022 Nation's Report Card for the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) shows most participating districts held steady in fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mirrored national trends in math.

[Read More](#)

**CNN Correspondent, Immigration
Advocate & Social Justice Activist
Address Council**



ORLANDO—Jose Antonio Vargas – journalist, filmmaker, undocumented citizen – called on educators to “open every window” to aid immigrant youth in their schools.

[Read More](#)



Politics and Public Education is the Focus of Council Town Hall

ORLANDO—The issue of politics and public education took center stage at a town hall meeting moderated by Beth Frerking, the editor-in-chief for Education Week, at the Council of the Great City Schools 66th Annual Fall Conference.

[Read More](#)



Detroit Superintendent Named Urban Superintendent of the Year

ORLANDO—The Green-Garner Award, the most prestigious honor in urban education leadership, was presented to Detroit Public Schools Community District Superintendent Nikolai Vitti during the Council of the Great City Schools’ 66th Annual Fall Conference.

[Read More](#)



St. Paul Leader Tenure Extended; Omaha, Columbus, Wichita, Aurora Leaders to Depart

Joe Gothard, superintendent of Minnesota’s St. Paul Public Schools, was recently given a three-year contract extension through June 2026. Gothard has been at the helm of the 32,000-student district since 2017.

[Read More](#)

and Louisville School Districts



Cleveland Metropolitan School District recently received a surprise \$20 million donation, which will help the 35,000-student school district fund student travel for college visits and learning, provide professional development for staff, and fund athletic equipment, musical instruments, and science labs.

[Read More](#)



Voters Decide on Ballot Issues

Students in Texas' Austin Independent School District, California's Long Beach Unified School District, Oklahoma City Public Schools and Rhode Island's Providence Public Schools received good news on Election Day, with the approval of ballot measures that will provide significant investments.

[Read More](#)



Legislative Column

Right Down the Middle

With the results of the November mid-term elections now finalized, changes are heading to Washington that will affect the way Congress and the Biden Administration operate for the next two years. Republicans won 222 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and will return to the majority in that chamber for the first time since 2018.

[Read More](#)

Upcoming Events

Chief Financial Officers & Chief Human Resource Officers Joint Meeting

When:
February 14 - February 17, 2023

Where:



Sheraton Grand Los Angeles
711 South Hope Street
Los Angeles, CA 90017

[Register](#)



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Darrel Woo
Board Member, Sacramento

A newsletter published by the Council of the Great City Schools, representing 78 of the nation's largest urban public school districts. [Click here](#) to learn more. All news items should be submitted to Tonya Harris (tharris@cgcs.org).

PRE MEETING

22nd Annual

Public Relations Executive Meeting

July 13-15, 2023 | St. Louis, MO

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**St. Louis Union Station Hotel
1820 Market Street
St. Louis, MO 63103**

