

COMMUNICATIONS

PRESS RELEASES

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Council of the Great City Schools

1331 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W., Suite 1100N, Washington, D.C. 20004

cgcs.org

FOR RELEASE

October 26, 2023

CONTACT: Tonya Harris

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**Boston School Board Member
Named Top Urban Educator**

SAN DIEGO, Oct. 26 – School board member Michael O’Neill of Boston Public Schools received recognition as the 2023 Urban Educator of the Year at the Council of the Great City Schools’ 67th Annual Fall Conference.

Five school board members from big-city school districts competed for the nation’s highest honor in urban education leadership, recognizing, in alternating years, an outstanding superintendent and school board member from 78 of the largest urban public-school systems in the country.

Urban school leaders applauded O’Neill during the Council’s 33rd Annual Green-Garner Award Banquet, where he received the prestigious leadership award.

Sponsored by the Council and Scholastic, the global children’s publishing, education, and media company, the top prize is presented each year in memory of Richard R. Green, the first African American chancellor of the New York City school system, and businessman Edward Garner, who served on the Denver school board.

A graduate of Boston Latin School, O’Neill has been on the Boston School Committee for 15 years, serving as chair from 2013-2017. Under his leadership, the Boston school district has achieved a balanced budget each year, while also investing in strategic priorities such as early childhood education and increased social-emotional support for students. Since 2020, he has served as the Committee’s vice chair, where he has worked to improve the quality and stability of the district’s leadership and governance.

O’Neill has also contributed to improving urban education nationally, serving as chair of the Council’s Board of Directors in 2020. He was also instrumental in developing a professional development program at Harvard Business School to accelerate the performance of urban school boards nationwide.

“Michael O’Neill has made substantial contributions to urban public education at both the local and national levels,” says Council Executive Director Ray Hart. “His passion for excellence has had a profound effect on how all of us serve our urban students. There could be no one more deserving.”

As the recipient of the 2023 Green-Garner Award, O’Neill receives a \$10,000 college scholarship to present to a student in Boston Public Schools.

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FOR RELEASE

October 26, 2023

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The Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute Graduates First Cohort of Superintendents

Second Cohort Announced

SAN DIEGO, Oct. 26 – The Council of the Great City Schools today announced the successful completion of the first cohort of the Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute for Superintendents, named after the Council’s longtime former executive director. A commencement ceremony was held in San Diego during the Council’s 67th Fall Conference.

While in the eight-month program, the 10 participants gained new skills as they attended sessions on effective leadership, school board relations, academics, media relations, operations, finances, and labor relations. Other facets of the program included individual coaching and mentoring as well as hearing from current and past Council member superintendents, including Deputy Secretary of Education Cindy Marten.

Cohort members were provided with the opportunity to shadow successful urban school superintendents who provided them with advice, guidance, and feedback. Current superintendents also took time out to present to participants during sessions each month.

“By the end of this program, we wanted to provide these education administrators with a fundamental understanding of and passion for the work it takes to successfully lead a large urban school district,” said Michael Hinojosa, the Council’s Superintendent-in-Residence, who oversees the program. “Due to the intensive training they received, as well as the work of their mentors, for whom we are all grateful, these graduates are well-prepared to join the ranks of urban school superintendents and create a successful educational environment for the students they will serve.”

“The purpose of this program is twofold,” said Council Executive Director Ray Hart. “We want to help current senior-level education administrators hone their knowledge and leadership skills, and develop and train the next generation of urban school superintendents. I believe the program has accomplished both of these goals, and I look forward to its continued success.”

Second Cohort Named

Nine education leaders from urban school districts have been chosen for the second cohort of the Council's program to train current and aspiring superintendents. The announcement was made at the Council's 67th Annual Fall Conference in San Diego.

This year's cohort is rich in diversity, with five men and four women, and six educators of color. Participants were nominated by a current or past superintendent and then had to undergo a rigorous selection process.

"Being a part of this cohort pushes individuals out of their comfort zone and gives them opportunities to grow both professionally and personally," said Hinojosa. "We're already hearing of the great progress from the first cohort, so I can't wait to see how this program will propel each one of these exceptional individuals to new heights as they receive the mentorship, tools, and guidance they need to improve the nation's urban school systems."

The second cohort of the Institute begins their leadership journey in February and will participate in monthly sessions through October 2024.

The members of the cohort are:

- Rochelle Cox, Interim Superintendent, Minneapolis Public Schools
- Drew Echelson, Chief of Schools and Accountability, Boston Public Schools
- Karla Estrada, Deputy Superintendent, Los Angeles Unified School District
- Fateama Fulmore, Deputy Superintendent, NOLA Public Schools
- Jose Martinez, Chief of High Schools, Orange County Public Schools (FL)
- Dexter Moore, Jr., Chief of Staff, Oakland Unified School District
- Eric Rosser, Superintendent, Poughkeepsie City School District
- Andrew Strobe, Deputy Superintendent, Indianapolis Public Schools
- Angela Whitelaw, Deputy Superintendent, Memphis-Shelby County Schools

To access bios and photos of the 2024 cohort of the Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute, [click here](#).

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FOR RELEASE

November 7, 2023

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Council Releases Resource to Help Educators Create a High-Quality Curriculum

WASHINGTON, Nov. 7 – In an effort to provide instructional leaders in urban school districts with a core set of criteria for what a high-quality curriculum looks like, the Council of the Great City Schools recently released [*Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum*](#).

This is the second edition of the report; the first one was released in 2017.

Developed through the combined efforts of the Council's staff, national experts, and academic leaders from Council member school districts, this resource is designed to help districts:

- Determine the quality and alignment of curriculum guidance to clarify the district's learning expectations at each grade-level with a focus on student assets and diverse learners;
- Ensure that curriculum guidance includes appropriate scaffolding and support for English language learners, students with disabilities, and historically marginalized students that is rigorous and aligned to district standards; and
- Provide support in their curriculum guidance for addressing unfinished learning during Tier I instruction that also attends to the social, emotional, and well-being of students.

Additional key features in the second edition of the *Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework* include guidance for incorporating technology into the instructional process; embracing culturally relevant pedagogy and racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity; providing equitable instruction across content areas; and optimizing student voice, assets, and identity. The framework is organized by nine key features that undergird high-quality curriculum guidance capable of improving districtwide student achievement.

“This document is a ground-breaking resource that school districts can use to strengthen their curriculum and goes even further than our 2017 report to provide tools to enhance the quality of the classroom materials that teachers use to boost academic achievement and prepare students for college and careers,” said Council Executive Director Ray Hart. “We encourage district leaders to use the actionable recommendations in this framework for developing, implementing, and continuously improving upon their district's curriculum.”

An accompanying rubric will be released soon to assist big-city school districts in the development of high-quality curriculum guidance.

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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



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New Report Identifies Ways to Build Safer Schools and Communities

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

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

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

- Expand mental health support and social emotional skills development for students, families, and communities.
- Rethink school discipline policies and practices to ensure fair and equitable practices for all students.
- Promote community partnerships and broad-based collaboration to ensure student safety and support.

Recommendations to Improve Student Safety

- School districts should support the mental health of students, staff, and communities by adopting or developing a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and related materials. These types of curriculums provide a roadmap to students and parents/caregivers for social emotional wellbeing and academic success.
- School districts should review restorative practices and consider implementing them as an approach to conflict resolution and an alternative to out-of-school suspensions.
- School districts, communities and law enforcement should work in unison to ensure student support and safer communities. This can include establishing relationships with community

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

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

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

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

[Download the report.](#)

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About CGCS

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About IACP

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

**ARTICLES: COUNCIL REPORTS, REVIEWS, AND
COACHING**

Leveraging the K-12 generative AI readiness checklist: A guide for district leadership

Tom Ryan, Ph.D., Co-Founder, K-12 Strategic Technology Advisory Group (K12STAG) (NM) & Shahryar Khazei, Consultant, Infosys (CA)

November 15, 2023

The extremely rapid pace of generative AI development brings with it both great opportunities and exposure to risk

***Editor's note:** This story on how to manage academic integrity as generative AI moves into classrooms [originally appeared on CoSN's blog](#) and is reposted here with permission.*

The rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) technology present both incredible opportunities and significant challenges for educational settings. Whether or not a school district is considering leveraging AI, the influence of this technology on educational ecosystems is undeniable. As AI increasingly becomes a part of our daily lives, district leaders have a responsibility to understand its impact in educational settings and make informed decisions accordingly. This is true whether the aim is active adoption or simply preparation for a future where AI tools become more prevalent in educational settings.

To ensure school districts are adequately prepared for the integration of [generative AI](#) into their instructional and operational systems, the Council of Great City Schools, CoSN – Consortium for School Networking, and Amazon Web Services have partnered to create the [K-12 Gen AI Readiness Checklist Questionnaire](#). There are several ways in which district leadership can best use this checklist for assessing and enhancing their readiness for integrating generative AI technologies into both instructional and operational systems.

The first step should be to bring together a group of individuals that will form the district's Generative AI Leadership Team. Who Should Be Involved?

- **Superintendents and District Leaders:** As decision-makers, your insights into aligning AI adoption with overall goals and strategies are critical.
- **Chief Technology Officers and Chief Information Officers:** You will be the primary users of the checklist, evaluating technical capabilities, limitations, and needs.
- **Cross-Functional Teams:** The checklist addresses a wide array of considerations, making it essential for input from representatives of all departments involved, including academics, finance, and legal.

The Checklist covers readiness in Executive Leadership, Operational, Data, Technical, Security, Legal/Risk Management. Below are some ideas for how the Checklist can be leveraged in your school district.

Initial Assessment

Alignment with District Goals: Start by examining whether AI technologies align with your district's mission, vision, and values.

Resource Inventory: Make sure you have designated teams or individuals who will be responsible for overseeing AI adoption.

Tactical Steps

Legal Review: Consult the legal department to ensure compliance with state laws or district rules concerning the use of AI technologies.

Policy Development: Establish clear policies around the responsible use of AI, keeping in mind to align them with existing federal guidelines and best practices.

Staff Training: Ascertain the training needs for different roles within the district and prepare a training roadmap.

Operational Readiness

Procurement Standards: Set forth clear standards for AI procurement, with a focus on compliance and ethical considerations.

Data Governance and Privacy: Make sure you have robust data governance policies in place and that you are compliant with privacy regulations.

Technical Readiness

Security Framework: Update your cybersecurity policies to include AI-specific considerations.

Identity and Access Management: Implement centralized role-based data access controls specifically for AI tools.

Monitoring: Develop processes to keep track of systems that use AI and how they are used.

Risk Management

Legal Remediation: Update terms and conditions to include AI-specific clauses and ensure the legal team has remediation plans.

Copyright Policy: Create or update the copyright policy to include content created using AI tools.

Continuous Review

Iterative Approach: The adoption of AI is not a one-off event but a continual process. Periodic reassessments should be conducted.

Making the Most of the Checklist

Customization: One of the key strengths of the checklist is that it is designed to be adaptable. Districts should customize it according to their unique needs and challenges.

Community Resource: The checklist is intended to evolve. Once it is made publicly available under a Creative Commons license, districts can not only modify it but also share their experiences and modifications, contributing to its value as a community resource.

The extremely rapid pace of gen AI development brings with it both great opportunities and exposure to risk. Creating a team to provide governance for the adoption of AI in educational settings is a critical step in guiding use and preventing abuse. The K-12 Gen AI Readiness

Checklist provides a comprehensive framework to guide district leadership to engage in understanding a complex AI ecosystem and the numerous considerations that come with AI adoption. By strategically leveraging this checklist, school districts can navigate the complexities of AI technology while aligning with educational objectives and ensuring data privacy and security.

The goal is not just to blindly adopt new technology but to transform our education systems for the better, and this checklist is a strong step in that direction.

Tulsa World

Tulsa School Board Eyeing Strategic Plan Changes

December 18, 2023

Tulsa Public Schools' Board of Education is looking at potentially changing its student outcome goals — but will have to wait until 2024 before voting on the change.

Originally set as a special meeting, the board did not have a quorum Monday. Instead, the three board members who did attend — Stacey Woolley, John Croisant and Susan Lamkin — spent more than five hours discussing potential changes to the district's strategic plan with district employees and coaches from the **Council of Great City Schools**, an organization that works with some of the nation's largest school districts and has previously worked with the board on internal governance matters.

The board's attorney, Jana Burk, made a point of reminding attendees that due to the lack of quorum, the event did not legally constitute a meeting and therefore the board could not hold the executive session listed on the posted agenda.

A [2020 opinion](#) issued by then-Attorney General Mike Hunter states that a gathering of less than half of a public body's membership to discuss business does not constitute a violation of the Open Meetings Act unless it is done in a manner to circumvent the law.

Woolley said Monday that board members were surveyed about their availability more than a month in advance.

"It's my understanding that when we booked this date, we definitely had a quorum," she said, noting that there are no plans for another special meeting attempt before the board's next regular meeting on Jan. 8.

With only three members present, no votes were taken on a proposal that would incorporate the Oklahoma State Testing Program into the board's test performance-related goals for students in grades 3-8.

"The spirit of the goals hasn't changed," Woolley said. "Just potentially the metrics."

Currently, the board's test performance goals for elementary and middle school students are based on the NWEA MAP test, which is administered three times per year in Tulsa Public Schools. In 2022-23 alone, 11.5 million children across 9,500 districts nationwide, including more than 100 school districts in Oklahoma, participated MAP testing.

As proposed, the plan's new goals would include increasing how many students in grades 3-8 score at a basic level or above on the English language arts portion of the Oklahoma State Testing Program by spring 2027 from 37% to 53% among elementary grades and from 44% to 59% among middle school grades.

One of the additional goals imposed upon the district at the Nov. 30 Oklahoma State Board of Education meeting was that at least half of TPS students score at basic or above on the English languages arts portion of the 2024 state test or increase the number of students meeting that threshold by at least 5%.

As Executive Director of Information Technology Sean Berkstresser told attendees, a 5% increase would mean about 300 students.

"We're at a place with our state and in our district we have to be mindful of how much time we have to accomplish things," Superintendent Ebony Johnson said.

Even with the board potentially shifting its strategic plan, interim Chief Learning Officer Erin Armstrong said she has met with representatives from the Oklahoma State Department of Education five times over the last two weeks to get additional clarity about the additional goals put before the district last month.

Among the specific items on which the district is still seeking clarity is an order requiring all of its teachers and administrators to participate in an OSDE-approved professional development module on the science of reading before the end of the school year.

Although there are state-approved modules for elementary educators, Johnson and Armstrong both said there are not any for secondary teachers, which would mean either having secondary teachers complete a professional development program designed for elementary educators or getting OSDE approval to use a module from another state.

Further complicating matters is a state statute that limits how many hours of professional development per year a district can require of its teachers. As per [House Bill 1441](#), which took effect July 1, school districts cannot require teachers to complete more than 150 hours of professional development during any five-year period.

Armstrong told meeting attendees the elementary training module can be up to 25 hours.

"What happens if they (the State Board of Education) ask us to do more than we legally can?" Croisant asked.

“That’s what we’re trying to figure out,” Johnson replied

ARTICLES: DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

The Oregonian

Portland Public Schools Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero will resign after 6 ½ years

- Updated: Dec. 11, 2023, 5:45 p.m.|
- Published: Dec. 11, 2023, 11:15 a.m.

Guadalupe Guerrero, who has [led](#) Portland Public Schools through 6½ [often turbulent years](#), including pandemic school closures and its first teachers strike, is resigning as superintendent effective mid-February.

The first Latino superintendent in district history, Guerrero informed the school board and senior leaders of his decision Monday morning. He gave school board members two months to tap a new leader or appoint an interim superintendent.

Guerrero said he will leave Oregon's largest school district in far more stable condition than when he arrived in fall 2017.

In a wide-ranging interview with The Oregonian/OregonLive, he sounded notes of both pride and regret about his tenure. He heralded [new curriculum rollouts](#) at every grade level, accompanied by professional development and coaching for teachers; expanded arts programming; a [nationally noted](#) climate justice initiative; an overhaul of early literacy instruction; and significant investments in student mental health, including an emerging partnership with the University of Oregon's new [Ballmer Institute for Children's Behavioral Health](#).

But Guerrero acknowledged that much of his capacity-building work — supported by big infusions of both [state](#) and [federal money](#) in the last three years and more money directed to high-needs schools — has yet to deliver [significant dividends](#) for the district's students of color, who remain academically far behind their white peers.

The seven-member school board told him in 2022 that making big strides in improving [reading proficiency](#) for third-graders of color was a top priority. Instead, the already low levels of success declined in spring 2023, for Black, Indigenous,

Pacific Islander and Asian students. Latino third graders showed only minimal growth.

The board underscored its focus on the achievement gap by promising Guerrero [bonuses](#) of up to \$75,000 on top of his \$341,000 salary if he hit academic targets for students of color in four key areas: third grade reading, fifth grade math, eighth grade readiness for high school and graduation rates. Except for [graduation rates](#), where he succeeded, he did not come close.

“We did some really foundational work,” Guerrero said. “Had we not been interrupted by COVID, I believe we’d be further along in demonstrating that our strategies and action are having a positive impact. Of course, I’d hoped for more growth [for students of color]. Like the other 12,000 school districts in America, we haven’t closed the achievement gap.”

But the district’s [encouraging](#) post-pandemic rebounds in reading and math proficiency for white and Asian students that made the district [stand out in Oregon](#) masked persistently disappointing results for Black, Latino, Indigenous and Pacific Islander students.

Guerrero’s departure marks an opportunity for the school board, the district and the city to “chart a course for a new chapter,” school board Chair Gary Hollands said Monday. “At some point, everyone has to know when it is time to pass the baton. The work [Guerrero] has done to this point set that foundation.”

Using the school board’s rubric, The Oregonian/OregonLive calculated that Guerrero made only “minimal progress” on raising fifth-grade math proficiency for students of color and improving those groups’ eighth grade reading and math proficiency. And he scored below “below performance target” in third grade reading.

Stubbornly low reading skills among Black students remained a particular point of outrage for the school board, three of whose members are Black. Beaverton and Hillsboro each got at least twice as many Black third graders to read proficiently in spring 2023 — 37% and 32%, respectively — as Portland did, at just 16%, state testing found.

When students returned to school buildings full-time in fall 2021 after months of isolation, Guerrero said, their [emotional](#) and [behavioral health needs](#) were enormous, competing with the need for a laser-like focus on academic repair.

“We chose to make a lot of deep investments in (emotional and behavioral health) because it’s a matter of survival,” he said. “It’s easy to say ‘Well, he didn’t meet these ambitious goals that we set out for him.’ I would argue that we have been attuned to our students’ needs and tried to sequence and address those as thoughtfully as we can.”

He noted other innovations to help particularly vulnerable students, like the in-development Center for Black Student Excellence and a new Multiple Pathways to Graduation building, which will open next fall for high schoolers who've struggled to find a foothold in traditional neighborhood schools.

Guerrero said he considered leaving his post at the end of the 2022-23 school year but did not want to do so before settling labor contracts with teachers and the two other unions with whom the district is still bargaining. Staying until mid-February will also allow him to get the district started on a budget framework for the 2024-2025 school year, he said, and leave time for a search for his successor that could allow a new permanent superintendent to be in place by September.

"In some ways, I could say I held on a little longer than maybe I should have," Guerrero said. "But I could see that there were these important remaining pieces that I don't think would have been fair to saddle on a new superintendent."

Before landing in Portland, Guerrero was deputy superintendent of instruction, innovation and social justice in the San Francisco Unified School District; he has also been a paraeducator, a teacher and a principal.

His next steps are uncertain, Guerrero said. He is not going straight to another position, despite having been a finalist for several big-city superintendent posts over the years, including in Los Angeles.

"I've long neglected my own health, especially lately," Guerrero said. "I have not been the best husband or father or uncle that I could have been these last few years. And I need time to digitally detoxify, decompress and stare at the stars again." He's planning a road trip across the country, including time lingering in the deserts of the Southwest, he said, and is awaiting the arrival of a vintage off-road 4x4 vehicle that he'll take along.

His resignation also is a declaration of his "free agency," Guerrero added. "I'm sure that I will remain committed to serving inner city children, youth and families in some capacity. I don't know that it will be as a superintendent. Maybe, maybe not."

Guerrero arrived in Portland at a moment when distrust in the district was near an all-time high. Board members had soured on his predecessor, Carole Smith, after a scandal over high lead levels in the water supply at many schools. But [she also was heralded](#) for slowly propelling Oregon's largest school district to do better by students of color.

Guerrero struggled to overcome perceptions that he was an outsider from California intent upon using Portland as a stepping-stone, though he now ranks with urban superintendents in Baltimore, St. Paul and Topeka as among the [nation's longest-serving](#).

He collected plaudits from his peers nationally, chairing the Council of Great City Schools and being named Superintendent of the Year by the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents in 2021.

But at home, Guerrero came under criticism, most persistently from the Portland Association of Teachers, for a destabilizing churn of senior administrators and principals. A 2022 follow-up [audit of the district](#) by the Secretary of State's Office singled out principal and teacher turnover at high-poverty schools as a particularly troubling weak point.

"A principalship has always been complex and challenging, but especially now," Guerrero said. "Imagine having to navigate the pandemic, and coming back to schools, and the challenge of kids always in your office because teachers are at their wit's end."

Navigating his relationships with the school board also proved challenging at times. The board gave him a [glowing review](#) in 2022, but there have also been significant moments of friction: Board members were furious last winter over the handling of a racially-charged [discipline incident](#) at West Sylvan Middle School and, last summer, overruled Guerrero's [recommendation to fire](#) a popular Black dance teacher at Ockley Green Middle School who misled his principal about his whereabouts during school hours in order to work at another job.

Tensions have also surfaced around construction projects. Guerrero, who is typically poker-faced in public, was clearly [exasperated](#) this fall when the board [voted to require](#) district officials to explore the feasibility of turning the former Whitaker Middle School campus in Northeast Portland into a youth sports complex overseen by a nonprofit run by school board Chair Gary Hollands. Portland Public School's own long-range plans call for using that site as an athletics hub primarily for the use of the district's own students. Hollands has said he would not benefit financially from the deal.

Most recently, [a furor has brewed](#) over modernization plans for Jefferson High, initially scheduled to begin next year at a cost of \$300 million. That price tag rose significantly once community members made it clear that they strongly oppose bussing the school's 600 or so students to Marshall High in far-away outer Southeast

Portland during construction, saying it would fatally eviscerate enrollment at the historically Black school.

“We are not doing any other schools until Jeff is done,” board Vice Chair Herman Greene said at a meeting of the district’s Facilities and Operations Committee last week, referencing the two high schools yet to be remodeled or rebuilt. “Cleveland, Wilson, I don’t care who is next. If that is the line we draw in the sand, there will be some pep in the step.”

Part of the issue with Jefferson — and districtwide — is uncertainty around [enrollment](#), which fell during the pandemic as parents sought other options. Student counts, which directly drive state funding, have been slow to rebound, due in large part to Portland’s high housing costs and declining birth rate, factors that are beyond any school leader’s control.

Compounding district crises and uncertainties, a bruising teachers’ [strike](#) kept students out of school for 11 days in November while educators dressed down the district and Guerrero’s leadership daily from picket lines. For weeks, teachers stationed on seemingly every street corner decried [big class sizes](#) and classrooms that were freezing in winter and [stifling in summer](#).

The strike concluded only after a series of [round-the-clock negotiating sessions](#) that seemed to produce little more than conflicting narratives. In its wake, Portland Association of Teachers President Angela Bonilla sounded circumspect about reconciliation and healing with district leadership and school board members. On Monday, Bonilla said she was not immediately available for an interview about Guerrero’s pending departure because she was in an all-day meeting about the implementation of the new contract.

But she issued a brief statement on behalf of the teachers union, writing that, “PAT recognizes the hard work done by Superintendent Guerrero this past month to reach a settlement with our union. Our sincere hope is that he takes the lessons he has learned from our educators, fellow union[s], families, communities and city to wherever he lands next. We wish him the best in his future endeavors. The Portland Association of Teachers looks forward to being a meaningful partner in the search for a new superintendent.”

The deal agreed upon by the two sides will require at least \$40 million in cuts to programs, staffing and services over the next 18 months. Reductions in staffing and a reconsideration of priorities are inevitable, even with central office cutbacks, Guerrero said. He said he hopes the district will cut fewer than 100 jobs, as many as possible via attrition, but that is not guaranteed.

The work of preparing the budget for the 2024-25 school year will fall largely on his successor. Hollands said school board members will soon meet to discuss a search for the district's next leader, which could include internal candidates. Guerrero's top aides include Deputy Superintendent for Instruction and School Communities Cheryl Proctor, Chief of Schools Jon Franco and Director of Research, Accountability and Assessment Renard Adams.

Proctor has [recently applied](#) for superintendent jobs in her native Florida. Last month, she was [named](#) one of 10 applicants for a job leading the Duval County school system in Jacksonville before the district decided to suspend its search, [reportedly](#) because of a lack of qualified candidates.

Guerrero's departure comes just as Gov. Tina Kotek has announced a new focus on revamping the state's education funding formula, work that could bear fruit as soon as the 2025 legislative session. His relationships with Portland-area legislators curdled this fall, with [finger-pointing](#) over whether the state had given the district enough money to meet its teachers' demands. On a personal level, why he might need a break after a tenure that included a pandemic and contentious teacher strike.

"Superintendent Guerrero's commitment to the district has been really a positive for stability," Kotek said. "I think the question now for the district moving forward is: What's going to happen in February? We need new leadership."

Some students and parents said they were caught off guard by Guerrero's announcement. Katherine Rodela, whose son is in seventh grade at Kellogg Middle School, credited Guerrero for a focus on equity and [racial justice](#) both for students and in hiring more teachers and administrators of color.

"He sat in a meeting with parents at Lent when he was brand new," Rodela said, of her son's former elementary school on the outer edges of Southeast Portland, where she said parents had felt unheard and marginalized. "According to families there, a superintendent hadn't visited for 10 years. The significance of the first Latino superintendent going to a school with majority Latino students can't be overstated."

At Benson High School, sophomore Milo McChesney said he first met Guerrero as a sixth grader, an encounter that sparked McChesney's interest in keeping close tabs on the district's decision-making. For many students, Guerrero seemed like a distant figurehead, McChesney said and as the years went by, he and other students sensed their teachers' "growing mistrust" in the central administration.

But Guerrero said he treasured memories from the years of school visits, from seeing a first grader grasp that letters blend together to make words to the student

musicians who've touched his heart, from a French horn player at Cleveland High to a pianist at Jefferson known for his Ray Charles covers. He sees himself in so many students for whom school is a refuge, Guerrero said.

"Where else if not public education for some of our students?" he asked. "That's the same way it was for me. There was a time in my childhood when all I had was a duffel bag and I was floating around, couch-surfing. I was once one of those first generation kids, identified with some level of potential. We don't always see the impact that we have on individuals, as educators. But I have to think that even in the superintendency, the work will speak for itself and the impact will become evident over time."

The Buffalo News

Sharon Belton-Cottman tabbed for second-straight term as Buffalo School Board president

Ben Tsujimoto

January 3, 2024

The leadership of the Buffalo School Board will remain exactly the same for another year after voting Tuesday, representing a key continuity for a nine-member group trying to sharpen its focus and clarify its goals.

Sharon Belton-Cottman, the Ferry District representative, was nominated to continue as president for a second year, and received votes from all eight board members who attended the reorganizational meeting in City Hall. Belton-Cottman served two previous yearlong terms as board president, in 2019-20 and 2020-21.

"It's encouraging because the work that's being done, it will allow us to be consistent and continue the continuity, which is very important when you've moving out a new plan," Belton-Cottman said.

Superintendent Tonja M. Williams, in a statement, commended the move.

"President Belton-Cottman has always been a strong and passionate voice for not only equitable education, but our entire BPS community," she said.

Kathy Evans-Brown, who represents the East District, was voted unanimously to continue as vice president of executive affairs, and at-large member Larry Scott again was elected vice president of student achievement. Ann Rivera, another at-large member, was not present Tuesday.

No new board members were sworn in, as no seats were up for election in November. Tuesday marked the second year in which the reorganization meeting was held in January. When school board elections were moved from their own ballot in May to converge with political elections in November, the board's reorganization shifted from July to January.

The plan referred to by Belton-Cottman is a partnership with Washington, D.C.-based **Council of the Great City Schools**, which guides school boards to govern with students' academic outcomes at the forefront. The board has also used the council's strategies to determine annual goals for the superintendent, crystallize the duties of a board member and to reassess what topics receive attention at board meetings.

"We as a board sometimes spend a lot of time on what adults need or want, and we need to be primarily focused on what students need and what their outcomes are and what they achieve," Scott explained. "Then, I think we'll start to see the needle move in the right direction for our students and families."

A vital task for board members in the next several months will be scheduling and holding community meetings in which the public can express needs and present ideas to clarify the route to greater student achievement.

"We are going to go on the road to find out what our constituents expect us to do," Belton-Cottman said.

Without new members or new leaders – and with minimal apparent division within the group – the Buffalo School Board has the opportunity to make significant progress in the second half of the school year.

"This is just a new year," Belton-Cottman said, "not a new game."

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

Cleveland schools face tough financial decisions as pandemic aid expires

Ideastream Public Media | By [Conor Morris](#)

Published November 20, 2023 at 6:00 AM EST

As it deals with the end of pandemic-era federal relief funds, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's latest five-year forecast predicts the district will be in the red financially as soon as the end of the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

Kevin Stockdale, the district's chief financial officer, said that based on the forecast, the district will likely be placed in a "fiscal precautionary status" by the Ohio Department of Education early next year. That means the district would be compelled to adopt a plan to balance its budget.

He said during a late October Board of Education meeting that such a plan would likely involve a mix of "reductions as well as additional revenue."

School districts [across the country are contending with](#) roughly \$190 billion in federal relief funds drying up — with the deadline to spend those remaining funds set for fall 2024.

According to a presentation from Stockdale at the Nov. 8 board meeting, CMSD used millions to purchase classroom technology upgrades, computers for every student and to fund additional supports, like having a nurse or health professional in every school building.

CMSD has received almost \$465 million in federal relief funds since the pandemic began. Stockdale said that presents a challenge for the district now because it is faced with absorbing into its general fund investments it has made into things like staffing. He said the district also received more than other districts might have, based on the number of students it serves who are in poverty.

"And I think, as I've described before, for our district, we have historically maintained a lower cash balance so we have less cushion to operate with," he said.

The district's enrollment has decreased slightly over the last two years, Stockdale told the board, and state funding per-pupil has increased only modestly in the face of rising costs driven by health insurance and salaries.

No cuts have been announced yet, and it's not clear whether the district will need to seek a new operating levy. Its last operating, a renewal of a levy from 2012 with a 5-mill increase, was approved by voters in 2020.

In Akron, the Akron Public School District has discussed the need for a vote on a new levy as soon as next year as federal aid expires, while other schools in the region went to the ballot box this fall to contend with rising costs.

The Cleveland board is expected to vote this week on a proposal to change the use of a \$20 million grant from philanthropist Mackenzie Scott that the district last year dubbed the "Get More Opportunities" fund.

The district has spent about \$4 million of that unrestricted gift so far. [Former CMSD CEO Eric Gordon said last year](#) that the money would be used on a variety of efforts to give students and educators opportunities, like helping students get their driver's licenses or to pay for class trips.

CEO Warren Morgan said during the Nov. 8 meeting that if the board approves the resolution to repurpose the money, the funds will still be used to support students and educator "success." However, he said money also could be used to maintain existing pandemic relief-funded programs in that area.

"It will not cover all of the ESSER (pandemic-relief-related) expenses, but it can help us do things for our students that may have to come off the table," Morgan said, noting that could include funding out-of-school supports for students or summer programming.

Morgan said during his State of the Schools address earlier this month that the district will need to consider cuts in the central office due to the expiring pandemic relief, noting there are "difficult decisions ahead of us."

"I am committed to protecting schools and classrooms where possible because the instructional core is our district's most important function," Morgan said.

Board member Denise Link said she learned at a recent meeting of the [Council of the Great City Schools](#) that many other large urban school districts are also concerned about what she termed a financial "cliff" caused by the expiring federal aid.

"We're all working together, looking at solutions," she said. "But it's a tough road for all of us."

SOCIAL MEDIA

Communications Report

Tracking The Council's Digital Presence

Monthly Update
October 2023



COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

Monthly Update: October 2023

Press Releases

PRESS RELEASES POSTED IN OCTOBER 2023

PRESS RELEASE TITLE	DATE POSTED	LINK
Council of the Great City Schools & CoSN Launch K-12 Generative Artificial Intelligence	10/11/2023	https://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=29&ModuleInstanceID=2625&ViewID=6446
The Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute Graduates First Cohort of Superintendents	10/26/2023	https://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=29&ModuleInstanceID=2625&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874
Boston School Board Member Named Top Urban Educator	10/26/2023	https://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=29&ModuleInstanceID=2625&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B

Media Mentions

MEDIA MENTIONS IN OCTOBER 2023

ARTICLE TITLE	PUBLICATION	DATE POSTED
Six candidates vying to become Duval Schools next superintendent	<i>First Coast News</i>	10/10/2023
180 Degree Turn: NYC District Goes From Banning ChatGPT to Exploring AI's Potential	<i>Education Week</i>	10/5/2023
DCPS board member finalist for Green-Garner Award	<i>CBS 47</i>	10/1/2023

Email Campaigns

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS SENT IN OCTOBER 2023

CAMPAIGN TITLE	DATE SENT	TOTAL RECIPIENTS	SUCCESSFUL DELIVERIES	BOUNCES	OPEN RATE	CLICK RATE
October 2023 Urban Educator	10/19/2023	2,450	2,339	111	35.5%	5.4%

Social Media

Facebook - October 2023

Posts: 5

Post reach: 2,249

Pages likes: 1,921

Page followers: 2,204

New page likes: 21

Page engagement: --

Top 3 Facebook Posts

POST	REACH	LIKES & REACTIONS	LINK CLICKS	COMMENTS	SHARES
Take a look at our 2nd cohort of urban education leaders! The second cohort of the Institute begins their leadership journey in February and will participate in monthly sessions through October 2024. For bios and photos of the 2024 cohort visit: www.cgcs.org/casserlyinstitute	979	22	0	0	0
We're thrilled to announce the launch of the K-12 Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) Readiness Checklist in collaboration with Consortium for School Networking (CoSN). Empowering district leaders with a comprehensive guide for responsible Gen AI integration in our schools. Read more at http://www.cgcs.org/genaichcklist	906	8	0	2	2
The Council celebrates the 1st cohort of the Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute's success at #CGCS23. The 10 participants have honed invaluable leadership skills through rigorous training, mentorship, and expert guidance. Learn more: https://tinyurl.com/2p93vsbx	556	25	0	1	0

Social Media

Twitter - October 2023

Tweets: 29

Tweet impressions: 48,500

Mentions: 80

New followers: N/A

Retweets: 61

Likes: 313

Link clicks: 72

Top 3 Tweets

TWEETS	IMPRESSIONS	ENGAGEMENT	LIKES	RETWEETS	LINK CLICKS
<p>This years Town Hall will be Amplifying Student Voices!</p> <p>Moderated by @sequoiastweets, conferees will hear from students representing 8 of our member districts!</p>	11,647	151	16	10	43
<p>Take a look at our 2nd cohort of urban education leaders! The second cohort of the Institute begins their leadership journey in February and will participate in monthly sessions through October 2024. For bios and photos of the 2024 cohort visit http://www.cgcs.org/casserlyinstitute</p>	5,663	280	17	8	23
<p>Students dive into the conversation on media literacy and its place in the curriculum at our town hall meeting on “Amplifying Student Voice” #CGCS23</p>	5,521	126	20	7	8

Social Media

LinkedIn - October 2023

Posts: 5
Post reactions: 1,269
Post comments: 58
Post reposts: 56
Page views: 1,992
New followers: 327

Top 3 LinkedIn Posts

POST	IMPRESSIONS	LIKES & REACTIONS	LINK CLICKS	COMMENTS	SHARES
The Council celebrates the 1st cohort of the Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute's success at #CGCS23. The 10 participants have honed invaluable leadership skills through rigorous training, mentorship, and expert guidance. Learn more: https://lnkd.in/dDrWV664	10,851	280	906	9	14
The Michael Casserly Urban Leadership Institute has recently celebrated the graduation of its first cohort! To read more, click here: https://lnkd.in/gKSf7kUh	4,683	143	303	50	5
Take a look at our 2nd cohort of urban education leaders! The second cohort of the Institute begins their leadership journey in February and will participate in monthly sessions through October 2024. For bios and photos of the 2024 cohort visit https://lnkd.in/dSF4EDFR	3,967	160	566	9	13

Communications Report

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COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

Monthly Update: November 2023

Press Releases

PRESS RELEASES POSTED IN NOVEMBER 2023

PRESS RELEASE TITLE	DATE POSTED	LINK
Council Releases Resource to Help Educators Create a High-Quality Curriculum(Gen AI)	11/7/2023	https://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=29&ModuleInstanceID=2625&ViewID=6446
New Report Identifies Ways to Build Safer Schools and Communities	11/14/2023	https://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=29&ModuleInstanceID=2625&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E

Social Media

Facebook - November 2023

Posts: 2
 Post reach: 1,438
 Pages likes: 1,921
 Page followers: 2,204
 New page likes: 4
 Page engagement: --

Top 2 Facebook Posts

POST	REACH	LIKES & REACTIONS	LINK CLICKS	COMMENTS	SHARES
This morning, CGCS and Broward County Public Schools discussed planning for foundational skills instruction to meet the needs of ELs at the Florida Association of Bilingual and ESOL Supervisors (FABES) Conference. Learn about the Council's framework at: https://www.cgcs.org/.../CGCS_Foundational%20Literacy...CGCS_Foundational%20Literacy...	1,028	20	0	0	1
The IACP-CGCS Task Force, composed of district superintendents, school police leaders, and community police chiefs, has released a comprehensive report to improve student safety and the lives of students in cities. Recommendations include expanding mental health support, rethinking school discipline policies and practices, and promoting community partnerships. Download the report to read more on how we can build safer schools and communities!	373	0	0	0	0

Social Media

Twitter - November 2023

Tweets: 15
Tweet impressions: 22,500
Mentions: N/A
New followers: N/A
Retweets: 25
Likes: 80
Link clicks: 64

Top 3 Tweets

TWEETS	IMPRESSIONS	ENGAGEMENT	LIKES	RETWEETS	LINK CLICKS
Join us in welcoming Andrew Strobe, a member of the 2024 Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute Cohort! @IPSSchools To read more about Andrew Strobe visit...	1,498	65	17	3	23
The 67th Annual Fall Conference in San Diego, hosted by @sdschools, gathered 1,500+ urban education leaders. With speakers like @LizCheney , @jemelehill, and @JohnLeguizamo, and an award for Sylvia Mendez, it was a remarkable event. See you in Dallas, Oct. 16-20, 2024!	923	45	N/A	N/A	N/A
The Council recently released Between the Lines, Large City Performance on NAEP Over the Last 20 Years (2002-2022) which uses data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to examine differences in performance among students.	830	15	1	3	6

Social Media

LinkedIn - October 2023

Posts: 5
Post reactions: 1,325
Post comments: 71
Post reposts: 25
Page views: 1,395
New followers: 457

Top 3 LinkedIn Posts

POST	IMPRESSIONS	LIKES & REACTIONS	LINK CLICKS	COMMENTS	SHARES
<p>Join us in welcoming Andrew Strobe, a member of the 2024 Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute Cohort! Andrew Strobe</p> <p>Andrew Strobe is the Deputy Superintendent for Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS). He oversees the implementation of IPS Strategic Plan 2025 as well as leads the Digital Strategy, Racial Equity, Portfolio, and External Affairs teams...</p>	5,587	217	189	19	2
<p>Join us in welcoming Dr. Fateama Fulmore, a member of the 2024 Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute Cohort!</p> <p>Fateama S. Fulmore is the deputy superintendent of NOLA Public Schools...</p>	4,418	267	180	27	3
<p>Join us in welcoming Dr. Dexter Moore Jr., a member of the 2024 Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute Cohort!</p> <p>Dr. Dexter Moore Jr. is an Oakland-born leader who has lived, led, and learned from communities around the..</p>	4,267	149 41	123	11	5

Communications Report

Tracking The Council's Digital Presence

Monthly Update
December 2023



COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

Monthly Update: December 2023

Email Campaigns

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS SENT IN DECEMBER 2023

CAMPAIGN TITLE	DATE SENT	TOTAL RECIPIENTS	SUCCESSFUL DELIVERIES	BOUNCES	OPEN RATE	CLICK RATE
2023 Conference Recap	12/13/2023	1,845	1,409	78	49.6%	9.4%
Happy Holidays/2023 Year-in-Review	12/19/2023	7,865	5,297	2,568	53.6%	2.3%

Social Media

Facebook - December 2023

Post: 1

Post reach: 256

Pages likes: 1,921

Page followers: 2,204

New page likes: 4

Page engagement: --

Top Facebook Post

POST	REACH	LIKES & REACTIONS	LINK CLICKS	COMMENTS	SHARES
The Council has a new Crisis Communications guidebook to help Public Relations Executives in urban school districts plan for, and be ready to manage communications before, during, and after a crisis or active shooter event. Read more here: https://www.cgcs.org/crisiscommunication	80	2	0	1	0

Social Media

Twitter - December 2023

Tweets: 7
Tweet impressions: 5,400
Mentions: N/A
New followers: N/A
Retweets: 6
Likes: 43
Link clicks: 45

Top 3 Tweets

TWEETS	IMPRESSIONS	ENGAGEMENT	LIKES	RETWEETS	LINK CLICKS
Join us in welcoming Dr. Karla Estrada, a member of the 2024 Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute Cohort! @LASchools To read more about Dr. Karla Estrada visit https://lnkd.in/gaQWEkFT	1,042	50	23	2	13
Join us in welcoming Dr. Angela Whitelaw, a member of the 2024 Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute Cohort! @MSCSK12 To read more about Dr. Angela Whitelaw visit https://lnkd.in/gye-dsRc	973	36	15	3	4
Join us in welcoming Jose Martinez, a member of the 2024 Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute Cohort! @OCPSnews To read more about Jose Martinez visit ..	472	20	1	0	6

Social Media

LinkedIn - December 2023

Posts: 5
Post reactions: 1,364
Post comments: 197
Post reposts: 7
Page views: 714
New followers: 337

Top 3 LinkedIn Posts

POST	IMPRESSIONS	LIKES & REACTIONS	LINK CLICKS	COMMENTS	SHARES
Join us in welcoming Dr. Karla Estrada, a member of the 2024 Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute Cohort! Los Angeles Unified School District Karla Estrada, Ed.D.	12,686	512	561	56	3
Join us in welcoming Dr. Angela Whitelaw, a member of the 2024 Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute Cohort! Memphis-Shelby County Schools Dr. Angela Whitelaw.	4,004	313	132	39	12
Join us in welcoming Dr. Eric Rosser, a member of the 2024 Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute Cohort! Poughkeepsie City School District Eric Jay Rosser, Ph.D.	3,666	257	91	33	5

THE URBAN EDUCATOR



Urban Educator

THE 34TH ANNUAL GREEN★GARNER AWARD FINALISTS



SCHOLASTIC
Premier Partner

Council of the
Great City Schools



MARCIA ANDREWS
School Board Member
The School District of Palm Beach County



VALERIE DAVIS
School Board Member
Fresno Unified School District



WARREN JONES
School Board Member
Duval County Public Schools



MICHAEL O'NEILL
School Board Member
Boston Public Schools

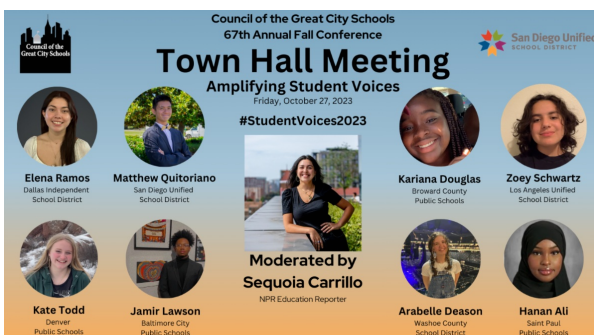


JOYCE WILKERSON
School Board Member
The School District of Philadelphia

'Urban Educator of the Year' Honors Go to...!

It's that time of year again! Five urban school board members have been selected as finalists for the Green-Garner Award, the nation's highest honor in urban education leadership.

[Read More](#)



Council of the Great City Schools
67th Annual Fall Conference
Town Hall Meeting
Amplifying Student Voices
Friday, October 27, 2023
#StudentVoices2023

Moderated by
Sequoia Carrillo
NPR Education Reporter

Elena Ramos
Dallas Independent School District

Matthew Quitoriano
San Diego Unified School District

Kariana Douglas
Broward County Public Schools

Zoey Schwartz
Los Angeles Unified School District

Kate Todd
Denver Public Schools

Jamir Lawson
Baltimore City Public Schools

Arabelle Deason
Washoe County School District

Hanan Ali
Saint Paul Public Schools

Council Aims to Amplify Student Voices at Town Hall Meeting

In an effort to give a voice to urban school students, the Council of the Great City Schools' national town hall meeting on Oct. 27 in San Diego will feature an all-student panel.

[Read More](#)



Toledo Superintendent Reflects on Decade at the Helm of Hometown District

The goal that Romules Durant has for the 22,000 students in Ohio's Toledo Public Schools is a simple one: to get each of them on a path that will allow them to stay in their hometown, make a living wage, and give back to their community.

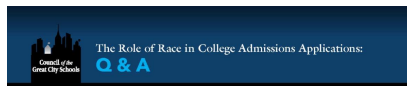
[Read More](#)



Influential Philadelphia Educator and Council Leader Remembered

Constance Clayton, the first Black and first female superintendent of The School District of Philadelphia, who died in September, played a major role in shaping the modern-day, influential standing of the Council of the Great City Schools.

[Read More](#)



Q&A Document on Role of Race in College Admissions Applications

Can students still mention their race when applying to college? How is race likely to be viewed by colleges and universities in the admissions process? These and other questions are answered in a new [guidance document](#) created and being distributed by the Council of the Great City Schools.

[Read More](#)

1 Can students still mention their race when applying to college?

Yes. Whether or not a college application specifically requests or expects an applicant to identify their race, there is no prohibition against a student including that information in the application. Based on the Court's ruling, there is a chance that race category check boxes may be retired or eliminated on college applications at some point in the future. However, students are free to include information about race and ethnicity if there is a place within the application to do so, including within essays. The Court did caution, however, that universities may not simply create through application essays or other means a context that implicitly or explicitly asks students to answer questions about race. Therefore, students should be reminded to explicitly follow the application instructions.

Colleges and universities may place importance on being a first-generation college applicant, geographic representation, and diversity in socioeconomic background without being impacted by the Supreme Court's recent decision.

2 What other information should students be advised to include in their applications?

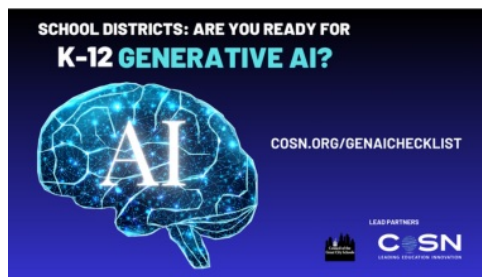
The Court emphasized that individual experiences and achievements—including how the ability to read and critically analyze complex texts by colleges and universities to consider during admissions. Colleges and universities may place importance on being a first-generation college applicant, geographic representation, and diversity in socioeconomic background without being impacted by the Supreme Court's recent decision. Students should be encouraged to share their story and emphasize whether they are a first-generation college applicant and other unique experiences that demonstrate their personal attributes. According to a Joint Question and Answer document by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education, "a university could consider an applicant's explanation about what it means to him or her to be the first Black student in his or her family to attend college or an applicant's account of overcoming adversity when the student is a first-generation college student who was the only student of South Asian descent. Similarly, an institution could consider an applicant's discussion of how having to work traditional housing jobs from her grandfather shaped her passion for food and inspired her sense of self by connecting her to past generations of her family."

Supreme Court v. Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., 591 U.S. 12 (2020) (slip opinion), 2020 WL 3243122 (June 16, 2020) (per curiam), 2020 WL 3243122 (June 16, 2020) (per curiam).

Council Releases New Reports

The Council of the Great City Schools recently released new reports focusing on AI technology, urban student achievement, academic performance indicators and operational management, curriculum, and English learners in the nation's big-city

school districts.



[Read More](#)



2023 Blue Ribbon Schools Named

In Hawaii, Ka'elepulu and Maunawili Elementary Schools have both demonstrated academic achievements that go beyond statewide averages.

[Read More](#)

Upcoming Events



2023 Meeting of Directors, Chiefs of Finance, Purchasing, Risk Management, and Internal Auditors

When:

November 6 - November 9, 2023

Where:

Hilton Phoenix Tapatio Cliffs Resort
Phoenix, AZ

[Register](#)



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CEO, Baltimore

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).

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CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS



CRISIS COMMUNICATION: BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER A CRISIS OR ACTIVE SHOOTER EVENT

**A Guidebook for Public Relations Executives
In the Council of the Great City Schools**

December 2023



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INTRODUCTION

If Public Relations Executives (PREs) in urban school districts learned anything during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is that our capacity to adapt and innovate expands even more during a crisis. We also learned that it has never been more important for PREs and their teams to proactively prepare for life-threatening challenges. Such incidents include a pandemic, a bomb/explosion, an environmental disaster, life-threatening violence against a student or staff member, or a school shooting.

These possibilities, combined with a rise in mental health issues and greater availability of weapons, make it imperative for PREs to prepare for the unthinkable.

We know that when a crisis occurs, communication will begin without us.

Chaos and anxiety will be immediate. Students will seek physical and emotional support; families will demand information; loved ones and media will rush to the scene; data and details will be collected and shared in cultural silos; and social media will instantly become a primary source of news.

Our challenge and responsibility in a crisis event is to:

1. **Remain calm, exhibit confidence, demonstrate readiness to keep our students and staff safe, and keep families and the community informed;**
2. **Communicate quickly and professionally on multiple platforms and through interactive communication channels with messaging that is honest, timely, and compassionate; and**
3. **Be at our best as professionals in managing the news media and in providing all stakeholders with the information they need.**

This guidebook was created to help PREs proactively plan for, and be ready to manage, communications during any crisis that raises extreme anxiety over school safety, that threatens the lives of children and staff, and halts routine school operations. The document also includes specific communication examples from school districts that have experienced other types of crisis such as cyberattacks.

PREPARATIONS BEFORE A CRISIS

CRISIS PREPARATION IN OUR CITIES AND SCHOOLS

Districts that are members of the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) already have active emergency plans in place through their city governments. These plans prepare first responders and related agencies to react immediately and effectively to disasters. This includes responding to school shootings and other events that risk public safety on our campuses, at businesses, and in neighborhoods. In addition to emergency response strategies, school districts are required to develop plans that meet state and federal guidelines for school safety management.

Existing emergency management systems follow guidelines and directives from the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and other emergency, rescue, and law enforcement agencies. City safety personnel, along with state and local agencies, train and prepare staff to prevent and mitigate bomb threats, terrorist acts, natural disasters, and other dangers. They are equipped to assist citizens and organizations, including schools, with preventing violence and help communities recover from a crisis or tragedy.

For Example:

- State legislatures require public and private schools to adopt safety plans.
- City charters describe the responsibilities and powers delegated to the mayor and department directors during a shooting or other crisis events.
- National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) direct departments, agencies, and political subdivisions within states to utilize the system for incident management.
- Mayors direct the city's elected officials, departments, agencies, and offices on the use of these standard response systems.
- The federal Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, passed in 2006, requires government entities to facilitate the reunification of minors with their parents/guardians in crisis situations.
- Following the 2012 Sandy Hook shootings, in Newtown, Connecticut, the FBI set a national standard for active shooter training that has better aligned federal, state, and local agencies.

Our city school districts have their own comprehensive plans and procedures for responding to bomb threats and other critical incidents in schools. Due to a rise in school shootings, their plans increasingly focus on preparing for active shooter events as well.

PREPARATIONS BEFORE A CRISIS

Crisis communication cannot be effectively managed without knowing the crisis procedures already in place. PREs and their communications teams should collaborate with their district safety and security teams to observe and become familiar with crisis [training for active shooter events](#), evacuation procedures, and other efforts coordinated with emergency response agencies.

THE VARIOUS ROLES OF THE CITY'S FIRST RESPONDERS

The safety plans managed by city public safety departments and emergency management offices include databases to identify facilities, rescue/evacuation plans and routes, and family reunification procedures with pre-determined sites.

The city's department of public works typically maintains a list of school facilities, coordinates that list with the office of emergency management, and manages evacuation sites and reunification centers.

School-based safety and security officers work closely with the office of emergency management, city police, FBI and first responders to understand complementary roles in mitigating and responding to school shootings and other crisis events.

Once you and your teams are familiar with those strategies, you can better align your work with theirs.

City public health departments and county health boards are trained to coordinate volunteer healthcare providers (e.g., nurses, physicians, pharmacists). School districts' Medical Reserve Corps (MRCs) are trained to staff evacuation and reunification centers to:

- Verify credentials, and;
- Coordinate staff and resources.

The American Red Cross also maintains a volunteer corps to assist with staffing and to support students and families in reunification centers.

The FBI and the Department of Homeland Security respond to investigate incidents and mitigate further threats.

PREPARATIONS BEFORE A CRISIS

THE ROLE OF THE DISTRICT'S CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

School district safety and security teams are expected to implement established protocols when responding to an active shooter or other crisis event. They prepare in advance by using active shooting drills to train principals, teachers, and students. They provide pocket guides and classroom emergency response signage, instructional pamphlets, and flips charts, etc. They also engage on a regular basis in joint response planning with city and county agencies.

THE ROLE OF THE DISTRICT'S CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM

In the event of a disaster or crisis, the school district's CEO/Superintendent will lead crisis management in executing plans to continue operations. This not only includes the safe and orderly evacuation of students but the transporting, housing, and feeding of students during times when normal school operations cease and a crisis unfolds.

During the pandemic, school districts managed crisis situations that closed facilities for extended periods and preserved academic functions, contracted with service providers, provided childcare, distributed course materials and technology, set up meal sites, and provided other services.

In an active shooter situation or other crisis, the district's top senior leaders should be prepared to:

- Use the student information database to:
 - Facilitate emergency medical response and treatment of victims;
 - Contact parents of students injured or deceased;
 - Support the reunification of families with students at the reunification center;
- Communicate with families, the community and media;
- Assign transportation, food service, nursing, psychological support, language services, disability accommodations, social and emotional learning supports, and other essential services;
- Help external agencies unify and support families, which could include:

- Transporting students/staff to staging areas;
- Checking attendance, releasing students, and streamlining the reunification process;
- Controlling lines of sight for orderly flow with signage, stanchions, and staffing;
- Notifying and communicating with parents as students are released/picked up; or
- Completing reunification cards and other recommended documentation.

THE ROLE OF THE DISTRICT'S CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

As the systems for crisis response and management are deployed, PREs must:

- Quickly focus on gathering information from first responders and crisis managers;
- Coordinate messaging through a Joint Information Center (JIC); and
- Equip superintendents with information to communicate first and quickly to the school board and community.

Coordinating communication with other Public Information Officer (PIOs) in city/county agencies in advance of a crisis is one of the most important steps PREs can take. Planning with PIOs ensures that messaging is timely and accurate, and that school district communication is not lost in the shuffle when PIOs from numerous agencies operate and communicate in silos.

A Joint Information Center (JIC) is a designated facility, typically activated by a city or county, to coordinate public information and crisis communication during emergencies on a mass scale. The JIC serves as a central location for first responders to transmit information and for PIOs to draft and release information to media and the public. Because activating a JIC is standard protocol during times of crisis (flood, explosions, etc.) it is recommended that PREs become familiar with their city's emergency management protocols and position themselves for inclusion as a central figure in any JIC activated during a school shooting incident or other mass emergency affecting schools. This will not only ensure the PRE has the most accurate and timely information as it is transmitted by first responders, but will also position the school district to be first in communicating critical information to staff and families.

PREPARATIONS BEFORE A CRISIS



CLARIFYING ROLES & COORDINATING MESSAGING

Before a crisis occurs, it is important that everyone knows what roles they will play. This is why pre-planning for these events is crucial. Here are some things PRE's should do in advance:

1. Regularly meet with your school district's safety and security team to:
 - Observe staff training(s).
 - Accompany them at meetings with city/county agencies that plan emergency responses to crisis and active shooter events.
2. Identify and invite the PIOs of agencies in those trainings to plan and prepare for where and how the city's JIC will operate during a disaster, or how they will coordinate during an active shooter crisis.
3. Get to know your city's emergency response PIO's before there is an incident and within the first three or four weeks of any staff transition. Meet quarterly for coffee or lunch to build rapport. Confirm you have each other's contact information, especially cell phone numbers, so you can quickly connect in a crisis.
4. Establish how information and updates will flow between agencies, and within respective organizations, during the crisis.
 - Confirm which responding agencies will provide continuous updates to the JIC.
 - Clarify how information will flow from the crisis site to the JIC.
 - Plan how the PRE and agency PIOs will collaborate together to draft and finalize talking points.
 - Identify spokespersons in the district and city/county agencies who will deliver information, through which means, and in what order.
 - The CEO/ Superintendent should be at the forefront of crisis communications, where feasible, in partnership with law enforcement or government officials, such as the mayor, during and throughout a crisis such as an active shooter event.

CRITICAL KEYS TO CRISIS PREPARATION

Drafting and Activating Holding Statements

PREs should draft holding statements for use immediately upon receiving word of a crisis event.

Holding statements can be developed now and used as a template later when a situation occurs and facts are known.

Appendix A of this guidebook includes a sample holding statement and draft news release to use in preparing for an active shooter incident. Using these samples, or creating similar drafts, will enable you to gather and prioritize information as it is available and approved for release by the JIC.

It is also vitally important that school districts update parent/guardian contact information in proactive ways -- similar to methods used by physicians' offices to routinely verify addresses and phone numbers.

Questions to Ask in Your District Before a Crisis Occurs:

Preparation:

- Do you understand how your team will deploy when a crisis occurs?
- What happens when a team member is pulled out of the mix (vacation, having surgery, family issue, etc.)?
- Does your team include representatives from community agencies?
- Have you practiced with your team to find out who can think clearly under pressure and accomplish the work assigned to them (are there too many or not the right tasks)?
- Do key stakeholders know their role (as a board member, superintendent, central office leader)?
- How will you keep district leaders informed about real/potential crisis situations to avoid surprises?

Speed vs. Accuracy:

- Does your district operate with one voice?
- Are you prepared to respond to messages from other parties whose comments you can't control?
- Have you discussed the impact of social media on communication, specifically the impact on speed of messaging in order to remain a trusted voice with key stakeholders?
- Who is talking to Board of Education members and who is talking to first responders?

Your Toolbox:

- Do you know who will contact you, and how, to provide information when a crisis occurs?
- Have you identified all key stakeholders who need information in a crisis, and who is responsible for reaching out to them? How will you reach them? When will you reach out to them?
- Do you have communication plans when you are out of the office or after hours?
- Have you developed plans to communicate with parents that don't speak English fluently?
- Have you prepared messages in advance?

DURING A CRISIS



PUTTING THE SUPERINTENDENT IN FRONT OF THE MESSAGING

This step deserves more than a mention in a crisis communications guidebook. In an ideal situation PREs should provide the district CEO/Superintendent with the most accurate information within the first 10-15 minutes of an emergency event or school shooting event (refer to the timeline on page 11). However, in many cases this may not be possible due to the chaotic nature of such events. But even if the superintendent is not able to have all the facts, they still need to appear with law enforcement and other first responders. Although superintendents will most likely be flanked by the chief of police and heads of other agencies at a news conference, families need to see their school superintendent front and center in a school crisis.

Families need more than updates on casualties and the status of the city's emergency response. Families need to hear messages of compassion, hope, and support. They also need guidance on where to go to reunify with their children and get the help they need. This is essential before handing off the microphone to a mayor, sheriff, police chief, or a medical worker for crisis/situation-specific updates.

KEEPING SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS INFORMED

Keeping school board members informed is essential to your response, as is making sure they are updated simultaneously. Your superintendent likely communicates with trustees through a group text and/or a group e-mail (and should be clear that no one can "reply all" without violating open meeting laws). The superintendent will want to let them know when the next update or news conference is coming and/or share a general timeline for when information will be shared. For example, "We'll update the public at tomorrow's 9 a.m. news conference" or "we'll update as soon as the police chief reports back."

Board members will receive immediate calls and text messages from concerned constituents, members of the media, and others. Providing school board members with identical talking points will ensure they respond word for word, with the same message as the district.

The board president should stand next to the superintendent at press conferences to show support and solidarity with the district's response. Ideally, though, the district speaks with one voice—that of the superintendent. The school board at some point may want to make a statement, however it is not in the first 48 hours in most cases and the school PRE should assist the school board in drafting language to make sure of its accuracy.

In a world driven by social media, communication is instant. Our colleagues who have experienced crisis events know this firsthand and have taught us that when such a crisis begins, we can expect that:

- PREs will receive text messages from chiefs and security teams that an active shooting or other event may be underway.
- Students and staff who hear shots or experience the crisis will call 911.
- Children will text their parents to ask for help or express their fear.
- Messages will be shared electronically, posted on social media, and picked up by news organizations (who will then call you to confirm what they are hearing).
- Parents will call their child's school and the superintendent's office, jamming phone lines across the district.
- Parents, news media, and community members will immediately race to the school.

The pre-planning outlined at the beginning of this guidebook prepares PREs for how information will flow and how key decisions will be made. It also outlines the information that should be shared as soon as the crisis response, management, and crisis communications teams activate individual and collective procedures.

Knowing how information will flow into the JIC, PREs can avoid the mistakes of first responders and school officials slow to communicate or contradict and correct each other's statements when they do. The school community and media will demand information and regular communication from school officials. Trust and credibility should be established in the first 30 minutes of the crisis with regular communication intervals even if new information or more



TIMELINE FOR CRISIS UPDATES

Experienced crisis communications professionals suggest a standard timeline known as the “15-30-60-90 Rule”. But when it comes to communicating with families, waiting 15 minutes for any information will feel like an eternity. It makes sense, therefore, for PREs to plan more aggressively, with a plan that gets something out within 5-10 minutes. If possible, update families every 10-15 minutes, as information critical to the emergency response, status of the rescue, and evacuation/reunification is known.

Using social media to communicate with families on snow days or calamity days shows how it has replaced the tradition of communicating through television or radio. School district information shared on our website and social media platforms is quickly shared with parents and the community. Communication is two-way. Families and students comment on our posts in real time, and local media check our sites for the most current, accurate, and reliable information about our schools. That is why PREs should plan and prepare to communicate first, and quickly, to establish the school district as the most timely and reliable source of information.



THE FIRST 5-10 MINUTES

Within the first 5-10 minutes, districts should release their first communication directly to internal and external stakeholders, starting with those most affected: students, staff, and families. That message should immediately be followed by a statement to media. This can be a simple acknowledgement of the situation before details are known. In addition, you can use the holding statements in Appendix A to, 1) provide reassurance that an emergency response has been activated, 2) instruct what staff and families should be doing, and 3) inform where and when updates will be posted as soon as information is received and verified.



THE FIRST 15-20 MINUTES

Within 15-20 minutes, first responders, in communication with the JIC, are likely to have confirmed the first details that can be shared on the school district's website and social media pages. News media will benefit (and appreciate) being given, or directed to, information about the school affected, its demographics, etc., and an estimated time for the first news conference.



THE FIRST 30-45 MINUTES

Your superintendent should be readied for his/her first public appearance. Families and the community will look to the school district for the most current and reliable information. This appearance should be live-streamed, if possible, and recorded so it can be posted immediately on the district's website and social media platforms. This message must include details as they are known, as well as empathetic affirmations already drafted into the holding statement.



THE FIRST 60 MINUTES

Additional press conferences should follow. In addition to the superintendent, they may include other key leaders as appropriate (e.g., mayor, sheriff, chief of police). Participants should be representatives with whom the school district and city's security detail have worked to secure the school, apprehend the suspect, evacuate the students, treat the injured, support the families, etc. Working in cooperation with other PIOs in the JIC, PREs should help create talking points for their respective spokespersons and plan the order for each representative to provide details from their perspective and area of knowledge and expertise.

THE CRITICAL FIRST 10 MINUTES

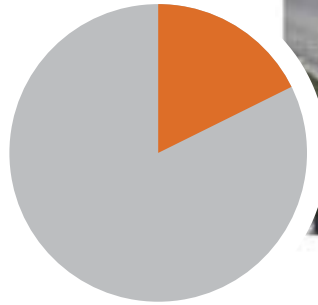
GATHERING INFORMATION

- News media and others will pick up information in “real time” on police scanners (which may or may not be accurate).
- Without access to the scene, news anchors or reporters will convey information observed from their helicopter’s aerial view and from students, staff, and others calling newsrooms.
- PREs, in cooperation with other PIOs in the JIC, should have access to scanners and to reliable contacts at the crisis site to verify information as its transmitted.
- As facts are relayed and verified, talking points, prepared in the JIC, will ensure consistent messaging for all PIOs.
- Advanced planning for when and how the superintendent and other agency heads will share information will ensure the school district is communicating first, or simultaneously, with heads of other agencies.
- Referring news media to identified PIOs/ spokespersons ensures that information and talking points are consistent with the first message delivered by the superintendent.

DRAFTING THE FIRST MESSAGE

The school district’s initial statement should:

- Express compassion for staff, students, and families affected.
- Summarize what is know (so far) about the incident.
- Instruct families where to reunite with students (provide a map if possible) and how to navigate the reunification process.
- Announce where continuous updates will be posted and when to expect the next news conference/ update as police respond.
- Make sure a Spanish-language communication specialist/interpreter is part of the Communications team to quickly make messaging available in Spanish. Messages should also be distributed in a district’s top three languages.



COMMUNICATING TO DISTRICT STAFF

For a crisis at a specific school, the district should communicate to staff at that school through phone/text/ email or mass notification systems such as Finals site, Parentlink, etc. Depending on the situation, a principal might use the intercom system within their building. The intercom is an important tool to remember, as sometimes teachers don’t have their phone with them, or their email pulled up. Something as simple as “staff, please review your outlook email immediately for an important information update.”

Here are several actions districts can take during a crisis to communicate to staff in other buildings:

- The district’s security dispatch center should have a distribution email list to which they send each 911 call that is made to a school. This is often the first trigger PREs use to begin developing strategic messages for a building.
- Districts should have a cross-functional district crisis team in which crisis team members know their responsibility.
- Use the district’s messaging system (email, phone, text) to communicate to all district staff to make sure they’re aware and have at least a few key talking points.

MANAGING NEWS MEDIA

There was a time when PREs could easily distinguish between social media and traditional media. In the digital age, however, newspaper, TV, and radio reporters are posting news stories and updates on their digital platforms just as quickly as citizen journalists are posting on an increasing number of instant messaging and social media platforms.

PRIORITIZE MESSAGES

- Practice with staff beforehand who will serve in specific roles during a crisis.
- Attend to your own information gathering first.
- Focus first on messaging to your staff and families, while assigning members of the team or an outside consultant to manage and prioritize media requests in the order they come in, sending a statement and updates to your media list.
- Reduce the number of one-off requests and ensure media members are receiving the same information at the same time.
- Monitor, 24/7, what's being posted on local and national media platforms, in print publications, and on social media sites about the incident.
- Remember, students are sharing information in real time, some of which may not be accurate. You may wish to emphasize that the only dependable, accurate source of information will come from the school district and law enforcement.
- Provide timely and accurate updates, and correct misinformation as it arises.
- In addition to providing communications support for the impacted school(s), share information, and talking points with other school leaders to share with staff and families.

FINALIZE HOLDING STATEMENTS

- All holding statements, including the initial statement issued within the first 10 minutes before information is known, should include contact information, phone numbers, and email addresses for media questions.
- Include links to a district crisis communications website where all statements, messaging, and updates are posted.

GATHER SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

- While waiting for updates, PREs and their teams can gather demographic data for the school affected, including the grades and number of students enrolled, number of staff employed, which classes are housed in the impacted wing of the building, etc. You will be asked for this information.
- Create an FAQ page on the website and add these fast facts for those seeking additional information.
- If your district has a family engagement hotline, ensure those in charge have information and talking points so that they can respond to questions from families who call in.

MANAGING NEWS MEDIA

TRIAGE CALLS

- Prep your communications team and add additional staff to monitor email, answer phones, record on-hold messaging, and quickly respond to callers.
- If there is a need to evacuate a school, ensure that one of the PREs is at the reunification site to assist and respond to questions from families and news media or direct reporters to the appropriate spokesperson.
- Email these staff members the prepared statements and instructions on where to access the most timely, accurate, updated information as it is received.
- Add updated information to your “on hold” messaging in key offices.
- Post an alert banner on your website directing information seekers to a designated page with the latest statement, information updates, superintendent messages/videos, news releases, the time of the next press conference, etc.
- Do **NOT** post a message apologizing that you are unavailable or overwhelmed with calls.

RESPECT LOCAL MEDIA

It's important to remember that local reporters cover your school district every day. PREs should not give more weight or more attention to calls from “big names” in cable news and from producers of shows hosted by nationally-recognized media personalities. They are, too often, put at the front of the line.



MANAGING NEWS MEDIA

PREs SHOULD:

- **Take care of local reporters first.** That is a basic rule in building good media relations. Local reporters will be on the story longer than the outsiders, and they will remember how you attended to their needs and referred national media outlets to them and to their local affiliates for the information, documents, and interviews you provide.
- Be as open and honest as possible from the start of a crisis and you will be better positioned to assure reporters you will continue to support their work as the “why” becomes clearer in the aftermath of the crisis.
- Keep communicating, even when the information has not changed. “Here’s what we have (repeat what’s already been told). We have nothing to add at this time, but we expect an update shortly.”

PRESS CONFERENCES

With news assignment desks monitoring police scanners, PREs should expect media outlets to call the district and to deploy cameras, reporters, and live trucks to the area within minutes. In drafting your holding statements for the media, it’s important to estimate that your first news conference will be held within the first 30-60 minutes.

It is here that you can take advantage of any positive relationships you’ve developed with reporters, news directors, and assignment editors. Expect news outlets to reach the school or as close to it as possible within 10-15 minutes of an incident.

- Announce the time and location of the press conference **as soon as possible.**
- Designate a spokesperson, ideally your superintendent. However, if the crisis is still unfolding at the school, the communications director should be the spokesperson.
- Brief speakers on information being reported and posted on social media.
- Equip spokespersons with talking points drafted and approved in cooperation with the JIC and post them on social media.

- Determine when and where press conferences are held, and when/what information is released.
- Communicate the gravity of the event and emphasize sensitivity to victims and their families.
- Clarify errors of fact or rumors that persist on social media.
- Announce where information is posted and updated and when the next press briefing will occur.
- Show sympathy toward victims and their families.
- Include signers and translators to ensure messages are clear to all stakeholders.

Depending on the demographics of the district, PREs may wish to provide Spanish language interpretation in written updates and at news conferences. Ideally the superintendent, if fluent, may be asked to share all or part of the news in Spanish. If that is not possible, a district administrator or spokesperson may be called up to address the Spanish speaking audience, both at the news conference or during interviews with Spanish language media.

If not provided by city government, the school district could provide live ASL (American Sign Language) interpretation at the news conferences.

CRISIS RECOVERY

Acts of mass violence will cause extreme disruption. Caring for the mental health of the community is critical for promoting resilience and recovery. Crisis experts advise that every school community has its own culture. Communications professionals can contribute what is known about that culture to support crisis recovery.

Expect community gatherings, memorial services, and candlelight vigils in the aftermath of a shooting event. Counselors attest that while these measures are comforting in the moment, what is really helpful is assisting students and families move forward and return to familiar routines as quickly as possible.

The balancing act PREs face is to help people recover and move on *without keeping their traumatic experience at the forefront*. For this reason, the most effective intervention supports in the wake of a crisis are local strategies implemented in cooperation with local service providers, counselors, and agencies that already have relationships with the grieving school community.

National crisis experts can also be helpful. They can provide training and consultation to local providers and extend programs and additional interventions families may need in their immediate, intermediate, and long-term recovery. Those interventions often promote the principles of Psychological First Aid (PFA) and include: safety calming, self- and community-efficacy, social connectedness, and restoring a sense of hope/optimism. These principles should be foremost in the messaging of PREs during the school community's recovery.



"It felt like the CVPA way today, the way we do business. It was a productive day. I feel like everyone was in good spirits. We had smooth transitions. At this point I'm focusing on the mental health of the students and staff. It was good having counselors available. We had some good connections made with the therapists who were here. I feel really good about the support we have received."

--Dr. Kacy Shahid, Principal of Central Visual and Performing Arts High School in St. Louis, after the reopening of school following an incident where a student and teacher were killed.

ACTIVATION TIMELINE

Incident Occurs



**Family Reunification Center
Within 2-7 hours**



**Family Assistance Center
Within 48-72 hours**



**Resiliency Center
~3+ weeks**

CONCLUSION

We know from experience and from observing poorly managed crisis response and communication that our primary goal is to eliminate, or at least minimize, complications that result when panic and confusion reign.

For example, first responders warn that for every child in a school, as many as 10 people will be inclined to drive directly to the campus. This will confound rescue efforts. Emergency workers should not have to abandon their vehicles and rush long distance on foot, carrying stretchers and medical gear. Police are key to traffic flow. PREs are in the best position to convey to families how they can best support the rescue effort.

The time to anticipate such complications is now. A proactive communications plan will include holding statements, sample messages, and other tools recommended in this guidebook. With this plan in place when a crisis occurs, PREs and senior leaders can focus on 1) securing students and staff, 2) keeping the entire school community informed of progress, and 3) leading an effective emergency response.

What we also know from experience is that we are not alone when the unthinkable happens.

- Our city and county agencies are trained and ready to support us before, during, and after a crisis event or school shooting.
- Our CEO/Superintendents, our safety and security teams, senior leaders, and the PREs in the CGCS network have, at our fingertips, the supports needed to guide teams through a crisis.

Proper planning ensures that crisis communication is:

- **Immediate**, to calm fears, provide direction, quell rumors, and redirect anxiety toward reunification and recovery.
- **Informative**, not only for communicating the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the event, but to guide a panicked community toward rational and reasonable actions that aid, rather than hinder, response.
- **Honest**, in ways that give no hint of understatement, obfuscation, omission of facts, or “spinning” a negative situation into a positive one. People just want and need the truth.
- **Compassionate**, to let people know their personal feelings matter as much as, or more than, the desire of the entire school community to know what’s happening.
- **Interactive**, in ways that:
 1. Acknowledge the opportunity in the digital age to provide information and answer questions through multimedia platforms.
 2. Quell rumors when they start.
 3. Answer questions as they are raised.
 4. Engage the community and the media, as much as possible.

Truth and compassionate concern for others is the bottom line in Crisis Communication.



These surveillance images of a 2008 shooting event show how quickly a school can turn from normal to nightmare, and are used in active shooter training in Cleveland to stress the importance of readiness and thoughtful planning for such events.

In conveying the importance of pre-planning for an active shooter event, the safety and security team in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District uses school surveillance video to remind staff how quickly things can move from normal to nightmare in a school.

These sobering images underscore the importance of readiness and the need for crisis communicators to engage regularly in thoughtful planning.

By working with crisis responders and managers, we are better able to ensure that none of our efforts complicate what may be a chaotic, anxiety-filled situation.

PREs are best prepared to communicate effectively in a crisis event by:

- Knowing the plans and actions of first responders.
- Preparing in advance for the flow of information from the site to PIOs of related agencies.
- Developing a communication plan that considers the proactive measures outlined in this guidebook and/or in the additional resources provided in the Appendices.
- Ensuring your communication, reunification, and recovery efforts:
 - » Demonstrate confidence and control;
 - » Show responsibility with effective strategies for diffusing fear and anxiety; and
 - » Reflect an empathetic, compassionate response to families' need to reach their children when they are in danger.

PREs must demonstrate preparedness, responsibility, and concern for those impacted and be ready to keep the public and the media informed. By doing this, PREs can meet fear, anger, and anxiety with the calm, thoughtful and compassionate response needed in every crisis situation.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE

HOLDING STATEMENT

UPDATED: _____

Police have responded to a report of (a possible/unconfirmed) active shooter at _____ school. The school is in lockdown, and our crisis response plan has been activated. School staff and security officers are working to keep students isolated and safe. Families and media are asked to stay away from the school and from roads leading to the school to avoid blocking access for police and emergency workers responding.

At this point, let's place our faith and trust in the quick-acting police and rescue workers who are at the scene, as we await confirmation that the threat has been eliminated and our school can be safely evacuated.

In the meantime, we will keep you fully informed by posting and updating information on the district website and social media platforms as we receive it.

Here's what we know at this point:

- the alleged shooter is [in custody / is isolated/ has been disarmed / has been injured/killed
- #___ students are reported to have been treated at the scene/transported for examination/treatment.
- Families of victims have been/are being notified.
- Evacuation of the school is underway / will begin shortly
- Unless personally directed otherwise, parents and caregivers should report, with identification, to the reunification center at _____.
- As we gather more information, our thoughts are with the students, families and staff affected by this tragic turn of events at _____ school.
- Our next news conference and update will be at _____ a.m./p.m.
- We continue to gather information as it is available, and will continue to keep families and the community fully updated on our website, social media platforms and through our school messaging service.

SAMPLE

TEXT MESSAGE / ROBO CALL

“This is (NAME), superintendent of (School District), with an urgent message for families of students who attend _____ School.

SCHOOL NAME has been placed on lockdown while police respond to reports of an active shooting incident in or around our school. Our emergency response plan has been activated in (____ school/all schools) to keep staff and students isolated and secure. Police are working to keep all roads leading to _____ school clear, to enable police and emergency workers to respond quickly.

Families of students and staff can help by reinforcing this guidance, keeping the areas around ____ school clear, keeping phone lines open, and following instructions as we receive and share them with you.

Our goal right now is to ensure our students and staff are safe, the threat is eliminated, and our families are fully informed.

I will be joining [emergency response officials if known] in a news conference at ____ o'clock to provide the most accurate and complete information as it is available. I will continue to keep you updated today through similar messages and website alerts. Thank you.

Drafting holding statements with as many points as are likely to be known in the first 10 minutes, will enable you to:

- quickly establish direct points of communication and information
- demonstrate preparedness and calm, deliberate action
- provide critical information to enable first responders to secure the scene and keep access roads and entrances clear for rescue and evacuation
- release information on casualties, and on notification of families affected
- direct all other families to reunification centers (and add a map if possible)
- allay fears and communicate empathy

SAMPLE

NEWS RELEASE

The _____ School District's Emergency Response Plan has been activated, as police respond to reports of a possible active shooting situation at _____ school. We have locked down the school to enable school officials and staff to keep students isolated and protected while the report is investigated and the threat addressed.

[The District] has activated our emergency communication protocols to alert families of the police response underway, and the need for families to stay away from the school and nearby streets to enable police and emergency workers to access and respond quickly to the site.

We are in communication with staff and families through our routine email/text/voice recorded message system, social media accounts and a website designated for crisis communication updates at _____.

The superintendent/CEO is monitoring updates from emergency management officials and will brief the community in a news conference at _____, scheduled at or about ____ o'clock.

Add (if known):

- the alleged shooter is [in custody / is isolated/ has been disarmed / has been injured/killed].
- #___ students are reported to have been treated at the scene/transported for examination/treatment.
- Families of victims have been/are being notified.
- Evacuation of the school is underway / will begin shortly
- Unless personally directed otherwise, parents and caregivers should report, with identification, to the reunification site at _____.
- As we gather more information, our thoughts are with the students, families and staff affected by this tragic turn of events at _____ school.
- Our next news conference and update will be at ____ o'clock.
- We continue to gather information as it is available, and will continue to keep families and the community fully updated on our website, social media platforms and through our school messaging service.

SAMPLE

INFORMATION UPDATE

[District] CEO/Superintendent [Name] will continue to brief the [District] community as more information is known about a school shooting incident at _____ school at _____ o'clock today.

We are grateful for the swift response of ~[police/rescue] who arrived at our school within _____ minutes of being notified of an active shooter in/around our school.

At this time, we have confirmed that

Select from any that apply:

- Evacuation protocols are in place and students are being transported to _____, the location designated as the family reunification site, at [address].
- Unless contacted directly by school personnel or other agency to do otherwise, parents should report, with identification, to (reunification location).
- #___ students are reported to have been treated at the scene/transported to hospitals. Those parents have been notified.
- The alleged shooter [is in custody/ has been isolated/disarmed/injured/killed].
- An evacuation of the school is in process/will begin shortly.
- Information and instructions will be continuously updated on our school district website, social media platforms and through our school messaging service.
- We continue to gather information as it is available, and will continue to keep families and the community fully updated.
- We expect to provide another update at _____ o'clock.
- All of us are grieving [with the families of students injured/killed], and we will be working together, in the difficult days ahead, to support our students, staff and families through this crisis.

APPENDIX B

This quick resource guide was created by the Wichita Public Schools' Strategic Communications team to highlight the critical action items that come into play for every crisis no matter the type or scope. With a full crisis communications plan behind this document, this QRG is on a clipboard at every staff member's work station so it can be easily accessed whenever the plan needs to be enacted.



CRISIS COMMUNICATION INCIDENT GUIDE REV 5/23
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

INCIDENT/DATE _____

CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN OUTLINE

- STEP 1: Verify Crisis Situation, Assignments, Team Members ("At A Glance")**
- STEP 2: Management and Logistics Considerations**
- STEP 3: Develop Key Messages**
- STEP 4: Approve and Release Key Messages**
- STEP 5: Monitor and Provide Feedback**
- STEP 6: Conduct Communications Debrief and Analysis After the Crisis**

**STRAT COMM
OPERATIONS BASE**
(if not in the office)

DEBRIEF NOTES - WHAT WENT RIGHT, WORKED WELL, DIDN'T WORK

ESSENTIAL DEFINITIONS:

LOCKOUT – Lock exterior doors, limit access from outside. Activity inside continues as normal.

LOCKDOWN – Lock internal and exterior doors, no one enters or leaves building. Access to classrooms and hallways also secured. Activities *may* continue in classrooms, but no one enters/leaves internal spaces.



ASSIGNMENTS/TEAM MEMBERS “At A Glance”

AUDIENCE / CHANNEL	RESPONSIBILITY
Weather Team / Crisis Team	Primary: Wendy Back-up: Susan A, Maria K <i>Spanish</i>
Key Staff <i>In the absence of both Wendy and Susan A, Suzy will be responsible for overseeing execution of action steps in the office.</i>	Primary: Wendy Back-up: Susan A Early morning: Ashley <i>Cable</i> (Jennifer as back-up), Maria K <i>Spanish</i> (Brenda Torres and Fabian Armendariz as back-ups)
Frontline Communicators <i>ZALLFrontlineComm, add ZALLPrincipals, ZALLClerical if necessary</i>	Primary: Suzy, Alicia
BOE / Email, Text, Phone <i>Staff will engage BOE at request of Supt., who may choose to handle those communications directly</i>	Primary: Wendy Back-up: Susan A, Suzy
ZALL Email	Primary: Wendy Back-up: Susan A, Suzy
Social Media / Students, Parents, Staff	Primary: Susan A (early AM, late night), Maria L / Maria K (daytime) Back-up: Susan A, Maria L and Maria K will back up each other, Brenda Torres is back up for Spanish
ParentLink / Parents, Staff (*Students) <i>See appendix for info on what groups for what message types</i> <i>NOTE: Support provided to principals if notification is localized</i>	Primary: Wendy (*Student notification is situational) Back-up: Susan A Back-up: Alicia, Suzy For both: Support from Maria K <i>Spanish</i> (written/phone), backed up by Maria Palacios and Denisse Cadena-Wright, <i>Vietnamese</i> support from Tan Tran (written/phone) and Mai Sullivan (written), <i>Sign language</i> support from Veronica Frambers
Web Updates <i>Pop up, ALL sites for weather, targeted for other emergencies, content on web headline news</i>	Primary: Susan A (early AM, late night), Maria L / Maria K (daytime) Back-up: Suzy, Wendy
Media	Primary: Susan A, Maria K <i>Spanish</i> Back-up: Wendy, Maria K <i>Spanish</i> , Maria L, Fabian Armendariz <i>Spanish</i>
Fielding Frontline Phone Calls	Primary: Alicia, Chelsea, Kayla, Carla*, Shawn*, Kowonia* (*situational, would come to StratComm office)
Media Monitoring / Traditional, Social, Web	Primary: Kayla, Ashley, Chelsea, Maria L, Maria K, Back-up: Jennifer, Michael, Brenda Torres <i>Spanish</i>
Documentation <i>Important to capture ALL communications disseminated and referenced, and create Microsoft Team</i>	Primary: Suzy, Jennifer BS, Chelsea Back-up: Kayla, Michael
Donation, Community Partner Support	Primary: Suzy Back-up: Kowonia



Monitor Information @ Email info@usd259.net	Primary: Alicia Back-up: Chelsea
Crisis Scene-to-Strat Comm Office Liaison	Primary: Maria L
Graphics	Primary: Kayla Back-up: Jennifer
Media Briefings	Primary: MPS Team
Team Checkup as crisis evolves	Primary: Kowonia

Situational roles / audiences:

AUDIENCE	LIAISON
Crisis Team Leader, Assistant Leader	
Leadership (Superintendent/BOE, DLT, Department Heads)	
Spokesperson	
Family/Reunification Liaison	
Employee Liaison	
VIP/Partner Liaison	
School Liaison	
Student Liaison	
Union Liaison (UTW, SEIU)	
Fire/Police PIO Liaison	
Lawmaker Liaison	
Media Base Lead	
Media Facilitator (technical)	
Communications Ops Center Lead	
Accident Liaison	
Counseling Liaison	



MESSAGING – *Write It Down!*

KEY MESSAGE 1	KEY MESSAGE 2	KEY MESSAGE 3

↓

↓

↓

SUPPORT POINT 1.1	SUPPORT POINT 2.1	SUPPORT POINT 3.1
SUPPORT POINT 1.2	SUPPORT POINT 2.2	SUPPORT POINT 3.2
SUPPORT POINT 1.3	SUPPORT POINT 2.3	SUPPORT POINT 3.3
WHEN TO SEND:		
HOW TO DISTRIBUTE:		
MESSAGE RECIPIENT(S):		

ESSENTIAL DEFINITIONS:

LOCKOUT – Lock exterior doors, limit access from outside. Activity inside continues as normal.

LOCKDOWN – Lock internal and exterior doors, no one enters or leaves building. Access to classrooms and hallways also secured. Activities *may* continue in classrooms, but no one enters/leaves internal spaces.



SAMPLE

EMAIL UPDATE FROM SAINT LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

October 12, 2022, 1:22 pm

Today, the Saint Louis Public Schools family has been devastated by news of an active shooter who injured six and killed one adult and one teen at Central Visual and Performing Arts High School before being shot and killed by an officer.

Students at two neighboring campuses, CVPA and Collegiate, were immediately placed on lockdown before being evacuated to a safe place to reunite with parents.

Counselors are on site and will continue to avail themselves to students, staff and families for as long as needed. Administrators and counselors are meeting with families.

NEW UPDATE: In an abundance of caution, all SLPS schools are on **HARD** lockdown, which means that for the remainder of the day there will be limited movement in and outside the schools. At dismissal, all scheduled buses will leave at the appointed time.

We are asking that any parents who want to come to school and pick up a student, please call the school in advance and let the office know when and who will be picking up the student. The student will be walked out to them.

Please **NOTE:** All after school classes and athletic activities are cancelled for this evening.

We will remain in touch with our families and community. Please rely on SLPS communications and the Police Department updates for your information.

Thank you.

George Sells
Director of Communications and Marketing
Office of Institutional Advancement
Saint Louis Public Schools
george.sells@slps.org
(c) 314.332-7035



SAMPLE

VIDEO MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT GOTHARD ABOUT THE TRAGIC EVENT AT HARDING SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9phwAl7Mh0Y>

Dear Saint Paul Public Schools Community,

I am devastated to share some tragic news with you this evening. A student was seriously injured today at Harding High School and did not survive. A suspect is in custody. Due to student privacy and the police investigation, there are not many other details I can share at this time. Like all of you, I am grieving that this happened in one of our schools today.

The school went into lockdown and dismissed students early. Activities at Harding were canceled this evening and through the weekend. We will keep you informed of other cancellations or events that may be impacted by this tragic event.

We are doing everything we can to support the students, staff, families and community this evening and in the days and weeks ahead. Trauma resources are available at every school and through Ramsey County outside of school hours. Please find a few resources here:

- Resources for Students and Families: spps.org/Domain/14350
- Resources for Staff: spps.org/Domain/13967

Right now our focus is on supporting the Harding High School community and those who were directly impacted by this horrible incident, especially the family of the victim. Our young people need us more than ever. Please continue to support each other as we all grieve this tragedy and work together on healing and moving forward.

In Partnership,
Joe Gothard, Superintendent

SAMPLE

Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney, Richmond Public Schools' Superintendent Jason Kamras, and Interim Police Chief Rick Edwards give an update on the June 2023 deadly shooting after Huguenot High School's graduation in Richmond.



View video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ph2BVzl59s>

APPENDIX C

MESSAGES ABOUT GUNS/WEAPONS FOUND ON CAMPUS

Here are some examples of messages/statements from districts where weapons were found on campuses:

Earlier today a Booker T. Washington High School student and the student's mother alerted administrators that another student at the school may be in possession of a weapon. That student was located immediately and a weapon was recovered. The student was arrested and faces both criminal and disciplinary charges in accordance with the Atlanta Public Schools/Atlanta Board of Education zero-tolerance policy for possession of a weapon on campus. Parents were notified as soon as all of the facts of the situation were ascertained.

The safety and well-being of students and employees is, and will always be, a top priority in Atlanta Public Schools.

Weapon/Gun at school template

Voice:

Good Afternoon, parents. The safety of our students and staff is a top priority at _____. Today we had a student in possession of a gun at school. There were no threats made and no one was hurt in regards to this incident. Our Security Officers, Administration and SRO got involved immediately and took the student into police custody. We followed all district safety protocols in this matter to ensure the safety of our school community.

Parents, please discuss with your student the far-reaching and serious consequences of bringing inappropriate items to school.

I want to thank those who shared the information. We take these matters seriously and our students and parents know about See Something, Say Something in order to maintain a safe school environment.

Thank you for your continued support of _____.

Email:

Good Afternoon, parents.

The safety of our students and staff is a top priority at _____. Today we had a student in possession of a gun at school. There were no threats made and no one was hurt in regards to this incident. Our Security Officers, Administration and SRO got involved immediately and took the student into police custody. We followed all district safety protocols in this matter to ensure the safety of our school community.

Important Update from Los Angeles Unified on Van Nuys High School Incident

The Van Nuys High School campus will remain on lockdown until law enforcement gives the "all-clear" to re-open the campus. The safety of our students and staff remains our top priority. There is no current threat to our campus and all student and staff remain safe.

We are informing you of a stabbing incident that involved multiple students which took place on our campus. Los Angeles School Police Department and LAPD are on scene investigating. Students are safe, and LASPD will stay on scene and continue to provide safety and support to students and employees. Parents of students involved have been notified.

1/2



Important Update from Los Angeles Unified on Van Nuys High School Incident

All appropriate procedures were implemented according to District policy. In addition, our staff is well trained and regularly reviews all emergency procedures. We will continue to keep you informed throughout this process.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation and patience.



2/2

APPENDIX D: CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT

Cott Media Group- Dr. Roseann Canfora trains and supports K-12 higher education executives and communications teams in crisis mitigation, support, and recovery. Her expertise in crisis and media management proved invaluable to Broward County Schools in the weeks following the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Author of the Crisis Communications & Active Shooting Incident Guidebook distributed to CGCS member school districts, Dr. Canfora provides valuable training for school district leaders and Public Relations Executives to effectively manage critical incidents and crises in their schools. Formerly Chief Communications Officer in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Dr. Canfora also provides training and executive coaching for entry-level PRE's.

Contact info: rcanfora@kent.edu

The Council for School Safety Leadership provides crisis communications support in the immediacy and aftermath and help guides districts on communication as part of the recovery process. John McDonald, the organization's chief operating officer, is recognized internationally as the architect of the post-Columbine tragedy safety, security, and emergency management plan.

Contact info: John McDonald, mcdonald@mosba.org

DGD Communications- Daisy Gonzalez-Diego, President, DGD Communications, was the Chief Communications and Community Engagement Officer for Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the nation's third-largest school district. She oversaw all communications, public relations, marketing, and outreach for various priorities. She now leads DGD Communications, utilizing her 30 years of experience navigating the public and private sectors to assist organizations with their communication needs.

Contact info: dgdcommunications.com, 305-607-1432

Enlighted Consulting- Eileen Houston-Stewart has been a passionate advocate for public education for 27 years and has worked as a communications/community engagement chief in urban school districts in four states. Her expertise includes crisis management, public and media relations, project and events management, video script writing and voiceover narration, and executive coaching for individuals transitioning into school public relations.

Contact info: <https://enlightenedconsulting.net/>, eileen@enlightenedconsulting.net, 816-379-0385

The Grayson Agency- Founder Justin Grayson is an award-winning public relations and communications expert who has established a national reputation for his crisis management skills, marketing prowess, and ability to shape an organization's public perception. Justin has spent over a decade as a leader in the field of public school communications, successfully navigating communications challenges in some of California's largest and most diverse school districts, including Long Beach, Fresno, and Riverside Unified.

<https://www.thegraysonagency.net/contact-us>

Barbara Griffith Communications- With a career spanning several decades, Barbara Griffith brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the field of communications. Barbara served as Senior Communications Officer for the Fort Worth ISD for 17 years, where she shaped the district's public image and communication strategies. Barbara's education consulting services include crisis communications, developing strategies to boost and sustain enrollment, facilitate smooth superintendent transitions, and lead successful bond election information campaigns.

Contact info: Griffith.barbara@att.net, 817-602-5011

Horan Communications- Chris Horan is a former Chief Communications Officer for the Boston Public Schools. Since 2010, he has worked with school districts across the country as Managing Partner of Horan Communications. Chris provides coaching, training, and consulting services to School Boards, Superintendents, Communications Directors, and Administrative Teams in K-12 strategic communication. Expertise includes crisis communication, messaging, marketing, writing and editing, media relations, social media strategy, and communications assessment.

Contact: chris@horancommunications.com, 617-852-1340, Twitter [@chrishorannomm](https://twitter.com/chrishorannomm)

APPENDIX E

ACTIVE SHOOTER RESOURCES

Active Shooter Preparedness. Department of Homeland Security.
<https://www.schoolsafety.gov/resource/active-shooter-preparedness>

Active Shooter Response: An Educator's Guide. Office of the Ohio Attorney General.
<https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/State-and-Local-Government/Schools/Active-Shooter-Response-An-Educator-s-Guide>

Developing Emergency Operations Plans: A Guide for Businesses (2018). Federal Bureau of Investigation, Law Enforcement Bulletin.
<https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-guide-for-businesses-march-2018.pdf/view>

Fast Facts, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, accessed August 12, 2021:
<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=54>

Federal resources to help youth cope after a mass shooting. Youth.gov.
<https://youth.gov/feature-article/federal-resources-helping-youth-cope-after-school-shooting>

Helping Students After a School Shooting. American School Counselor Association.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/when-disaster-strikes-inside-disaster-psychology/201802/school-shootings-how-respond>

Resources in Response to the High School Shooting. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network.
https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/Docs/homepage/2018/Resources_in_Response_to_High_School_Shooting_February_2018.pdf

School Shootings: How to respond (2018). Psychology Today.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/when-disaster-strikes-inside-disaster-psychology/201802/school-shootings-how-respond>

School Shooting Prevention, Response, Mitigation and Recovery Resources. Campus Safety Magazine, March 23, 2023.
<https://www.campussafetymagazine.com/news/school-shooting-prevention-response-mitigation-recovery-resources/>

Kowalski, P. (2022) School Shootings: What we know about them and what we can do to prevent them. The Brookings Institute.
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2022/01/26/school-shootings-what-we-know-about-them-and-what-we-can-do-to-prevent-them/>

APPENDIX F

In recent years, school districts across the country have experienced an increase in cyberattacks. According to the White House, in the 2022-23 academic year alone, at least eight K-12 school districts throughout the country were impacted by cyberattacks.

Two of those districts were members of the Council of the Great City Schools: Los Angeles Unified School District and Iowa's Des Moines Public Schools.

In September 2022, the Los Angeles school district experienced a ransomware attack that disrupted the nation's second largest school system's access to email and key systems and applications they needed to operate schools. And on January 9, 2023, a ransomware attack on Des Moines Public Schools led the district to cancel classes.

When a school system experiences a ransomware attack it is vital for the district to effectively communicate with students, families, and employees during that time.

Here are the announcements, press releases, and notices communications departments in the Los Angeles and Des Moines



Cyberattack Update for Students, Families and Employees

.....

All of us are understandably troubled by the cyberattack we experienced in early September. The attack has been a complication that we are navigating together, and I want to provide an update of where we currently stand.

We want to assist concerned families and have opened a hotline that is available Monday-Friday 6:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and this weekend 6:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with expanded hours coming soon. Please contact 855-926-1129 for questions related to the cyberattack.

We will continue updating our community as more information is available. Please be assured that we have taken the necessary steps to protect the data of our families and staff, and we will continue working to safeguard sensitive information.

Thank you for your continued understanding and support. Students, families and employees, please review the email sent by the District today for more information.

MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Los Angeles Unified Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho will be available to answer questions on Tuesday, September 6 at 11:00 a.m. at Edward R. Roybal Learning Center – 1200 Colton St, Los Angeles, CA 90026. RSVP by 9 a.m. on Tuesday, September 6 to LASchoolsCommunications@gmail.com.

News Release

CONTACT: Shannon Haber
communications@lausd.net

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 5, 2022

Los Angeles Unified Targeted by Ransomware Attack

Los Angeles, CA (September 5, 2022) – Los Angeles Unified detected unusual activity in its Information Technology systems over the weekend, which after initial review, can be confirmed as an external cyber attack on our Information Technology assets. Since the identification of the incident, which is likely criminal in nature, we continue to assess the situation with law enforcement agencies. While the investigation continues, Los Angeles Unified has swiftly implemented a response protocol to mitigate Districtwide disruptions, including access to email, computer systems and applications. This communication is being published after extensive, required vetting and approval by a number of entities and agencies.

Despite this significant disruption to our system's infrastructure, schools will open on Tuesday, September 6 as scheduled. We are working collaboratively with our partners to address any and all impacted services. While we do not expect major technical issues that will prevent Los Angeles Unified from providing instruction and transportation, food or Beyond the Bell services, business operations may be delayed or modified. Based on a preliminary analysis of critical business systems, employee healthcare and payroll are not impacted, nor has the cyber incident impacted safety and emergency mechanisms in place at schools.

Los Angeles Unified is committed to delivering high-quality instructional programming, and we are benefiting from an immediate and comprehensive response from the federal government. After the District contacted officials over the holiday weekend, the White House brought together the Department of Education, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) to provide rapid, incident response support to Los Angeles Unified, building on the immediate support by local law enforcement agencies. At the District's request, agencies marshaled significant resources to assess, protect and advise Los Angeles Unified's response, as well as future planned mitigation protocols.

Furthermore, Los Angeles Unified is immediately establishing a plan of action, informed by top public and private sector technology and cyber security professionals, to determine additional protections for the District, and to provide an independent opinion on system-wide protective measures. We will continue to benefit from the declared assistance of federal and state law enforcement entities to assist with investigative procedures and technical deployment and solutions. Presently, federal investigative and technical experts are working on-site, collaboratively, with the Information Technology Division.

Los Angeles Unified has initiated immediate adjustments to ensure this District is able to deliver what our Board, community, teachers, students and parents have come to expect, an excellent educational experience for all. In response, the following actions have been taken, will be taken immediately or will be implemented as soon as feasible.

Press Conference at Edward R. Roybal Learning Center: Cyber Threat September 6, 2022

<https://lausd.wistia.com/medias/dpcm61yr7r>



[Press Conference
at Edward R.
Roybal Learning
Center: Cyber
Threat
September 6,
2022](https://lausd.wistia.com/medias/dpcm61yr7r)

lausd.wistia.com

Press Conference Cyber Attack Follow-up Oct. 3, 2022

<https://lausd.wistia.com/medias/0jkcbjx4uv>



[Press
Conference
Cyber Attack
Follow-up Oct.
3, 2022](https://lausd.wistia.com/medias/0jkcbjx4uv)

lausd.wistia.com

UPDATES: DMPS Network Outages and Interruptions

11:00 AM – Monday, January 9, 2023

Des Moines Public Schools preemptively took the school district's internet and network services offline this morning in response to unusual activity on the network. At this time, the matter is being investigated by our IT staff and consultants.

Access to the internet, WiFi, and various networked systems, at school buildings and district offices, will be either offline or intermittent throughout the day. Telephone service is working.

We apologize for any inconvenience. An update will be provided later today.

NOTE to DMPS families and staff: To receive instant updates on your mobile device, download [Snap! Connect](#) and enable notifications.

4:30 PM – Monday, January 9, 2023

Classes are canceled at Des Moines Public Schools for Tuesday, January 10. Offices will be open although staff may be working remotely, and services will be limited. Athletics and activities are currently scheduled to take place.

Earlier this morning, DMPS was alerted to a cyber security incident on its technology network. As a preemptive measure the school district's internet and network services were taken offline as the matter is currently being investigated and assessed.

Because many technology tools that support both classroom learning as well as the management and operation of the school district are not available at this time, the prudent decision is to close the district for the day.

We apologize for any inconvenience this situation has caused. Updates will be posted as more information becomes available.

6:00 PM – Monday, January 9, 2023

Classes are canceled at Des Moines Public Schools for Tuesday, January 10. Offices will be open although staff may be working remotely, and services limited. Home athletics and activities are cancelled; away athletics and activities will continue as scheduled.



Watch video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbzj3aPdQy0&t=8s>

The district will share another progress update tomorrow morning. Please check the email address you provided the district during registration for a message from Interim Superintendent Matt Smith.

8:00 PM – Tuesday, January 10, 2023

DMPS information technology professionals have made significant progress tonight in restoring our systems. School will resume for students on Thursday, January 12. Students should expect an offline learning experience.

What has changed:

- Access to Infinite Campus student information is now available.
- Phones are operational.
- A limited number of building staff will have access to the internet, though it is not yet accessible to all classroom teachers. WiFi will not be available.
- Operations and building staff will be taking appropriate measures to keep the buildings safe and secure.



We appreciate that there are more questions to be answered (athletics, activities, etc.) We will have additional information to share tomorrow morning.

A reminder that updates can be sent directly to the [Snap! Connect](#) app on your phone.

SXSW SESSION

The Council of the Great City Schools is presenting a session at the **2024 SXSW EDU Conference** in Austin, TX on March 6, 2024. The session will discuss how the Michael Casserly Urban Executive Leadership Institute is training a diverse group of aspiring superintendents to successfully lead large urban school systems. SXSW EDU, March 4-7, 2024 brings together the learner, the practitioner, the entrepreneur, and the visionary for a four-day event that fosters innovation and learning within the education industry.

Shaping the Future: Training Next-Gen Urban School Leaders

 Date TBA  [Professional Development](#) [Administration](#)

Of the 77 largest urban school districts, only 20 superintendents have stayed in their current jobs since 2020. This panel will discuss how a new program is training a diverse group of aspiring superintendents to successfully lead large urban school systems. Participants gain new skills as they attend sessions on school board relations, academics, media relations, and finances. Other facets of the program include individual coaching, mentoring, case studies, and shadowing successful urban school superintendents. Learn how this program is training the next generation of urban school leaders.

Programming descriptions are generated by participants and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of SXSW.



Ray Hart

Council of the Great City Schools



Add to Favorites



Michael Hinojosa

Council of the Great City Schools



Add to Favorites



Martin Pollio

Jefferson County Public Schools



Add to Favorites



Angela Whitelaw

Memphis-Shelby County Schools

SXSW EDU

PRE MEETING

**SAVE
THE
DATE**



23RD ANNUAL PUBLIC RELATIONS EXECUTIVES CONFERENCE

July 11-13, 2024

Seattle | Hyatt Regency Bellevue

*Hotel Reservations will be available in January