



How We Help America's Urban Public Schools

A Summary of
Membership
Benefits of the
Council of the
Great City Schools



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Membership Benefits of the
Council of the Great City Schools



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Introduction

The Council of the Great City Schools brings together the largest urban public school systems in a coalition dedicated to the improvement of education for children in the nation's inner cities.

Founded in 1956 and incorporated in 1961, the Council is governed by a Board of Directors composed of the superintendent of schools and one school board member from each city, making it the only independent national organization so constituted and the only organization whose sole purpose is urban education.

The Council and its member districts strive to help urban schoolchildren become successful and productive members of the global community. The Council informs policymakers, the media, and the public of the successes and challenges of schools in the nation's Great Cities. And urban school leaders from across the country use the organization as a source of information and a forum for coordinating their joint activities.



National advocacy, service, and capacity building shape the Council's activities on behalf of urban schools across the country. Legislation, research, communications, leadership and management, and teaching and learning comprise the organization's functions. As members of the Council, school district personnel from coast to coast share concerns and solutions, capitalizing on strength in numbers, building their expertise, and discovering how their counterparts in other cities have solved similar challenges.

In addition, joint efforts with other organizations, agencies, corporations, policymakers, and coalitions extend the voice of the Council beyond its individual members onto a broader national stage that will ultimately benefit from the contributions of today's urban students.

About the Council of the Great City Schools

Vision

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

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

Mission

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

Goals

- To educate all urban school students to the highest academic standards
- To lead, govern, and manage our urban public schools in ways that advance the education of our children and inspire the public's confidence
- To build a confident, committed and supportive urban community for raising the achievement of urban public schoolchildren

Membership Eligibility

School districts eligible for membership must be located in cities with populations over 250,000 and student enrollment over 35,000. School districts located in the largest city of any state are also eligible for membership, based on urban characteristics.

What Do Members Get for Your Dues?

- Access to the Council's unique network of urban public school leaders and staff
- Access to the nation's foremost team of experts in education legislation, policy, and regulations to ensure you have the best information on local and federal policy developments and are able to address special advocacy needs you may have
- Use of the organization's strategic support teams to review instructional programs, special education, bilingual education, budget and finance operations, business services, and other functions of your school system to ensure they are operating effectively and efficiently
- The Council's monthly newsletter reporting the latest developments in urban schools across the country and providing an outlet for you to showcase your successes and progress
- Access to the Council's unique performance management system and key performance indicators, allowing you to compare your academic performance and non-instructional operations on some 500 measures with your peers across the nation
- Access to the Council's online job sites, allowing you to advertise your district's vacant administrative positions
- Access to on-site briefings for school board members and others undertaking the superintendent search process, and guidance on how to conduct such a search successfully
- Access to Council scholarships for African American and Hispanic graduates of our districts who are pursuing STEM fields in college
- Access to Council award programs honoring special achievements in urban education
- Use of the Council's public service announcements and videos on college- and career-ready standards and the progress of urban public schools
- Political and strategic advice on positioning your school systems for success
- Assistance in solving operational problems with federal grant programs
- Access to the Council's urban schools legal webinars on cutting issues of the day

- Access to Council convenings and professional development on implementing college- and career-ready standards, along with implementation tools and materials
- Ability to query other big-city school systems across the nation on policies and practices
- Ability to act jointly with other urban school systems with similar challenges on shared priorities
- Ability to participate in the Council's research projects and access to all of the organization's analyses, special reports, case studies, research briefs, surveys, and data
- Technical assistance for member districts participating in the Trial Urban District Assessment of NAEP
- Access to the organization's regular "job-alike" meetings and conferences of chief academic officers, research directors, human resource directors, legislative liaisons, chief operating officers, chief information officers and IT directors, public relations officers, bilingual education directors, chief financial officers, and others
- Complimentary registration for the superintendent and school board representative to the Annual Fall Conference of the Great City Schools, the nation's premier gathering of urban school leaders
- An annual report that itemizes services that the Council provides to your district and the return on investment you get for your dues
- Voting rights for the superintendent and one school board representative on the Council's Board of Directors



Boston Schools Superintendent Tommy Chang, right, and Boston school committee chair Michael O'Neill attend the Council's Legislative/Policy Conference.

Summary of Membership Services

We Help America's Schools by:

Legislative and Advocacy Services

- Providing legislative advocacy for urban schools before Congress and the executive and judicial branches of the federal government, bringing millions of dollars in extra federal support to urban school districts each year
- Representing urban schools at national meetings; on task forces, commissions, and advisory groups; and in conferences with Congress, federal agencies, educational associations, and others to ensure a strong voice for urban public education
- Devising and implementing legislative and regulatory strategies and interventions on behalf of member urban school systems
- Providing regular updates for members on federal legislative and agency activities affecting urban schools
- Providing on-call technical assistance for staff in member districts on the implementation of federal programs
- Holding regular meetings of member legislative and program staff to share information on federal program implementation, issues, and recommendations
- Convening an annual Legislative and Policy Conference in Washington featuring leading legislators and federal policymakers
- Delivering timely legislative alerts and briefing papers on issues of particular importance to urban districts
- Conducting city-specific analysis of the effects of federal legislative proposals on member school systems
- Intervening in federal court cases on behalf of member school districts
- Providing direct access to Washington's best legislative staff and to the federal bill amending and writing process
- Creating partnerships as needed with the nation's mayors, corporations, and other advocacy groups to promote issues facing urban education
- Convening regular legal webinars to the membership on cutting edge issues



“What’s so nice about this award from the Council is that you have been there for the long haul. We’ve come across a lot of fads and quick fixes in education in the last 40 years and a lot of shortcuts but this organization has always had their eye on the prize and knows that educating students in urban communities is doable.”

- **Rep. George Miller**, member of Congress, upon accepting a Lifetime Achievement Award from Council Executive Director Michael Casserly before the congressman's retirement.

Research Services

- Conducting statistical analysis, research, and surveys on the conditions, successes, and challenges of urban schools
- Providing comparative data on key performance indicators across the membership
- Publishing research-based reports on why some urban school districts see faster improvements than others and what is behind the differences
- Conducting studies of issues that are critical to urban districts such as turnaround schools, principal supervisors, school tests and demographic changes
- Analyzing and publishing annual member district reading and math state test scores in the organization’s *Beating the Odds* series
- Providing on-call statistics and data for member urban districts and the nation on a wide variety of urban education topics
- Serving as a clearinghouse for research, data, and information on issues concerning urban schools

- Maintaining a research listserv as a channel for research directors and staff in member districts to exchange information
- Providing technical assistance, guidance, and analysis to member districts participating in the Trial Urban District Assessment of NAEP
- Conducting special analyses of NAEP data to inform member districts of instructional challenges and needs
- Providing online facts and statistics about Council member districts
- Providing research and guidance for the Council's Males of Color initiative
- Representing urban school districts before various national research organizations like the National Academy of Sciences
- Representing member districts at forums and meetings of the Partnership for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)
- Collecting and analyzing information on member district assessment practices
- Holding regular meetings of member research and assessment staff to share information on program evaluations, testing practices, data needs, and other areas
- Conducting strategic reviews of the research and accountability departments and operations of member districts

Communications Services

- Developing major public relations initiatives that focus attention on urban education priorities, rally public support, and articulate the needs and direction of urban schools
- Writing articles and opinion pieces in nationally-circulated newspapers and magazines, as well as generating broadcasts and commentary on television, radio, and social media in support of urban schools
- Writing specially tailored op-ed pieces for city newspapers on issues important to individual urban school districts, and providing national context and comparisons for local media on urban schools
- Publishing the *Urban Educator*, an award-winning monthly newsletter providing updates on the latest national, state, and city developments in urban education and showcasing member district successes and progress
- Conducting national press conferences and media conference calls linking the membership with the national press on critical and timely issues

- Producing public service announcements to highlight the progress of urban schools and to inform the public on issues critical to member districts
- Offering technical assistance to member school districts on working with the press and establishing successful communications operations
- Publishing an annual report highlighting Council and membership activities over the year
- Hosting an annual National Town Hall Meeting on urban issues of the day
- Conducting and publishing a survey of public relations offices in big-city school districts every other year
- Holding regular meetings of public relations executives in member districts to share best practices and discuss ongoing challenges
- Maintaining a Public Relations Executives listserv as a channel for communications staff in member districts to exchange information
- Linking the Council's membership and the public through multiple social media outlets
- Operating and maintaining the Council's extensive web site (www.cgcs.org), the Common Core Works web site (www.commoncoreworks.org) and the Males of Color web site (www.malesofcolor.org)



Council Executive Director Michael Casserly discusses the release of the Council's two-year study on school testing at a press conference and panel discussion at the National Press Club in October 2015. The panel featured, left to right, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Council of Chief State School Officers Executive Director Chris Minnich, incoming Acting Secretary of Education John King, North Carolina State School Superintendent June Atkinson and Miami-Dade Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho.

Teaching and Learning Services

- Assessing the instructional, special education, and bilingual programs of member districts and providing strategic support and professional development to help improve them
- Spearheading and supporting the adoption and transition to college- and career-readiness standards in member urban school districts
- Producing print and electronic materials and tools and convening professional development meetings, webinars, and advisory groups of member district academic staff to support and guide effective implementation of college- and career-readiness learning standards
- Developing detailed rubrics and other tools to help member districts determine the degree of alignment between instructional and curricular materials and the college- and career-readiness standards
- Representing urban member districts in national discussions on standards, assessment, and urban progress
- Responding to requests for information from member districts on instructional programs, supplemental materials, interventions, and other academic information
- Maintaining a curriculum listserv as a channel for curriculum staff and directors in member districts to ask questions and exchange information
- Developing key academic performance indicators to allow districts to benchmark instructional progress
- Providing support, materials, analysis, and tools to highlight and address the academic needs of English language learners (ELLs)
- Providing a Professional Learning Platform to assist member districts with struggling readers
- Providing a procurement alliance by which members can jointly purchase high quality ELL materials
- Building district awareness and capacity to address achievement gaps and improve the instruction and educational outcomes of poor and minority students, especially males of color

Leadership and Management Services

- Assessing the management and operations of member districts and providing strategic support to improve them

- Providing access to the Council's groundbreaking online performance management system to allow member districts to track and compare their operational management and expenditures to those of other large urban districts nationwide
- Providing professional development for member school boards on governance practices
- Providing strategic advice and research to member district superintendents and school board members on a variety of financial, leadership, and management topics
- Providing on-call information and best practices on management, administrative, and operational topics
- Providing technical assistance to member districts beginning the search for new superintendents and senior managers
- Providing specialized professional development to urban school executives to build the pipeline of line administrators
- Providing access to online management and operational resources, materials, and tools
- Maintaining various listservs for CIOs, COOs, CFOs, HR directors, food services directors, transportation directors, and others to ask questions and exchange information, and convening regular meetings to facilitate information-sharing and collaboration
- Maintaining a job bank for member urban school districts



Forums and Staff Liaison Groups

- **Staff Liaison Groups:** networks of senior managers who meet annually to discuss best practices and solve common problems—
 - ✓ **Legislation:** directors of government relations, federal legislation and federal program administration in such areas as Title I, Medicaid, school lunch, E-Rate, special education and bilingual education
 - ✓ **Research and Evaluation:** directors of research, evaluation, testing, and accountability
 - ✓ **Public Relations:** directors of public information, communications and media relations
 - ✓ **Human Resources/Personnel:** directors of human resources and personnel operations
 - ✓ **Finance:** directors of finance, business, and procurement
 - ✓ **Curriculum and Instruction:** directors of curriculum and instruction, chief academic officers, and content specialists
 - ✓ **Operations/Administration:** directors of management, operations, administration and facilities, transportation, food services, security, and other business services
 - ✓ **Technology:** chief information officers and technology directors
 - ✓ **Bilingual Education:** directors of bilingual, immigrant, and refugee education
- **Council of the Great City Colleges of Education:** a coalition of deans and other staff of Great City Colleges of Education in member cities whose purpose is to coordinate the work of higher education and K-12 education in cities and to collaboratively address issues of professional development, teacher recruitment, curricula, and more.



Strategic Support Teams

The Council provides on-site district assessments, technical assistance, and peer reviews to its members. This is done by marshaling the expertise of the organization's members to help each other improve. Reviews are conducted in the areas of:

- **Curriculum and Instruction** (e.g., reading and math programming, instructional strategy and organization, professional development, low performing schools, accountability systems, special education, bilingual education, and other areas)
- **Management and Operations** (e.g., organizational structure, staffing levels, procurement, budgeting, personnel operations, MIS, technology, facilities management, finance and budget operations, governance, transportation, food services, and other areas)
- **Research and Assessment** (e.g., testing, research department structure, data collection and use, program evaluation, and other areas)
- **Communications** (e.g., department structure, marketing, internal communications, community outreach, publications, and media relations)
- **Federal Programs** (e.g., Title I, II, III of NCLB, afterschool programs, use of funds, and program alignment)

(The Council has produced hundreds of reports on the instructional, management, and operational functions of urban schools as a result of the peer reviews.)

Review of the Pittsburgh Public Schools

ORGANIZATION, INSTRUCTION, RESEARCH, AND
OPERATIONS

Council of the Great City Schools
2016

Review of the Organizational Structure and Staffing Levels of the Anchorage School District

Submitted by the
Council of the Great City Schools



4/2/2017

Major Conferences

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

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



U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos at the Council's 2017 Annual Legislative/Policy Conference.



U.S. Secretary of Education John King at the Council's 2016 Annual Legislative/Policy Conference.



U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan praises big-city schools at the 2014 Council's Annual Legislative/Policy Conference.

“None of your districts are adequately served, but year after year the improvement we are seeing across your school districts is actually helping lead the country where it needs to go. Thank you collectively for the difference you are making.”

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



"I owe everything to the NYC school system, I would not be who I am today without Stuyvesant High School. I'm living proof that public school systems in this country can work."

-Eric Holder
Former U.S. Attorney General
Guest speaker, 60th Annual Fall Conference

"I am a product of America's urban public schools- my first experience in schools was as a Head Start student."

- Donna Brazile
Political commentator
Guest speaker, 60th Annual Fall Conference



"How thankful I am for your leadership because what you do everyday matters. There were people who told me I didn't matter and I stand before you because of your efforts."

-Anna Maria Chavez
Former Girl Scouts USA CEO
Guest speaker, 58th Annual Fall Conference



Periodicals, Booklets, and Reports

- **Urban Educator:** an award-winning, monthly newsletter covering the latest developments in urban schools nationally and distributed to member school boards, superintendents, central office managers and administrators, Congress, the White House, federal agencies, urban colleges of education, mayors, foundations, the news media, governors, educational associations, and others



- **FG/MPrevention: A Resource for U.S. Schools:** A resource guide for U.S. school staff to support the prevention of female genital mutilation. (July 2017)

- **Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum:** A framework that provides instructional leaders and staff with a core set of criteria for what a high-quality curriculum entails. (July 2017)



- **Re-envisioning English Language Arts and English Language Development for English Language Learners:** Criteria for determining whether English language arts materials are compatible with college- and career-readiness standards and appropriate for English language learners. (May 2017)

- **A Framework for Re-envisioning Mathematics Instruction for English Language Learners:** This document defines a new vision for mathematics instruction that explicitly attends to the needs of ELLs, addressing the interdependence of language and mathematics. (Dec. 2016)



- **Souvenir Journal, Celebrating 60 Years of Service to America's Urban Public Schools:** Commemorates the 60th anniversary of the Council, chronicling the growth of the Council through its 60-year history. (October 2016)

- **Managing for Results in America's Great City Schools 2016, Results from Fiscal Year 2014-15:** An initiative created by the Council to define, gather, and report data on key performance indicators (KPIs) in various non-academic operations of school district management. (October 2016)
- **Indicators of Success, A Guide for Assessing District-Level Implementation of College- and Career-Readiness Standards:** A set of indicators districts might use to track their progress on implementation of college- and career-readiness standards. (Summer 2016)
- **Enterprise Risk Management in the Great City Schools:** Identifies best practices in managing risk in a K-12 public school setting. (May 2016)
- **U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights Guidance: An Update:** This report provides a primer on the Office of Federal Civil Rights and its roles and responsibilities. (May 2016)
- **Student Testing in America's Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis:** In the Spring of 2014, the Council staff developed and launched a survey of assessment practices. This report presents the findings from that survey and subsequent Council analysis and review of the data. (October 2015)
- **School Improvement Grants: Progress Report from America's Great City Schools:** This report measures trends in performance among urban schools receiving federal School Improvement Grant awards as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. (February 2015)
- **Implementing Common Core Assessments, Challenges and Recommendations:** The purpose of this booklet is to help school districts across the country get ready for the new PARCC and SBAC assessments in English language arts. (September 2014)
- **A Framework for Raising Expectations and Instructional Rigor for English Language Learner Students:** This report outlines a framework for acquiring English and attaining content mastery across the grades in an era when new college- and career-readiness standards require more reading in all subject areas. (August 2014)
- **Parent Roadmaps to the Common Core** (Mathematics and English Language Arts and Literacy, Kindergarten - High School, English and Spanish) Parent roadmaps in English language arts/literacy and mathematics to provide guidance to parents about what their children will be learning and how they can support that learning in grades K-8. (June 2012)

Online Services

- The Great City Schools web site—www.cgcs.org—provides regularly updated information on Council activities, policy positions, research, legislation, management, conferences, publications, and links to other resources.
- The Council's Common Core State standards web site—www.commoncoreworks.org—provides information and tools to help school districts better implement college- and career-readiness standards.
- The Council's Males of Color web site—www.malesofcolor.org—has been established as a resource for various stakeholders, including school districts, administrators, teachers and the community at large to improve the academic outcomes of males of color.
- The Council's Key Performance Indicator site provides member school districts with the mechanism to enter their non-instructional performance data and compare themselves to other districts.
- The Council has a strong social media presence, utilizing Twitter, Facebook, Youtube and Vimeo.



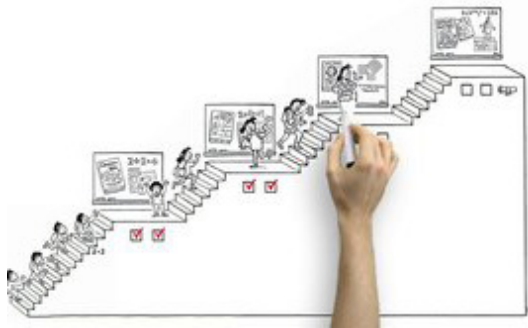
Videos

- The Council has produced several award-winning videos explaining the purpose and features of the Common Core State Standards (English and Spanish)
- **Conversation.** Two three-minute videos (one in English and one in Spanish) that explain how the Common Core State Standards will help students achieve at high levels and help them learn what they need to know to get to graduation and beyond. (2015)
- **Staircase.** Two three-minute videos (one in English and one in Spanish) that explain the Common Core. This is particularly good for presentations to community and parent groups. (2012)

Common Core 30-second public service announcement that has run on television and radio stations across the country (English and Spanish)

- **Common Core** professional development sessions on mathematics and English language arts

- **Videos of Council National Town Hall Meetings** on topics such as race, language, and culture; how to prevent student bullying; and other cutting-edge issues
- Videos of Council Fall Conference keynote speakers such as CNN host Fareed Zakaria, astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, political commentator Donna Brazile, Super Bowl football coach Tony Dungy, author Tom Friedman, actress America Ferrera, and many others.
- Call for Change video on black males.



Staircase PSA



Conversation Video

“At our next Board Meeting, I will have it run to educate those present and stimulate discussion for its further use. What is even better is that it can be shared at no cost to our district – a very nice membership benefit. The PSA/Videos are very well done, clear and concise. I am so happy that it is available in Spanish, too. Thank you!”

- **Cecelia Adams**, Former Board Member, Toledo Public Schools

Awards and Scholarships

- **Green-Garner Award:** the Council's annual urban education award (in collaboration with ARAMARK Education and Scholastic, Inc.) for outstanding leadership by a superintendent or school board member



Cleveland Schools CEO Eric Gordon gives remarks after being named the winner of the Green-Garner award for 2016.

- **Queen Smith Award for Commitment to Urban Education:** the Council's annual award for outstanding service to urban education among professional educators and teachers (in collaboration with McGraw-Hill)
- **Dr. Shirley S. Schwartz Urban Education Impact Award:** the Council's annual award for exemplary partnerships between universities and urban school districts
- **ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Scholarships in Math and Science:** the Council's annual scholarships to graduating African American and Hispanic seniors in member school districts who plan to pursue college majors in STEM fields (in collaboration with the ExxonMobil Foundation and the Harris Foundation)
- **Research and Assessment Leadership Award:** the Council's annual award for an outstanding urban school official who exemplifies leadership, innovation, and commitment to improving student achievement (in collaboration with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Inc.)
- **Making Strides Together Curriculum Award for Excellence in Urban Education:** the Council's annual award to district teams who have been able to break their organizational silos to work toward a common goal to

improve student achievement. (in collaboration with Curriculum Associates)

- **Human Resources Leadership Award:** the Council's annual award to human resources and personnel directors for outstanding leadership in the area of human capital management
- **Operations Leadership Award:** the Council's annual award to a chief operating officer in a member school district who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in a non-instructional operating area
- **Bill Wise Award:** the Council's annual award to a chief financial officer in a member school district who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in financial management
- **Information Technology Leadership Award:** the Council's annual award to a chief information officer for outstanding leadership in the area of information technology and/or management information services
- **Award for Excellence in Financial Management:** the Council's award to recognize Council member districts that meet the highest standards of financial accountability and performance



Urban school leaders pose with President Barack Obama in the Oval Office after their meeting in March 2015. Official White House Photo by Pete Souza

Council Staff

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Pinellas County

Baltimore

Hillsborough County

Pittsburgh

Birmingham

Houston

Portland

Boston

Indianapolis

Providence

Bridgeport

Jackson

Richmond

Broward County

Jefferson County

Rochester

Buffalo

Kansas City

Sacramento

Charlotte

Long Beach

San Antonio

Chicago

Los Angeles

San Diego

Cincinnati

Miami-Dade County

San Francisco

Clark County

Milwaukee

Santa Ana

Cleveland

Minneapolis

Seattle

Columbus

Nashville

Shelby County

Dallas

New Orleans

St. Louis

Dayton

New York City

St. Paul

Denver

Newark

Toledo

Des Moines

Norfolk

Tulsa

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