

# 4 insights from city school leaders

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Many large urban schools have made tremendous progress, due in part to a focus on perseverance and closing gaps

Media stories about large metropolitan school districts usually focus on their challenges instead of the impactful work they are doing to help students succeed.

As a former Council of Great City Schools (CGCS) CIO who spent part of my career working at large school systems, I collaborated with countless talented, intelligent, and inspiring education leaders. Many of these relationships were cultivated through my active participation in CGCS, a nonprofit organization whose mission is “to promote the cause of urban schools and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research and media relations.” Founded in 1956, the organization now includes 77 of the nation’s largest urban public school systems.

Both CGCS’s recently retired Executive Director and now Strategic Advisor Dr. Michael Casserly, who has been with the organization for over 40 years, and its Director of Management Services Dr. Robert Carlson, who has worked in public education for 60 years, 30 of which he’s spent at CGCS, have witnessed the tremendous progress made by large school districts. They shared four key reflections they’ve gleaned during their tenure with the organization.

## **Technology’s Seat at the Table**

When Dr. Casserly and Dr. Carlson started at CGCS, technology was in its infancy. Now, many public urban school districts have moved the CIO/CTO position up from a second or third tier management level to the enterprise level. According to Dr. Carlson, this shift in leadership structure was very much needed. “Technology plays such a prominent role in achieving interoperability and aligning the five core functions of a public school district — people, product, things, money, and information,” said Dr. Carlson.