COMMUNICATIONS
STATEMENTS
Statement by Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools
On the Verdict in the Chauvin Trial

Yesterday, in Minneapolis a jury reached a guilty verdict in a murder trial that has the potential to serve as an inflection point in our nation’s history. When George Floyd was killed last summer by police officer Derek Chauvin, the nation’s urban public schools offered our full-throated condemnation of his killing and the racism behind it. While this verdict cannot bring back Mr. Floyd and the many lives unjustly lost in America’s communities of color due to police brutality, it does rekindle our hope that this country can grow and that justice for all can be realized.

Today, the nation’s urban public schools commit to ensuring that equity and racial justice for all of America’s citizens serve as our North Star. We vow to do our part in helping our students, staff and graduates step into their communities holding the highest regard for the value of the lives of their neighbors. We take solace in the justice that was served yesterday and recognize that tomorrow we must continue to push against the walls of racism and inequality to ensure that our students enter a society that values them and their contributions to a world where there is equal protection under the law. The Council will continue to fight to ensure racial justice and use our collective efforts to make sure our schools are nurturing and welcoming environments for students, particularly students of color, as we work toward creating an equitable nation free of ignorance, fear, and prejudice.
Statement on Critical Race Theory
By
Michael Casserly, Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools

While the arc of history may bend toward justice, the unfolding story of social change is often a series of fits and starts, a steady volley of progress and pushback. In the wake of the George Floyd killing a year ago, America embarked on a new chapter of introspection and dialogue around race and society. The pushback was inevitable, and it has come in the form of opposition to the teaching of critical race theory. Never mind that elementary and secondary schools do not, for the most part, teach critical race theory; there is political advantage to be had. Critics and some state legislatures have now bundled nearly every discussion involving race and equity under this heading and cast it as divisive, unpatriotic, and un-American. In fact, our schools have a moral and patriotic obligation to teach a balanced and comprehensive history of our nation, including events that others have hidden or conveniently avoided.

Education, by definition, should equip us with all the facts and information we need to form our own opinions and perspective. All the facts, not some of the facts. Not just the facts that make us proud. Otherwise, it is just indoctrination. The complete, unabridged story of American history is one of triumph and of tragedy, of great ingenuity and immense injustice, and we need to talk about both. That means that when we talk about race and our history, we need to not only celebrate the contributions of African Americans to music, sports, cuisine, language and literature, medicine, and business throughout the years, but also to explore the attitudes that led to hundreds of lynchings that occurred up to modern times. We need to highlight the contributions of Hispanic Americans to the agriculture, art, and aerospace industries, but include the study of the Melendez case (a precursor to Brown vs. Board of Education) and the systematic seizure of acreage and property from Mexican American landowners in Texas in the early twentieth century. We need to cover the contributions of the Navajo code talkers to winning World War II, and the horrors of the Trail of Tears and the systematic murder of the Osage for oil headrights. And it is as important to study the contributions of Chinese Americans to building the Transcontinental Railroad as understanding the racism behind the Chinese Exclusion Act. Our history is also not complete without an understanding of both the contributions of and oppression of peoples of differing faiths, gender orientations, disabilities, and languages.

If our history makes some people uncomfortable, then so be it. If some people need to be reminded that everyone was born equal and that no one is superior to anyone else, then let’s remind them. If some people are surprised to learn that our culture and institutions, including our own schools, have advantaged some and disadvantaged others, then it’s about time. This is not an unfortunate by-product—this is the purpose of education. And it is perhaps the most patriotic act possible. Because if we believe that our children are heirs to a great nation that is striving to be better and more equitable, then we need to make sure that they understand both the history of that nation, and the important role they will play in determining its future. In our quest for a more perfect union, a great nation is not afraid of or threatened by this history or the discussion of it. On the contrary, it is our ongoing dialogue and steady—if not smooth—progress toward justice and equality that makes us great.
PRESS RELEASES
MEDIA ADVISORY
March 17, 2021

CONTACT: Tonya Harris
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Education Secretary Miguel Cardona, Journalist Bob Woodward
Congressmen Bobby Scott and Richard Neal to Speak at Conference

CDC Official Will Also Address Urban School Leaders

WHO: Miguel Cardona, U.S. Secretary of Education
Bob Woodward, Washington Post Journalist
Rep. Bobby Scott, Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee
Rep. Richard Neal, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee
Greta Massetti, Chief of the Field Epidemiology and Prevention Branch
of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

WHAT: Council of the Great City Schools virtual Annual Legislative/Policy
Conference, gathering of the nation’s urban school leaders --
superintendents, board members and senior administrators -- focusing on
education legislation, funding and policies.

WHEN: Sunday, March 21 - Bob Woodward at 2:15 p.m.
Monday, March 22 - Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.) at 11:15 a.m.
Monday, March 22 - Greta Massetti at 12:00 p.m.
Monday, March 22 - Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.) at 2:00 p.m.
Monday, March 22 - Education Secretary Miguel Cardona at 2:30 p.m.

###

CONFERENCE AGENDA
Ray Hart Named to Lead National Urban School Coalition

Long-serving Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools to Step Down

WASHINGTON, March 22 – Ray Hart, the current research director for the Council of the Great City Schools, was named this weekend by the group’s executive committee as the new Executive Director of the national urban education coalition.

Hart currently serves as Director of Research for the Council, where he is responsible for working collaboratively across the membership to identify and analyze major trends, patterns, successes, and challenges in urban education nationwide. He was instrumental in developing and launching the organization’s Academic Key Performance Indicators, and has led the Council’s efforts around the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and its males of color initiatives.

Prior to joining the Council, Hart was a Fellow at ICF International. He also served as Executive Director in the Atlanta Public Schools, where he led the redesign of the research and assessment division. Hart has a bachelor’s degree in Industrial and Systems Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology, a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction from Cleveland State University, and a PhD in research, measurement, and statistics from Kent State University.

Michael O’Neill, the organization’s Chair of the Board and vice president of the Boston School Committee, made the announcement at the Council’s virtual Legislative/Policy Conference.

In his remarks, O’Neill noted the Search Committee, which was established by the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors and chaired by Eric Gordon, the CEO of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, conducted an extensive search over the course of more than one year, aided by the search firm of Isaacson, Miller. “As expected from the national reputation of the Council, there was considerable interest in the role and a number of interviews were
conducted with very highly qualified candidates. After significant review, the Search Committee unanimously recommended, and the Executive Committee unanimously agreed, that Dr. Hart is the right person to lead the Council forward. We were energized by his commitment to our work, his involvement in the Council’s success to date and his eagerness to continue to focus on equity for all the youth our member districts serve,” said O’Neill.

“It is an honor and privilege to be named to this position,” said Dr. Hart. “My gratitude to the Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and the organization for this opportunity is beyond words. I look forward to working with the talented staff of the Council to serve the students and staff in our member districts and help grow the organization’s reputation, impact, and influence.”

Hart replaces Michael Casserly, 72, who has been with the Council for 44 years this summer, nearly 30 years of which he has served as the Council’s Executive Director. Casserly will remain with the group as a Strategic Advisor. Hart assumes his responsibility as Executive Director on July 1.

###
Legacy Award Presented to Council Executive Director
For His 44 Years of Service in Urban Education

$10,000 Scholarship Comes with the Award

WASHINGTON, March 22 – Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, received the first-ever Dr. Michael Casserly Legacy Award for Educational Courage and Justice at the Council’s Legislative/Policy Conference.

Former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan presented the award to Casserly during a virtual award ceremony honoring Casserly’s achievements in urban education.

Casserly took the reins of the Council in January 1992 after serving as the group’s director of legislation and research for fifteen years. He is now believed to be the longest-serving chief among the major national education membership organizations.

The Dr. Michael Casserly Legacy Award for Educational Courage and Justice will be presented annually to a person who has made outstanding contributions in the field of K-12 urban education. Future recipients will be chosen for personifying what Casserly has based his career on: taking a courageous and passionate stance on the issue of educational justice and equity.

The award comes with a $10,000 scholarship sponsored by Curriculum Associates. The scholarship is for a graduate of the Council’s 77-member school districts pursuing a graduate-level degree in education, and the award recipient will select the scholarship winner.

The history of the Council under Dr. Casserly’s leadership includes numerous examples of the organization staking out positions that are often cutting-edge and potentially controversial for a
national coalition, but are always focused on a moral core that puts first all of the 8.4 million youth that the Council collectively serves.

Dr. Casserly was the only head of a national education organization to support the 2002 *No Child Left Behind* legislation, doing so because of its emphasis on closing achievement gaps for specific at-risk student groups. The law was enacted under Education Secretary Rod Paige.

The Council also played a major role in initiating what became known as the Common Core State Standards, and was the first national membership group to endorse them.

“For more than 40 years, Michael Casserly has diligently worked to improve public education for the nation’s urban school children,” said Michael O’Neill, chair of the board of CGCS. “His contributions have led to some of the most significant legislative actions and best practices in urban public schools; and he has earned a well-deserved national and international reputation as a thoughtful, committed, data-driven and bipartisan leader. So, it is only fitting that Dr. Casserly be the first recipient — and namesake — of this new award. We are profoundly grateful for his fearless, tireless and courageous leadership; and we are honored to celebrate his legacy.”

After more than 30 years as executive director of the Council, Casserly will step aside at the end of June 2021, and Ray Hart, the Council’s research director, will assume the role. Casserly will then assume the role of Strategic Advisor to CGCS through 2024.

###
Council Creates National Task Force to Help Urban School Districts Effectively Spend Federal COVID-19 Relief Funds

WASHINGTON, March 31 – The American Rescue Plan (ARP) recently enacted by the Biden Administration is the single largest investment in federal elementary and secondary education in the nation’s history. The 77-member school districts that comprise the Council of the Great City Schools are expected to receive some $40 billion in supplemental funding from ARP as part of the $122.8 billion provided under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund.

In addition, school districts will receive additional funds from new appropriations for virus testing, the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the FCC’s Emergency Connectivity Fund to cover the costs of student devices and off-campus internet connectivity, and other provisions—on top of the federal aid that was approved by Congress in December.

Careful planning will be critical over the next few years in coordinating the various streams of new and traditional federal funding districts will receive to safely reopen schools, address student learning needs and mental health services, as well as maintain and upgrade school facilities.

To help with this effort, the Council has formed a high-level national task force composed of 20 diverse superintendents, school board members, chief academic officers, chief operating officers, chief financial officers, chief information officers, English language learner (ELL) directors, special education directors and other experts from the nation’s largest big-city school systems. The task force will develop guidance for and aid to urban school systems across the country in the planning and use of federal funds to effectively build the long-term capacity they need to continue their improvement.

In addition, the Council will form a series of 10 working groups around specific areas such as instruction, infrastructure, technology, communications, data and research, and other areas along
with weekly job-alike calls with senior-level administrators to share draft proposals and best practices.

“The financial support from the ARP provides an historic opportunity for the Great City School districts to address the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on urban students, as well as to fund essential investments that advance educational excellence and equity in the long term,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “It is critical that districts spend the money smartly, strategically, effectively and in a transparent way. It is the aim of this special task force to provide our member districts with the practical and timely support they need as they work diligently to safely reopen schools and expand equitable opportunity for the students they serve.”

The effort by the Council of the Great City Schools is supported through a grant from the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation.

###
U.S. Department of Education Launches National Summer Learning & Enrichment Collaborative to Help Students Most Impacted by the Pandemic

APRIL 26, 2021

Contact: Press Office, (202) 401-1576, press@ed.gov

NOTE: Press interested in covering the launch of the Collaborative may register here to receive updated meeting information and links to join National Convening on April 26 and 27.

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) launched the Summer Learning & Enrichment Collaborative today, providing support to 46 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Bureau of Indian Education, and three territories working together to use American Rescue Plan and other federal pandemic relief funding to support as many students as possible through enriching and educational summer programming. Summer programs are key in the nation’s efforts to address lost instructional and extracurricular time as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Collaborative—a partnership between ED, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Governors Association, and other national partners—follows President Joe Biden’s call to action at ED’s National Safe School Reopening Summit to, “work together to ensure that all children have access to high quality summer learning and enrichment opportunities this summer and beyond.” Biden added that, “This is essential for all students, particularly those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, students of color, English learners, students with disabilities, homeless students, and all those who went without in-person instruction this year.”

The Collaborative brings together state and local leaders working alongside key stakeholders to design evidence-based summer programs that address the lost instructional, social, and extracurricular time students have experienced as a result of the pandemic, especially underserved students and those disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

“Too many students have experienced interruptions in learning and negative effects on their social and emotional wellbeing due to time apart from friends and community,” said Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. “Summer presents a key opportunity for school districts and community partners to accelerate learning and provide new avenues for students to safely engage with each other in fun activities. Let’s use this moment to reimagine what fun, engaging summer programming can look like, make it accessible for all students, and work together to make sure our communities recover and rebuild stronger than they were before the pandemic.”

The American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund provides nearly $122 billion to states and school districts and requires that states invest at least $1.2 billion on evidence-based summer enrichment programs. Under the ARP ESSER Fund, school districts are also required to use at least $21 billion for evidence-based initiatives to address the impact of lost instructional time, including summer programs. ED recently released the ARP ESSER state plan application template, which invites states to describe their plans for how they will engage their communities to distribute and utilize ARP ESSER funds.

Over the next two days, ED will convene states for virtual learning sessions to kick off the Collaborative. The Collaborative aims to both take a national approach to understanding best practice and rapidly setting up fun, innovative, and engaging summer opportunities for students, while also facilitating regional and local level partnerships to ensure speedy and robust implementation of state- and district-level plans.

The convening will include sessions on forming state-level coalitions; using evidence to inform summer programs; and using federal funds to promote equity through summer enrichment
opportunities that support social, emotional, and academic development. Speakers include: Secretary Miguel Cardona, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, Illinois State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen Ayala, Arkansas Secretary of Education Johnny Key, Education Trust Interim CEO Denise Forte, National Summer Learning Association CEO Aaron Dworkin, and Founder of the Harlem Children’s Zone Geoffrey Canada. Participants will discuss how to design summer programming in ways that create safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments that reengage students socially, emotionally, and academically as they recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

Summer activities can include opportunities to accelerate learning, along with a broad array of enrichment activities ranging from physical fitness and health education; arts programs; science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) activities; and career and technical education (CTE) programs; to youth development. For older students, these opportunities can include a work-based learning or community service component.

The Collaborative also emphasizes the importance of offering the necessary supports to ensure all students have access to summer learning and enrichment programs—including students with disabilities, English learners, students from low-income backgrounds, and students experiencing homelessness. In addition to the launch of the Collaborative, ED recently released Volume 2 of the COVID-19 Handbook, which outlines strategies to meet the needs of underserved students, including summer learning opportunities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently released guidance for operating youth and summer camps during COVID-19. The guidance is intended to help camp administrators operate camps while preventing the spread of COVID-19 and protecting campers, their families, staff, and communities. The Summer Learning & Enrichment Collaborative will prioritize and maintain a clear and ongoing emphasis on health and safety in all summer offerings.

Organizations participating in The Collaborative’s convening include:

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
American Camp Association
American Federation of Teachers
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Council of Chief State School Officers
Council of the Great City Schools
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Education Association
National Governors Association
National League of Cities
National Rural Education Association
National Summer Learning Association
National Youth Employment Coalition
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
RAND Corporation
StriveTogether
The Afterschool Alliance
The Education Trust
The National Comprehensive Center
Wallace Foundation

Additional information about the Collaborative is available here. Planning meetings as well as regional and theme based convenings will take place in May through July, and the Department will
provide additional technical assistance to states and districts upon request. At the end of the summer, the Department will hold a second national convening to discuss implementation success and challenges.
Austin Independent School District

Board Considers Planning Partner Ahead of Possible November 2022 Bond

May 11, 2021

By Anne Drabicky

Austin ISD will take the first step toward updating plans for buildings and other infrastructure as trustees on Thursday discuss hiring a planning partner to update the district’s Long-range Facilities Plan.

Formerly known as the Facility Master Plan, the new LFP will guide everything about how AISD uses its buildings and will lead, if trustees choose at a later date, to a robust community engagement process before a 2022 bond election.

The last major updates to the plan came ahead of the 2017 Bond, with additional direction for athletics, fine arts and Career and Technical Education in the 2019 update. As the first step in the process to call for a November 2022 bond election, the revised plan would also lay the foundation for what could be included in a new bond.

“The LFP really begins to identify the priority of schools that need improvement,” said Beth Wilson, executive director of planning and asset management. “It’s about making a timeline, making sure that schools and other district facilities get the improvements that they need to line up with the district’s vision of modernized schools.”

Often referred to as a roadmap, the LFP, like the FMP before it, helps the district, community leaders and advisory groups to prioritize which projects may end up in a bond.

Equity as the Guide

AISD will approach this process and any potential bond in a more intentional way than the 2017 process, with a clear focus on equity and on hearing from the more marginalized groups within the community.

Ali Ghilarducci, supervisor of community engagement, said the biggest difference for 2021 will be the use of an Equity by Design approach. That approach will look
closely at the data about who the district is serving most poorly and then begin conversations with those groups.

“So when we’re developing our plans, we’re not creating solutions for people but we’re working side-by-side to identify what they would like to see to address the problems they’re seeing with their schools,” Ghilarducci said. “This is at every step of the decision-making process, from even defining what the problem is, to identifying assets and opportunities and developing a shared vision.”

In partnership with the Equity Office, all staff and consultants working with the district on the LFP and the bond will receive equity training and cultural proficiency and inclusion training.

If approved by trustees, the district also will create a Long-range Planning Advisory Committee made up of students, parents, community leaders and staff who will provide recommendations about what projects to include in the 2022 bond.

“It starts with data gathering and meeting with focus groups, community leaders, faith-based leaders, and community and student representatives from all over the district,” Wilson said. “This is the first step.”

The approval of a contractor to act as planning partner for the LFP and bond process is among the items on the agenda preview section of this week’s Information Session. DLR Group has been proposed as the firm to work with AISD.

Trustees do not take action during information sessions. The next regular voting meeting is scheduled for May 27.

A Facebook Live interview with district leaders about the LFP is scheduled for May 12, at 6:30 p.m. in English and 7 p.m. in Spanish.

Meeting Highlights

Trustees will also be discussing some potential changes to how the board itself operates. The proposed policy changes have several goals, including to increase transparency and provide more opportunities to hear from the public.

The changes being considered were developed in partnership with the Council of Great City Schools and include adding a timeline for the development of agenda items for each meeting and adding opportunities for feedback on agenda items.

The board will hear details about the recommended $1.73 billion (general, food service and debt service) budget for 2021–22, which reflects a $39.2 million deficit for the general fund. The district estimates it will pay $709 million in recapture to the state, based on a projected 7.9% increase in property tax values.
The recommended budget does not take into account the $155 million in one-time federal funds approved by the U.S. Department of Education and recently released by state officials.

This week’s Information Session also will include general public comment, which means those who call to share their thoughts may give feedback on any topic. Anyone wishing to record public comment may do so by calling 512-414-0130 between 7:45 a.m. and 3 p.m. May 13.

Agenda Preview

At each Information Session, staff provide trustees and the public a preview of items that will be up for a vote or on consent during the next Regular Voting Meeting. This week's preview includes:

- 8.3: Innovative Course Approvals—High schools can offer courses based on student interest and college and career paths.
- 9.1: Approval of a contract for dairy products for food services with Oak Farms Dairy.
- 9.3: Approval of a contract for internal audit services.

For complete details, including how to sign up to share public comment, please view the agenda online.

###
Six in 10 Parents Plan to Vaccinate All of Their Children and Large Majority of Parents Would Feel Safer Sending Kids to School if Most Other Children Were Vaccinated

Parents’ intent to vaccinate their children closely corresponds with their own intention to do so, but there is variance across racial groups and based on ages of children.

NEWS PROVIDED BY COVID Collaborative
May 17, 2021, 00:01 ET

WASHINGTON, May 17, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Released today, a new survey from the COVID Collaborative, Ad Council, and the Council of the Great City Schools shows that 61% of parents plan to vaccinate all of their children, but 27% will not vaccinate any of their children and 12% remain mixed or undecided. Vaccination intent in parents varies across racial and ethnic groups, with Asian American and Pacific Islander parents being the most likely to vaccinate their children (77%) and Black parents being the least likely (55%). And while at least 65% of parents of children ages six to 17 plan to vaccinate their children, only 56% of parents of children under the age of six will vaccinate their children.


Vaccination intent is especially prevalent in conversations about children returning to school. There is widespread support for making vaccines and information about them available at public schools (80%), and nearly three in five (59%) parents of children in school support requiring students to get vaccinated to attend school in person. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of parents with
children in school would be more likely to vaccinate their own children if such a requirement were in place.

Parents least likely to say they will get their children vaccinated against COVID-19 include those who live in small towns and rural areas (42% will get all children vaccinated), those age 18 to 29 (46%), women 18 to 39 (51%), White mothers (51%), Black mothers (45%), women without a college education (47%), Independents (48%), and Republicans (53%); and most of these groups are among those least likely to say they have been or will get vaccinated themselves. "Parents want to keep their children safe and in school," said John Bridgeland, CEO of COVID Collaborative. "This survey provides important insights to increase parent confidence in vaccination, which will enable children to be safe for in-person learning, on playgrounds, and for other activities that help them grow and thrive."

The research was conducted by Hart Research for the COVID Collaborative, a national assembly of experts across health, education, and the economy working to support local, state, tribal, and federal leaders in turning the tide against the pandemic. The Collaborative has partnered with the Ad Council to address vaccine hesitancy with a COVID-19 Vaccine Education Initiative and the "It's Up To You" campaign to ensure the American public has the latest and most accurate information about the COVID-19 vaccines. The Collaborative also has partnered with the Council of the Great City Schools on a range of education initiatives, including utilizing schools as vaccination sites.

"With COVID-19 vaccines now approved for children ages 12 and up, our vaccination education campaign with the COVID Collaborative will focus its efforts on getting good information to parents and their pediatricians," said Lisa Sherman, CEO of the Ad Council.

The survey shows that parents trust doctors and experts the most when it comes to recommendations about vaccinating their children. A recommendation from their child's pediatricians would earn trust from 83% of parents, and more than three in four say they are more likely to vaccinate their children upon hearing from top scientists and physicians that the vaccine is safe (76%) and 100% effective (77%) in children. Parents also fear the risk of the virus to their children. 70% of parents are worried that their children could get COVID-19 and view protecting their children as an important reason to vaccinate their children (83%) and themselves (77%). Nearly one in five (18%) parents have a child who is at high risk.

"Parents trust their pediatricians when it comes to their child's health, and that includes important questions they have about immunizations. I encourage all parents to talk with their pediatrician about the COVID-19 vaccine so they can get the information they need to make this decision," said Lee Savio Beers, MD, FAAP, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, a member of the COVID Collaborative. "Vaccinating children and teens will protect them and allow them to fully engage in the world again. That's why we are thrilled to partner with the Ad Council and the COVID Collaborative on the vaccine education campaign."

The Council of the Great City Schools has demonstrated the central role that school districts can play in COVID-19 response, including as vaccination sites for parents, children, and others in the community. "There are numerous examples across the country of school districts stepping up as
vaccination sites," said Michael Casserly, Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools. "As the country works to vaccinate children and youth, we need to utilize more schools to help keep students and others in the community safe."

**About the COVID Collaborative**

COVID Collaborative, a project of UNITE, is a national assembly of experts, leaders and institutions in health, education and the economy and associations representing the diversity of the country to turn the tide on the pandemic by supporting federal, state and local COVID-19 response efforts.

The COVID Collaborative is co-chaired by former Governor and U.S. Senator Dirk Kempthorne (R-ID) and former Governor Deval Patrick (D-MA) and led by Co-Founder and CEO John Bridgeland and President Gary Edson. COVID Collaborative includes expertise from across Republican and Democratic administrations at the federal, state and local levels, including former FDA Commissioners, CDC Directors, and U.S. Surgeon Generals; former U.S. Secretaries of Education, Homeland Security and Health and Human Secretaries; leading public health experts and institutions that span the country; the Business Roundtable, National Association of Manufacturers, and U.S. Chamber of Commerce; the NAACP, UnidosUS, National Urban League, and the National Congress of American Indians; the Skoll Foundation, The Allstate Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation; and associations representing those on the front lines, from the American Public Health Association and Association of State and Territorial Health Officials to the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Council of the Great City Schools. Tim Shriver is Chairman of UNITE.

To learn more, visit [www.CovidCollaborative.us](http://www.CovidCollaborative.us), and follow the COVID Collaborative on [Twitter](https://twitter.com) and [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com).

**About the Ad Council**

The Ad Council has a long history of creating life-saving public service communications in times of national crisis, starting in the organization's earliest days during World War II to September 11th and natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Sandy. Its deep relationships with media outlets, the creative community, issue experts and government leaders make the organization uniquely poised to quickly distribute life-saving information to millions of Americans. The Ad Council is where creativity and causes converge. The non-profit organization brings together the most creative minds in advertising, media, technology and marketing to address many of the nation's most important causes. The Ad Council has created many of the most iconic campaigns in advertising history. Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk. Smokey Bear. Love Has No Labels. The Ad Council's innovative social good campaigns raise awareness, inspire action and save lives. To learn more, visit [AdCouncil.org](http://AdCouncil.org), follow the Ad Council's communities on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com) and view the creative on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com).
New Study Shows Students in Large City Schools Are Mitigating The Effects of Poverty Faster than Others

Analysis Shows How Large City Public Schools Narrowed Gap with Nation in Reading and Math by Half to a Third

Individual City School Districts Show Significant Progress

WASHINGTON, June 29 – Students in the nation’s urban schools are about 50 percent more likely to be poor, twice as likely to be English learners, twice as likely to be Black or Hispanic, and about 50 percent more likely to have a parent who did not finish high school as students in all other schools. Yet despite these factors often correlated with low student achievement, urban school students are making significant progress academically, according to a new report by the Council of the Great City Schools.

The study, *Mirrors or Windows: How Well Do Large City Public Schools Overcome the Effects of Poverty and Other Barriers?* used the last ten years of data in reading and mathematics at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to answer the question of whether schools are windows of opportunity – and help overcome poverty and other barriers – or they are mirrors of society’s inequities. Data was also used from the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) of NAEP, which the Council initiated in 2000 so that the nation’s largest school systems could track their progress against other cities, states, and the nation. Twenty-seven large urban school districts volunteered to participate for the 2019 urban NAEP.

Using both general NAEP student-level data and district-specific TUDA student-level data, the study looked at poverty, language status, parental education, disability, literacy materials in the home, and race ethnicity to assess student achievement. The study then predicted student results based on all of these variables and compared those predictions against actual results over six separate administrations of NAEP between 2009 and 2019.
Findings from the study suggest that poverty was not necessarily destiny in urban public education. The analysis showed that:

- Students in large city schools narrowed the gap with students in all other schools in both reading and math at fourth and eighth grade levels between 2003 and 2019 by a third to a half, depending on grade and subject;

- After considering differences in poverty, language status, race/ethnicity, disability, educational resources in the home, and parental education, large city schools had reading and mathematics scores on NAEP that were significantly above statistical expectations at both the fourth- and eighth-grade levels in 2019 (the latest year NAEP was administered) and in most years since 2009; and

- After factoring in these variables, students in large city schools consistently had significantly higher results on NAEP than students in all other schools in the aggregate.

Several big-city school districts demonstrated results that were significantly above expectations in 2019 in at least three of four subject/grade combinations on NAEP: Boston, Miami-Dade County, Hillsborough County, Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Cleveland, New York City, Duval County, Fort Worth, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the District of Columbia, Austin, and Guilford County. In addition, six districts improved their ability to “beat the odds” in at least two grade/subject combinations over the ten years studied: District of Columbia, Detroit, Miami-Dade County, Chicago, Cleveland, and Atlanta. The study showed a number of notable examples of significant results—

Boston consistently demonstrated some of the highest fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics effects that were well above statistical expectations in every grade, subject, and year between 2009 and 2019.

Chicago was one of only a handful of urban school districts that showed gains in district effects in at least two grade/subject combinations, and it was one of the few districts showing gains between 2009 and 2019 that went from below expectations to above in at least one area.

Dallas showed reading and mathematics results that were above statistical expectations in three of four grade/subject combinations, and it produced a district effect that was well-above its scale scores in all grades and subjects.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools not only scored higher on NAEP than Large City School averages in all areas, the district outperformed All Other Schools, public and private, nationally in 4th grade reading and mathematics. In addition, Miami-Dade County Public Schools’ district effects exceeded All Other Schools in 4th and 8th grade reading and math. Miami-Dade County emerged as the only district to be in the top rankings in both average scores and district effects in three of four NAEP assessments.

Finally, the District of Columbia Public Schools posted the largest increases of any of the TUDA districts in all four grade and subject combinations tested, outperforming expectations in reading and math, and improving faster than any other major city school system in the country. Detroit was the second fastest improving in three of four grade/subject combinations.
Finding Out How Districts Improved

In an effort to find out the reasons some urban public-school districts seem to be mitigating barriers and increasing student achievement faster than others, the Council conducted site visits to six districts that demonstrated substantial improvements: Boston Public Schools, Chicago Public Schools, the Dallas Independent School District, the District of Columbia Public Schools, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, and the San Diego Unified School District. The Council also visited two other districts that were not making as much progress to compare practices.

The Council conducted these visits to find out if there were approaches or strategies these districts were using that could inform the work of other major urban school systems. The visits revealed several common practices the districts were taking connected to the progress seen in student performance. They included: strong and stable leadership focused on student instruction; high academic standards and well-defined instructional support; strong professional development and school-based support structures; systemwide change; accountability and a culture of collaboration; resilience and resourcefulness in the face of adversity; support for struggling schools and students; and community investments and engagement efforts.

“While urban school districts have not overcome or mitigated the barriers before them entirely, it is clear from the data in this study that large city schools may be doing a better job of mitigating the effects of poverty, discrimination, language and other barriers than other schools in the country,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “We know there is more work to do, but by examining the extent to which urban schools are “beating the odds” we know that with the right strategies and practices the nation’s large city schools can and do improve, but they can significantly raise student achievement and produce results that defy expectations.”

The exhibits below compare the differences between statistically expected results and actual NAEP results in large city schools and all others, showing that large city schools produced a larger than expected result in most years, subjects, and grades.

Trends in District Effects† on NAEP Fourth-grade Mathematics by School Type, 2009 to 2019.

† District effect is the difference between the actual district mean and the expected district mean.
* District effect is significantly different from zero at $p < .05$. 

### Trends in District Effects† on NAEP Eighth-grade Mathematics by School Type, 2009 to 2019.

† District effect is the difference between the actual district mean and the expected district mean.

* District effect is significantly different from zero at $p < .05$.

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### Trends in District Effects† on NAEP Fourth-grade Reading by School Type, 2009 to 2019.

† District effect is the difference between the actual district mean and the expected district mean.

* District effect is significantly different from zero at $p < .05$.

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Trends in District Effects† on NAEP Eighth-grade Reading by School Type, 2009 to 2019.

† District effect is the difference between the actual district mean and the expected district mean.
* District effect is significantly different from zero at $p < .05$. 

###
Four Urban Students Named 2021 Math and Science Scholars

Council of the Great City Schools Awards CGCS-Bernard Harris Scholarships

WASHINGTON, June 30 – Four graduating high school seniors have been selected by the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) to receive the 2021 CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship. The students were chosen from several hundred applicants in big-city school districts across the nation for their academic performance, leadership qualities and community involvement.

Now in its third year, the scholarship was created by former NASA astronaut Dr. Bernard Harris, the first African-American to walk in space, to encourage and assist promising students of diverse backgrounds who plan to pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies after high school.

The awards were given to two African-American and two Hispanic seniors from high schools in four of the 75 urban school districts represented by the Council.

“These scholarships are a wonderful way to promote academic excellence in math and science and foster the next generation of STEM leaders,” said Dr. Harris. “The achievements and aspirations of these young men and women are truly inspirational and it is my hope that the scholarships they receive will propel them to a future of fulfilling their dreams.”

Each scholar will receive $5,000 for continued education in a STEM-related field. This year’s award winners are:

- Saul Balcarcel-Salazar, John A. Ferguson Senior High School, Miami-Dade County Public Schools
• Destiny Caldwell, Scotlandville Magnet High School, East Baton Rouge Parish School System
• Natalie Martinez, Godinez Fundamental High School, Santa Ana Unified School District
• Emini Offutt, Hume-Fogg Academic Magnet High School, Metro Nashville Public Schools

In the fall, Balcarcel-Salazar will attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and major in physics. Caldwell will study mathematics at the University of California, Los Angeles. Martinez plans to study mathematics at the University of California, Irvine and Offutt will pursue a degree in computer science at Vanderbilt University.

“These competitive scholarships will provide talented minority students in big-city school districts a way to pursue STEM studies after high school and excel in their career pursuits,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council. “We appreciate the generous support of the Harris Institute to help these young men and women create a brighter future for themselves and become the leaders and innovators of tomorrow.”

Administration of the scholarship program, including the application process, pre-selection and presentation of awards, is provided by CGCS. Dr. Harris makes the final selection of recipients.

# # # #

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 75 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

About The Harris Institute
The Harris Institute is a 501 (c) (3), non-profit organization founded by former NASA Astronaut Dr. Bernard A. Harris, Jr., to serve socially and economically disadvantaged communities locally and across the nation striving to reach the most underserved populations in the areas of Education, Health, and Wealth. The institute supports programs that empower individuals, in particular minorities and economically and/ or socially disadvantaged, to recognize their potential and pursue their dreams. The education mission of The Harris Institute is to enable youth to develop and achieve their full potential through the support of social, recreational and educational programs. The Harris Institute believes students can be prepared now for the careers of the future through a structured education program and the use of positive role models. More than 50,000 students have participated and benefited from THI programs. www.theharrisfoundation.org/
Orange County Superintendent to Lead Council of the Great City Schools

WASHINGTON, July 1 – Barbara Jenkins, superintendent of Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Fla., becomes chair of the Council of the Great City Schools’ Board of Directors for a one-year term, effective July 1.

The 150-member board is composed of the superintendent and a school board member from each of the 75 big-city school districts represented by the Council.

Jenkins has served as superintendent since 2012 and under her leadership, the district won the prestigious Broad Prize for Urban Education in 2014 and has repeatedly been recognized by the College Board for increasing access to Advanced Placement course work, while simultaneously maintaining or increasing the number of students earning exam scores for college credit.

She succeeds Michael O’Neill, vice-chairman of the Boston School Committee for Boston Public Schools. O’Neill will assume the position of immediate past chair.

Kelly Gonez, school board president for the Los Angeles Unified School District, becomes chair-elect, stepping up from the Council’s secretary-treasurer post.

Rounding out the Council’s 2021-22 leadership team will be William Hite Jr., superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia, who has been elected to the secretary-treasurer post.

“The Council of the Great City Schools is extremely fortunate to have Jenkins, a recognized education leader, as its next chair,” says Council Executive Director Ray Hart. “The wealth of knowledge and expertise Jenkins and her leadership team brings will provide important direction and guidance to urban schools as they prepare to resume in-person learning this fall as well as develop plans to effectively spend federal COVID-19 relief funds to address student needs.”

###
Parents are key to ending the pandemic — but will they vaccinate their children?

By Steven Phillips, John Bridgeland & Michael Casserly

The U.S. may finally be seeing the light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel. To reach herd immunity and return to full societal activity and productivity, we will need America’s parents to allow the vaccination of their children.

The CDC has relaxed masking and other preventive guidelines, as cases, hospitalizations and deaths are significantly down in most states. The back-to-normal index of U.S. economic activity now stands at 89 percent of its pre-pandemic level and is rapidly increasing. This turnaround is due to rapid development, access and administration of highly effective vaccines now reaching nearly 60 percent of the adult population with at least one dose.

Although everyone wants to get back to normal, there is a worrisome polarization on the role of vaccination in achieving this goal. A blue state-red state divide in vaccination rates is emerging across the country.

The nation’s 75 million children are about to enter this battlefield. Those under 18 comprise about one-quarter of the population and generally require parental consent to be vaccinated under state law. With current vaccination trends nearing demand saturation in adults, it’s likely that children will occupy the last national vaccination combat zone that determines whether 75 to 80 percent of the population has the immunity that allows a safe reopening of the country.

Children are the last in line for vaccine eligibility. Until recent FDA emergency use authorization (EUA) of the Pfizer vaccine for ages 12 to 15, children under 16 were ineligible for vaccination. Nearly all children will eventually become eligible through EUAs as vaccine trial results allow. As the country waits for such approvals, more communicable variants and seasonal upturn of virus infection in fall and winter will emerge, right when children return to school and in-person day care. Even if the absolute likelihood of severe illness in children is low (and some get long COVID-19 or multi-inflammatory syndrome), the asymptomatic carriage of the virus presents a significant transmission risk in multi-generational households. Unvaccinated adults may suffer the consequences of living with unvaccinated schoolchildren. How will parents, whose risk tolerance for their children is typically very low, respond to this complex shifting landscape?

A new COVID-19 Collaborative poll of parental views on vaccinating their children provides cause for both concern and hope. While 61 percent of parents plan to vaccinate all their children, 27 percent will not and 12 percent are undecided. Unsurprisingly, parents do for their children as they do for themselves. The poll finds 84 percent of parents who have or will be vaccinated also intend to do the same for their children. A similar percentage who will not be vaccinated also will not vaccinate their children.

Mothers more than fathers tend to be the “deciders” for their children and vaccine hesitancy is higher for parents with younger children. Those with the highest hesitancy are people living in
rural areas, Black and white mothers, women without a college education, lower-income households, independents and Republicans.

The survey also revealed practical steps to increase children’s vaccination uptake. Pediatricians are the most trusted parental voice and their offices are a desired and convenient administration platform. Parents fear the risk of virus to their children, and view protecting them as an important reason to vaccinate the entire family.

But it is school districts across the country that will play a central role in COVID-19 response. There is widespread parental support for making vaccines and information about them available at public schools (80 percent). Most parents (59 percent) of school children support mandatory vaccination for in-person attendance. Nearly three-quarters would be more likely to vaccinate their own children if such a requirement were in place.

History’s lessons from the school-based polio vaccine distribution of six decades ago underscore the importance of achieving and maintaining public trust in the process. Their success ultimately resulted in the elimination of domestically acquired polio in the U.S. There are now many examples across the country of school districts stepping up as COVID-19 vaccination sites.

Other polls have indicated that incentives could be powerful drivers for parental intent. Single dose vaccines, airline, sporting and entertainment event entrance requirements could successfully encourage parents to vaccinate themselves and their children.

Perhaps it was inevitable that concern for the health of our children would be a final test of national resolve. The vaccination of children is a litmus test of a fractious country’s path to addressing the closing chapter of our pandemic. It’s a fortuitous irony that parental concern for the safety of their children may do more to motivate their own vaccine intention. With carefully crafted local incentives, mandates and trusted voices, the whole family may get vaccinated. And America could put the pandemic behind us.

*Steven Phillips is vice president of science and strategy at Covid Collaborative.*

*John Bridgeland is CEO of the Covid Collaborative*

*Michael Casserly is executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools.*
ARTICLES- CORONAVIRUS CHALLENGES AND RESPONSE
The Seattle Times

COVID-19 changed schooling profoundly — in some ways, for the better

March 21, 2021 at 6:00 am

By

Peggy Barmore

The Hechinger Report

There’s no going back.

That is the consensus emerging from education leaders across the country as the nation enters a second year of schooling in a pandemic.

A public school district in Arizona is looking to become a service provider for parents who have pulled their children out to home-school them. In Oklahoma, students are having a say in where and when they learn. And educators everywhere are paying closer attention to students’ mental well-being.

“None of us would have ever wanted to go through this,” said Deborah Gist, the superintendent of schools in Tulsa, Oklahoma. “We have a chance now to make it something that will change teaching and learning forever for the better.”

At the outset of the pandemic, schools nationwide had to make swift and drastic changes in public education to keep students learning. And while teachers, principals, district leaders and parents forced to shift to virtual learning are eager for an end to the emergency measures, many are already looking ahead and considering which education solutions have worked well, and what parts of public schooling should be permanently altered.

The changes to schools go beyond the sudden dive into education technology. In fact, some of the most exciting education solutions forced by the pandemic have very little to do with giving every student a device.

In many districts, educators are reconsidering old norms about schedules and thinking about how to incorporate more community-based learning. The pandemic’s disruptions have also forced schools to get more proactive about communicating with families, especially in places where remote learning has turned homes into classrooms. Some educators are listening more closely to student and parent voices, and a few are even going door to door. And they’re placing greater weight on the emotional well-being of all members of a school community, a
gratifying development for experts who have long called on schools to pay attention to the way home life can affect children.

“This is a disruptive moment” for schools, said Robin Lake, director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) at the University of Washington, Bothell. “There are so many discoveries, realizations — so much innovation,” she said.

CRPE collaborated with the RAND Corp., Chiefs for Change, the Council of the Great City Schools, and the education consulting firm Kitamba last year to assemble and survey a panel of more than 375 school district leaders and charter management organizations from around the country about the changes the pandemic has wrought. (The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation sponsored the project and is among the many funders of The Hechinger Report and Education Lab.)

The big take-away: “Public education will never be the same,” according to Lake. “They said, ‘We’re never going back fully to the old ways.’”

Forced by necessity to be more flexible to individual student needs, some schools are thinking about how they can better design learning around kids’ interests and passions. “The ability to be unbounded by the offerings that are in a school building and the kind of one-size-fits-all approach has been liberating for people,” said Lake.

Tulsa Public Schools is one example of a district thinking about education solutions outside the classroom box. Even before the pandemic forced its schools to go remote, the district was piloting ways to move education out of the classroom and into the community. One program, Tulsa Beyond, gave a small group of students at several district high schools — in partnership with educators and community members — the opportunity to design and implement a new vision of what high school should look like.

The resulting three models varied, but each called for real-world, hands-on, work-based learning experiences. The new models had been operational for a semester when COVID-19 forced them to pause. But the pandemic also opened a door after all Tulsa schools closed when COVID-19 hit, according to Andrea Castañeda, the district’s chief innovation officer.

“All of a sudden [students] got a level of independence, time management and decision-making autonomy that a traditional school usually doesn’t afford,” she said, which whetted their appetite for more such opportunities.

Now, the district is determined to sustain the program and create new, richer opportunities that could eventually take all students outside school more often.

“We’re going to be able to grow and expand on [learning outside the school building] more than we would have been able to do before the pandemic,” said Gist, the superintendent. “Our students need the ability to learn outside of their school through internships, through apprenticeships, through concurrent learning with higher education and technical schools.”
The district is going to be “investing heavily” in these programs in the future, according to Castañeda, using federal coronavirus relief funding to support the design and administration of this doubling down. “Our goal is to have rich programming available across the district,” she said.

In Arizona, schools across the state have taken advantage of loosened regulations to get creative about education solutions, according to Emily Anne Gullickson, CEO and founder of the nonprofit A for Arizona, which funds innovation in public education.

“That flexibility to adapt quickly allowed school leaders to step back and look at what is and isn’t working and how to pivot quickly,” Gullickson said.

Her organization has given grants of $20,000 or more to schools and districts to launch a number of new programs. The proposals included after-hours study groups for third graders to work with a qualified teacher or tutor to stem learning loss during the pandemic; an outdoor learning hub to reengage students who weren’t attending online classes; and an in-person small learning community with social and emotional supports for students suffering from trauma.

Vail School District in Vail, Arizona, had parents in mind when it applied for and received a $60,000 grant from A for Arizona to offer school services a la carte to the 150 families who switched to home schooling during the pandemic and need extra support. “We were thinking as educators, but just as much as parents,” said Darcy Mentone, a spokesperson for the district, who was part of the brainstorming team that came up with the idea.
A year into the coronavirus pandemic, many public schools in the United States remain closed for in-person instruction. While some experts assail the prolonged widespread closure of public schools for causing students to experience declines in mental health and academic performance, others see a blessing in disguise that will empower alternative forms of education.

When the coronavirus pandemic was declared in March 2020, schools around the world ceased holding in-person instruction. Many school districts transitioned to virtual learning, where students would meet with their teachers via digital platforms such as Zoom. The widespread closure of public schools continued in most cases for the remainder of the 2019-'20 school year.

When the 2020-'21 school year began, many school districts in the U.S. continued to conduct classes entirely virtually or embraced a "hybrid" model where students attend classes in-person for part of the week while distance learning the rest of the week. While only a small number of school districts offered full, in-person learning for all students at the beginning of the school year, that number has expanded as the year progresses.

The extended closure of public schools in the U.S. has had negative effects on American students. Still, it might have opened up other opportunities for education in the long term, according to experts who spoke with The Christian Post.

Education Week has kept track of the reopening statuses of member districts in the Council of the Great City Schools. This collection of school districts, featuring some of the largest school systems in the country and one in
Canada, contains more than 8.2 million students. It accounts for 15% of the total public school enrollment nationwide.

While 56 of the 75 districts included in the Council of the Great City Schools currently offer some type of in-person instruction, a significant number of them have not offered widespread in-person learning for any part of the school year, which is well into its second semester.

Portland Public Schools, the largest school district in Oregon, has not opened for in-person learning this year. The district will implement a hybrid option for students in kindergarten through fifth grade in early April and a hybrid option will begin for older students later that month.

Other districts that have yet to hold in-person learning this school year but will offer it in some form before the conclusion of the academic year include Sacramento City Unified School District in California, Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky, Kansas City Public Schools in Missouri, and Long Beach Unified School District in California.

Richmond Public Schools, one of the largest school districts in Virginia, will remain completely virtual for the duration of the second semester. School districts in Fresno, Oakland and Santa Ana, California, have yet to open for widespread in-person learning this school year. But they have opened classrooms for select groups of students, such as those enrolled in classes for students in which English is a second language and special education programs.

People who shared their perspectives on the consequences of the widespread closure of public schools include a senior official with a conservative-leaning think-tank, the author of a book detailing her experience educating her children during the coronavirus pandemic, the president of a coalition of Christian schools and universities, and the author of a book urging parents to pull their children out of public education.

Consequences of widespread public school closures

According to Hadley Manning, the policy director for the Independent Women's Forum, who has extensively studied the consequences of school closings, the widespread closure of public schools "has exacerbated some existing inequalities in our educational system."
In an interview, Manning said that while many families have the "means and resources to put together a homeschooling pod, hire a private tutor, put the children in private school or to make other arrangements," students who come from families who lack the aforementioned means and resources "have been working essentially on their own at home through virtual learning, which the data would suggest is no replacement for in-person schooling."

David Dockery, the president of the recently formed International Alliance for Christian Education, echoed Manning's concerns.

"I think students from strong families, particularly — where both parents are educated — there will be strong efforts to ensure that those students are taken care of and almost a homeschooling approach provided," he said.

"But for so many families ... both parents working, both are busy, not able to provide the care and instruction needed for the students who are missing that from their teachers, I think we don't know the impact of that at this time, but it's certainly a concern for all of us."

Dockery, the chancellor of Trinity International University in Illinois, said he's "concerned" for students in primary school, saying that in-person instruction for elementary grade students is "vitally important."

Emily Greene, the author of School, Disrupted: Rediscovering the Joy of Learning in a Pandemic-Stricken World, who researches and writes about education, creativity, the neuroscience of learning, agreed with Dockery.

"It doesn't take an advanced degree to realize that [the] format of [online] learning is not how young children learn," she said.

Manning expressed concern for "children who have essentially lost a year of education because their school system has been closed and they haven't had access to good alternatives." She warned that "those children may face a real education deficit."

"I think that would be ... a totally reasonable expectation to see the education gap widening between children who are advanced and who continued to advance during the pandemic and children who probably have seen some backsliding."

"It's pretty common knowledge that over the summer months, when schools are typically closed, you see some sort of regression educationally among
students who are out of school for the summer, but this is like a summer that has lasted for 12 months," she continued.

"One of the biggest failures with virtual learning is that you can't make kids show up," Manning remarked. "For example, in Boston, only half of the students showed up for online instruction on any given day."

"The question of school closure is much bigger than an academic question," she said. "It's a question about what's best for children broadly speaking, not just in terms of their progress on reading, writing and arithmetic, but their social and emotional development, their mental health, and their ability to have a safe place to be during the day."

Manning also spoke about the mental health impacts of the widespread school closures and the accompanying social isolation.

After citing reports about "higher numbers of youth reporting depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms" and suicide attempts, Manning maintained that it was hard to get concrete mental health statistics because the U.S. has a "delayed reporting system" when it comes to suicide rates.

In Japan, which Manning said "has one of the fastest data capturing systems in the world when it comes to suicide rates," previous data from the fall showed an 80% increase in the suicide rates among women.

"There's an impact certainly on the mental health of our young people, our children and also I would say on parents because there is that additional layer of stress that comes with trying to educate children at home while also continuing to provide financially for the family," she contends.

"Many families depend on two incomes, and so that math doesn't work out. Two full-time jobs plus the job of overseeing virtual education at home is too much for many working parents," Manning said.

Another unintended consequence of keeping schools closed for in-person learning, Manning asserted, relates to the reporting of child abuse because "the school system is a very important part of our child abuse reporting mechanism in this country."

"Aside from parents, family members, pediatricians, teachers and school counselors are some of the most important people in preventing child abuse
or stopping child abuse,” Manning stressed. “And so we've lost that with the widespread closure of public schools.”

Opportunities presented by widespread public school closures

Lt. Col. Ray Moore is the chairman of the board for publicschoolexit.com, a website designed to provide resources for parents seeking to withdraw their children from public schools.

Moore, an Army Reserve chaplain and an outspoken critic of contemporary public education, sees a silver lining in public schools' widespread closure and the accompanying adaptation of virtual learning.

With many parents at home with their children, they have the opportunity to listen to what they are learning at school.

"The public school curriculum is coming into their living rooms, and some of it is just terrible, borderline pornography,” he asserted. “They teach sex education in ways that are not compatible with Christian teaching. And the parents are seeing on the computer in their living rooms, and they're just horrified.”

Moore said that in some districts, public schools are “trying to get parents to sign a document saying that they will not look at the curriculum that their children are getting in their living room.”

“[It's] pretty amazing that they would go that far,” Moore told CP.

For example, a Tennessee school district asked parents to sign a waiver promising not to listen to or monitor their children’s virtual learning sessions due to concerns about "confidential information about a student being revealed."

The district later issued guidance that would allow parents to "assist their children during virtual group lessons with permission of the instructor."

"They are fearful, the public school people are fearful that the parents will discover what they've been doing to harm the children, and they are in fact discovering it,” Moore concluded. “The system's out of control. It can't correct itself.”
Moore elaborated on the content that some public school children have been exposed to in school, including lessons related to the Black Lives Matter movement, transgender ideology and critical race theory, which he described as "viruses that have attached themselves to the education system."

In addition to slamming the "anti-Christian" philosophy that has infiltrated some public schools, he reiterated that the U.S. and other nations find themselves in "a 100-year moment for private Christian schools and homeschooling."

While acknowledging the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic, Moore said that the widespread closure of public schools has provided "an unprecedented opportunity for K-12 Christian schools and homeschools to really accelerate and grow exponentially."

Moore pointed to studies finding that a significant share of students who attended public schools before the pandemic might never return to the state-run schools when the pandemic comes to an end and in-person learning resumes on a mass scale.

Although Dockery was "expecting an enrollment decline of perhaps deep significance because of the coronavirus," he told CP that "overall our enrollment has maintained health."

"The level has been better than what we expected, and there are a handful of schools that even have shown increases for which we are both surprised and grateful," Dockery said.

Greene agreed with Moore that the widespread closure of public schools was "a long-overdue disruption of a very outdated education system" that triggered "the most robust period of innovation in the entire history of education in America."

She told CP that "American society and American parents have relied on outsourcing their education to schools for 100 years and in a blink, we experienced how fragile that framework is."

"Parents started opening their mind for new ways for children to learn, which is so exciting," she recalled.

Greene cheered one new method of learning: the increased establishment of "learning pods," a form of homeschooling where a group of parents and their
children band together, and each parent would teach the children a specific subject.

She also disagreed with the notion that children learned less during the widespread closure of public schools than they would have if they were attending school for in-person learning.

"Many families experienced this completely new vast expanses of free time during the pandemic and the things that parents and children did to discover new talents and passions, new interests and curiosities in this free time might very well lay the foundation for their future careers," Greene added.

"The way that families got outside in new ways during the pandemic, there's a completely new path of learning for many kids who go to public schools and get 20 minutes of outside time per day. There was a verifiable explosion in making things, in hands-on making things, meaning people who never picked up a needle and a thread started making things with their kids. People who never baked cookies all of a sudden were making sourdough starters, and it goes on and on and on."

Greene concluded that if the insight was available to measure “how our kids actually grew during the pandemic, we might discover that they learned more than they would have in traditional schools."

Moving forward

The experts who spoke with CP shared their thoughts on what they think the state of American education will look like following the pandemic and what changes they would like to see regarding education in the U.S. going forward.

Manning predicted that following the pandemic, Americans will "have a greater appreciation for the importance of education. Not simply as a means for educating children but as a means for learning social skills and allowing peer-to-peer interaction." She also expressed hope that "many of these bills that have been proposed in state legislatures to allow for greater school choice" will become law.

Specifically, Manning would like to see policies enabling "all families to have an education savings account that is funded by the state and allows them to direct their education dollars" to public schools, private schools, homeschool pods or other education models.
Manning favors the implementation of a "robust school choice policy" that extends beyond "people who have the resources" and "the financial security that supports alternative methods."

Dockery hypothesized that following the pandemic, "parents will take more responsibility for the education of their children" and "Christian education in various forms" will "expand and be strengthened."

He told CP that he believes society has “learned a new level of flexibility that will lead to new levels of innovation for the days ahead.”

"I think we have learned that online education is here to stay," he added. "I think we have all learned how to use online learning, and we will continue to do so, making it not an auxiliary option but a significant part of our educational offerings," Dockery said.

“So yes, I agree that the changes that have been implemented during the COVID season will likely remain with us, but I think our schools have adjusted well to the hybrid model, and we'll be healthy and maybe even stronger as a result of it."

With the expansion of homeschooling following the pandemic, Moore suggested that "it's possible the public school system will begin to implode and unravel and ideally collapse."

He surmised that such a scenario would allow the U.S. to "revert back to a private, free-market, Christian and home education, which was the original American model for the first 200 years of American history."

"Public education is a socialistic model in education. And socialism never works," Moore asserted. “It always is very self-destructive, and it's not working now in education. So public education is pretty well dysfunctional, and a lot of people know it."

Moore envisioned an America where parents and churches were working together by "rescuing the children" from public schools, believing that such an arrangement would lead to the home transforming into a "biblical learning center" that "strengthens marriages" and ends up "revitalizing the family."

Greene praised the rise in parental engagement that has accompanied the coronavirus pandemic. She expressed hope that when the pandemic is over, people will not forget that "ultimately, the people who are most responsible for
our children's education are the parents." She warned that "without the parents' voice in the revitalizing of our education system in this final moment, things will simply regress into status quo."

“So this is the time for people to stay engaged and speak up and not just slide back into outsourcing our children to schools,” the author said.
House Education Committee Chairman to Big City School Districts: Don’t Mess This Up

The chairman of the House Education Committee told big-city school districts that they better use the coming windfall in relief funds in a way that leaves no doubt the funding drove improvements.

By Lauren Camera, Senior Education Writer  March 22, 2021, at 5:14 p.m.

REP. BOBBY SCOTT TOLD the leaders of the country’s big city school districts Monday that they’re set to receive a windfall of federal relief to help reopen schools for in-person learning. But they better use it in a way, he warned, that leaves no doubt that the funding drove improvements.

"You have a lot of work to do," Scott, Virginia Democrat and chairman of the Education and Labor Committee, told the Council of the Great City Schools during its annual legislative conference. "The biggest school districts are the ones with the most challenges."

"The achievement gap got worse, and in some areas it may have gotten a lot worse," he continued. "So we need to acknowledge that and find out how bad it got and then show that the money we provided and focused according to the Title I formula made a difference."

Despite the fact that the country's public school system is tiptoeing back to life, urban school districts account for the majority of the holdouts to providing in-person instruction – and for good reason as they've faced significantly more challenging circumstances to reopening. The Council of the Great City Schools represents 76 of the country's largest urban public school systems, 42 of which currently offer some types of in-person learning.

Not only do many of them still have high community transmission rates, but their school facilities tend to be older, with poorer quality heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. They lack the extra indoor and outdoor space that their suburban and rural counterparts have to help keep children socially distanced. And many of them also lack the funding of their well-resourced peers to provide personal protective equipment and sanitization, hire additional staff – including nurses, social workers, janitors and bus drivers – and establish testing and tracing programs.

Most notably, the low-income, Black and Hispanic communities that urban districts more often serve have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus. Their students are expected to have some of the greatest academic, social and emotional learning losses coming out of the pandemic.

The $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan included $122 billion for K-12 schools, in addition to $7.6 billion for students with disabilities and $10 billion for testing and tracing. The relief can be
used for a variety of things, including to purchase personal protective equipment, improve ventilation, obtain additional space to ensure social distancing, bolster payroll to prevent layoffs, hire additional staff, fund summer or after-school programs to blunt learning loss or provide Wi-Fi hotspots and devices.

The pot of funding is being disbursed using the formulas used to distribute Title I – the federal funding stream meant to offset resource discrepancies for districts that serve lots of low-income families whose children often start school at a disadvantage compared to their wealthier and often whiter peers. The formula takes into account the size of a district and the child poverty levels.

New York City, the largest school district in the country, is expected to receive $5.2 billion, according to congressional documents obtained by U.S. News – by far more than any other. Meanwhile Los Angeles Unified School District is set to receive $2.8 billion and Puerto Rico is set to receive $2.7 billion. Smaller urban school districts with very high child poverty rates are also slated to get a windfall, including Philadelphia, which is set to see $1.7 billion and Detroit, which is set to see $930 million.

"Some of the school districts where the poverty rates are off the chart are getting a significant amount of money," Scott said. "We want to show that it was bad, but because you had the resources you did a good job. Without the assessments, you can't make that argument."

"Take the money, use it well and show us the good job you did so we will be empowered to make the argument that money made a difference."

Scott's remarks are part motivation for the districts, which still face serious reopening challenges despite the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention revising its social distancing guidance from 6 feet to 3 feet last week, and part serious warning that without something to show for it, Democrats' ability to argue for future funding increases will be all but gone.

After all, congressional Democrats succeeded in fending off efforts to slash funding for education in the relief bill by Republicans who argued that schools still hadn't exhausted all the federal relief included in previous coronavirus stimulus packages.

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona also addressed the group of urban school leaders Monday, where he acknowledged their challenges and also reiterated his goal of helping every school district reopen for in-person learning.

"The work that we've had to do as leaders in education this past year is not something we could have predicted, planned for, and I know it's not something that's part of any preparation program that you've been a part of," he said. "But you've had to do it. And it was a difficult time to lead, but even as commissioner I know this pandemic has served to sharpen our swords in the larger fight of inequity."

"I want to be clear that my primary focus right now is reopening schools as quickly and safely as possible," he continued. "For me that's the greatest equity lever I can pull right now."
As of January, 43 percent of 4th graders and 48 percent of 8th graders were still learning full time from home, according to newly released federal data. And the new numbers point to alarming disparities among regions and states in the quality of that remote learning, with a subset of those remote learners—a quarter or more in both grades—receiving fewer than two hours of live or “synchronous” teaching a day.

The long-awaited data, produced by the agency in response to an executive order from President Biden, offer the first nationally representative picture of what proportion of schools offer remote learning, in-person learning, or a hybrid of the two.

In all, 47 percent of grade 4 schools nationwide offered full in-person teaching, and 46 percent of grade 8 schools did. But because many schools are small or remote—and also because families have chosen from among different options—that translated to only 38 percent of grade 4 students and just 28 percent of grade 8 students attending full time in person.

When hybrid learning is added into the picture, more than 75 percent of schools offer at least some in-person instruction. And though the data are limited to two grade levels, federal officials say enrollment patterns are probably similar for other elementary and lower secondary grades.

“It knew it was going to be low, but not quite that low,” she said.

President Biden made opening “a majority” of K-8 schools within his first 100 days in office for five-day in-person learning one of his top priorities, but his administration did not set a target for the share of students. The new baseline data suggest that the school target has probably been met by now, but it is much less clear whether, more than two months later, at least half of students are now attending in person five days a week.

Many larger districts have been more cautious about returning to in-person schooling. The federal data also show that students in towns or rural locations were more likely than those living in cities or suburbs to be attending in person.

But that picture has shifted dramatically since the federal survey was taken, too, according to Education Week’s tracker of large, urban districts, a project it’s created with the Council of the Great City Schools.
In early February, only about 43 of a sample of 75 large districts in the EdWeek tracker offered some in-person learning, and that number is now 59. Many of these districts have moved from allowing only a limited number of students to attend in-person to letting all students come to school. In addition, many of these districts plan to expand their in-person access even further over the next few weeks.

**Uneven access to in-person learning—and uneven amounts of live, remote teaching**

The federal data bolster other surveys indicating that Black, Hispanic, and Asian students were more likely to be offered—or to prefer—remote learning. Just 28 percent of 4th grade Black students and 15 percent of 4th grade Asian students were attending in-person full time. Almost half of white students, by contrast, were attending full-time in person; white families have been among the most vocal about returning to schools in cities like New York.

The data were collected earlier this year and represent a sample of 7,000 schools, half in grade 4 and half in grade 8. Additional collections will produce monthly results for the same sample of schools February through May.

But below the surface, the findings raise new questions about how states and districts have managed teaching and learning plans during the pandemic.

For one thing, while many districts said they’d planned to prioritize certain groups of vulnerable students to return to classrooms first, the data do not suggest that such plans led to widespread differences in in-person attendance patterns. Schools notably said in the survey that they prioritized students with disabilities for full-time, in-person learning, but fewer than half of those students in 4th grade were doing so.

The findings that look at the subset of students in full-time remote learning show some shocking differences in their access to live-streamed teachers. Twenty-seven percent of those 4th graders and 26 percent of those 8th graders received two or fewer hours of live, synchronous instruction in their remote classes—the rest of their schooling was presumably asynchronous. But students in other states or districts learning remotely got five or more hours of live teaching.

And it appears some of those disparities are due to regional differences. In Oklahoma, 71 percent of 4th grade students in remote learning received two or fewer hours of live teaching, and 73 percent of 8th grade students in Idaho received two or fewer hours of live teaching. Students in cities and in the Northeast typically got more live teaching in their remote classes than did those in towns or in the Midwest.

Parents and advocates alike have urged districts to improve their remote learning offerings; many are concerned about their children’s well-being in remote settings. But the political discussion on school reopening has focused almost exclusively on returning to in-person settings.

The data also do not conform easily to theories about why some districts offered more live-streamed remote teaching than others. Labor contracts have shaped some teaching conditions, modes, and hours, but the data don’t appear to correlate easily to states where unions are strong.

In fact, the states reporting the highest proportion of 4th grade students receiving less than two
hours of synchronous instruction are Alabama, which has no public-sector unions, and Arkansas and Oklahoma, where unions are significantly weaker than on the coasts.

It could be the case that, since most students in those states appear to be attending in person, many districts there simply are no longer prioritizing the quality of their remote learning option, or do not have the staff to maintain it.
BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The latest federal coronavirus relief package includes $81 billion that began flowing to states this week with the goal of helping schools reopen quickly — with one obstacle being that many of the districts’ problems can’t be solved by money.

Many parents want to keep their children home. Teachers have pushed back at reopening plans. And some districts say state guidelines on social distancing keep them from bringing all students back at once.

The money is welcome assistance for districts that have had to spend enormous sums on ventilation systems, laptops and protective equipment. With the end of the academic year approaching quickly, however, many are looking ahead to how to best spend the new money next fall.

For some districts that have yet to bring large number of students back to classrooms, no amount of money can help in the near term.

The Hillsboro School District, one of Oregon’s largest, plans to begin introducing limited in-person learning for some students this month but cannot bring all students back full time because of guidelines on issues such as social distancing and bus transportation, said Beth Graser, a district spokesperson.

“There simply aren’t people to hire to drive the buses we have, much less the fact that we would need to go through a purchasing process to secure additional buses if we were to increase our fleet to the point where we could feasibly overcome the transportation constraints,” Graser wrote in an email.

The money released this week is part of $122 billion included for K-12 schools in the $1.9 trillion virus relief bill. Schools are strategizing over how to use the money over the next couple years to undo the pandemic’s damage to the pace of learning and students’ mental well-being.

Nearly half of U.S. elementary schools were open for full-time classroom learning as of last month, according to a survey by the administration of President Joe Biden, who has pledged to have most K-8 schools open full time in his first 100 days in office. While the administration touted the relief package as a way to help reopen schools, officials in some districts say they won’t tap into the new funding for months.

In Ohio’s Youngstown City School District, where about 40% of students are back in classrooms part-time, CEO Justin Jennings doesn’t expect the newest federal money to change those numbers before the school year ends.
That’s partly because students already were offered the opportunity to return for in-person learning, and partly because the district doesn’t even expect to draw on the latest funding until at least the summer, Jennings said. Then it may go to more protective equipment, upgrading schools’ air filtration systems and broadband access, and investing in transportation to allow for better social distancing, he said.

About 60 of the 77 large urban districts that make up the Council of the Great City Schools are at least partially open, Executive Director Michael Casserly said, and most of the rest already had plans to reopen by the middle of April. The new funding will help with the return to in-person learning, he said.

“There’s a fair amount of money that will go to just efforts to reopen the buildings and make sure that everybody is safe,” he said. “Those will be one-time expenditures that the school districts will make that won’t necessarily build any long-term capacity, but they will help open the doors.”

In Hartford, Connecticut, Superintendent Leslie Torres-Rodriguez said she expects the relief money will help the district bring more students back by expanding efforts to connect with families of students who have been absent or disengaged. The district has done close to 4,400 home visits this school year but often has lacked the resources to address the root causes of the problems, she said.

“Additional social workers, mental health and wellness supports would be so important and most immediately needed,” she said.

Amid signs of slipping academic achievement, the school district in Connecticut’s capital is encouraging all students to return for in-person learning on March 29, including some 9,600 students who have opted for virtual learning.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said last week that students can safely sit 3 feet, instead of 6 feet, apart inside classrooms as long as they wear masks. But officials in some districts say that won’t allow them to increase the number of days students learn in person unless state governments adopt the same guidance.

“If the guidance is permissible, we are excited to be able to do that,” said Jeffrey Rabey, superintendent of Depew Public Schools in Buffalo’s suburbs, where schools are operating with a hybrid model.

One of the biggest obstacles remains parent fears about the spread of the virus in schools, said Andre Perry, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. He said districts have to show parents they are safe, especially in traditionally underserved schools where bathrooms often lacked soap or working sinks before the pandemic.

In Fairfax County, Virginia, where schools last week completed the transition from fully remote to a mix of remote and in-person learning, surveys indicate many families in the state’s largest district may not want more time in classrooms.
The percentage of parents who say they prefer in-person learning over online has decreased in recent months, down to 47% this month from 56% in October, according to the district, which said parents have to feel prepared and safe sending their kids back.

“We are still working on looking at factors that may be able to help bring back additional students in-person in the weeks ahead,” a district spokesperson said via email.

In Ohio’s largest school district, Columbus, most students are back in classrooms part time under a hybrid schedule. Social distancing requirements that put capacity on school buses is one hurdle, and it doesn’t make sense to buy hundreds more buses, officials said.

Another hurdle, district treasurer Stanley Bahorek said, is uncertainty about what’s ahead and how schools might have to adapt.

“We’re in a situation where we don’t have a choice but to respond to an ever-changing environment,” Bahorek said. “And that’s the perspective that I hope people on the outside consider when they say, ‘Well, why don’t they just bring the kids back to school?’”
Helping HVAC fight Covid

Protecting students and staff from Covid-19 has made upgrading HVAC systems in education facilities a more urgent need.

Mike Kennedy
APR 02, 2021

Schools and universities seeking to make their facilities healthful learning environments that help combat the spread of Covid-19 should focus on their heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems—specifically the ventilation part.

“HVAC systems are critical to Covid-19 mitigation efforts due to their ability to control airborne pollutants and viruses and to distribute fresh outside air in classrooms,” the Learning Policy Institute says in a December 2020 paper.

The systems may be critical in the fight against Covid, but too many of them may not be up to the task. The obstacle for thousands of schools is the condition of their HVAC systems. Education institutions in general struggle with facility maintenance backlogs—problems that have been ignored or deferred because of inadequate funding and the priority given to more urgent crises. Keeping HVAC systems in shape is one of those items that get put on the back burner.

A June 2020 study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that an estimated 41% of school districts need to update or replace the HVAC systems in at least half of their schools. That equates to about 36,000 schools.

“If not addressed, HVAC issues can result in health and safety problems,” the GAO says.

Covid-19 is a health and safety problem that descended into all schools whether or not their facilities had HVAC issues, but adjusting and upgrading HVAC systems to combat the virus will help schools provide a safer and more healthful learning environment for students.

The Covid relief package enacted by Congress in March allocates $130 billion in aid to K-12 schools, and some local districts may opt to use some of that to improve or replace their HVAC systems. But improving HVAC systems in all the facilities that need it will be costly.

The Learning Policy Institute estimates that the cost for new HVAC systems ranges between $30 and $50 per square foot.

“If half of the 36,000 buildings with sub-standard HVAC systems require upgrades and the remaining 50% require new ventilation systems, it would cost approximately $72 billion to ensure safe and healthy air quality in all schools and classrooms,” the institute says.
Healthy venting

For months, many classrooms sat empty because of the coronavirus, and concerns about HVAC systems and indoor air quality took a back seat to the effort to pivot to online instruction and make sure that students still could keep learning via the internet.

Now, as more school facilities are cleared to welcome students back from their pandemic-imposed exile, maintenance and operations staff should turn their attention to providing healthful learning spaces.

The Council of the Great City Schools is one of several organizations to provide guidance to help schools improve the air quality inside classrooms and other spaces.

“Improving air quality and increasing ventilation in our school buildings is one of the most important steps districts need to take to prepare school facilities for the return of students, teachers and staff during the Covid-19 crisis,” the Council says.

The Council has compiled recommendations to help schools maintain their ventilation systems to improve indoor air quality and lower the potential for Covid-19 circulating in a school building. Among them:

• Better filters. Return air filters in HVAC systems should be changed to those that have higher efficiency and trap more particles—the Council recommends a minimum MERV 13 filter (or equivalent) with the greatest depth allowed by the equipment, typically 2 inches where possible.

• Daily air flush out. Before teachers and staff arrive in the morning, maintenance workers should have the control settings and schedules for the ventilation systems and fans set so that they run for a minimum of two hours in occupied mode with the peak outside air rate.

• Open Windows. In facilities where there is no central HVAC system, doors and windows should be opened two hours before occupancy and at other times throughout the day.

• Regular inspections. Schools should conduct regularly scheduled preventive maintenance inspections on HVAC systems to ensure they are operating properly and providing adequate ventilation.


“For example, districts and schools can schedule incremental checkpoints to ensure plans for updating ventilation are going according to schedule and increase the frequency of changing ventilation filters,” the handbook says.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides additional recommendations to ensure that HVAC systems in schools are maximizing ventilation

• Set HVAC systems to bring in as much outdoor air as a system will safely allow.

• Disable demand-controlled ventilation controls that reduce air supply based on occupancy or
temperature. Doing this will keep the air supply constant throughout the day.

• For simple HVAC systems controlled by a thermostat, setting the fan control switch from “auto” to “on” will ensure that the HVAC system provides continuous air filtration and distribution.

• To enhance the effectiveness of open windows, use fans.

  “Fan placement is important and will vary based on room configuration,” the CDC says. “Avoid placing fans in a way that could potentially cause contaminated air to flow directly from one person to another.”

If schools are opening windows and using fans, they should take safety precautions, such as using fans with covers and having screens on windows.

• Consider portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan and filtration systems to enhance air cleaning (especially in higher-risk areas such as a nurse’s office or areas frequently inhabited by people with a higher likelihood of having Covid-19).

• Ventilation is especially important in areas where students may not be able to wear masks; if students have to eat indoors in a cafeteria, use methods such as opening windows, maximizing filtration as much as a system will allow, and using portable HEPA air cleaners.

• Make sure air filters are properly sized and within their recommended service life.

• Generate clean-to-less-clean air movement by evaluating and repositioning as necessary, supply louvers, exhaust air grilles, and damper settings.

• Consider using ultraviolet germicidal irradiation as a supplemental treatment to inactivate Covid-19, especially if options for increasing room ventilation and filtration are limited.
Wall Street Journal

Nation’s Largest School Districts Aim to Reopen Fully in the Fall

CDC director says schools should plan to open in the fall; many districts plan for in-person classes, but say remote options will remain

By
Jennifer Calfas and Brianna Abbott
Updated April 9, 2021 12:45 pm ET

Some of the largest school districts across the country are planning to fully reopen schools in the fall for in-person instruction as more staff become inoculated against Covid-19 and a record level of federal funding is expected to bolster safety measures.

School districts from New York to California currently grappling with inconsistent in-person offerings are starting to lay out plans for full-time instruction with hopes of a less disruptive year ahead.

Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, says that schools should anticipate being open in the fall, according to a CDC spokesman.

“We should anticipate that come September 2021, that schools should be full-fledged in person and all of our children back in the classroom,” Dr. Walensky said in an ABC News interview on Wednesday.

The CDC and other federal authorities have pressed schools to reopen with the recommended safety protocols as in place as soon as possible, as officials work to balance Covid-19 risks with the benefits of in-person learning for students and families.

In recent months, data has suggested that Covid-19 spread din the classroom is limited when the recommended safety guidance is strictly followed, and more resources are expected to become available for schools to implement Covid-19 testing systems and other safety measures.

Nearly 50 million students shifted to remote learning over a year ago when districts closed school buildings. The debate over when and how to reopen classrooms has been one of the most divisive battles of the pandemic and resulting in vastly difference procedures across the
nation’s more than 13,000 school districts. As districts began to offer in-person learning, hybrid options often meant kids went to the classroom just two or three days a week, and quarantine protocols sent them back home for days or weeks at a time.

Even in the fall, many schools will continue to use mitigation measures recommended by the CDC and offer remote-learning options for students whose families remain hesitant to send them back into the classroom, educators said. Superintendents expect to monitor infection rates, keeping hybrid of remote-learning plans in their back pockets in case the pandemic worsens.

“It could put a damper on everybody’s desire to fully reopen,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of dozens of large urban school districts, about infection rates. “But our planning at the moment is tilted in favor of opening up five days a week for as many parents and students who want an in-person option.”

This week, the San Francisco Board of Education voted to offer in-person learning five days a week for students in the fall. District of Columbia Public Schools Chancellor Lewis Ferebee announced similar plans on Thursday, and leaders in nearby Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia and Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland outlined their own goals last month. When asked Wednesday whether New York City’s public schools, the largest district in the nation, will open full time in the fall, Mayor Bill de Blasio said, “Based on what we know now? Absolutely.”

At the School District of Philadelphia, where district leaders have worked with the teachers union to reopen more classrooms this spring, Superintendent William Hite said they’re “working towards” a full-time in-person instruction plan for the fall.

A variety of variables could affect the feasibility of this goal, including the trajectory of the pandemic, the length of vaccine efficacy and whether more parents will opt their children back into classroom learning, he said. Abiding my distancing guidelines for schools with a large number of students could present another challenge.
“Nonetheless, we’re trying to problem-solve through all of those issues now with a view towards ensuring that we can get all the children back on a full-time basis in the fall,” said Dr. Hite, adding they plan to continue to follow health officials’ recommendations.

Evidence suggests that transmission in schools is limited when safety precautions such as masking and distancing are strictly in place, and in grade schools, teachers are more likely to be the primary transmitters of the virus than their students. Clusters of cases can still occur, however, and federal officials are currently hearing reports about clusters linked to day-care centers and youth sports, Dr. Walensky said during a White House press briefing on Wednesday.

The seven-day average for new Covid-19 cases is now just above 64,000 a day, the CDC said on Friday, as cases and hospitalizations have continued to tick upward but are down from their January peaks. Public-health authorities are currently racing to get as many shots in arms as possible, and many states are starting to expand eligibility to all adults.

“I want to be clear. As cases increase in the community, we expect cases identified in schools will also increase. This is not necessarily indicative of school-based transmission,” said Dr. Walensky said on Friday. Implementing CDC guidance for schools and reducing Covid-19 spread in the community can help limit or prevent transmission in schools, she added.

The CDC this week is sending out the $10 billion from the American Rescue Plan designated to help schools implement and bolster Covid-19 testing. “Being able to rapidly identify new cases among students will help us slow the spread of Covid-19,” Dr. Walensky said.

This week, the CDC announced close to 80% of all K-2 teachers, school staff and child-care workers have received at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine. All 50 states and Washington, D.C., have now prioritized educators for their shots, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, which has tracked vaccine prioritizations.

Vaccines are only available for people ages 16 and older. But testing is under way to determine efficacy and safety for younger teenagers, which could possibly prompt expanded access before the summer.
FEMA Is Spending Billions on Pandemic Relief. How Schools Can Get More of It

By Mark Lieberman — April 14, 2021

So exactly what pandemic-related costs will FEMA reimburse school districts for?

Even as schools have devoted a growing pile of dollars to PPE, cleaning supplies, and other measures to keep COVID-19 out of buildings, it’s been hard to get a straight answer. Many districts have submitted claims only to see a fraction of their costs reimbursed, often with little or no explanation.

On top of that confusion, FEMA says it has contributed more than $21 billion in disaster relief through its public assistance program during the pandemic. How much have K-12 schools gotten so far?

Just under $26 million, according to an agency spokesperson.

But this week, officials with the Federal Emergency Management Agency offered some clarity. A FEMA spokesperson answered detailed questions about what the agency will and won’t pay for as the nation’s school districts continue to navigate one of the most costly and turbulent periods in their history.

Districts can’t get reimbursed for:

- Remote learning costs, including laptops, webcams, Wi-Fi hotspots, and online curriculum materials
- Cleaning supplies that were used and discarded between Sept. 15, 2020, and Jan. 21, 2021

But districts can get reimbursed for:

- Cleaning supplies, masks, desk shields, COVID-19 testing and screening tools, and PPE that a districts purchased in 2020 but continued to use after Jan. 21, 2021
- Cleaning supplies, masks, desk shields, COVID-19 testing and screening tools, and PPE purchased after Jan. 21, 2021

A ‘difficult’ agency to work with

Throughout the pandemic, district leaders have griped about conflicting and vaguely worded guidance from FEMA.
So far, K-12’s small sliver of the FEMA public assistance pie can be attributed in part to the agency’s decision last September under the Trump administration to stop reimbursing schools for the cost of masks and PPE. President Joe Biden has since reversed that policy, but this week’s updates from FEMA indicate the new policy isn’t fully retroactive to the start of the pandemic.

While the policy shift should help schools, district officials still have a pretty negative view of FEMA.

“No federal agency is more difficult to work with than FEMA,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council for the Great City Schools, whose 77 big-city members’ pandemic-related costs could climb to tens of millions of dollars or more. “Their guidelines and rules are not clear; their responsiveness is appalling; and the timelines for reimbursement are excessive. I would rather work with almost anyone else but FEMA.”

Some school leaders also may not have realized they were eligible for FEMA reimbursement, or may not have the staff and resources to devote to filling out and tracking lengthy grant applications during an ongoing public health crisis.

Unprecedented spending by schools

The pandemic has disrupted almost every corner of school operations, and some K-12 advocates have suggested districts will eventually spend close to $25 billion on COVID-19-related costs. FEMA has urged districts to rely mostly on $195 billion in direct aid to K-12 schools passed by Congress during the pandemic as part of three economic stimulus packages to pay for those costs.

But districts say every dollar matters, particularly with efforts to help students who have struggled during the pandemic.

U.S. senators and state emergency managers in recent weeks have been ramping up pressure for FEMA to retroactively reimburse schools.

Questions and answers on FEMA’s current reimbursement policy for schools:

My district applied for millions of dollars in reimbursements, but the agency has only approved a small fraction of that sum so far. Why might that be?

Schools may have submitted requests for reimbursement for ineligible expenses, like the cost of remote learning. They might have submitted requests for reimbursement for the costs of work performed between Sept. 15 and Jan. 21, 2021, when FEMA’s policy did not permit reimbursing school districts for the cost of PPE and other COVID-19 mitigation efforts.

Schools would not be denied simply for requesting too much money, FEMA confirmed. The agency is not imposing a dollar limit on what K-12 districts can get back from eligible expenses. It’s also not currently imposing a deadline for submitting requests by a certain date.

According to the spokesperson, the agency’s public assistance program reimburses for “emergency protective measures that are necessary to eliminate or lessen immediate threats to life, public health, or safety.”
The agency has chosen a relatively narrow interpretation of that rule, excluding some costs of maintaining educational services for students during a public health emergency. My school district last fall purchased masks and other PPE for students and staff, in preparation for reopening school buildings. Students and staff are still using that equipment now. Can I get reimbursed for it?

Potentially, according to FEMA. The current policy says eligible expenses must be related to “work performed between Jan. 21 and Sept. 30” this year. An agency spokesperson confirmed that purchases made before those dates could be eligible for reimbursement if the items purchased are being used during that time frame.

My district bought laptops and tablets for students to help them learn remotely while school buildings were closed for safety reasons. Can I get reimbursed for those technology costs?

No. FEMA has specifically ruled out remote learning as an eligible expense. Furthermore, “increased costs of operating a facility or providing a service are generally not eligible even when directly related to the incident,” the FEMA spokesperson said.

My district bought cleaning supplies last October to prepare to reopen school buildings in November. We used up all of those cleaning supplies shortly after buildings reopened. Can I get reimbursed for the cost of those supplies?

Likely no. The FEMA policy says expenses must be tied to work performed after Jan. 21, 2021 in order to qualify. Since that cleaning effort happened during the period when FEMA’s policy for reimbursing schools was more strict, the district likely would not be eligible for FEMA assistance through the current iteration of the program.

My school district applied last year for reimbursement from FEMA, but I haven’t heard back about the status of my reimbursement. Does that mean I’m not eligible?

Not necessarily. “Any school for which funding is denied is provided a written explanation of that denial and afforded an opportunity to appeal and/or arbitrate that decision,” the FEMA spokesperson wrote. “If a written explanation was not provided, it is because funding has not been denied and is still under consideration.” The agency recommends schools get in touch with their local and state emergency management organizations for more details. Here’s a state-by-state list.

My district purchased masks for students and staff members to wear. Can I get reimbursed for all of those expenses, or only for the costs of masks for staff?

FEMA says masks and other personal protective equipment qualify as eligible expenses, regardless of who wears them: “school administrative personnel, staff, teachers, and students.”
Commentary: SC schools must use COVID relief money to make lasting changes
By John C. Read
April 29, 2021

Close to a half-billion dollars of federal and state COVID-19 recovery funds are expected to be flowing into the four tri-county school districts in the next two to three years. Will these funds be used merely to return our schools to where they were pre-COVID, or will they serve to transform the system in a way that assures the success of all children in our region?

In its award-winning series “Minimally Adequate” three years ago, The Post and Courier documented our state’s systemic failures to assure that all children are successful in our schools. Here in the tri-county area, organizations including Harvard, Clemson, Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative, Charleston Shared Future, the Avery Institute and the Charleston Forum have documented the extent to which disparities exist in every school attended by children of poverty and of color. The evidence is irrefutable that while these gaps have worsened during the pandemic, their root cause is to be found in an underlying, longstanding and at least implicit racial bias in how the system works.

This new funding will not be repeated, and the track record of our districts in making effective use of such one-time infusions is not impressive. District staffs prefer to keep their own counsel on how such funds should be spent, often turning to other educator consultants for advice. The results — fragmentation, more interventions, more remediation, something for everyone — have left these systems unchanged once the funds are spent.

School boards have the ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the effective use of these funds when they arrive, but none of these boards have had experience with funding of this magnitude. The Charleston County School Board is still new, finding its footing and could be entirely replaced in less than two years. The Berkeley County School District’s financial challenges are well-documented, and the Dorchester 2 board has shown little interest in the disparities found in its schools. Where, then, can the community turn for a different way to approach the use of these anticipated funds and the opportunity they present in order to effect lasting change?

The Council of the Great City Schools is composed of educators with long experience in such matters, and its advice to districts is strikingly different. It encourages districts to convene teams of stakeholders from across the district and region to create the plan for these funds. Educators should join with civic and business leaders, students, parents and community leaders and these cross-functional teams empowered to make these decisions. “Go slow to go fast” is the council’s advice such that schools not only open safely but that equity drives the application of these funds to where the need is greatest and with changes that are proven to work.

Within Charleston County, for example, a concentrated effort to transform the 14 “accelerator schools” should be a high-level objective for these funds, and the result: highly qualified, culturally competent teachers led by well-supported, world-class principals in these schools.
Stakeholder plans should result in a disproportionately large share of the money directed to these schools. In other regional schools where disparities are covered up by averaging, targeted support for students and families during and after school may be appropriate.

While these one-time dollars would secure the necessary talent for these schools, it will be the system changes that retain them — changes that free a principal and teaching staff from bureaucratic requirements that impede innovation. The principals at two of our public schools, Brentwood Elementary and Burns Elementary, have this flexibility and accountability. Their results, from student achievement to parental engagement and teacher satisfaction, demonstrate the value of providing resources and flexibility to capable educators and staying out of their way. The COVID-19 crisis has been devastating for all concerned, and educators at every level have exhibited heroic efforts on behalf of our children over these past months. Systemic failure is no one’s fault but everyone’s responsibility, and with public education already disrupted, it would be a moral failure to waste the opportunity for lasting change. School boards and civic and community leaders should heed this expert advice and open up the planning to broad-based community engagement across the region.

John C. Read, the former CEO of Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative, serves on the Charleston Forum board and as a member of Charleston Shared Future.
Angry White Parents vs. the Public School System

Children are still learning remotely in many cities and some parents are fed up – but the divide could fundamentally change urban public school systems.

By Lauren Camera
May 12, 2021, at 10:07 a.m.

Elizabeth Walsh, a Washington, D.C. mother of three elementary school aged children, is determined not to become one of those wealthy white families that abandons urban public schools when the going gets tough, as it’s been since the coronavirus shuttered schools for 50 million children more than a year ago.

But with the vast majority of students still learning virtually in cities across the country – and upwards of 90% in the nation's capital – she is hanging on by a thread.

"I don't want to generalize, but where we live so many people already have it in their head, 'I'm just using the public school system until fifth grade or fourth grade and then I'm applying my kid out anyway,'" Walsh says about the majority white neighborhood nestled in the northwestern part of the city, where median home prices often exceed $2 million. "I believe in the public school system. I want my kids to go until twelfth grade."

"I think they're going to get into a better college coming from DCPS than Sidwell Friends," she says, referencing one of the dozens of elite Washington-area private schools, in which she estimates at least 50% of the families in and around her neighborhood have already secured enrollment for their children.'

"We have the money to go to private school, but I'm not changing course," she says, unless, that is, her kids don't go back in person this fall.

Walsh is trying to hold out, but anecdotal evidence from cities across the country suggests an uptick in wealthy parents pulling their kids from public schools. While the data lacks demographic details, enrollment in urban public schools is down roughly 4% since schools shuttered a year ago – in some cities enrollment is down by more than 30% in prekindergarten and early elementary school grades. And as white parents increasingly insist on in-person school, leading them to enroll in private options or move to the suburbs, at the same time that many parents of color are reluctant to send their children back in person, it's exacerbating the inequities that already plague urban public school systems.

Like so many other mayors and superintendents of big city school districts, Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser and DC Public Schools chancellor Lewis Ferebee have promised that schools will be open, in-person, five days a week next fall for families that want the option. But as it stands,
87% of fourth-grade students and 93% of eighth-grade students in Washington were still learning entirely remotely in March. And fall might be too late for some of the parents who have already left the public school system.

Walsh's three children get two and half hours of in-person instruction four days a week at their neighborhood public school. The in-person offering began mid-April.

"What the public schools have done to us has shown us that they are not necessarily going to be there for us," she says. "And what the private schools have shown people is like, 'No, no. You pay us a lot of money and we are going to be here for you. We are not going to leave you high and dry.'"

That's why Walsh has a back-up plan in case her children's school doesn't fully reopen next school year: Relocating to a house she and her husband own on Cape Cod.

"If something falls through, we will go up there next year and I will enroll my kids in Massachusetts, where they have in-person school," she says. "But I don't want to do that at all."

With the latest federal data showing that less than 30% of elementary and middle school students in cities are receiving in-person instruction, full time, five days a week, Walsh is on the verge of joining a chorus of parents pulling the plug on their urban school systems – a phenomenon that stands to financially handicap districts where enrollment is already down due to the pandemic and further segregate children in cities where white students and students of color are already separated by boundaries and feeder patterns.

"They know that if they're not able to make good on five days a week next year that parents will unenroll and that's going to hit them in the pocket," says Keri Rodrigues, co-founder and president of the National Parents Union who enrolled two of her children in Catholic school last year after mounting frustration with the learning options provided by their Boston-area public school district.

"Those October numbers we look for are going to be atrocious," she says, predicting that the disenrollment among white families will prove disastrous for urban public schools. "I think the systems have abused the trust of families across the country, and I don't think they realize what kind of damage the relationships have suffered during this period. There is a crisis of confidence."

**Urban School Districts Face Bigger Hurdles to Reopen**

As the rest of the country made strides in returning students to classrooms for in-person learning earlier this year, Walsh – and many parents like her – grew increasingly frustrated.
"That's about when I realized, Oh my gosh this isn't going to just be given to me," she says. "We have to actually start banging down doors. We have to march, we need to fight, we need to go crazy."

She helped organize a rally outside city hall in March and testified before a D.C. city council committee hearing outlining her concerns about the lack of in-person options.

To be sure, reopening for in-person learning has been significantly more challenging for urban school districts for a whole host of reasons.

Not only are many urban areas still grappling with higher community transmission rates, but their school facilities tend to be older, with poorer quality heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. They often lack the extra indoor and outdoor space that their suburban and rural counterparts have to help keep children socially distanced. And, until recently, many of them also lacked the funding to provide personal protective equipment and sanitization, hire additional staff – including nurses, social workers, janitors and bus drivers – and establish testing and tracing programs, among the many other things the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends for a safe return to the classroom.

City school systems have made significant strides in returning more students to classrooms over the last three months, especially on the heels of the $140 billion in federal aid included in the most recent coronavirus stimulus package to help those reopening efforts. Those offering some type of in-person instruction jumped from from 57% in January to 79% in March, according to the latest federal data – though that could mean anything from open for in-person learning five days a week for all students to a hybrid model that allows students to be in person only one or two days a week.

But challenges unique to urban school districts are reflected in equal measure by the fact that only 38% of their elementary and middle schools were open full time for all students in March, according to the same federal data set, and only 26% of students enrolled in urban schools in grades four and eight were being taught in person, full time.

And in places like Washington, where the vast majority of students are still remote-only, parents who can are seeking other options.

"The pandemic is promoting another round of an old American story – that when public goods are scarce, the privileged are almost always able to use their money or social capital to get the best version of what is available," Conor Williams, fellow at the Century Foundation, says.

What's happening in Washington, he says, where he lives with his family, including two children who attend public school and are learning remotely, is just the latest example of parents with means – often, white parents – who have for decades self-segregated in the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city and its surrounding suburbs.

"You did it by purchasing a really good house in those spots or you paid private school tuition to get access to really high-quality education and then you left everyone else to whatever was
leftover and given to them as far as public resources," he says. "In this case, if in-person education is scarce, those who have the most ability to go find it will do it. I don't think you have to be a Marxist to see that the economic prerequisites of each individual family are what drives their access to more options of how they get public education."

Williams argues that the pandemic threw a lot of access to public goods back on individuals and their ability to pay for it, which is nothing new, he says, except for how public and toxic the school reopening debate has become.

"In the case of schools," he says, "that means you buy your way into or you social capital your way into in-person schooling wherever you can find it. That's not an option if you can't afford to leave D.C., if your job isn't remote, if fill in the blank."

But with an unclear path to reopening full time this late in the school year, some parents who have so far resisted such temptations – mostly white, upper- and middle-class mothers like Walsh – are now making moves, either enrolling their children in private or Catholic schools, or bolting to nearby suburbs where, right now, there is a full on scrum over houses that are closing upwards of $100,000 over asking with no contingencies.

Though some, including real estate agents working in Washington's highest-income zip codes, say the decisions to leave the city aren't singularly about the schools.

"The out-migration of city dwellers into the suburbs seems to be just a general concern as people have discovered that they want more space between them and their neighbors," Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, says. "I'm not sure how much that has to do with the schools or is an overarching issue people have."

"There is some exodus from the cities, but we don't know the extent of what that is and I'm not sure anyone understands how permanent this is," he says. "We've seen in-migration and out-migrations in previous years and it hasn't always been permanent. We're also not always sure who has moved and why they have moved, but this is an issue."

It's unclear how their decisions to leave will impact enrollment in places like Washington. As it stands, schools in the neighborhoods from which they're fleeing are some of the most overcrowded in the city, and the school district is in the process of reconfiguring the feeder system and adding a new school to create roughly 1,000 new seats.

Among urban school districts nationwide, enrollment for the current 2020-21 school year was down roughly 3% to 4%, mainly in the early learning years of pre-kindergarten through second grade – though city school systems reported much steeper drops in attendance.

Casserly says districts won't have a solid understanding of enrollment declines for the next school year until October, when schools begin reporting such data. Until then, he says, most urban school districts are looking to use summer camps, including academic, art, music and sports programs, to reengage students and their families and get a better sense of what they should anticipate in the fall.

"We don't know how big of an issue it is," he says. "Everyone is trying to keep close track of who is coming back and who has disappeared on them."
Racial Gaps in Reopening

Belying the issue of urban school districts’ hesitance to reopen for in-person learning amid outcries from mostly white and upper-middle class parents is a complex racial dynamic that underscores how the coronavirus pandemic was experienced by and has affected groups of people differently.

In large cities, where the population exceeds 250,000, the latest federal data shows that 42% of white students in fourth grade were learning remotely in March, compared to 58% of Black students, 59% of Hispanic students and 75% of Asian students. And among eighth grade students in urban schools, 48% of white students were learning remotely compared to 68% of Black students, 67% of Hispanic students and 81% of Asian students.

In some of the country’s biggest cities, those disparities are supercharged.

In New York City, for example, 37% of white students in fourth grade learned remotely compared to 66% of Black students, 61% of Hispanic students and 77% of Asian students. In Chicago – where 67% of students are Black, Hispanic or Asian – 39% of white students in fourth grade learned remotely compared to 75% of Black students, 84% of Hispanic students and 74% of Asian students.

The most egregious gap documented in the federal data shows 21% of white students in fourth grade learned remotely in Atlanta compared to 70% of Black students.

Some of the discrepancies can be explained by capacity, staffing and facilities woes – where even within one district, the schools in poorer neighborhoods, which tend to enroll more students of color, aren’t as equipped as schools in more affluent neighborhoods. A big part of the explanation is also that more families of color are choosing to stick with virtual learning, even when they have the option of returning to classrooms – both because their communities have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus and because, against the backdrop of a national reckoning over racism and systemic inequality, they say they never felt safe in those schools even prior to the pandemic.

That’s the case in Washington, where Ferebee says the majority of families are, in fact, receiving education for their children the way they prefer.

"You have in public, these angry, vaccinated white parents yelling about often unvaccinated teachers in an urban setting, often teachers of color, about how they need to get back to school to serve my kid because my kid is hurting," Williams says. "The point is that the reopening debate makes it vivid that when these demands are being made, and they're often being made in the guise of equity, the people who are benefiting are not the people who are being talked about. The people who are benefiting are the angry white parents."

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona has addressed this disparity in recent weeks – though he's proposed little to nothing concrete to tackle it directly.

The pandemic, he's said, "served to sharpen our swords for the real battle, to fight boldly to address inequities that are in our system. It's not about reopening schools; it's about making them better than they were before the pandemic."
What to Expect Next School Year

While Black, Hispanic and Asian parents are still more likely to want to continue with virtual learning due to the fact that their communities have been harder hit by the virus, the share of each demographic that feels that way is shrinking, largely due to continued messaging from the CDC that in-person school doesn’t increase community spread and that, in most cases, children are less likely to be infected by the coronavirus in school than out of school.

Educators, too, are feeling more confident about welcoming students back into the classroom now that the majority of teachers are vaccinated.

Organizations tracking school reopenings are reporting each week that more districts are offering in-person learning five days a week and fewer and fewer offering virtual-only learning. And more good news: The FDA approved coronavirus vaccines for children 12 years old just this week.

Yet urban school districts are far from in the clear. They still face space constraints, older facilities and higher than average transmission rates in pockets of their communities. Now they’re also bracing for new strains of the virus, including the B. 117 variant that originated in the UK, which is driving up infection rates in children in ways the original strain didn’t. In doing so, schools and daycares are closing once again in parts of Colorado, Maine, Maryland and Michigan.

And for the city school systems that have yet to fully reopen, the confluence of remaining challenges and potential future complications is fueling the very real notion that they may not be able to offer in-person learning, five days a week for every family that wants that option this coming fall.

There’s been little to no public acknowledgement of that possibility from school leaders, but it’s the type of unspoken understanding that parents say they’re picking up on from casual conversations with teachers, from the options included in reopening surveys or from reading between the lines of monthly check-ins from principals and reopening announcements.

"If they can’t even say assuredly that, ‘Yes we are going to be open five days a week in the fall, and it might look different with masks, but we are going to be open and you will have some stability’ – if we’re not hearing that now, parents are making moves," Rodrigues says. "Parents are over the instability, they’re over the political back and forth. They need stability for their kids, and they’re terrified about what this means for long-term learning loss."

As for Walsh, she filed the reenrollment forms for her children to remain in their neighborhood public elementary school last month.

"I plan to stay public," she says. "A lot of people don’t. I believe in it. It's going to work. But I need it to work faster."
Teachers union chief calls for full return to school this fall

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, says instruction should be in-person, five days a week.

By Laura Meckler

May 13, 2021 at 4:38 p.m. EDT

The president of the nation’s second-largest teachers union is calling for full-time in-person school this fall, a move that could smooth the way back after a year where teachers often resisted a return to classrooms.

“There is no doubt: Schools must be open. In person. Five days a week,” Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said in a speech Thursday delivered via YouTube and other streaming services. “Given current circumstances, nothing should stand in the way of fully reopening our public schools this fall and keeping them open.”

Weingarten has long said that she wants school to operate with teachers and students physically present, though many of her union’s members have resisted. Her call was greeted with skepticism by some who see unions as having been overly cautious or outright obstinate.

Union leaders have generally said schools cannot open in a pandemic unless it is safe, and the school year has been marked by endless disputes over what is required for safety.

But with the Biden administration pushing hard for a full return to classrooms, and with coronavirus vaccinations widely available and districts across the country promising weary parents they will reopen fully this fall, it appears that opinion among teachers is shifting. The largest teachers union in the country, the National Education Association, suggested Thursday that it agrees with the AFT.

“NEA supports school buildings being open to students for in-person instruction in the fall,” said a statement from NEA President Becky Pringle. She did not specify whether that would be five days a week, but a spokeswoman later said NEA does support a full-time return to in-person learning.

In her statement, Pringle also suggested unions were responsible for making sure schools open safely. “Educators will continue to lead in making sure each school has what it needs to fully re-open in a safe and just way and to ensure the resources exist to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of all students,” the statement said.
Many school districts have offered students at least part-time options this spring, with very few still completely remote. Many districts are using hybrid systems, in which students are in the building only a day or two a week, or where in-person learning is not available to all students. Federal data show that as of March, nearly half of schools were not yet open full time for all students.

Districts in the South and Midwest were much more likely to be fully in-person than those in the Northeast and West. And students of color were more likely to be attending remotely than White students.

Nonetheless, districts across the country have promised that they will reopen full time this fall, and Weingarten’s speech suggests her local chapters will not try to fight that.

“We have been planning for fully reopening in the fall for months,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, which represents urban districts. “We welcome the unions in the ongoing planning.”

Weingarten, who is close to the White House, also puts her union more fully in line with President Biden, who has pushed for schools to reopen. Asked about the union leader’s comments, White House press secretary Jen Psaki replied, “We agree.”

Weingarten said Thursday that her union will run a $5 million “back-to-school for everyone” campaign this summer to persuade teachers and families to return. “The United States will not be fully back until we are fully back in school. And my union is all in,” she said.

Weingarten announced that the AFT executive council had endorsed her call for a return to school, as well as a vision for how to improve education as the system begins to recover from the pandemic. Nonetheless, some of her members may resist.

One teacher addressed Weingarten on the AFT Facebook page: “Last I knew, the pandemic did not magically disappear. Please do not speak for the rank and file who love our union but who are NOT `all in’ for returning to five days a week.”

In her speech, Weingarten defended previous union resistance to going back to classrooms this year, accusing critics of scapegoating and vilifying teachers and blaming them for “problems outside their control.” But she said conditions have changed since then.

Keri Rodrigues, president of the National Parents Union, a group that often opposes teachers unions, supports full reopening but gives AFT little credit for making it happen.

“Weingarten announced that a return to in-person school is “not risk free” but that those risks can be managed with vaccination and other mitigation measures, including the use of masks and maintaining three feet of distance between students. She said new federal money can help schools implement a variety of protective measures.
Vaccination has been the game changer, she said. The union’s data show that 89 percent of its members are fully vaccinated or want to be. And she noted that the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine has been authorized for use in children ages 12 to 15.

She called on districts to reduce class sizes — something teachers have long supported — to maintain three feet of distance, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends. She suggests that school systems work this summer to find more space to keep classes smaller.
Wall Street Journal

Can Schools Mandate Covid-19 Vaccines for Children? What We Know

Schools and districts can't require Covid-19 vaccines for students, but states can

By Yoree Koh
June 11, 2021 8:00 am ET

Many education officials, public-health officials and parents believe that vaccinating children against Covid-19 will play a key role in resuming normal life in time for in-person learning in the fall. That stance has led some parents to wonder: Will K-12 students be mandated to receive the vaccine to be allowed on campus this fall?

Children as young as 12 years old are now eligible to receive the Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE. Moderna Inc. said Thursday it has asked U.S. health regulators to authorize the use of its Covid-19 shot in adolescents ages 12 to 17, setting up the potential availability of a second vaccine option for adolescents.

About 23% of youths 12 to 15 years old have received at least one dose of the Pfizer vaccine since U.S. health regulators cleared it for use among that age group last month, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

About 51% of people are in favor of mandating vaccines for middle-school students, 56% for high-school students and 61% for college students, according to a Gallup poll of more than 3,500 adults conducted in May.

About 53% of parents of children between the ages of 12 and 15 said they plan to have their child vaccinated. The same percentage of parents of children under 12 said they planned to have their children vaccinated once the green light is given.

State policies regarding vaccinations will play a key role in whether schools can require Covid-19 vaccinations in a way similar to how many require shots for infectious diseases such as measles.

Can schools mandate Covid-19 vaccines?

Schools and school districts generally don’t have the authority to mandate student vaccines.
But other authorities can: namely, state legislatures or health officials acting under legislative authority, said Dorit Rubinstein Reiss, a public-health law professor at the University of California Hastings College of the Law.

The one exception is New York City, where a 2018 court case over flu vaccinations implies that city officials can likely require student vaccines in addition to the ones authorized by the state.

“This is an area that is already simply pretty highly regulated,” said Ms. Reiss.

Some states such as California allow state health departments to add other vaccines to those required by law. But the health department has never exercised that allowance, said Ms. Reiss. Every one of the 10 vaccines on California’s approved list has been added through the state legislature, she said.

**Have state lawmakers shown an interest in mandating the Covid-19 vaccines for K-12 students?**

Not really, and that isn’t surprising, according to Ms. Reiss. For starters, the vaccine has only been approved for use in children 12 and up. So making an argument that a vaccine is necessary might prove hard if only half the school population can receive it, said Ms. Reiss. Lawmakers are unlikely to push for a mandate until the vaccine is approved for use by all school-age children. Another reason is that all three Covid-19 vaccines are currently approved under an emergency-use authorization, said Ms. Reiss. While that status doesn’t necessarily preclude a mandate, it does weaken the legal standing.

Oklahoma became the first state to pass legislation blocking K-12 vaccine requirements. The bill, signed by Republic Gov. Kevin Stitt late last month, also forbids schools from implementing a mask mandate on unvaccinated students. Similar bills prohibiting schools to require the vaccine are making their way through Michigan and Pennsylvania legislatures.

**Do school districts want the Covid-19 vaccine to be mandated?**
Many are keeping quiet on the issue. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, who has authority over schools, indicated last week that he isn’t keen on a vaccine mandate.

“I think when we get in the business of mandating, we create conflict that we don’t need in this,” said Mr. de Blasio. He added that increasing vaccinations by educating about their effectiveness would be better.

Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Austin Beutner said vaccines should be made mandatory once they have been proven to be safe and effective.

“I would expect that in the not too distant future—I don’t know if it’s weeks, months or hopefully not years—the state would mandate it. Why would we treat Covid differently than we treat measles and mumps? It doesn’t make sense to me,” said Mr. Beutner.

Mr. Beutner, head of the country’s second-largest school district, said that he has discussed a potential mandate with state legislators for months and that when the politics around the topic are put aside, many agree that the vaccine should be required. There are differing views on when would be the right time to implement it, he said.

Mr. Beutner is stepping down from his job at the end of the month.

Nearly 50 urban school districts, including New York City, Los Angeles, Cleveland and Detroit, are offering vaccinations to students and families at school buildings, according to the Council of the Great City Schools.

**What do teachers say?**

The National Education Association, the country’s largest teachers union, said it doesn’t have a national position, and the American Federation of Teachers, the second-largest teachers union, said it isn’t pushing for vaccination to be required. Randi Weingarten, the group’s president, has said it is important to convince people of the vaccine’s efficacy to overcome hesitancy.

**How effective are the Covid-19 vaccines among children?**
The results of a Pfizer-BioNTech study of 2,260 adolescents found that the two-dose shot was 100% effective at protecting against symptomatic Covid-19 in 12- to 15-year-olds. So far, researchers haven’t found evidence that the vaccines pose any additional or different risks to children versus adults. The most common side effects of the vaccine, according to the CDC, are flulike symptoms, such as fever, muscle aches and chills.

Do school vaccine mandates work?

Yes, according to Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. Take the case of measles, the first vaccine to be mandated at schools in some states. According to a 2003 paper in the American Medical Association’s Journal of Ethics, “Evidence showed that states with school immunization laws had rates of measles 40-51% lower than states without such laws.” Such findings led to more state mandates and strict enforcement.

“Because of those mandates we ultimately eliminated measles from this country” for a time, said Dr. Offit.

Every state requires children to be vaccinated to attend school, with inoculations for mumps, measles and rubella, as well as polio and diphtheria among the most common. But there are exemptions. Six states—West Virginia, Mississippi, New York, Maine, California and Connecticut—allow only medical exemptions.

Forty-four states and the District of Columbia grant religious exemptions, and 15 states allow philosophical exemptions, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

What about colleges?

Hundreds of colleges and universities—both public and private—are requiring students to be vaccinated to participate in on-campus learning this fall. The legal restrictions that bind K-12 schools don’t always apply because most public universities have self-governing powers from the state, and private universities
generally aren’t subject to state regulations, said Ms. Reiss. But the self-governing powers of public universities usually aren’t strong enough to override state legislation. If states say that public universities can’t make the Covid-19 vaccine a condition for attendance, such as in the case of Oklahoma and Utah, then the universities’ powers might be limited, said Ms. Reiss.

**What’s next?**

Some public-health experts and pediatricians caution that it might be prudent to wait until more data is available before making the Covid-19 vaccine a requirement. Danny Benjamin, a professor of pediatrics at Duke University, said he would want “maximum information” on the vaccine’s efficacy and mortality rates on a much larger scale than provided through the initial trials. “We’re really early in the life cycle of mandating it,” said Dr. Benjamin.

Dr. Benjamin, whose four children have all received the vaccine including two who were part of the initial trials, said that given the hesitancy regarding vaccines it is best not to rush to mandates. Instead, encouraging vaccinations through incentives and education would be better, he said.
DISTRICT LEADERSHIP
Biden’s Pick for Deputy Education Secretary Faces Criticism Over Charter School Views

By Evie Blad — March 10, 2021

After a relatively smooth confirmation process for U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, President Joe Biden’s pick to help lead the Education Department may face stronger headwinds.

San Diego Unified Superintendent Cindy Marten has seen support from prominent national education leaders. But she’s also faced criticism from charter school advocates, parent activists, and the San Diego chapter of the NAACP.

Chief among the critics’ concerns is one of the most divisive issues in Biden’s education platform: charter schools.

Groups like the Center for Education Reform and the Powerful Parent Movement have singled out Marten’s criticism of charter school policy in California and her work on a task force that supported changes to the state’s authorizing laws.

If Marten is confirmed “we risk reverting to an Education Department that serves the system and not the students and parents striving to succeed within it,” said a statement from the Powerful Parent Network which confronted 2020 Democratic presidential candidates about their positions on school choice.

But Marten’s nomination has also won praise. The Learning Policy Institute, an organization founded by Linda Darling-Hammond, who led the Biden transition team’s education efforts, labeled San Diego a “positive outlier” district in California under Marten’s leadership, citing efforts to improve academic equity. University of Southern California Education Dean Pedro Noguera said he was happy with the choice.

Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of large urban public school systems, offered the organization’s “enthusiastic support” for Marten after the choice was announced in January.

“Cindy Marten will be the perfect complement” to Cardona, he said in a statement. “Both have been school-level leaders and thoroughly understand the complexities of public education at the state and local levels like few other leadership teams in the department’s history.”

While their confirmation hearings typically receive less attention from the general public, deputy education secretaries play a key role in the Education Department. They
help set policy and lead major initiatives, and they are next in line to take over agency leadership if the secretary leaves.

It’s unclear if the criticisms, or the praise, will affect senators’ support of Marten.

“Senator Murray is committed to working with Secretary Cardona to make sure every single student can recover from this pandemic and that we address the longstanding inequities in our education system,” said an aide to Sen. Patty Murray, a Washington Democrat and chairwoman of the Senate education committee. “Like all of President Biden’s qualified nominees, Senator Murray looks forward to hearing from Cindy Marten about how she would work to address systemic racism in our education system as part of Secretary Cardona’s team.”

Representatives for the White House and for Republican leadership on the Senate education committee did not respond to questions.

**Positions on charter schools**

Charter school supporters who’ve criticized Marten zero in on her past assertions that the publicly funded, independently managed schools draw money away from traditional public school districts.

California has the [second-oldest charter school law](https://www.charterschools.org) in the country, and it has a much larger and more-complex charter school sector than other states.

In 2019, Marten served on a state task force that [recommended changes to the state’s charter laws](https://www.charterschools.org), including a recommendation that school districts should be allowed to consider the “fiscal impact” of a new charter school in the authorization process. Those recommendations informed a contentious debate that led to [new state laws](https://www.charterschools.org) following compromise discussions between teachers’ unions and [charter school organizers](https://www.charterschools.org).

Maureen Magee, a spokesperson for the San Diego district, noted that, at the local level, the school system has approved five out of six charter renewal applications for the current school year, and a sixth one is pending. The district has also sought input from charter operators on its policies and set aside money for charter facilities in public bond issues, she said.

The San Diego NAACP, which criticized Marten, notably broke from the national NAACP in 2019 when it opposed a national call for a moratorium on charter schools. Several 2020 Democratic presidential candidates cited that national NAACP position when they called for new limits on charter schools.

The national NAACP has also split with its San Diego branch on Marten’s nomination. National NAACP President Derrick Johnson called her “a great pick” by Biden.

But, in a joint statement, the National Charter Collaborative and the Freedom Coalition for Charter Schools [faulted Marten](https://www.charterschools.org) for her support of “extreme anti-charter school
restrictions,” saying her selection nullifies the goodwill Biden earned by selecting Cardona.

Cardona won support from education groups across the ideological spectrum when he took a relatively neutral posture on charter schools, in part because the charter sector in his home state of Connecticut is smaller and less controversial. Even so, some GOP senators who voted against his confirmation cited Biden’s positions on charters and school choice, not Cardona’s.

While the U.S. Department of Education administers a grant program for charter schools, most decisions about governance are made at the state and local levels. Biden has pledged not to provide federal funding to “for-profit” charter schools and has said most of his education department’s efforts will focus on the “neighborhood public schools” that a majority of students attend.

**Confronting disparities in school discipline**

San Diego media outlets and local activists have flagged some other criticisms of Marten’s tenure.

The local NAACP focused most of its statement on disproportionately high rates of discipline for Black students in San Diego schools, a persistent problem at school systems around the country.

In 2019-20, Black students in San Diego Unified represented 7.5 percent of total enrollment and 17.9 percent of students suspended, state data show. Latino students made up 44.3 percent of enrollment and 53.3 percent of students suspended, while white students made up 23.9 percent of students and 13.8 percent of those suspended.

Statewide, Black students made up 5.4 percent of California’s enrollment and 15 percent of students suspended in 2019-2020, the data show.

The Learning Policy Institute report noted the district’s work to reduce discipline disparities by eliminating zero-tolerance policies and promoting restorative practices as an alternative to suspensions. And it noted that the district’s suspension rates were lower than some other large California districts’.

The district has also narrowed its list of expellable offenses in recent years.

The local NAACP noted voluntary racial equity training in the district.

“While this is commendable, it does not erase the fact that SDUSD has a history of harming our children, families, staff, and educators,” Katrina Hasan Hamilton, education chair of the San Diego branch, said in a statement.

**The challenge of reopening schools**
Much of Cardona’s confirmation hearing focused on his positions on coronavirus-related school closures and how federal officials can encourage schools to safely reopen.

The Biden administration has promised more guidance for schools about how to offer in-person learning or, for districts operating in a hybrid mode, to expand the amount of time students are taught in-person.

The president’s relief bill, which passed Congress this week, also includes funding for testing, virus mitigation, and ongoing recovery efforts as schools help students rebound from interrupted education.

Much of that strategy aligns with Marten’s. In November, Marten wrote a letter to Biden’s transition team outlining how she’d worked with local scientists to design a COVID-19 testing and mitigation plan for her schools. She said equity should be a key focus in schools’ response efforts.

A majority of the district’s students have remained in remote learning as it waited to clear state virus rate thresholds required for reopening. San Diego Unified plans to reopen schools April 12.
Tampa Bay Times

Hillsborough School Board member: Can we fire superintendent Addison Davis?

Some constituents want to see it happen. But the board has agreed to draft an improvement plan instead.

By Marlene Sokol
April 19, 2021

TAMPA — Hillsborough County superintendent Addison Davis survived what could have been a call for his dismissal on Monday, but not without incurring criticism from his School Board, which will now draft a document laying out their expectations for him.

The professional development plan, as some are calling it, will be worked on Tuesday, April 27, at a 9:30 a.m. workshop.

It follows an outpouring of criticism over the way the district notified nearly 100 teachers that their jobs would not exist after the end of this school year. Teachers learned the news Friday in a batch email that began with the phrase: “Dear HCPS Educator.” Some said their principals did not know they were being dismissed. They thought their jobs were safe after April 9, when 1,000 other job cuts were announced.

The email said the teachers were not eligible to find new positions during the transfer and pool periods for longtime employees. They were advised to check back after mid-May to see if retirements or resignations had created any openings.

A union grievance filed Sunday called the emails “callous” and “appalling,” describing them as vague, unsigned and generic in tone. The messages “failed to show any gratitude for the employee working through a pandemic or regret for ‘having to’ take such a drastic action,” the grievance said.

On Facebook, constituents asked board member Jessica Vaughn what it would take to fire Davis, who has been on the job since March of 2020.

Vaughn explained the need for a board majority, then posted: “Take a poll of your current board members and ask them who would vote to end the superintendent’s contract. Let me know if we have the votes. I can’t ask the other board members or I would violate sunshine laws. Call them up, ask them privately. If you think we have the votes, send me a private message.”

Davis said Monday that Friday’s email to employees — 91, by his count — was not handled properly. “As superintendent, I have to own that,” he said.
Those affected include Stacie Emory, a music teacher at Bryan Elementary School in Plant City. Her husband, a music teacher at Madison Middle School, got an email too, she said.

Emory said that, because of a stipend her husband receives for leading the school band, he was able to keep his job.

She was not. “My husband and I moved here from Colorado because of the reputation of the music programs in Hillsborough County,” she said. “We have no family here. It’s devastating.”

Teachers such as Emory are considered “one-year contract” employees because they were hired after 2011, when tenure rights were discontinued under state law.

However, Stephanie Baxter-Jenkins, executive director of the teachers’ union, said that, until now, the district has not dismissed these teachers unless there were performance issues. Those issues are explained during a process called “re-nomination,” and disclosed before March 31.

The district’s financial struggles are not new. After a prior board fired superintendent MaryEllen Elia in 2015, her successor, Jeff Eakins, learned that the district’s main reserve account had lost more than $200 million, largely because of a new pay plan that coincided with a teaching reform experiment.

Eakins made some moves to rein in spending. But the low reserve remained an issue.

A study by the Council of the Great City Schools found supervisors were filling jobs that were not funded. The district was using capital accounts to shore up its operational budget. Compared to other Florida districts, Hillsborough was overstaffed by 3,000 employees. The way things were going, Davis and deputy superintendent Michael Kemp said, the district would run out of money this spring, spurring a possible state takeover.

Davis said the new round of cuts happened when district leaders discovered last week that, because of other cuts and a limited number of positions in the hiring pool, they could not guarantee placement to the newer employees.

He said he spent the latter part of the week trying to find more than $8.4 million to pay the teachers, with no success, and that he was able to reduce the number affected from 114 to 91.

As for the growing social media campaign against him, Davis said: “I was hired to transform Hillsborough County. And in that process, we had to make some very difficult decisions. We changed instructional focus. We changed instructional frameworks. We’ve increased accountability. I led this district through a pandemic, successfully. And on top of that I’m facing budget downfalls over and over again. And while you’re cutting 2,000 people it’s hard to build relationships. It’s hard to build trust.”
Vaughn said Davis’ actions have caused an erosion of trust between him and the board. “I don’t feel this board is directing the superintendent,” she said. “I feel like the superintendent is pretty much doing whatever he wants. And maybe he tells us and maybe he doesn’t.”

During a long discussion Monday about members’ frustrations with Davis, however, Vaughn did not call for his dismissal. Instead, she joined the others in agreeing to hold him to the document they will prepare next week.

“I think we all agree we want you to succeed,” Vaughn told Davis, after telling him earlier, “you might not be a good fit for our district.”

Several said Davis is too much of a micro-manager, insisting on communicating nearly all information with the workforce. They said that habit, coupled with his assembling of a cabinet from his last post in Clay County, makes it difficult for longtime Hillsborough administrators to trust him.

“I think the problem with morale is not COVID, and it’s not even the financial situation,” said Nadia Combs. “It’s the way top leadership communicates.”

Henry “Shake” Washington said he is concerned about minority assistant principals who lost their jobs this month. And, like most of the others, he was horrified about the Friday email blast. “I’ve talked to 14 principals already. They’re very upset,” he said. “This is a severe hit and this is something that is hard to overcome.”

Member Melissa Snively defended Davis, saying he was hired to make profound changes in the district and his work during the pandemic was “Herculean.” She blasted Vaughn for the Facebook post.

“You were trying to count votes to get rid of this man,” Snively said. “This is a human being. Our teachers absolutely deserve respect. But so does this man.”

Karen Perez, after agreeing for the need to set clear expectations, warned Davis, “I intend to hold you accountable.”
Learning Loss, Declining Enrollment And A Combative Teachers Union: What Lies Ahead For CPS’ Next CEO

By Sarah Karp, NPR
Wednesday, May 5, 6 a.m. CT

When Mayor Lori Lightfoot offers someone the job of running Chicago Public Schools, she will try to sell it as an opportunity to bring “transformative change to our public education system,” as she put it on Monday.

But in reality, the next chief executive officer of the nation’s third largest school district will be walking into a complex, difficult job at a precarious time. Even CEO Janice Jackson, who called it her “dream job,” is stepping away this summer after three years at the helm.

For one, there is no guarantee that Lightfoot will be reelected mayor in two years. As Lightfoot campaigns, the next CEO will have to navigate a highly politicalized election season in which the head of CPS will be under the microscope. Making any big changes during this time likely will be difficult.

And then if Lightfoot loses, a new mayor may want to bring in his or her own team to take over.

Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, said he thinks the top job in Chicago Public Schools would appeal to many candidates. He points out Chicago is an attractive city and that the school district has made a lot of academic gains in recent years.

But the fact that the mayor’s term is up in two short years will be a “big consideration” for candidates, he said.

The school district also may be taken out of the mayor’s control altogether, as momentum is building behind a bill that would eventually create an elected school board in Chicago. It’s currently appointed by the mayor. While many details of a final bill are still unclear, an elected board would likely be given the power to hire its own school district leader.

Stuck in the middle

On top of the possible temporary nature of the job, the next CEO will have to find a way to work with both the mayor and the Chicago Teachers Union, both of which can be challenging.
Outgoing CEO Janice Jackson found herself in the middle of what became a toxic relationship between the mayor and the teachers union. At the press conference announcing her resignation Monday, Jackson called the politics in education in Chicago “ugly” and an “outlier.”

She admitted that she’s worn out from the fighting between the school district and the teachers union. Under her watch, the union went on strike once and came close several other times.

Of the union, she said “the tactics they use, I don’t agree with and they make it very difficult for good people to do these jobs.”

Gov. JB Pritzker also recently signed a bill expanding the union’s bargaining rights, which could force the school district to negotiate more with the union and potentially face more labor unrest.

Jackson, who will leave on June 30, also had to manage the mayor, who is notoriously difficult to work for. Jackson said she and the mayor developed a friendship over time and said she doesn’t think the mayor gets enough credit for work she’s done for CPS. But others inside CPS say that Jackson never felt supported by Lightfoot in the same way she was supported by former Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who appointed her to the job in 2018.

In the Chicago Teachers Union statement on Jackson’s departure, the union pointed to the mayor as an obstacle for the next school district leader. Union leaders have publicly noted tensions during contract negotiations between the mayor and school district officials.

“We are hopeful the mayor can improve on her ability to work collaboratively and cohesively with others, in particular her own staff and appointees in CPS,” the CTU statement reads.

While the union wished Jackson and two other departing top leaders “the best in their future endeavors,” it did not apologize for making their tenure difficult or indicate that they will back down in the future.

Along with Jackson, Chief Operating Officer Arnie Rivera and Chief Education Officer LaTanya McDade also recently announced they are leaving the district.

Pandemic effects

The next CEO also will be taking over at a time when the academic progress made over the past decade could be challenged. Jackson touted test scores growing at faster rates than anywhere else in the country and increasing graduation and college enrollment rates.
But Jackson and Chief Education Officer McDade sounded alarms this fall as they saw attendance and grades plummet while children were at home learning remotely during the pandemic.

“I worry that unless we act with urgency, we will lose a generation of students,” McDade told the Board of Education last fall. Jackson said the situation made her desperate to get students back into classrooms, learning in person.

They managed to eventually open schools, but most students are still remote. No one knows the lasting impact of the pandemic on academic achievement, but national research is predicting learning gaps, especially for low-income students and students of color. The next CEO will have to figure out how to counter any backsliding.

CPS’ new leader also will have to manage a windfall of $1.8 billion from the federal government. It’s to be used, in part, to mitigate learning loss. Jackson has said that before she leaves she plans to lay out a comprehensive framework for how this money will be spent.

But she won’t be around for the fight over it. Already, parent and community groups, as well as the Chicago Teachers Union, have said they want to have a say in how this money is spent.

And while advocates have said they don’t want to see the bulk of it spent on repaying debt, the school district is weighted down with it. At the end of the last fiscal year, the school district had about $8.1 billion in outstanding long-term debt and $500 million in outstanding short-term debt.

A shrinking school district

The pandemic also has exacerbated some long-standing, troubling trends in Chicago Public Schools, and the next CEO needs to be ready to deal with them.

The most critical is a loss of students. In the two decades prior to the pandemic, the school system was down more than 80,000 students. Then, this year, enrollment dropped by another 15,000, though some of those students could return next year.

As of this school year, 103 schools now have fewer than 250 students; up from 63 when Jackson took over. Some of these schools might rebound once classes are normal next year, but many of them had dwindling populations before the pandemic.

Because schools are funded based on enrollment, many of these schools struggle to offer robust programming. Jackson has provided many of them extra grants, but that makes them expensive to run. They include charter schools and once-vibrant neighborhood high schools that aren’t attracting students.

Lightfoot and Jackson have shied away from closing schools. But they also have not presented a comprehensive strategy for dealing with under-enrolled buildings.
The next CEO will inherit the hard questions of what to do with these schools in a way that takes into account communities, the budget and, most importantly, the quality of education for the students who attend them.
Has COVID-19 Led to a Mass Exodus of Superintendents?

By Stephen Sawchuk — May 06, 2021

The weight of the superintendency is heavy these days: Beleaguered staff. Exhausted teachers. Angry parents.

So as districts enter the spring—prime superintendent-resignation season—it’s a good time to ask: Will it all come to a head in a wave of superintendents racing for the exit doors?

Preliminary signs indicate an uptick in superintendent retirements and resignations so far this year. Two major recruitment firms for superintendents say they’ve been fielding an unusually high number of RFPs, and internal data from EdWeek’s Top School Jobs recruitment site also support this pattern.

Those data are bolstered by anecdotes from worried observers.

“Almost on a regular basis, I hear from a superintendent indicating that they can’t take it anymore and bail out,” said Dan Domenech, the president of AASA, the School Superintendents’ Association. “It’s a combination of stress on the job and being confronted with a no-win situation, when half of parents want their kids in school and the other half want them at home.”

There are reasons to be cautious about reading too much into these early reports. For one thing, high-quality estimates on superintendent tenure are difficult to come by, making it harder to establish a benchmark against which to compare this year’s hiring cycle.

But if the numbers pan out, the experts say, a newer, less experienced corps of superintendents will be charged with leading the nation’s schools come fall—all while helping them recover from months of disarray and while figuring out how to spend a bonanza in federal cash smartly and sustainably.

Search firms say more boards are putting out requests for leadership talent

As a testament to its concerns about superintendent turnover, the AASA recently launched a support network for superintendents who are under duress locally. It has about 25 in the network and plans to expand it to more, Domenech said.

Recruiters say they’re seeing some ominous signs, too.

Max McGee, the president of Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates, said his firm generally handles about 50 searches in each July-to-June academic year. It is already fielding about 80 searches this school year.

“Some of them are retiring early of their own accord; some are looking to move to downsized districts; frankly, some have been forced out,” he said. “What we’re seeing this year is directly related to pandemic issues.”
Data from EdWeek’s Top Schools Jobs, which offers recruitment and talent solutions, similarly found that listings for superintendent jobs, between July 2020 and April 2021, were up by about 10 percent compared with that same time period in 2019-20—and are on track to outpace last school year’s total listings.

Local news reports also predict similar instability. In Idaho, the pandemic appears to be fueling increased turnover, a trend that began a few years back. About a third of the state’s district leaders will have hired someone new over the past two years, according to Idaho Education News.

Traditionally, most hiring falls in the late-fall to early-spring cycle, but this year, the cycle has been pushed back later in the year, said Michael Collins, the president of Ray and Associates, another search firm. His company also handles 40 to 50 searches a year and is already beyond that mark, at about 65 so far.

“In January, there was this flurry of announcements. It actually happened as the vaccines rolled out and it appeared districts might be able to carry on and go back to live instruction,” he said. “And the superintendents who got picked up by March or spring break, now their [former] districts have vacancies.”

Collins said he anticipates 4,000 to 5,000 more superintendent vacancies than usual this year—some from those who planned to retire last summer but were persuaded to stay on for another year by desperate school boards. Now that infection rates are trending downward, many of those superintendents are finally following through.

National media, meanwhile, have picked up on the striking and unusual sight of the announced departure of superintendents from the nation’s three largest school districts within two months of one another. New York City’s Richard Carranza in March said he would step down. Austin Beutner of the Los Angeles district declined to renew his contract in late April. And just this week, Janice Jackson, who has spent 22 years in the Chicago public schools and became its CEO in 2018, said that she would depart this summer.

Despite national patterns, big-city superintendents are generally staying put

Some observers are cautious about reading too much into those patterns. Top officials at the Council of the Great City Schools, which represents 76 such large districts, say so far, the organization’s member districts have fewer openings in the first four months of this year than they typically do.

Usually there are about 12; this year, it’s only up to six, noted Michael Casserly, the executive director of the council, and some of those departures weren’t directly attributable to coronavirus pressures. San Diego’s Cindy Marten was tapped to take a post at the U.S. Department of Education, and Robert Runcie of Broward County, who is now negotiating the terms of his exit from that district, resigned in the wake of a perjury charge related to grand jury testimony over an alleged case of fraud in the district.

In all, said Casserly, turnover in those large urban districts appears to be periodic and more defined by local events than national catastrophes.

“Which is not to say that individual turnovers might not be related to something going on in the ether nationally,” he said, “but I’m not sure that drives turnovers on a grand scale.”
There is no longitudinal, nationally representative sample that tracks how long superintendents stay in their posts and can help pinpoint just how this year’s hiring cycle might compare with a normal one. Most estimates are based on superintendents’ current, rather than their completed tenure.

According to the AASA’s most recent figures, for example, a plurality of superintendents, about 47 percent, are now in years 2 to 5 of the job and about 28 percent are in years 6 to 10. A seminal 2018 report issued by the Broad Center, which offers leadership and management training for district leaders, tracked big-city superintendents over time and found that they stayed about five and a half years—longer than conventional wisdom.
Aurora board mulls taking more power from superintendent

By Yesenia Robles  May 25, 2021, 12:24pm MDT

Following a tumultuous year, the Aurora school board is weighing whether to embrace a hands-on approach to managing the district or whether to defer to the superintendent, as their own guidelines say they should.

The upcoming vote, on June 1, stems from the latest instance of the board blocking the superintendent and his administration. The district wanted to start the process outlined in district policy for cutting staff, but the board said no.

The board overseeing the fifth-largest district in Colorado has struggled for years to define its role with Superintendent Rico Munn. Munn’s contract has always stated that the board must follow what is known as a policy governance model. That means the superintendent makes decisions guided by board goals and policy. Approximately 30 Colorado school districts have this version of oversight, according to the Colorado Association of School Boards.

But the seven board members, a majority of whom were elected with help from the teachers union, have favored a more active role, despite a consultant’s urging that they stick to what they approved. Board members vary from being unapologetic about overriding Munn when they disagree with him, to wanting more clarity on the limits of their power. Some began questioning whether they serve only to rubber-stamp the district’s decisions.

A board decision next week on whether to do away with their current governance model and adopt one that allows a more active role would represent a major change to the board’s relationship with Munn and could have implications for his future.

In November, four of the seven board seats will be up for election. So far, none of those incumbents has announced if they will seek re-election. Board members say they want to clarify the board’s role for themselves and any new candidates before the election, so people know what to expect.

Consultant and trainer A.J. Crabill from the Council of the Great City Schools, who has worked with the board this school year, has warned that lack of clarity about the board’s role hurts the district.
“It is harmful to your organization’s ability to be effective, to say as a board ‘this is how we will function’ and then function in a materially different fashion than that,” Crabill said at a board meeting this month.

Aurora’s governance model was in place even prior to Munn becoming Aurora’s superintendent in 2013. Under this model, the superintendent makes decisions guided by board goals and policy. The Aurora board in addition has set limitations, to set guardrails on his work, such as not making major decisions without seeking community input.

“What you said is it’s my job, my responsibility, to sort through all the choices, make the best determination I can, and bring that to you,” Munn said, explaining his interpretation of the model. “You will then evaluate if it’s a reasonable interpretation of your policy — not whether you like it — but whether it’s a reasonable interpretation. And if it is, you will approve it.”

The explanation seemed to be new information to at least some board members, including Nichelle Ortiz, who said she didn’t like the pressure she felt to always go along with what’s presented. “I can’t stay with that plan if I’m always expected to just say yes,” she said.

This school year, the Aurora board reaffirmed its commitment to the model, adopting a new framework with new goals outlining the priorities board members wanted to focus on. That included goals around early literacy, postsecondary workforce readiness, and closing achievement gaps.

Those goals are also used to evaluate the work of the superintendent.

Munn and the district would not comment on the implications of a possible change in oversight.

Munn’s contract, which goes through 2023, states that “should the board elect to materially alter the governance policy, such changes may be deemed by the superintendent a unilateral termination by the district.” If that happens before June 30, that would trigger a severance payment of $180,000. Munn would have to provide a written notice 30 days prior to exercising that right, and the board and the superintendent must have discussions during that period to attempt to resolve concerns.
The board created a schedule to track progress toward the goals throughout the year. But those first conversations have been hampered by limited data, because the state and district halted many tests during remote learning.

At least twice this school year the board has argued about whether the district was straying from board goals.

In July the board overturned Munn’s plans to reopen school buildings.

After that, Munn tried to get the board to clarify who would make the next decision to reopen. But board members felt uncomfortable taking on the sole responsibility of deciding when it was safe to reopen, and struggled with what factors should be considered. They concluded the decision should be shared, but in November again reversed one of his reopening decisions.

More recently, when district staff sought approval to prepare for staff cuts, the board, in a split vote, refused and instead decided the district should not lay off any employees this year.

In response to board member complaints that the administration hadn’t considered other options, and that the board didn’t have other options, Munn earlier this month presented alternatives to layoffs. The board approved one that could cost the district up to $2.7 million.

Following that decision, board President Kayla Armstrong-Romero suggested that the board discuss how to administer a survey, including to administrative staff, about their perceptions of the board and their work. The board will take that up, and also when to release it and which groups to survey, on June 1.

Joshua Starr, a former schools superintendent, said that it’s common for boards to have trouble following a governance-type model for long. But he agreed not having clear roles is harmful.

“It makes an already difficult job that much more impossible,” said Starr, CEO of PDK International, a professional organization for educators. “I certainly would advocate for a governance model, but frankly clarity is what’s most important.”

Starr said the damage caused is not just to the superintendent’s work, but that it can have an impact on classrooms and on the community as well.
For example, he said, if a school board is swayed by political rhetoric such as the recent trend to police how teachers talk about race, a board might vote on banning certain books from schools.

Besides that decision having a direct impact on classrooms, it could also affect how free teachers feel to do their job, and how comfortable they are to raise issues with the administration or with their board.

For the public, seeing the fighting and not seeing progress on stated goals is what’s harmful, he said.

“Whenever people are fighting like this it decreases people’s confidence in the system, which means it becomes that much harder to make changes,” Starr said.

But all of this is also on the superintendent to fix, not just boards, Starr said.

“Part of the job of the superintendent is to make sure that the board, and the public for that matter, really understand each other’s roles and really spend time on it,” Starr said.
Charlotte Mayor Lyles Won’t Take A Side In CMS-County Funding Battle

WFAE | By Steve Harrison
Published June 3, 2021 at 7:15 PM EDT

Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles declined to take sides Thursday in the escalating fight between Mecklenburg County Commissioners and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board over the county’s decision to withhold $56 million from the school system.

The city of Charlotte doesn’t fund the school system. But most CMS students are from the city, and the vast majority of its low-income students are from Charlotte.

The county is keeping the $56 million until CMS presents a detailed plan to close achievement gaps between white and Asian students and Black and Hispanic students.

“You know, I think the process that the state put in place for mediation or arbitration - however you define it - is because people do have disagreements and this is a way to have a collaborative discussion and make a difference and I believe the process needs to play out,” Lyles said while touring a vaccine clinic off Freedom Drive with Gov. Roy Cooper.

Lyles is referring to mediation between the county and CMS that is scheduled to start Monday. CMS announced Tuesday it would seek mediation that is allowed under state law.

When Lyles was asked whether she thinks the county is doing the right thing, she said: “I think that public education is number one in our recruiting area in economic development and good-paying jobs. Everybody wants their kids to be successful. I just want the best urban school district in the country.”

Though the CMS Board is officially non-partisan, most members are registered Democrats. All nine members of the Mecklenburg Commission are Democrats. Two Democratic commissioners – Laura Meier and Susan Rodriguez-McDowell – voted against the county budget because it holds money back from CMS. Lyles is also a Democrat.

Cooper also declined to take sides in the dispute.

“I expect local government officials to work together,” Cooper said. “I believe they will work together at the end of the day. I think it just shows the great passion for education and how important it is for this area and our state’s future and I hope they can work something out.”

Cooper then shifted the focus to Republican legislators, saying he’s trying to get them to spend more on education.
Mecklenburg County Manager Dena Diorio has said CMS must present a plan to improve the performance of 42 low-performing schools in the district. Other requirements include making sure that by 2024, 75% of students in all racial and ethnic groups graduate.

Diorio said CMS must also “limit the achievement gap disparity of college and career readiness to no more than 10% for each demographic subgroup by 2024.”

The metrics to determine college readiness include performance on end-of-course tests, as well as Advanced Placement tests, among other metrics.

CMS officials have said they already have a strategic plan in place. And they have said the county is acting as an unofficial school board.

Mecklenburg Commissioners are concerned about the achievement gaps between white and minority students. But that problem is not unique to CMS.

Michael Casserly is executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, an advocacy group for urban school districts. “I don’t know that any school district in the country has successfully, completely, and permanently closed the achievement gap,” he said to WFAE.
Boston Globe

Boston School Committee member to temporarily lead board after previous chair’s abrupt resignation

By James Vaznis Globe Staff, Updated June 9, 2021, 3:17 p.m.

Boston School Committee member Michael O’Neill temporarily will take over the leadership of the board, following a text messaging scandal that caused the abrupt resignations of the chair and another member.

O’Neill, who was serving as vice chair, previously led the seven-member board from 2013 to 2017. He is the longest serving member of the mayoral appointed committee and joined the board in 2008 when Thomas M. Menino was mayor.

Born and raised in Jamaica Plain, O’Neill is a graduate of Boston Latin School and currently is serving as chair of the Board of the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of 76 big-city school districts nationwide. The Charlestown resident also has lived in Hyde Park and West Roxbury as an adult before moving to Charlestown about 15 years ago.

The School Committee is expected to hold its next meeting on June 16. O’Neill said on Wednesday that he would defer comment until next week’s meeting.

Former chair Alexandra Oliver-Dávila resigned from the board on Monday, days after fellow member Lorna Rivera quit the board.

Recently released text messages between the two revealed they made disparaging comments about West Roxbury families during a contentious meeting last October, which also led to the downfall of another former chair, Michael Loconto, who was caught on a hot microphone mocking some speakers with Asian-sounding names.

The School Committee at the time was discussing a historic proposal to temporarily drop the entrance test for the city’s three exam schools due to the pandemic. The temporary admission plan, which the committee eventually approved that night, doled out most seats by grades and ZIP codes.

The change was expected to increase the chances of Black and Latino applicants getting in while decreasing the chances of white and Asian students. That night, many Asian and white parents — a number from West Roxbury — complained the changes were unfair and discriminatory.

Early in the meeting Rivera texted to Oliver-Dávila, who was jubilant about making the admission change: “Wait until the white racists start yelling at us.”

“Sick of Westie whites,” Rivera replied. “Me too. I really feel like saying that,” Oliver-Dávila texted.

The messages originally were collected by the city last fall at the request of the Globe, which sought all texts regarding school business that transpired during the meeting. But city officials, who gave the Globe dozens of texts in November, decided to keep secret the most controversial exchanges between Oliver-Dávila and Rivera.

In recent weeks, an anonymous tipster began alerting the media about the existence of the omitted text messages.

The School Committee is getting ready to take up the exam school issue again. A task force is finalizing recommendations to make permanent changes to the admission requirements and the School Committee is expected to vote on it this summer.
On May 27, Dallas ISD’s Board of Trustees recognized Kamila Vargas, a senior at Thomas Jefferson High School, as the 2021 recipient of the Council of Great City Schools’ Green-Garner Scholarship, based on her high academic performance and strong character.

The scholarship accompanied CGCS’ recognition of Dallas ISD Superintendent Michael Hinojosa as its 2021 Superintendent of the Year.

“I feel so lucky to be chosen,” Kamila said. “When I got the news that I had won the scholarship, I felt really happy that they had read my story and that I was being seen.”

Kamila’s parents came from Mexico when they were in their early twenties—her dad from the northern state of Durango and her mother from the southern state of Guerrero—and settled in Dallas.

“This is the only area that we really know; for us, this is home,” said Kamila. However, six years ago their lives were transformed by the sudden deportation of her father. Her mother stepped in to provide for the family and Kamila also assumed a supportive role for her brother.

“It was very tough on all of us, because my dad was the main support of our family,” Kamila said. “But my mom worked really hard, long hours to provide for us. She made sure that we were well mentally and physically, and she inspired me to keep pushing for more opportunities and in my academics.”

Despite the distance, technology has played an important role in keeping the family together. “Thank God, we have these phones, because we are able to see each other’s faces,” said Kamila. “We call each other as much as possible and we spend time telling stories over the phone. It can be a little awkward to not see each other in person, but it also makes me feel like we are together again.”

Kamila’s teachers at Thomas Jefferson High School noticed her commitment from the very beginning. They praised her as a hard-working student, highlighting her work ethic and close attention to detail, as well as her ability to work with others. “Kamila is an amazing student and her hard work and academics prove that she is determined to succeed in her plans,” said Alejandra Chavez, campus advisor for the Education is Freedom higher ed support program.
One element of Kamila’s character that her teachers highlighted is that she’s always presenting her culture in the proudest way that she can. And as a future major in radio and television, first at Dallas College at Brookhaven and then the University of Texas at Austin, Kamila wants to help transform the way Latinos are portrayed in popular media.

“I really want to see us being something other than drug dealers or housemaids or gardeners. I want to show that we have stories in which we are the main characters,” she said.

“I’ve been living in an area where there are mainly Hispanics and Latinos. So I haven’t really struggled with my identity of being Latina. And I find that I am lucky to have that,” Kamila added. “I do realize that I am a minority in the United States and I feel more proud to be from Mexico, or that my parents are from Mexico. I still feel connected, even though I haven’t visited Mexico in years.”

Finally, like every other senior at TJ, Kamila’s last year was marked by the destruction of their original campus in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the shared experiences helped them rebuild their community. “It was really tough, and we have gone through a lot of issues,” said Kamila. “But that’s okay, it was tough, but we worked it through. Like we always do.”
COUNCIL REPORTS AND REVIEWS
Hillsborough school cuts become real as workers get news of jobs ending

Many will find new positions in the district’s hiring pool, but hundreds won’t as the district slashes its budget. “Principals are frustrated.” Course offerings, class schedules and careers will be impacted as the Hillsborough County school system prepares to cut its workforce by about 1,000 positions.

By Marlene Sokol
Published Apr. 9
Updated Apr. 9

TAMPA — The Hillsborough County School District notified hundreds of employees this week of job cuts that will affect class schedules, course offerings and decades-long careers.

Dozens of assistant principals will see their positions cut, leaving them with few prospects for the “soft landing” of another job in the school system, said Ray Bonti, executive director of the Hillsborough Association of School Administrators.

Teachers are being directed to a hiring pool that may, or may not, have positions for which they are qualified. In some cases, they will take jobs without the proper certification, agreeing to earn those credentials while on the job.

But no one can say how many will be leave the school district for lack of a suitable placement. Earlier in the week, teachers’ union executive director Stephanie Baxter-Jenkins predicted that “several hundred will probably end up in that situation.”

On Friday, she said the union is still working to protect jobs, but added, “We will filing be several grievances in response to the way things are being handled.”

For Jeff Woollard, an economics and government teacher at Jefferson High, it was the second such trip to the hiring pool in two years. As a low-seniority teacher, he also lost his last position at Spoto High.

“I’ve been having a lot of conversations with my principal,” Woollard said. “I’m telling him I really want to be here, I really want to be here. Because I’m a football coach and a teacher here, I’m hopeful and confident that I can come back.”

Mary Hoover, an art teacher at two elementary schools in Plant City, was also headed for the pool. So she started job-hunting and was offered a position in Virginia, where she used to live. Her Hillsborough job was saved at the last minute but, after a similar scare
in the fall, she did not want to remain in such an insecure situation. So she took the job in Virginia.

“It’s the most horrible thing to be told, after 23 years as a teacher, that I’m a unit and there’s no place to put me,” Hoover said. “They talk about relationships with kids, but they don’t foster the relationships with us.”

Hillsborough’s leaders, under superintendent Addison Davis, say they are trying to correct a budget imbalance that goes back nearly a decade, caused largely by the district’s past reliance on short-term grants. The grants ran out, but the positions remained.

A study by the Council of the Great City Schools, an organization of large urban districts, found the district was over-staffed relative to like-sized districts by 3,000 positions.

While not disputing the need for reform, critics are taking issue with the timing of the cuts, and the way they are being carried out. Teachers and school-based administrators, who are also being cut, just went through 13 months of distance learning, food distribution and COVID-19 protocols, including contact tracing and heightened mental health needs.

“Our leaders came to schools every day while students, teachers and other staff members were provided the option of working remotely,” says the latest letter from the administrators’ association.

In the letter, the organization took issue with Davis’ plan to save $3.5 million by having 12-month employees take four furlough days this June.

Bonti is also troubled that as many as 52 assistant principals will lose their jobs under a new staffing formula. Many were recruited into their positions because they showed leadership potential. Now, he said, they will not be able to seek classroom positions until after the teachers have their turn.

These are not people who earn $150,000 or $300,000 a year, he said, but usually between $60,000 and $80,000, or less than some teachers.

Bonti and Baxter-Jenkins say the impact of the cuts will be far-reaching. Students will be without specialty classes they looked forward to, or taught by instructors who are not experts in the topic. Class sizes will be larger as the district conforms more tightly to the state-imposed caps. Preparation time will be stretched thin as teachers take on new assignments.

“You’re shortchanging kids because, for teachers, it’s hard enough to differentiate in class with 26 kids with different needs,” Baxter-Jenkins said. “I have not yet heard a teacher or principal say we have more than enough adults on campus.”
As of late Friday, not all School Board members had seen details of the cuts, and the district was preparing to disseminate the information.

District spokeswoman Tanya Arja said that “not all schools are being cut. Some are adding positions. This is all based on student enrollment and programmatic needs.”

Arja also said counseling jobs, which were a concern by many, have been restored with the help of federal mental health funding.

Arja said school principals have been involved in the entire cutting process. Through their meetings and appeals, they kept the cuts down to about 1,000, from an early count of 1,600.

But Bonti said morale has dropped among his members.

“Principals are frustrated,” he said. “Principals are scared. Principals feel communication has not been to the level that they can plan well and facilitate some of the things that are being asked of them.”

Ultimately, critics say, the moves could weaken the district’s position as non-government charter schools compete for top student and teaching talent.

“Facebook served me three ads today about charter school hiring,” Baxter-Jenkins said.
Is the Assistant Principal the Most Overlooked, Undervalued Person at School?

By Denisa R. Superville — April 14, 2021

Are assistant principals the most overlooked, undervalued people in schools? While their numbers have exploded over the last 25 years, schools have little to no idea of whether this sizable group of second-in-command administrators influence student learning. Often, they don’t have clearly defined roles. And whether their experience as APs prepares them to become effective principals is not well known or understood.

In a new and sweeping review of decades of research on assistant principals, researchers came to some clear conclusions:

1. There’s no consensus—in theory or practice—on what assistant principals do or should do;
2. Too many APs’ experiences fall short of leading them to the principal’s role, and
3. Districts may be squandering a talent pipeline, especially one filled with more women and people of color.

The upshot?

“It’s time to take stock: what do we know and what do we need to know in this really important role?” said Ellen Goldring, a dean at Peabody College at Vanderbilt University and the lead author of The Role of Assistant Principals: Evidence and Insights for Advancing School Leadership.

Unexplained increase in assistant principals

The number of assistant principals grew from close to 44,000 to nearly 81,000 between the 1990-91 and 2015-16 school years—at about six times the rate of principals, according to the report. The percentage of principals who had previously worked as APs also increased in that period.

Are assistant principals the most overlooked, undervalued people in schools? While their numbers have exploded over the last 25 years, schools have little to no idea of whether this sizable group of second-in-command administrators influence student learning. Often, they don’t have clearly defined roles. And whether their experience as APs prepares them to become effective principals is not well known or understood.

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2. Too many APs’ experiences fall short of leading them to the principal’s role, and
3. Districts may be squandering a talent pipeline, especially one filled with more women and people of color.

A barrier or stepping stone for people of color?

Though the teaching profession is largely female—nearly 80 percent of teachers are women—they were less likely than men to become both APs and principals, according to the report.
The researchers found a higher percentage of people of color serving as APs than as teachers and principals. Just under a quarter of assistant principals were people of color, but they made up only 19 percent of those serving as principals and 13 percent of teachers. (Students of color comprised 34 percent of the enrollment in the six states that were included in this specific study that was part of the larger review.)

And principals of color were more likely to have worked as APs than their white peers and more likely to do so after finishing their leadership preparation programs.

There are a number of possible explanations for why the higher numbers of women and people of color in the AP role doesn’t transfer to the principalship.

One is who gets into the pipeline. Since teachers often decide to go into administration on their own or at the encouragement of district leaders and principals, it’s possible that district leaders and principals are not steering women and people of color toward the principalship, Goldring said.

While there is little research to explain fully this phenomenon, the authors posit that discrimination in hiring as well as access to mentoring could also play a role.

It’s also possible that Black assistant principals—particularly Black men—who are often steered toward student discipline, may not be getting the instructional leadership experience necessary for the principal’s job, Mollie Rubin, a research assistant professor at Vanderbilt and a co-author, said during a panel discussion and presentation of the report’s findings.

The new report affirms some findings from a recent study that the Council of the Great City Schools, the organization that represents some of the nation’s largest school districts, found when it looked at APs and principals in its member districts, said Michael Casserly, the executive director.

But there were also some key differences, Casserly said.

While the new report said that big-city and other large districts offered more professional development and mentoring opportunities for APs, the council’s research found something quite different. In its districts, there was little coaching and mentoring for assistant principals, few PD opportunities for principals on how to mentor APs, and a dearth of PD tailored to or differentiated for APs, Casserly said.

And while the ranks of school leadership were more diverse in the big cities, they did not fully reflect students. Black principals and assistant principals come close to matching Black student enrollment, but Hispanic school leaders still fall short of mirroring the districts’ share of Hispanic students.

More diversity could be the result of districts and schools drawing candidates from a wide pool that includes central office staff, instructional coaches, department chairs, and teacher-leaders, Casserly said. But, he said, there’s not enough research to fully answer the question.

**Assistant principals as ‘co-pilots’**

Who is selected to be principal is part of the problem, said Beverly Hutton, the chief program
officer at the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Understanding—and reducing—the barriers that prevent Black APs and women from moving up the ladder could lead to greater equity and diversity to the field, said Mariesa Herrmann, a senior researcher at Mathematica and one of the report’s authors.

Equity audits to identify barriers can help districts address this issue, as well as examining data on who has access to mentoring and who is selected to pursue leadership roles, Rubin said. District leaders can also ensure that APs have equitable experiences to hone their managerial as well as instructional leadership skills.

Hutton said APs should be treated as “principals in training” or as the lead principal’s “co-pilot” and provided with training and job experiences to match those roles.

A key finding from the report highlighted the disconnect between pre-service programs and the real world: Prep programs prepare candidates to work as principals even though the majority of graduates work as APs upon completion of their training.

**Ideas to support assistant principals**

The report comes with some clear recommendations on how districts can better support APs and bring some coherence to the role, including:

- Develop standards and tasks that are consistent with the AP job and responsibilities;
- Create evaluations for APs that are separate from those for principals;
- Ensure principals have the skills, training, and professional development to mentor APs and that they offer APs experiences to develop their leadership skills;
- Prioritize people of color and women in leadership pipelines and plans.

Other highlights from the report:

- It’s unclear whether the assistant principal’s role is a career goal itself or a stepping-stone to the principalship.
- The actual responsibilities of the assistant principal are often at the discretion of the school’s principal—meaning that two assistant principals in the same district can leave their jobs with vastly different experiences and readiness for the next step in their careers. Goldring and colleagues note, however, that recent data indicate APs’ responsibilities, in some cases, are becoming more instructionally-focused, possibly because more detailed teacher evaluation requirements that may lead principals to share those duties with their APs.
- There’s limited empirical evidence that having worked as an AP leads to better school outcomes or effectiveness as a principal. But there’s emerging research to suggest that working as an AP in their current school, in a more effective school, or being an effective AP could improve student outcomes. But the research is “nascent,” Rubin said.
- Assistant principals can play an important role in improving school culture and equity through their work with students and families.

The researchers started from a base of 103 qualitative and quantitative studies and fully coded 79 studies. The report also relies on data from the National Teacher and Principal Staffing Survey and longitudinal assistant principal and principal data from Pennsylvania and Tennessee and job descriptions from districts.
Assistant principals are in a pivotal position to shape school culture and student outcomes if the role is carefully considered. Prep programs, for example, can work with districts to sequence courses to match the work that APs are doing. A residency model, similar to those in the medical profession, may hold promise, Goldring said.

“This isn’t an assistant to the principal; these are assistant principals—key school leadership positions,” Goldring said.

“We hope the report support the people in those positions as well as those who want to and aspire to be principals have the opportunities and experiences needed to move forward.”
How did Hillsborough County Public Schools end up in their dire financial situation?

By: McKenna King
Posted at 4:42 PM, Apr 23, 2021 and last updated 6:17 PM, Apr 23, 2021

TAMPA, Fla. — In an open letter Thursday, Florida Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran said Hillsborough County Schools’ finances are at a “point of crisis” and he would take emergency action if the situation doesn’t change.

Now a big question on the top of minds is “how did Hillsborough County Public Schools get into this situation, and who’s to blame?”

Hillsborough County Public Schools is the eighth largest school district in the United States and the third-largest district in the state of Florida. In an audit requested by newly-elected Superintendent Addison Davis last year, findings revealed the district was warned about the dire financial situation back in 2016.

That audit was conducted by an outside group, the Council of the Great City Schools, and it came with recommendations to get the district back on track and helps piece together just how Hillsborough County Public Schools ended up with an over $100 million deficit.

“It’s the largest deficit that any superintendent in the state of Florida has ever had to address,” said Hillsborough County Public Schools Superintendent Addison Davis, during an interview on April 8th, before any teacher cuts were officially announced.

When asked if Superintendent Davis was aware of just how dire the financial situation was before he was elected to his position, he responded: “Absolutely not, you know, I knew openly that we had work to do. Instructionally, I knew that we had the most underperforming schools in the state of Florida, and I gravitate toward that. This is what I do, I’m an instructional leader, I love it. And that was a challenge I’m still excited to be able to address once we get through the pandemic, but openly the financials have been somewhat of a canyon in this work, and we’re just trying to work our way out of it,” said Superintendent Davis.

Shortly after that interview, the first teacher cuts and reassignments came.

“My heart just sunk. I’m like, ‘what is happening right now,’ said Cece Gaddy, a physical education teacher for Hillsborough County Schools.

Gaddy is currently working to update her resume, unsure of what the future holds for her within the district.
“It is very hard. Especially when the kids are asking, ‘Coach Gaddy, I can’t wait to have your class next year, am I gonna have you as a teacher next year!’ you know, what am I supposed to say, like ‘hey, by the way, the county doesn’t want me here because they can’t afford me,’” said Gaddy.

It’s a situation dozens of others are facing as the district works to make up the shortfall.

But the financial crisis did not happen overnight.

Digging through the October 2020 audit, it outlined structural imbalances from past administrations; things it says the district had been forewarned of back in 2016.

Things like:

- Revenue losses due to enrollment declines (resulting from the expansion of charter schools, demographics shifts, and the impact of COVID) have not been offset by related reductions in school staffing."
- Past leadership did not adjust staffing levels or find new funding sources when grant funds expired or other special funding sources had dissipated. 4
- The matrix staffing model, using existing state staffing norms and current student FTE data (noted above), has identified 3,000 excess positions.
- Expenditure increases from salary raises have not been tied to identified ongoing sources of revenue (e.g., the School Board approved salary increases in the fall of 2019).
- HCPS has backfilled revenue declines and expenditure increases by transferring onetime resources from Capital Funds to the General Fund and then consuming the General Fund balance. To illustrate
  - During the past six years, the district made the following transfers from the Capital Fund to its General Fund to backfill budgetary shortfalls totaling $197.0 million.

But the audit also uncovered that the district has “a strong new leadership team and is on a trajectory to achieve sustained financial stability.”

However, not everybody agrees with the new leadership’s plan.

“We’re at a particular point in this year where, I’ve already cut district administration, as soon as I got in, close to 100 positions. In September and October, I cut over 600 positions at that particular time. We’re in the process now of, I cut district budget, I cut overtime, we’re looking at surplus property. Myself and my cabinet and administrators are taking furlough days to help us financially,” said Superintendent Davis.

Tough decisions that will likely lead to more cuts in the months ahead.

The district has implemented what they call a “soft-landing” approach, where they’ll be eliminating positions in three stages:
1. one-third in the current school year,
2. one-third in the first semester of FY 2021-2022, and
3. one-third in the second semester of FY2021-2022.

The audit says the plan “relies heavily on the elimination of vacant positions, natural attrition, and the reassignment of qualified staff.”
SURVEY ON PUBLIC RELATIONS OPERATIONS
Survey on Public Relations Operations

In an effort to determine the structure and function of Public Relations office in our member districts, the Council is distributing a survey requesting information on these offices.

Name of School District: 

District Enrollment: 

Name of Department 

Brief Description of the Department: 

Number of Staff Positions: 

Title of Positions: (please use comma after each position) 

Please indicate the duties your department handles: 
- Press Secretary/Media Relations 
- Marketing/PR/Promotions 
- Print & Online Publications 
- Internal Communications 
- Event Planning 
- Alumni/Parent & Community Engagement 
- Partnerships & Volunteers 
- Social Media/Website 
- Television Operations 
- Public Records 
- Other, please specify 

Operational Budget (Include Salaries) **If not able to include salaries, please indicate that: 

If you use any outside consultants (i.e. graphic design, web maintenance, etc) please list them and how much you spend on these services 

Are social media responsibilities handled by one person or multiple people? If one person, list his or her title? 

Click the social media tools your district uses: 
- Facebook 
- Twitter 
- Youtube 
- Google+ 
- Pinterest 
- Tumblr 
- Instagram 
- LinkedIn 
- Other, please specify 

Please list the number of followers for each social media tool: 

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Submit  Cancel
BERNARD HARRIS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
The Council of the Great City Schools and The Harris Institute are awarding four scholarships, with a value of $5,000 each, to two African American and two Hispanic students currently completing their senior year of high school in a member district of the Council of the Great City Schools. Applicants must be accepted for full-time enrollment at a four-year college or university in the next academic year, and pursuing a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM).

The deadline to apply is April 9, 2021.

Apply Online at: https://www.cgcs.org/Scholarships
2021
CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship Program

Application Guidelines
Scholarships awarded in May 2021

For questions, please visit: https://www.cgcs.org/Scholarships
or email tharris@cgcs.org

Deadline to apply is April 9, 2021
The Council of the Great City Schools and Dr. Bernard Harris strongly believe that education is key to progress, development and economic growth in our country. Together, they have developed a partnership to increase awareness about the need for more math and science graduates, especially among underrepresented populations. This scholarship is part of their efforts to support students of color who plan to pursue math- and science- related degrees.

Four scholarships for two boys and two girls, with a value of $5,000 each, will be awarded in May 2021 to two Black and two Hispanic students currently completing their senior year of high school in a member district of the Council of the Great City Schools (see list of member districts on left). Applicants must be accepted for full-time enrollment at a four-year college or university in the next academic year and pursuing a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM).

The scholarships, named in recognition of Dr. Bernard A. Harris, Jr., serve underrepresented students pursuing careers in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. As a former astronaut, physician and businessman, Dr. Harris is an outstanding role model dedicated to serving as a mentor to the scholarship recipients.

Applications will be reviewed by a committee appointed by the Council of the Great City Schools. Recipients will be selected by Dr. Harris and notified in May. The scholarship will be paid to the university of the recipient’s choice and can be applied to tuition and related expenses during the 2021-2022 academic school year.

To apply for the 2021 scholarship, this application must be submitted online by April 9, 2021. Click [here](https://tinyurl.com/ycd6z8dr) to apply or go to: [https://tinyurl.com/ycd6z8dr](https://tinyurl.com/ycd6z8dr).

Applications should include evidence of the applicant’s academic achievement in high school, leadership skills or community service in the area of Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics and the applicant’s commitment to pursue a career in a STEM field. To be eligible for the scholarship, the applicant must have a minimum 3.0 unweighted grade point average and have been accepted as a full-time student at a four-year institution of higher education.

No person may receive more than one award administered by the Council of the Great City Schools in the same academic year. Employees or immediate family members of The Harris Foundation or the Council of the Great City Schools are not eligible to apply for these scholarships.

*All applicants must attend a public school in a Council of the Great City Schools district. Go to: [www.cgcs.org/domain/57](http://www.cgcs.org/domain/57) to find the list of CGCS districts. (Students in Toronto are not eligible).
The Harris Institute is a 501 (c) (3), non-profit organization founded by former NASA Astronaut Dr. Bernard A. Harris, Jr., to serve socially and economically disadvantaged communities locally and across the nation striving to reach the most underserved populations in the areas of Education, Health, and Wealth. The institute supports programs that empower individuals, in particular minorities and economically and/or socially disadvantaged, to recognize their potential and pursue their dreams. The education mission of The Harris Institute is to enable youth to develop and achieve their full potential through the support of social, recreational and educational programs. The Harris Institute believes students can be prepared now for the careers of the future through a structured education program and the use of positive role models. More than 50,000 students have participated and benefited from THI programs.

[www.theharrisinstitute.org](http://www.theharrisinstitute.org)

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools, and is based in Washington, D.C. Composed of 76 large city districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban schools and to advocate for the inner-city students through legislation, research and media relations. The organization also provides a network for school districts sharing common problems to exchange information, and to collectively address new challenges as they emerge in order to deliver the best possible education for urban youth. [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org)

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**CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship Recipients**

"This scholarship means a great deal to me and it significantly helps my family and me towards my college expenses."

Eliska Peacock is a graduate of the District of Columbia Public Schools and received a CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship in 2020. She is studying computer science at Stanford University in California.

"This scholarship helped me tremendously and I am very grateful to have received it."

Ruben Marroquin is a graduate of the Houston Independent School District and received a CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship in 2019. He is studying electrical and computer engineering at Rice University in Texas.
Bernard Harris selected the winners of the scholarship. They are:

Hispanic male:
Saul Balcarel- Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Hispanic female-
Natalie Martinez- Santa Ana Unified School District

African American female:
Destiny Caldwell- East Baton Rouge Parish

African American male:
Emini Offutt- Nashville Public Schools
2021 CGCS Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship Applicants

Demographic Overview:

Total Candidates from Council Districts: 417
Number of Districts Represented: 59

Number of Black Male Applicants: 87
Number of Black Female Applicants: 134
Number of Hispanic Male Applicants: 82
Number of Hispanic Female Applicants: 114

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<th>Hispanic Female</th>
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SOCIAL MEDIA
COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS:
Monthly Update: March 2021

KEY MESSAGES
» New Executive Director of Council named
» 2021 Virtual Legislative/Policy Conference
» March Issue of Urban Educator
» American Rescue Plan

MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA POST:
Read the press release: https://tinyurl.com/zhd4w8p5

SOCIAL MEDIA STATS
» 38K Impressions
» 3,920 Profile Visits
» 69 Mentions
» 5 Link Clicks per day
» 28 Retweets
» 90 Likes
» 31 New Followers

ANALYSIS:
This month we held our 2021 Virtual Legislative/Policy Conference. At the Legislative/Policy conference Ray Hart was named as the new executive director of the Council. The Council also created a national task force to help urban school districts effectively spend COVID-19 relief funds.
### Broadcast and Print Media

- **4 Press Releases/1 Media Advisory**
  - Education Secretary Miguel Cardona, Journalist Bob Woodward Congressmen Bobby Scott and Richard Neal to Speak at Conference (Media Advisory)
  - Ray Hart Named to Lead National Urban School Coalition
  - Legacy Award Presented to Council Executive Director For His 44 Years of Service in Urban Education
  - Council Creates National Task Force to Help Urban School Districts Effectively Spend Federal COVID-19 Relief Funds

- **6 Media Mentions**
  - Education Week (2)
  - Associated Press
  - US News & World Report
  - Christian Post
  - Seattle Times

### Urban Educator Headlines

- New Education Secretary Will Address Urban Educators
- NYC Chancellor Steps Down, Albuquerque Names New Leader
- L.A. Cuts School Police to Boost Achievement, Des Moines Replaces Police with Student Supports
- Toronto School System Creates Anti-Asian Racism Resource for Teachers
- Council Offers Scholarships Named for an Astronaut
- Newspaper Spotlights Detroit Educators
- Legislative Column: American Rescue Plan Legislation Includes Historic K-12 Federal Assistance

### Top Digital Media Posts

- Thank you to @MiamiSup Alberto Carvalho for testifying before the House @EdLaborCmte and highlighting the @MDCPS response to COVID-19 and the district’s plan to use federal resources to fuel recovery and acceleration efforts. Watch the hearing here: https://youtube.com/watch?v=BF0kwBXgbZE
- Congratulations! Ray Hart was named the new executive director of the Council at the Legislative/Policy Conference. Read press release https://tinyurl.com/34nuap62
- Congrats to New Education Secretary Miguel Cardona. We look forward to working with you to serve the nation’s urban schoolchildren.
- @RepRichardNeal, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee answering questions from conference attendees and @GCSchoolsNC Supt. @scontrerasGCS and @BSCMemberONEill at the Council’s Leg/Po Conference. pic.twitter.com/O2LzC2fJBV
HIGHLIGHTS

Thank you to @MiamiSup Alberto Carvalho for testifying before the House @EdlaborCntr and highlighting the @MDCPS response to COVID-19 and the district's plan to use federal resources to fuel recovery and acceleration efforts. Watch the hearing here: youtube.com/watch?v=BF0kwB...

Congratulations! Ray Hart was named the new executive director of the Council at the Legislative/Policy Conference. Read press release tinyurl.com/34nuap62

Our March UE Newsletter is here just in time for our Leg/Pol Conference. Check out stories such as: @SecCardona Will Address Urban Educators; Newspaper Spotlights @Detroit12 Educators; @GUSDNews Documentary Nominated for NAACP Image Award. conta.co/3eUW7q

@realBobWoodward addressing attendees this morning at our 2021 Leg/Pol Conference.

Congrats to New Education Secretary Miguel Cardona. We look forward to working with you to serve the nation's urban schoolchildren.

@RepRichardNeal, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee answering questions from conference attendees and @6CSchoolsNC Supt. @contrerasGCS and @BSCMertemberO'Nell at the Council's Leg/Pol Conference.
COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS:  
Monthly Update: April 2021

KEY MESSAGES
» Council’s Statement on Chauvin Trial
» 2021 CGCS-Bernard Harris Scholarship
» April Issue of Urban Educator

MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA POST:
Read the Council’s statement on the Verdict in the Chauvin Trial at: https://tinyurl.com/27e4kabd

SOCIAL MEDIA STATS
» 36.4K Impressions
» 2,764 Profile Visits
» 62 Mentions
» 3 Link Clicks per day
» 18 Retweets
» 52 Likes
» 14 New Followers

ANALYSIS:
This month we reminded districts to share the 2021 CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science scholarship program with their students and encourage students to apply. We also announced the Legacy Award presented to Council Executive Director Michael Casserly for his 44 years of service. The Council also released a statement on the verdict in the Chauvin Trial.
BROADCAST AND PRINT MEDIA

1 Press Release/Media Advisory
- Statement by Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools on the Verdict in the Chauvin Trial

7 Media Mentions
- ABC Action News (Tampa)
- American School & University
- Education Week
- TampaBay Times (2)
- The Post and Courier
- Wall Street Journal

URBAN EDUCATOR HEADLINES

- Ray Hart Named to Lead National Urban School Coalition
- Council Creates National Task Force to Help Urban School Districts Spend COVID-19 Funds
- Secretary Cardona Embraces Partnerships to Reshape Public Education
- Rep. Bobby Scott, Richard Neal, and CDC Official Address Council at Virtual Leg/Pol Conference
- Journalist Bob Woodward Reflects on Watergate, Trump Era
- Legacy Award Presented to Council Executive Director for his 44 Years of Service
- Kansas City Leader Receives Contract Extension, San Francisco Chief Postpones Retirement

TOP DIGITAL MEDIA POSTS

- Read the Council’s statement on the Verdict in the Chauvin Trial at: https://tinyurl.com/27e4kabd  pic.twitter.com/M0QoUPd2W1
- REMINDER!!! We are still accepting applications for our CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship! We are awarding $5,000 scholarships to 2 African American and 2 Hispanic students interested in STEM. Deadline to apply is May 4, 2021! To apply visit http://cgcs.org/scholarships  pic.twitter.com/G6yH5U6esQ
- Council seeks a Director of Research. Click here to apply: https://www.cgcs.org/jobs  pic.twitter.com/AAtmFnCIUW
- At #BIRE20, @RebCallahan and @jessica_lander discussed research and practice to improve #ELL access to academically rigorous content, which contributes to lasting benefits for English learners and society. Watch at
COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS:
Monthly Update: April 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

REMINDER!! We are still accepting applications for our CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship! We are awarding $5,000 scholarships to 2 African American and 2 Hispanic students interested in STEM. Deadline to apply is May 4, 2021! To apply visit cgcs.org/scholarships

The Council is proud to partner with @usedgov to launch the Summer Learning & Enrichment Collaborative. Read more at: tinyurl.com/25hmdn6z

Our April UE issue is now available! In this issue:
- @SecCarson Embraces Partnerships to Reshape Public Education
- @LASchools Opens 25 Vaccination Centers
- Two Urban Students Win Awards in National Science Contest @AustinISD @NYCSchools

Read more at conta.cc/3aqZLM

Secretaries Cardona Embraces Partnerships to Reshape Public Education

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona is meeting with educators in the week of his March 21 visit to Chicago. The primary focus this spring will be the reopening of the nation's schools as quickly and as safely as possible.

Read More


Harassing a massive infusion of federal funding to public schools. U.S. Rep. Robert "Bobby" Scott cautioned leaders of the nation's largest urban systems to spend the money wisely—and get results.
COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS: Monthly Update: May 2021

KEY MESSAGES

» Teacher of the Year
» May Issue Urban Educator

MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA POST:

We congratulate @ClarkCountySch @JulianaUrtubey3 for being named National Teacher of the Year.

SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

» 9.8K Impressions
» 3,261 Profile Visits
» 79 Mentions
» 1 Link Clicks per day
» 1 Retweets
» 14 Likes
» -12 New Followers

ANALYSIS:

In May we typically have our Bilingual, Immigrant, and Refugee Meeting, but since it was held late in 2020 we did not have one this month. Stories from the May issue of the Urban Educator did well.
COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS:
Monthly Update: May 2021

BROADCAST AND PRINT MEDIA

6 Media Mentions
» U.S. News & World Report
» Chalkbeat
» Education Week
» The Hill
» The Washington Post
» WBEZ Chicago- NPR

URBAN EDUCATOR HEADLINES

» Urban School Districts Share Expanded Summer School Programs
» Las Vegas Educator Named Teacher of the Year
» Superintendents in L.A. and Chicago Step Down
» Tulsa Public Schools Launches Curriculum to Commemorate 1921 Race Massacre
» Philadelphia Expands Mentoring Program Between School Safety Officers and Black Students
» Three Urban Schools Ranked Among the Nation’s Top 10
» Philadelphia Student Wins $25,000 Scholarship from the National Honor Society
» Legislative Column: Initial Application Cycle for the $7 Billion FCC Emergency Program To Fund Student-Home Connectivity for School Year 2021-22

TOP DIGITAL MEDIA POSTS

» How can educators help students understand and engage with content and language on a deeper level? Find out in our #BIRE20 webinar featuring @AuthenticEd President @DeniseWilbur and Literacy & #ELL Expert Maryann Cucchiara. Watch at https://vimeo.com/476482987.
» Deadline to to apply for the CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship is tomorrow! Submit those last minute applications. 2 African American and 2 Hispanic students interested in STEM will be awarded with $5,000 scholarships. To apply visit http://cgcs.org/scholarships!
» Parents are key to ending the pandemic – but will they vaccinate their children? https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/554181-parents-are-key-to-ending-the-pandemic-but-will-they-vaccinate-their …@BSCMemberONEill at the Council’s Leg/Pol Conference.
HIGHLIGHTS

May UE is hot off the press! Stories include:
- @TulsaSchools Launches Curriculum to Commemorate 1921 Race Massacre
- @PHL.schuls Expands Mentoring Program Between School Safety Officers and Black Students
To read more conta.cc/2RNSxZv

May 6
@GreatCitySchls
We congratulate @ClarkCountySch @JulianaUrtubey3 for being named National Teacher of the Year. 🎉

Carissa Miller @CMoffatMiller - May 6
Congratulations to @JulianaUrtubey3 on being selected as the 2021 National Teacher of the Year! Juliana exemplifies the dedication, creativity and heart teachers bring to their students and communities. I look forward to her leadership bit.ly/33xGFbP #NTOY21 @CCSSO #NTOY21

May 3
CGCS @GreatCitySchls
Deadline to apply for the CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship is tomorrow! Submit those last minute applications. 2 African American and 2 Hispanic students interested in STEM will be awarded with $5,000 scholarships. To apply visit cgc.org/scholarships!

May 10
CGCS @GreatCitySchls
How can educators help students understand and engage with content and language on a deeper level? Find out in our #BIRE20 webinar featuring @AuthenticEd President @DeniseWilbur and Literacy & #ELL Expert Maryann Cucchiara. Watch at vimeo.com/476482987.
THE URBAN EDUCATOR
Urban School Districts Share Expanded Summer School Programs

With catchy program titles and an infusion of federal money, urban school districts across the nation are gearing up for expanded summer school offerings in all grades.

Read More

Las Vegas Educator Named Teacher of the Year
Juliana Urtubey was born in Bogota, Colombia, and moved to the United States with her family when she was five. As a first-generation Hispanic and a bilingual special-education teacher in Las Vegas, Urtubey takes immense pride in being a role model for her students.

Superintendents in L.A. and Chicago Step Down

Austin Beutner, superintendent of the Los Angeles United School District since 2018, and Janice Jackson, CEO of Chicago Public Schools since 2017, have announced their departures as their contracts expire June 30.

Tulsa Public Schools Launches Curriculum to Commemorate 1921 Race Massacre

In 1921, the Greenwood community in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was home to one of the most prosperous African-American communities in the nation and dubbed “Black Wall Street” because of its affluence and thriving businesses.

Philadelphia Expands Mentoring Program Between School Safety Officers and Black Students

The School District of Philadelphia is expanding the Leaders Encouraging Achievement and Development (LEAD) Program, an effort designed to help support the needs of young Black male students through positive engagement with Black adult males.
Three Urban Schools Ranked Among the Nation's Top 10

U.S. News & World Report magazine recently released its 2021 “Best High School” rankings, and several school districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools topped the list.

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Philadelphia Student Wins $25,000 Scholarship from the National Honor Society

Sheyla Street, a senior at Central High School in Philadelphia, has been selected as the national winner of the 2021 National Honor Society (NHS) Scholarship.

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Legislative Column

Initial Application Cycle for the $7 Billion FCC Emergency Program To Fund Student-Home Connectivity for School Year 2021-22

Though shorthanded, a unanimous Federal Communications Commission (FCC) met
its statutory deadline in announcing new rules for the $7 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund to support remote home connectivity for students and staff under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP).

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Read more stories here

Urban Schools Win Green Ribbon Awards | Three Big-City School Districts Win Energy Awards | Spanish Embassy Honors Florida School

Upcoming Events

65th Annual Fall Conference

The Council will be holding its 65th Annual Fall Conference in Philadelphia.

When: 
October 20 - 24, 2021

Where: 
Philadelphia, PA

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