MINUTES
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS
MINUTES
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
January 22-23, 2021

Friday, January 22, 2021

Present:

Officers:

Michael O’Neill, Chair, Boston School Committee
Barbara Jenkins, Chair Elect, Orange County Superintendent
Ashley Paz, Secretary/Treasurer, Fort Worth School Board
Eric Gordon, Immediate Past Chair, Cleveland CEO

Members:

Tom Ahart, Des Moines Superintendent
Siad Ali, Minneapolis School Board
Marcia Andrews, Palm Beach County School Board
Richard Carranza, New York City Chancellor
Marcelo Cavazos, Arlington Superintendent
Valerie Davis, Fresno School Board
Kelly Gonez, Los Angeles School Board
Leslie Grant, Atlanta School Board
Guadalupe Guerrero, Portland Superintendent
Michael Hinojosa, Dallas Superintendent
William Hite, Philadelphia Superintendent
Robert Runcie, Broward County Superintendent
Sonja Santelises, Baltimore CEO
Elisa Vakalis, Anchorage School Board
Van Henri White, Rochester School Board
Sylvia Wilson, Pittsburgh School Board
Darrel Woo, Sacramento School Board
Deborah Shanley, Brooklyn College, CUNY Dean

Absent:

Linda Cavazos, Clark County School Board
Sharon Contreras, Guilford County Superintendent
Michael O’Neill, Chair of the Board of Directors, called the virtual meeting to order at 3:00 pm ET. A quorum was established.

Members then introduced themselves and gave a short update on events in their districts.

Minutes

Michael O’Neill presented the minutes of the October 15, 2020 virtual meeting of the Executive Committee and October 17, 2020 virtual meeting of the Board of Directors.

A motion to approve the minutes passed without dissent by virtual vote.

Appointments and Nominations

Ashley Paz announced that she will not be running again for school board, so she will rotate off the Committee after June. She will step down as Secretary/Treasurer in time for a new officer to be selected. She shared with the group that she has formed an exploratory committee to run for the U.S. House of Representatives.

Eric Gordon then shared the recommendations of the Nominations Subcommittee.

Officers

1) Kelly Gonez (Los Angeles School Board) to serve as Secretary/Treasurer beginning March 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2021, and Ashley Paz (Fort Worth School Board) to fill the unexpired term of Kelly Gonez beginning March 1, 2021, whose term was set to expire June 30, 2022.

2) Barbara Jenkins (Orange County Superintendent) to serve as Chair of the Board beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2022.

3) Kelly Gonez (Los Angeles School Board) to serve as Chair-Elect of the Board beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2022.

4) Bill Hite (Philadelphia Superintendent) to serve as Secretary/Treasurer of the Board beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2022.

5) Michael O’Neill (Boston School Committee) to serve as Immediate Past Chair of the Board beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2022.

Extend Terms/Confirm Appointments/Fill Vacancies

1) Robert Runcie (Broward Superintendent) to serve a first three-year term from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024.

2) Elisa Vakalis (Anchorage School Board) to serve a second three-year term from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024.
3) Marcelo Cavazos (Arlington Superintendent) to be confirmed to serve the unexpired term of Juan Cabrera whose term expires on June 30, 2023.

4) Diane Porter (Jefferson County School Board) to fill the vacancy created by Ashley Paz (Fort Worth School Board), whose term was set to expire June 30, 2022.

5) Joe Gothard (St. Paul Superintendent) to fill the vacancy created by new Secretary/Treasurer, Bill Hite (Philadelphia Superintendent, whose term was set to expire June 30, 2023.

There was one vacancy remaining, and the Subcommittee will make a recommendation at the next Committee meeting in March.

A motion to approve all nominations passed without dissent by virtual vote.

Interlude—Need for Immediate Feedback on Letter to Biden

Executive Director Michael Casserly then gave a summary of the origins of a draft letter to President Biden included in the legislative section of the Committee materials. The letter offered the support and facilities of public schools in the nation’s major cities to help the administration reach its twin goals of reopening schools and disseminating 100 million vaccines. Approval of the letter by the executive committee was sought.

The committee unanimously approved the letter, lauded its message and tone, and urged Council staff to release it as soon as possible with signatures from the executive committee members.

Membership

The new superintendent in Baton Rouge has indicated his desire to have his district rejoin the Council. They will be sending a formal letter signed by the superintendent and board chair. Casserly indicated that Baton Rouge is a former member and is eligible to re-join since they continue to meet all membership criteria. The committee agreed to wait until a formal request was received before acting.

By-Laws

No report.

Audit

Ashley Paz, Audit Subcommittee Chair, presented the audit report. Paz indicated that the organization was in good financial shape for the time being.

Casserly then described in greater detail the results of the draft external audit that showed no material findings or weaknesses. Of note, the external audit showed—

- The Council had a net carryover of $9.2 million. Casserly indicated that the amount had been fluctuating between $8 million and $10 million for several years.
• The Council was no longer required by the auditor to carry a functional allowance for uncollected revenues.
• The overall cash flow of the organization was strong.
• An inventory of various accounting policies and definitions used by the Council.
• An inventory of property and valuation, along with revenues from various sources
• Grant funds as of June 30, 2020, and all remaining obligations on the organization’s office lease.
• Bank holdings that were covered by FDIC and amounts that were not covered.
• Investment policies and guidelines
• Asset allocations on the Council’s investments.
• A description of the organization’s financial agreements with the current executive director.
• A description of the organization’s retirement plan.
• An inventory of categorical expenditures
• A letter from the external auditors to the Board of Directors summarizing the work.
• Adjustments to journal entries that did not reflect any material weaknesses.

Casserly then moved to describe the status of the general operating budget, categorical budget, and combined budgets for 2020-21, including the status of dues payments for the year. He noted that some 97% of expected revenues for the year had been received and about 40% of anticipated expenditures had been incurred. (Overall costs were lower because of the pivot to virtual work and the lack of travel expenses due to the pandemic.) In addition, Casserly noted that the organization’s carryover amount had increased to $12.7 million because of fund raising efforts over the last six months of 2020.

Casserly also noted that several districts were not able to pay dues for the 2020-21 program year, including Manchester, Stockton, and Bridgeport. In addition, Hawaii could only pay for half the year. Otherwise, all dues had been received. Board Chair Michael O’Neill indicated that he would reach out to the three districts and report back.

The budget for FY21-22 was then presented by Casserly. The budget assumed a 1.2% increase in dues based on the CPI. A balanced budget was also assumed for FY21-22.

Finally, Casserly highlighted the Council’s paycheck protection program loan and indicated that the organization did not know whether it will need to be repaid. He also indicated that the group had not incurred any penalties from hotels for cancelled meetings.

Michael O’Neill informed the committee that he was confident that the organization would not have to repay the PPP loan, but that he was doubtful that the group would qualify for a second loan. He also asked about the possibility of rent reduction. Casserly reported that staff had investigated this but found that the landlord was simply extending the lease rather than forgiving the rent. O’Neill also called attention to the fundraising Casserly had done to see the organization through after his departure.

Ashley Paz and Michael O’Neill then thanked Teri Trinidad and Alisa Adams for their careful stewardship of the organization’s finances.
A motion to accept the audit report passed without dissent by virtual vote.

Conferences and Meetings

Michael O’Neill asked the committee about their preferences for holding the upcoming March legislative conference virtually or in person.

Members agreed that March should be held virtually given travel restrictions and worsening pandemic conditions. One Committee member urged the Council to keep most of the meeting over the weekend. Another member suggested that we provide an “advocacy 101” session for members. There was also a recommendation that the Council create a summary of legislative issues to be advocated.

Casserly named possible policymakers and speakers who would be invited, including *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward.

A motion to hold the 2021 legislative/policy conference virtually passed without dissent by virtual vote.

Communications

The Committee briefing materials included recent press releases, statements, and numerous articles that had come out since the October meeting. Most media coverage was on school re-openings, but articles also covered education leadership, Council reports, and other activities.

The materials also presented an update on the Bernard Harris scholarship program and the latest social media report. Finally, the materials included the most recent *Urban Educator*.

Casserly pointed out that the Council was often cited in the media, but that our strategy has not always been to seek out coverage. Instead, he indicated that he was generally guided by the belief that staying out of the media was often just as useful—or more so—than being in the spotlight.

Members agreed with this strategy, but they pointed out the value of the Council’s highlighting experiences, challenges, and progress being made in urban districts, particularly amidst the pandemic.

**Saturday, January 23, 2021**

Legislation

Jeff Simering, the Council’s director of legislation, gave an update on the Council’s legislative and policy work. He described the overall tone in Washington with the inauguration of President Biden and the new executive orders that were being issued on DACA, school reopenings, and pandemic plans. Simering then outlined the new Administration’s COVID relief legislation and its provisions for k-12 education. Many of the items recommended in the Council’s transition proposals had been included.
Simering indicated that the latest regular appropriations bill contained small to moderate increases to Title I, Perkins, and other programs. The COVID-relief portion of the end-of-the-year bill, however, also included $54 billion in relief funds for k-12 schools. He also noted that allocations for private schools did not come out of this amount, like they did in the measure that passed earlier last year, triggering our legal action around equitable services.

Simering then offered a note of caution on the issue of state maintenance of effort. A maintenance of effort provision was included in the various COVID bills, but in the year end legislation this provision involved a proportionate requirement—meaning that if overall state budgets were cut by a certain percent, then education funding could be cut by that same percent. Richard Carranza informed the group that his governor was taking away a large part of the federal funds allocated to the New York City schools.

Simering then provided details on the budget reconciliation process and what the process meant for the new Biden COVID relief package.

Executive Directors Report

Michael O’Neill asked Casserly to give a brief executive director’s report on the organization’s activities.

Casserly indicated that over the past several months, there had been five central areas of focus for the organization—

1) The response to the COVID pandemic, including ongoing Zoom calls with district leaders and various job-alike groups, vaccination proposals, and reports and resources.
2) Work to set up the organization with the new Administration, including introducing ourselves to various Biden officials and other outreach.
3) Advocating new COVID stimulus aid for schools and fund raising to ensure the organization’s financial viability.
4) Urban school governance, including our work with school boards, the Harvard institute, and coaching initiatives, and
5) Helping districts address unfinished learning and social emotional learning.

Casserly also stressed ways in which the organization had evolved over the last several months and years. He noted that—

- The Council was increasingly serving as a mechanism for driving improvement among members and not just representing the members like most organizations do.
- The Council was building its personal relations increasingly with its members through its regular Zoom calls. He stressed that the group had always felt like a family but that these relations had become stronger over the months.
- The Council’s executive committee had taken on a more active role over the years in guiding the organization, which suggested greater ownership of the group’s work.
• The Council was increasingly willing to take hard stances in areas where others did not. Examples included our statements, legal action, and our willingness to push the publishers to produce better instructional materials.
• Finally, the Council has built a reputation for excellence, trust, and respect over the years. Funders, legislators, and the press have come to see us as a go-to group, consistent and strong in our work and values. Casserly noted, however, that the group faces increasing competition from others in an ever-crowded policy space.

In response, several Committee members discussed the importance of maintaining and advancing the Council’s focus on capacity building, particularly among school boards. Members also expressed an ongoing need to capture and disseminate the good work that school districts across the country were doing.

Research

Briefing materials for the committee included a department overview outlining activities of the research staff. Information included work of the National Assessment Governing Board TUDA Task Force to advise NAGB on issues related to NAEP.

Briefing book materials for the committee also included—

• A copy of a recent RAND survey that the Council participated in. Forty-one of our districts completed this survey. Ray Hart, the Council’s research director, highlighted some of the findings.
• A copy of a memo documenting progress by the Kansas City school district to help with its bid for full state accreditation.
• A draft version of the Council’s special NAEP analysis on whether urban schools were able to overcome the effects of poverty and other barriers. Casserly and Hart provided additional detail on the report’s findings.

Committee members underscored the importance of issuing the NAEP special analysis, pointing out that it would help in our outreach with the new Secretary of Education and others.

Members stressed the need to communicate a strong and simplified message with the report, one that stressed that poverty was not destiny. Casserly indicated that the report would include an executive summary.

Coronavirus Resources

There were three sections in this part of the briefing materials. The first was a screenshot of coronavirus resources on the Council’s website. The second contained a breakdown of weekly meetings that had been held since March 2020 with various job-alike groups.

The third section provided copies of reports that the Council had produced in response to the pandemic, including—

  o *Assessing Language Proficiency During Extended School Closures*
Michael O’Neill then spoke to the possibility of bringing Council members together with the new Secretary of Education and Secretary of Labor to discuss how to work together with the teachers’ unions on reopening schools. He indicated that the new Secretary of Labor, as the former mayor of Boston, was very understanding of our perspective. He then asked members for their thoughts.

Casserly provided some background on the issue, indicating that past Executive Committees had not wanted the organization to wade into these issues, but that he understood the renewed interest and described some of the things that the organization had the capacity to do. He also described some of Secretary Arne Duncan’s efforts in this area and the Council’s role in them.

One Committee member suggested that districts could benefit from having access to national experts on labor issues that they could pull into negotiations.

Another member cautioned that the window to solve these problems around reopening was very tight.

Members agreed that one thing that would be helpful would be for the Council to collect MOUs and compile a database of practices.

Michael O’Neill indicated that he would approach Labor Secretary Walsh on the issues.

Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys

Co-chairs Michael Hinojosa and Bill Hite introduced the task force discussion and asked Ray Hart for an update on work. Hart indicated that the forthcoming NAEP special analysis helps make the point about raising achievement among males of color.

Casserly pointed to some preliminary analysis that he was doing that raised the question about whether there was a connection between African American male achievement and the numbers of students placed in more isolated special education classes where the core
curriculum was not necessarily used. This may be something we want to explore further. There was also the issue of disproportionality in suspensions and in other areas such as access to advanced coursework that the task force could do more work on in addition to issues of unfinished learning. Michael O’Neill raised the issue of ethnic studies as well and what criteria we needed to use to determine quality.

Casserly asked the group whether there was anything the Council could be doing to support district work in this area. It was suggested that the Task Force Co-chairs hold an offline discussion in the coming weeks to talk through objectives and future directions.

Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development

Deb Shanley, task force co-chair, gave the report on the Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development. This section of the committee’s materials included information on—

- The Council’s draft professional development framework
- The organization’s reading webinars with SAP on priority standards and unfinished learning.
- A recent data review of special education programming in Omaha conducted by the Council.

Casserly called the group’s attention to a survey on materials districts were using in reading and mathematics. In addition, he addressed the ongoing work on the professional development framework.

Finally, Casserly reported that the discussion on the weekly ZOOM calls with the chief academic officers had focused largely on addressing unfinished learning with more extended time initiatives—early start times, after hours programming, summer school, etc. He stressed the need for teachers to stay focused on grade-level work as much as possible and not let extended time initiatives devolve into solely remedial sessions.

Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls

Kelly Gonez, task force co-chair, gave the report of the Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls. Members had two sample logos in their materials. The co-chairs would welcome feedback on the two options.

Gonez reported on the previous task force meeting at the virtual fall conference. The group revisited task force goals and made additional edits based on feedback they had received. She also reported on a presentation from Jefferson County on a STEAM program for girls. Task force members reported being excited about the presentation and about the potential of employing single gender schools to help build representation of female students of color in STEAM fields.

Kelly Gonez indicated that the task force still needed to finalize the data they wanted to look at (particularly around disproportionality), determine whether there were any
partnerships they wanted to pursue, and finalize the goals for ratification by the board of directors.

Members then offered their opinions on the task force logo.

**Task Force on Bilingual Education**

Committee materials included a department overview detailing the work of Council staff around ELLs. Two COVID reports addressing ELL issues have been released, one on provisional identification of ELLs and other on supporting ELL instruction and students. The materials also provided information on the annual BIRE meeting, which had record attendance.

Materials also included an update on the professional development platform. About ten cities were actively using the program, and preliminary data suggested that it was producing positive results. Materials also included information on the ELL writing project and the projected pilot project in Long Beach.

Materials also provided information on challenges districts were facing with ELL language testing. Finally, members found brochures on the joint procurement project in their materials.

**Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance**

Barbara Jenkins, task force co-chair, gave the report of the Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance. She asked Casserly to give an update on the status of the Harvard school board institute. Materials included information on the institute and new school board technical assistance initiatives.

Materials also provided information on a Broward County grand jury inquiry that involved one of the Council’s strategic support teams along with three strategic support team reports, which Jenkins encouraged members to distribute to their staff.

Casserly and O’Neill then gave more detail on the Harvard program, indicating that the institute might extend over a week or so unlike the in-person three-day session that was done in 2019. Both reported that they had the opportunity to sit in on a virtual class and were very impressed by the quality of it. Harvard is expected to provide additional information soon on the revised costs of the program since the sessions would be all virtual this year.

Finally, a committee member asked about whether the Council makes all its SST reviews available on its website. Casserly indicated that some reports were placed on the website and others were not, depending on the confidentiality of the findings and the wishes of the district being reviewed.
Strategic Plan

A copy of the Council’s strategic plan was included in the committee’s materials, along with an update on various elements of the plan and what the group had accomplished so far. Casserly indicated that the group may want to refresh the plan since the pandemic and a new executive director had changed the landscape somewhat.

The Committee then went into executive session at 3:20 pm (ET).

Respectfully submitted:

Michael Casserly
Executive Director
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Michael O’Neill, Chair of the Board of Directors, called the virtual meeting to order at 11:10 am ET. A quorum of the Executive Committee was established, and a quorum of the Board was established later in the meeting.

Executive Directors Report

Michael Casserly, executive director, was asked by Chair O’Neill to give an overview of Council activities since the last board meeting. Casserly indicated that the organization had to pivot a lot of its work to deal with the global pandemic and the challenges it was presenting for the membership. He indicated that the staff initiated a series of conference calls with superintendents back in March, and these calls expanded to other job alike groups. Since mid-March, the group has held over 325 such calls, not counting separate working groups. There are currently about 12 regularly scheduled calls each week, and we estimate that between 15,000 and 18,000 district staff members have participated. These individuals use these weekly forums to share information, trade tactics and tips, and to provide mutual support.

The Council has also produced a set of guidance documents (i.e., the “Returning to School Series”) to help members with various aspects of the pandemic. More recently, staff has launched a set of shorter briefs on more technical issues, such as water safety, air quality, and the like. These publications were produced in partnership with our job-alike groups, along with external consultants. The Council has also created a public-facing website, as well as a password-protected online space for districts to share draft documents and resources confidentially.

In addition to helping the membership share information and best practices, the Council has spent the past several months actively engaging the U.S. Congress, the Departments of Education and Agriculture, and the federal courts in support of urban districts. The Council joined with its colleagues in developing and signing onto comments and correspondence to Congress and the agencies on a variety of issues including—

- Supplemental appropriations for elementary and secondary schools
- School meals and meal flexibility
- The Senate’s HEALS Act
- Equitable services under the CARES Act
- Letter to Secretary DeVos on IDEA flexibility
- Comments to the U.S. Department of Education on CARES Act equitable services rules
- Comments to USDA on simplifying school meal services and monitoring requirements
- Letter to Congress endorsing HR 1636 to establish a national commission on the social status of Black Men and Boys.
The Council also identified legislative areas of concern that others missed, such as the prohibition on school districts from offsetting Social Security payroll withholding payments.

In addition, the Council, along with a coalition of member districts, filed suit against the U.S. Department of Education to block its proposed guidance to interpret the federal CARES Act in a way that would have distributed disproportionate and unprecedented aid to private schools. The Council was successful in these suits and saved the membership several hundred million dollars.

Moreover, the ELL team successfully petitioned DoE to ensure that provisionally identified students were eligible for Title III funding.

In communications, the Council has been very active with the press. The group has conducted about 250 interviews with press outlets across the country, as well as drafting or contributing to articles for various publications to update the public on what urban districts were doing to support students, staff, and families during the pandemic.

During this period, the Council also surveyed its members regarding the feasibility of NAEP testing. According to our findings, 21 of the 27 TUDA districts indicated they did not want to go ahead with spring TUDA testing due to safety and validity issues. So, the Council recommended to NAGB that we not oversample students in big cities. Again, we prevailed and there will not be TUDA in 2021.

To ensure our financial stability, the Council has also raised over $3 million from foundations and applied for (and received) a small business loan. It is still unclear whether we will need to repay this. Dues payments, in general, have remained strong, despite a small drop-off by some districts.

Casserly indicated that the organization has had to curtail certain activities, such as planned initiatives on vaping and bonding. The group has also conducted a limited number of strategic support team reviews, but not as many as normal. Moreover, the Council has had to postpone several job alike meetings, and while our work to establish our newest task force—the Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls—continued, it was not as much as was planned for this year.

Aside from these examples, the group has been able to sustain a lot of its core work, including school board technical assistance, KPI data collection, the annual report and individual benefits reports for each member district, the Bernard Harris scholarship program, the external audit, the Urban Educator newsletter, regular legal webinars, quarterly Executive Committee meetings, and of course, the planning and convening of the virtual annual fall conference. Casserly noted that a key strength of the organization is that it can be flexible and nimble enough to meet member needs as they evolve. Casserly then thanked Council staff, as well as Board members for their efforts on behalf of kids over the past several months.
Board Chair Michael O’Neill echoed the applause for the work, thanked the lead districts in the equitable services case, and reiterated the point about incorporating students in a more official capacity moving forward. One suggestion might be to establish a rotating student advisory council of around ten students from member districts.

Coronavirus Resources

This section of the materials included all the reports Casserly described earlier, as well as a copy of the Council’s coronavirus webpage.

Appointments and Nominations

The Board materials provided a complete list of subcommittee and task force appointments that the chair made in July.

Appointments include Robert Runcie, superintendent of the Broward County Public Schools to replace Paul Cruz who was stepping down as Superintendent of the Austin Independent School District.

A motion to accept the appointment of Robert Runcie to join the Executive Committee passed by virtual vote.

Minutes

Michael O’Neill presented the minutes of the March 23, 2020 virtual meeting of the Board of Directors and the July 10 and 11, 2020 virtual meeting of the Executive Committee.

A motion to approve the minutes passed by a virtual vote.

Annual Report

Eric Gordon, immediate past chair, gave a summary of the 2019-20 annual report, and thanked the Council for his glass gavel.

Conferences and Meetings

Michael O’Neill presented the annual conference lineup. Next year’s conference is scheduled to be held in Philadelphia, the 2022 conference will be held in Orlando, the 2023 conference will be held in San Diego, the 2024 conference will now be held in Dallas (this was postponed from this year), and the 2025 conference will be held in Boston.

Communications

Casserly gave the report on the Council’s communications activities. We have conducted some 250 interviews over the past six months. A sample collection of these articles is provided in the materials. The materials also included press releases, statements, the latest Urban Educator (which is now all digital), the organization’s monthly social media report, and Bernard Harris scholarship winners.
A question was raised from Rochester concerning a recent letter they sent to the College Board advocating for AP courses in African studies. They wanted to know how the Council could support this effort. Casserly responded that he has spoken with the head of the College Board about this issue, and they have indicated interest. Casserly asked members to send him similar letters, so we can package them together and make official outreach to the College Board.

**Legislation**

Jeff Simering, legislative director, gave an overview of policy and legislative developments from Washington. Despite a flurry of federal legislative action in March and April (which resulted in the passage of four relief bills), action has now been replaced by rhetoric leading up to the election. The level of K-12 education recovery aid has been woefully inadequate. The $13 billion in direct aid represents 6/10ths of one percent of aid overall. Comparatively, we received $100 billion in ARRA funds. Being shortchanged in the first three bills prompted education groups to submit a joint request to Congress for $200 billion in funding. The Council followed with its own letter in April, signed by 60+ superintendents.

Simering then covered details of recent proposals for a recovery package, as well as the “skinny” recovery bill, which include $70 billion in education stabilization aid. These funds, however, were tied to conditions, including the physical reopening of schools.

A change of administrations or control of Congress could result in additional coronavirus aid, but we need to keep in mind that democratic control will also increase regulatory requirements.

Julie Wright Halbert, the organization’s internal counsel, then reviewed the Council’s legal activities. Over the past six months the Council has been in six federal courts. We have also hosted numerous legal webinars, as well as weekly meetings with special education staff and general counsels. These calls cover topics such as MOUs, labor relations issues, due process, and COVID testing, to name a few. The calls allow staff to respond to immediate needs as they arise. An example of this involved a recent national class action case filed in New York.

**Research**

Ray Hart, the Council’s research director, gave the report on the Council’s research activities. The group is holding weekly meetings of research directors and staff and providing research and backup that research directors need.

Research materials in the board’s briefing book included information on the TUDA task force and our work with NAGB, including our comments on the NAEP reading frameworks. We have also released a number of TUDA briefs that focus on individual districts. The latest draft of the NAEP special analysis is also provided in the materials. We have been working on this for a number of years. We have now received the final data set for 2019 (a restricted data set), and staff hope to release the analysis soon.
Dr. Hart also previewed the Council’s new data dashboard system, which included academic KPI data and special education data.

He also described a contract with the RAND Corporation to participate in the American School Panel research project, which will entail fielding surveys of members on current administrative practices.

He also described the Edwires fileshare platform for sharing materials across districts. Staff are now building this out to include forums and discussion features, where members will be able to directly contact colleagues and share files.

Finally, we recently received a small grant from the Casey Foundation to produce a series of research briefs. These will be brief, three- to four-page summaries of research topics and will include a review of current district practices. The topics will be gathered from suggestions from research teams.

**Achievement and Professional Development Task Force/Task Force on English Language Learners and Bilingual Education**

Deb Shanley gave the report of the Achievement and Professional Development Task Force. She called the group’s attention to a few key materials provided in the Board book—

- An overview of priorities and activities of the academic team, and a catalogue of resources and tools, including an extensive guide on *Addressing Unfinished Learning after COVID 19 School Closures*
- The NAEP reading framework
- A principal supervisor survey report, which provided a before and after look at how the role of principal supervisors had changed over the years.
- A report on Academic KPI data across districts
- NAEP 2019 data

The materials also included the agenda from the joint meeting of the Task Forces on Achievement and Professional Development and English Language Learners and Bilingual Education, held at the start of the virtual conference this week.

Gabriela Uro, the Council’s director of language policy, then gave an overview of the Council’s work around English Language Learner education during the pandemic, pointing out various resources for ELLs that staff and members have developed from their weekly conference calls. She also informed the group that this year’s BIRE meeting, coming up in November, will be virtual.

**Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls/ Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys**

Kelly Gómez, task force co-chair, gave the report on the joint task force meeting. She shared the latest changes to task force goals, which reflected feedback from participants. She then called the Board’s attention to data on access and achievement for girls of colors in STEAM
fields, provided in the meeting materials. And she shared a recent *New York Times* article on barriers facing girls of color, and the impact of COVID on these barriers.

**Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance**

Barbara Jenkins, task force co-chair and chair-elect of the Council, gave the report of the Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance. Materials included information on the Harvard school board-superintendents governance institute. And there were materials describing the governance and technical assistance work of the Council.

The latest *Managing for Results* report was also included in materials, and members were urged to share this with their operational leadership teams.

**Audit**

Casserly gave the report on the Audit subcommittee. Materials included summaries of general operational spending and categorical funding and expenses, including breakouts of categorical funding sources.

Materials also provided a report on the first quarter of 2020-21. Casserly called attention to the status of dues payments for the program year, having received dues from 63 districts so far. Several districts weren’t able to pay this year, including Stockton, Hawaii, San Antonio, and Manchester. The group has not heard from 5-6 other districts, although staff are following up.

The Council has spent out approximately 20 percent of its budget by the end of the first quarter, and staff expect a balanced budget for the year. Staff have also secured several outside grants and a small business loan. By and large, the organization is in good financial shape for the current year. The revenue picture for 2021-22 might be tighter if additional stimulus funds are not approved by Congress, resulting in financial strain to the membership.

The audit materials also provided a status update on Council investments and asset allocations, all of which were within target ranges.

Ashley Paz, secretary-treasurer, then urged members to share their individual member services reports, so all communities are aware of the substantial value and return on investment that membership in the Council brings.

Michael O’Neill applauded the Council staff and the prudent stewardship of the organization’s finances. He also noted that the virtual fall conference operated in the black.

A motion to accept the audit report passed by virtual vote.

**By-Laws**

No report.
Membership

No report.

Strategic plan

The materials included the strategic plan, and an update on its status.

Executive Session

The Board then went into Executive Session at 1:45pm (ET).

Respectfully submitted:

Michael Casserly
Executive Director