A Year Like NO OTHER

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021
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This past year, unlike any other year we have all experienced personally or professionally, the Council of the Great City Schools, the only organization in the nation exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools, lived up to the challenge of keeping its member districts interests first and foremost.

Like our member districts, the Council reinvented itself while helping urban school systems deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. Importantly, the Council has hosted weekly Zoom calls with job-alike groups from districts across the country, ranging from superintendents to school board members, from CIO’s to research directors. This real-time exchange of ideas on issues faced, what works (and doesn’t) and even shared support has become a key part of a leader’s week. The Council also released Returning to School, a series of reports providing recommendations for reopening planning, as well as more specialized reports called Spotlight dealing with Covid-19 issues. Additionally, our Fall and Spring conferences continued conducted on-line, even as we plan for a return to in-person in Philadelphia in October.

With the American Rescue Plan providing unprecedented levels of federal funding, the Council formed a Federal Funds Optimization Task Force of 20 superintendents, school board members, chief academic officers and other experts from the nation’s largest big-city systems. The culmination of that effort was the recently released toolkit, Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively, Guidance for School Districts, which offers 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. The Council is also working closely with the Biden Administration on a number of matters impacting our members.

On the legislative front, the Council notched several victories for urban schools, including filing an amicus brief to successfully stop the prior Department of Education’s plan to divert hundreds of millions of dollars to private schools during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as substantially impacting the debate on funding in each relief bill. We also continued to be a leader on social justice issues, releasing a statement of support on the George Floyd verdict and holding a Town Hall meeting at this year’s virtual Fall Conference featuring urban student leaders from across the nation discussing issues of race and equity.

As Chair, I joined my fellow Board Officers and several other Executive Committee Members on a search committee to select a new executive director to replace Dr. Michael Casserly, who is stepping down from the position after serving for more than 30 years. After an exhaustive national search, we were pleased in March to name Dr. Ray Hart, the Council’s former director of research, as the new Executive Director. We know that Dr. Hart is the best next leader of Council and will continue to add value to our collective work of improving educational opportunity and equity for all of our youth.

As the Council reinvented itself in real-time during the pandemic and adjusted to the new leadership soon to be in place, I must share my deep-felt appreciation for the Council staff, who advocate on behalf of our member districts, researching best practices and helping all of us to improve. Their collective tireless work on our behalf is so appreciated. A true family effort.

Lastly, I want to express my appreciation to Dr. Casserly for his 44 years of service with the Council. His contributions have led to some of the most significant legislative actions and best practices in urban public school. I thank Dr. Casserly for his passion, dedication and commitment to our youth and our member districts. His career has made a major difference in the lives of millions of urban children and it is truly fitting that he was the recipient at the March Legislative Conference of the first annual Dr. Michael Casserly Legacy Award for Educational Courage and Justice, an award which honors the key attributes we all attribute to Dr. Casserly.

As a school board member of an urban school district and as a graduate of a Great City School system, including the nation’s oldest public school, it has been my true honor to have served as this year’s Chair. The value of a membership in the Council has become clearer than ever. The Council, like our country and our member districts, has adapted, evolved and reimagined its future, and we are well positioned to be the top urban education organization for many years to come.

Michael O’Neill
Vice Chair - Boston School Committee
Chair of the Board, 2020-21
I am proud to present this, my final, annual report to the membership on the work of the Council of the Great City Schools during the 2020-21 program year. It has been an extraordinary year, and the Council of the Great City Schools did everything we could think of to help you meet the unprecedented challenges you faced because of the global pandemic. On top of everything else, the organization’s entire body of work—like yours—was done on-line, making this year singular in every respect.

First and foremost, we pivoted this year to focus primarily on the COVID-19 crisis by producing a dozen guidance documents on everything from unfinished learning to air quality, from special education to transportation, and almost everything in between to give you the best advice we could muster. We also conducted over 700 ZOOM calls with our superintendents, school board members, and line officers of every stripe to share lessons learned, to strategize, and support each other personally and professionally. We tracked our status and fielded hundreds of press interviews, and we launched efforts to vaccinate our staff and students. And we ended the year by naming a task force that produced guidance on how best to use the unprecedented levels of federal support that was coming our way.

At the same time, we successfully argued before the National Assessment Governing Board for a one-year delay in NAEP, and we made a substantial proposal for modifying NAEP’s reading framework. We also spoke out forcefully on the killing of George Floyd; provided professional development and coaching to over 35 of our Great City School boards; continued our Strategic Support Teams; and launched a major effort to improve our technology interoperability and security.

If that were not enough, the Council released several new reports this year, including a professional development framework to complement the curriculum work we have done over the last several years, and a report analyzing the academic effect urban schools were having in overcoming the effects of poverty and other barriers faced by our students. We also continued publishing our annual academic and operational key performance indicator reports and our monthly newsletter, The Urban Educator.

While all-virtual, we didn’t miss a beat in holding our annual conferences. Our fall conference featured Ibram X. Kendi, Thomas Friedman, Julián Castro, and Laura Bush along with an all-student national town hall; and our spring conference included Education and Labor Committee Chair Congressman Bobby Scott, Ways and Means Committee Chair Congressman Richard Neal, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, U.S. Secretary of Labor-nominee Marty Walsh, officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and noted Washington Post reporter Bob Woodward.

All of this was done while the organization conducted a nationwide search for its new executive director.

I thank Michael O’Neill, Vice-Chair of the Boston School Committee, for his terrific leadership this year. We could not have gotten through the year without his stalwart presence and innovative thinking. And I thank the amazing Council staff for the dedication and expertise they put into their work on behalf of urban schools and our children every day. Thank you and farewell.

Michael Casserly
Executive Director

June 30, 2021

MICHAEL CASSERLY
The Council of the Great City Schools brings together the nation’s largest urban public school systems in a coalition dedicated to the improvement of education for children in the inner cities. The Council and its member school districts work to help our schoolchildren meet the highest standards and become successful and productive members of society.

The Council keeps the nation’s lawmakers, the media, and the public informed about the progress and problems in big-city schools. The organization does this through legislation, communications, research, and technical assistance.

The organization also helps to build capacity in urban education with programs to boost academic performance and narrow achievement gaps; improve professional development; and strengthen leadership, governance, and management.

The Council of the Great City Schools accomplishes its mission by connecting urban school district personnel from coast to coast who work under similar conditions. Staff with responsibilities for curricula, research and testing, finance, operations, personnel, technology, legislation, communications, and other areas confer regularly under the Council’s auspices to share concerns and solutions and discuss what works in boosting achievement and managing operations.

In addition, joint efforts with other national organizations, corporations, and government policymakers extend the Council’s influence and effectiveness outside member school districts to the larger, interdependent world that will ultimately benefit from the contributions of today’s urban students.

Since the organization’s founding in 1956, geographic, ethnic, language, and cultural diversity has typified the Council’s membership. That diversity propels the coalition forward to see that all citizens receive an education that will equip them with the skills and knowledge to compete successfully in the world marketplace and to enhance the quality of their lives in a society changing with phenomenal speed. The wellspring of accomplishments and innovations rising from our inner cities testifies to the resounding benefits of investment in the nation’s urban centers and in their public schools.
Former First Lady Laura Bush shared her thoughts on the challenges facing public education with Dallas Schools Superintendent Michael Hinojosa in an interview conducted at the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum in Dallas and shared virtually at the 64th Annual Fall Conference.

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona discussed the importance of reopening schools during his address to urban educators at the virtual Legislative/Policy Conference.
Urban public schools exist to teach students to the highest standards of educational excellence. As the primary American institution responsible for weaving the strands of our society into a cohesive fabric, we—the leaders of America’s Great City Schools—see a future where the nation cares for all children, expects their best, appreciates their diversity, invests in their futures, and welcomes their participation in the American dream.

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

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

Our Goals
- To educate all urban school students to the highest academic standards.
- To lead, govern and manage our urban public schools in ways that advance the education of our children and inspire the public’s confidence.
- To build a confident, committed and supportive urban community for raising the achievement of urban public schoolchildren
Author and columnist Thomas Friedman, bottom right, participated in a session on the “Future of Education” at the Annual Fall Conference moderated by Council executive director Michael Casserly, top left, and featuring big-city superintendents. Clockwise right to left, Baltimore Schools CEO Sonja Brookins Santelises; Cleveland Schools CEO Eric Gordon; Boston Schools Superintendent Brenda Cassellius; and Tulsa Schools Superintendent Deborah Gist.

Massachusetts Congressman Richard Neal, top left, discussed his support for school infrastructure at the Legislative/Policy Conference. The session was moderated by Council Chair Michael O’Neill and Guilford County Schools Superintendent Sharon Contreras.
School districts located in cities with populations over 250,000 and student enrollments over 35,000 are eligible for membership in the Council of the Great City Schools. Membership is also open to those districts serving a state’s largest city, depending on its urban characteristics.

The Board of Directors is composed of the superintendent and one board of education member from each member district, making the Council the only national educational organization so constituted and the only one whose purpose and membership is solely urban. The board meets twice a year to determine and adopt policies. It elects a 24-member executive committee, which exercises governing authority when the board is not in session.

The board of directors has established five special task forces to address major issues facing the membership. These include an English Language Learners and Bilingual Education Task Force to focus on issues around the education of English language learners.

A Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development was established to eliminate gaps in the academic achievement of students by race. A Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance addresses concerns about issues surrounding urban school leadership and management. Black and Latino Young Men and Boys Task Force works to implement the pledge the membership took to improve conditions and outcomes for these students. And the organization has recently initiated a Black and Latina Young Women and Girls Task Force to strengthen its commitment to equity.

Three subcommittees of the executive committee provide support in financial and organizational areas:

**By-Laws:** Defines the Council’s mission, responsibilities, and composition within the framework of applicable laws and regulations.

**Audit:** Reviews and studies budgetary matters and ensures that revenues are properly managed.

**Membership:** Determines eligible cities for membership and recruits, screens, and recommends new members.

In addition to these governing bodies, a network of deans of the Great City Colleges of Education and staff liaisons from various school district departments encourage information exchange with counterparts in other cities. Common concerns in areas such as student achievement, public relations, technology, human resources, finance, research, legislation, special education, and curriculum connect urban education personnel from member cities to share the ideas and experiences of the larger group.
Characteristics & Conferences

Characteristics of the Great City Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Student Enrollment</th>
<th>Free/Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility</th>
<th>Total Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.2M</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>470,756</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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- 44% Hispanic
- 26% African American
- 18% White
- 8% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 1% Alaskan/Native American/Other
- 16% English Language Learners
- 14% Students With Individualized Education Plan (IEP’s)

Conferences

- Virtual 64th Annual Fall Conference
  October 13–17, 2020

- Virtual Bilingual, Immigrant, and Refugee Education Meeting
  November 3, 4, 10, 13, 20 & 21, 2020

- HRD/Personnel Directors Virtual Meeting
  February 16-19, 2021

- Legislative/Policy Virtual Conference
  March 20-22, 2021

- Chief Operating Officers Virtual Conference
  April 13-15, 2021
Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council of the Great City Schools held its 64th Annual Fall Conference virtually, October 13-17, with the theme “Championing Urban Education.”

In a town hall moderated by AJ Crabill, the Council’s director of governance, student leaders from several urban school districts stressed the importance of telling the full, unvarnished history of the United States. “I want us to rewrite the textbooks,” said Carmella Thomas, a student in Oregon’s Portland Public Schools. “Let’s not give only one narrative. We need to open more perspectives to kids – and at a younger age.”

In his keynote address, author and historian Ibram X. Kendi said educators face a profound either/or situation. “Fundamentally, we as educators – our schools, our school systems, our teachers, our pedagogy – are either raising and educating the students in our classes to be racist or to be antiracist,” said Kendi.

Conferees also heard from former First Lady Lara Bush, who recounted her own memories of educators who had a lasting impact on her life with Dallas Schools Superintendent Michael Hinojosa during a discussion held at the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum in Dallas. Public education is “so important,” said Bush. “We’re so fortunate in our country to have great public schools everywhere that welcome every student.”

Former secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro was interviewed by San Antonio Schools Superintendent Pedro Martínez. A graduate of the San Antonio Independent School District, Castro is a strong advocate for education equity in the nation’s public schools. “Whether the digital divide or the need to invest fully in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) so students of every ability are fully able to learn, it’s clear we need to focus now and in the years to come on investing in equity,” said Castro.

Author and columnist Thomas Friedman participated in a session called “The Future of Education,” alongside big-city superintendents. He said that massive, simultaneous accelerations in technology, climate change and globalization are reshaping the world and K-12 education has to be about inspiring, mentoring, fostering, nurturing and creating lifelong learners.
The Council of the Great City Schools’ Legislative/Policy Conference was hosted virtually from March 20 – 22 and featured an address from the nation’s 12th U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona.

A former teacher and education commissioner in Connecticut, Cardona promised educators that his primary focus will be the reopening of the nation’s schools as quickly and as safely as possible. “To me that is the greatest equity lever I can pull right now,” said Cardona. “There is no substitute for in-person learning, so getting our students in school safely is goal number one.”

Conferees heard from Rep. Robert “Bobby” Scott (D-Va.), who urged leaders of the nation’s largest public school districts to spend the money they will receive from the American Rescue Plan wisely. “Take the money, use it well, and show us the good job you did so that we will be empowered to make the argument that the money made a difference,” said Scott.

The issue of school infrastructure was discussed by Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass), chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. Neal believes that as the nation looks to reopen schools, post-pandemic, the need for updated infrastructure for schools is more pertinent than ever and a national infrastructure plan will be especially essential for big cities, which have the oldest and most overcrowded school buildings in the country.

Greta Massetti, chief of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Field Epidemiology and Prevention Branch, noted that there has been a tremendous uptake of vaccination among educators and she encouraged school leaders to reach out to public health partners and identify ways to offer vaccination clinics at a district site.

Conferees also heard from author and Washington Post journalist Bob Woodward, who said that educators need to teach children to be lifelong learners, a trait that he said has served him well over his long career. When asked how schools can help students consume media more critically and become better informed citizens, Woodward said that if he were a third-grade teacher, he would help students learn about reputable news organizations and also about sites that grade/assess the credibility of the information being published.

As the conference came to a close, Council Executive Director Michael Casserly was honored at a video ceremony where he received the first-ever Dr. Michael Casserly Legacy Award for Educational Courage and Justice from former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. The award came with a $10,000 scholarship, sponsored by Curriculum Associates, and will be presented to a graduate from one of the Council’s member school districts.
North High School in Des Moines held a vaccination clinic where hundreds of students received the first dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.
COMMUNICATIONS

The Council of the Great City Schools works to give the public and the press a balanced and accurate view of the challenges, developments, and successes of urban public schools. In 2020-21 the Council—

- Convened over 700 ZOOM calls with member school boards, superintendents, and senior staff, including regular calls with member communications directors, to share best practices, discuss strategies, and provide personal and professional support to the membership during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Launched a reopening schools tracker with Education Week to provide up-to-date information on the operating status of the nation’s largest school districts.
- Held an introductory conference call with communication directors from urban school districts and the new communications team from the U.S. Department of Education.
- Emailed eight issues of the Council’s award-winning digital newsletter, the Urban Educator.
- Created the Communications Toolkit for Reopening Schools after COVID-19 to provide district leaders and communications staff in urban school districts with recommendations for effective messaging during the COVID-19 crisis.
- Hosted the organization’s 64th Annual Fall Conference featuring Laura Bush, Ibram X. Kendi, Julian Castro, Tom Friedman, an all-student panel discussing issues of race and equity, and dozens of best practices panels with member districts.
- Published the organization’s Annual Report.
- Issued more than a dozen press releases on Council activities.
- Issued statements on the killing of George Floyd and the storming of the U.S. Capitol.
- Managed the CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarships Program.
- Participated in the Education Writers Association Conference.
- Managed the organization’s Blue Ribbon Corporate Advisory Group.

LEGISLATION

In voicing its proposals and ideas to Congress and other federal policymakers, the Council helps shape legislation to strengthen the quality of schooling for the nation’s urban children. In 2020-21, the Council—

- Successfully advocated for the use of the Title I formula to distribute Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding, including $54 billion under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act and $122 billion under the American Rescue Plan, resulting in more than $50 billion in funding for Council member school districts.
- Coordinated Council districts’ participation in three state lawsuits and filed supporting Amicus briefs opposing the Education Department’s Interim Final Rule on Equitable Services that would have diverted an additional $300 million in COVID-19 relief funding from Council members to private schools beyond the amount required in the CARES Act.
- Conducted regular ZOOM calls of member legislative liaisons, federal program directors, general counsels, special education directors, and others during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Sent detailed policy recommendations to President-Elect Biden and the incoming administration’s Education Transition Team, focusing on substantial financial shortfalls in school districts, the safety and health of students and staff due to the pandemic, and racial and ethnic equity and justice.
- Circulated detailed summaries of the six enacted pandemic relief and recovery bills including education funding, health related funding, tax credits, and employment and benefit provisions, as well as similar summaries of the various major interim proposals.
- Provided hundreds of briefings to CGCS school boards, superintendents, chief financial officers, general counsels, and other senior district officials on the status of federal COVID-19 funding, including congressional proposals, enacted legislation, and agency regulations and waivers.
- Hosted the 2021 Annual Legislative/Policy Conference virtually, with remarks from the new Secretary of Education, the Chairs of the House Committees on Education & Labor and Ways & Means, and the Labor Secretary-Designate, as well as Q&A sessions with staff from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Education, and Congress.
- Supported proposals from the Biden Administration and continued to advocate for $100 billion in school infrastructure support through the American Jobs Plan, over $200 billion in universal pre-school and child-care grants under the American Families Plan, and doubling annual Title I funding in the FY 2022 Budget Proposal.
- Submitted regulatory comments to the Education Department on the interim final requirements for the Elementary and Secondary
**Highlights of Council Activities**

- Filed scores of legislative and regulatory questions and interceded.
- Opposed the Trump Administration’s Education Freedom.
- Coordinated efforts among member legal counsels to oppose an IDEA-related national class-action lawsuit.
- Filed multiple comments with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to ensure that $10 billion in COVID-19 funding for emergency broadband connectivity and remote learning was targeted to poverty, required minimal application burden for school districts, and protected student and family privacy.
- Filed recommendations with the Federal Communications Commission supporting the permanent use of the E-Rate program for off-campus student internet access and petitioned the agency to make school district cybersecurity costs eligible for reimbursement.
- Hosted a series of legal webinars with Husch Blackwell on issues affecting urban school districts, including COVID-19 testing and vaccination requirements; LGBTQ+ issues; legal and policy priorities of the Biden Administration; and First Amendment and hate speech issues.
- Coordinated efforts among member legal counsels to oppose an IDEA-related national class-action lawsuit.
- Opposed the Trump Administration’s Education Freedom Scholarship proposal, which would provide $5 billion in federal tax credits for donations that could be used for private school tuition.
- Filed scores of legislative and regulatory questions and interceded for member school districts to resolve problems with federal agencies.

**RESEARCH**

Timely data collection and analysis allow the Council to prepare comprehensive reports, predict trends, and assess the effects of various policies, reforms, and practices on student performance. In 2020–21, the Council—

- Coordinated bi-weekly COVID-19 ZOOM calls with research, evaluation, and assessment leaders and staff in member districts to discuss district needs and plans for responding to the pandemic.
- Conducted bi-weekly COVID-19 mental health and social/emotional learning meetings with member districts to discuss district needs and plans for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Relaunched www.edwires.org to coordinate document and information sharing among district leaders across member districts and expanded its capacity to host discussions among Council role-alike staff.
- Analyzed NAEP and Academic KPI data to assess the progress of young men and women of color across Council member districts and presented it at the Council’s Black and Latino Young Men and Boys Task Force and Black and Latina Young Women and Girls Task Force meetings.
- Provided data analysis on disproportionality for young men and women of color to support district efforts to improve student achievement and social/emotional outcomes for students.
- Completed three national surveys in collaboration with the RAND Corporation as part of the American School District Panel on district plans and progress related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Collected, analyzed, and reported on the Council’s Academic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on student achievement levels, attendance, suspensions, course participation, AP attainment, graduation rates, special education trends, and principal and teacher demographic data.
- Expanded the Council’s Academic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to include annual data collection on the performance of English Language Learners in member districts.
- Enhanced the Council’s online data dashboard of Academic KPIs to include longitudinal data.
- Served as the lead evaluator on a Kellogg Foundation grant to improve early literacy achievement in the San Antonio Independent School District.
- Conducted data analysis to support the Council’s reviews of district academic and operational functions.
- Conducted research on urban school progress on the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
• Testified before the National Assessment Governing Board arguing for a delay in 2021 NAEP testing until 2022. Request was granted.
• Finalized and published *Mirrors or Windows: How Well Do Large City Public Schools Overcome the Effects of Poverty and Other Barriers?*
• Provided technical support to districts on NAEP and other National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) results during U.S. Department of Education Workshops.
• Convened two meetings of the Trial Urban District Assessment Task Force to advise the National Assessment Governing Board and the National Center for Education Statistics.
• Represented urban school district interests at meetings of the National Assessment Governing Board; National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine; American Educational Research Association; Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium; National Center for Education Statistics; National Association for the Education of Young Children; National Network of Education Research –Practice Partnerships; Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents; National Association of Assessment Directors; Directors of Research and Evaluation; Council of Chief State School Officers; Council of Large Public Housing Authorities; and the Educational Testing Service.
• Responded to numerous member requests for statistical information and research assistance.
• Provided technical assistance to member districts on setting up or enhancing programs for males of color.

**ACHIEVEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Improving the performance of all students and closing achievement gaps is one of the Council’s most important priorities. In 2020-21, the Council—*

• Convened weekly ZOOM calls with chief academic officers and instructional leaders across member districts so they could confer on rapidly evolving issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
• Convened a committee composed of chief academic officers, experts in the field, and researchers to develop and release detailed guidance about high-quality professional development, including exemplars from member districts illustrating key principles, *Advancing Instruction and Leadership in the Nation’s Great City Schools: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining High-Quality Professional Development.*
• Worked with expert consultants and curriculum staff and leaders to develop and release a document guiding planning and responses to accelerate student learning, *Addressing Unfinished Learning After Covid-19 School Closures.*
• Arranged through the Wallace Foundation to provide technical assistance to member districts on strategically and effectively using federal American Rescue Plan Funds.
• Collaborated with IES to co-host a Reading Summit using NAEP data on addressing the declines in reading proficiency across grades four, eight, and 12, featuring panels of national reading experts and representatives from member districts.
• Collaborated with Student Achievement Partners, the Kellogg Foundation, and the San Antonio Independent School District to implement an early reading accelerators pilot project to improve early literacy skills. Lessons learned were shared with other CGCS member districts in multiple ways.
• Provided Strategic Support Teams to review the special education programs in Omaha and Norfolk.
• Published a series of three Spotlight reports on best practices among the member districts in social/emotional learning and mental health.
• Collaborated with Student Achievement Partners to facilitate three webinars about the early reading accelerators pilot project in fall 2020. Each webinar featured expert speakers and one or more member districts who shared their current implementation status as well as lessons learned.
• Worked with Student Achievement Partners to review and provide feedback on their *Priority Instructional Content in English Language Arts and Mathematics* and revisions to their *Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool* publications intended to support standards-based instruction in member districts.
Highlights of Council Activities

- Planned and facilitated three webinars on addressing unfinished learning and defining models for accelerated instruction when schools reopened in the fall of 2020.
- Provided virtual support to districts on ways to apply the principles of unfinished learning to their summer programming and curriculum guidance for the upcoming school year.
- Facilitated district networking to share approaches, successes, and lessons learned in developing quality curriculum guidance in reading, English language arts, and mathematics.
- Enabled and facilitated district collaboration on problems of practice in a range of areas, including scheduling, instructional technology, learning management systems, and professional learning.
- Continued to elevate and leverage the work of member districts that have shown substantial gains on NAEP among disadvantaged students and students of color to share characteristics, strategies, and lessons learned in publications and presentations.
- Convened the Achievement and Professional Development Task Force virtually at the Annual Fall Conference in October 2020 and the Legislative Conference in March 2021 to update district leaders on newly-released publications and trends in district data.
- Participated on NAEP’s Visioning Panels for Reading to update the assessment’s Reading Frameworks, and briefed member CAOs, ELL Directors, ELA Directors, and Task Forces. Wrote two letters to NAGB arguing for a more equitable framework.
- Collaborated with strategic partners in supporting urban districts with standards implementation and school turnaround initiatives.
- Provided virtual support to districts on their curriculum initiatives using the Council’s resource "Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum" and its accompanying rubric.
- Connected the work of the Council to work done by leading mathematics and literacy organizations to keep the membership informed and to help shape the work of those organizations in addressing urban education.

BILINGUAL, IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE EDUCATION

America’s urban schools serve more than 26 percent of the nation’s English language learners. In 2020–21, the Council—

- Convened working groups of ELL program directors and staff from across the membership on "Assessing & Addressing Unfinished Learning, Family Engagement/Communication & Translation and Interpretation, EL Student Engagement, and Technology and Opportunities to Practice Listening and Speaking to develop the Supporting English Learners in the COVID-19 Crisis guide.
- Successfully lobbied the U.S. Department of Education to include provisionally identified ELLs in the official ELL count for purposes of Title III funding and to include additional flexibility in the administration of the annual English Language Proficiency Assessment.
- Hosted a two-part webinar series on ELL standards to support ELL access to grade-level content.
- Collaborated with Student Achievement Partners (SAP) and the Council’s academics team to plan and host Early Reading Accelerators, a three-part webinar series on instructional practices to support early readers.
- Co-planned and participated in two joint task force meetings on Achievement & Professional Development and ELL & Bilingual Education.
- Responded to numerous information requests on issues and policies related to serving ELLs and immigrant children and youth in Council-member districts, especially on pandemic-related virtual instruction.
- Enrolled and supported over 10 member districts implementing professional development on supporting struggling students with the Council’s Professional Learning Platform (PLP) courses.
- Held a four-part series for the new PLP subscribers to train facilitators on the 3LsTM courses.
- Hosted virtual sessions on a range of topics including the use of technology to support virtual instructional delivery, meeting unique needs of newcomers, and addressing foundational skills within the context of English language acquisition.
- Assisted several districts in planning the rollout of the Council’s professional development courses on Complex Thinking and Communication in addition to providing technical support to previously subscribed districts.
- Supported Baltimore City Schools with their development of a strategic plan for ELLs as part of the EL Plan Guiding Coalition.
- Participated in the National English Learner Roundtable meeting with Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona.
- Presented the Educator’s Toolkit on Preventing Female Genital Mutilation, a resource jointly developed by the Council and the Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation, during a webinar for attendees from across the globe, including Australia and the United Kingdom.
- Began designing writing courses for ELLs in partnership with the Pathway to Academic Success project of the University...
of California Irvine’s National Writing Project, funded by an Education Innovation and Research (EIR) expansion grant.

- Included Los Angeles Unified School District in the Pathway to Academic Success Education Innovation and Research (EIR) expansion grant project, providing over three years of quality professional development.

**LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND SCHOOL FINANCE**

The Task Forces on Leadership, Governance, and Management, and School Finance address the quality and tenure of leadership and management in and funding of urban schools. In 2017-18, the Council—

- Designed and organized a professional development program for member school boards and superintendents with the Harvard Business School, Harvard Graduate School of Education, and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.
- Provided on-site technical assistance, coaching, and professional development on effective governance to some 35 member boards of education and superintendents.
- Published guidance document during the pandemic on finances and budgets, operations (food service, security, transportation, and facilities), technology, air quality, and water safety.
- Conducted a Strategic Support Team review of the finances of the Hillsborough County schools.
- Convened the Annual Meetings of the Human Resources Directors and the Chief Operating Officers, including the Directors of Transportation, Food Services, Facilities, and Safety and Security to discuss COVID-19-related issues.
- Convened meetings of the Council’s Governance, Management and Finance Task Force at the Annual Fall Conference and March Legislative Conference.
- Published *Managing for Results in America’s Great City Schools* with an expanded set of operational key performance indicators.
- Recommended numerous people for key administrative positions in the member districts and responded to member requests for management and operational information and services.
- Coordinated an effort to provide technical assistance to 20 Council-member districts to help them strengthen their technology interoperability.

**ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

The Council works to manage its resources and ensure the integrity of its programs. In 2020-21, the Council—

- Conducted an all-virtual external audit of the organization’s 2019-20 spending and received unqualified audit results for FY2019-20.
- Coordinated travel to 12 districts for School Board Retreats
- Managed financials for Board Retreats and Strategic Support Teams, 15 grant projects, 12 programs, and 5 virtual conferences.
- Due to the pandemic, in-person meetings were not held. Hosted an all virtual 2020 Annual Fall Conference and 2021 Legislative/Policy Conference as well as multiple meetings and forums throughout the year.
- Maintained online conference registration for all virtual meetings.
- Maintained work-from-home technology for staff during pandemic lockdown.
- Replaced all computers/laptops at the start of the fiscal year.
- Replaced copier at the beginning of the calendar year.
- Continued implementation of the alternative to payables processing during lockdown.
- Reviewed options for renewal of medical/dental/life/disability insurances.
A big thanks to Team Dallas—we have tremendous talent in Dallas—and especially my central team that helps me on a daily basis. It makes me very proud to have grown up in this city, to be an immigrant, to be the leader of this district.

MICHAEL HINOJOSA

GREEN-GARNER AWARD
During the Annual Fall Conference, the Council bestows the Green-Garner Award upon a past or present member district superintendent or board of education member in recognition of exceptional contributions to urban schools and students. As the nation’s highest urban education honor, the award pays tribute to the memory of Richard R. Green, former Minneapolis superintendent and New York City Public Schools chancellor, and Edward Garner, a businessman and former school board president of the Denver Public Schools.

The award, sponsored by Cenergistic, Curriculum Associates and K-12 Insight, includes a $10,000 college scholarship to be presented to a senior in the winner’s school system. Michael Hinojosa, the superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District, was presented with the award at the 2020 virtual Fall Conference. A graduate of Dallas ISD, Hinojosa served six years at the helm of the nation’s 14th largest school system before leaving in 2011. He returned for a second term as superintendent in 2015 and helped persuade voters to approve a $1.6 billion bond program, the district’s largest in history.

Under his leadership, the Dallas school system has seen a steady rise in student achievement over the last three years. Hinojosa has also spearheaded an effort to increase internet access and connectivity, and worked to boost the number of people of color and women in the district’s leadership ranks.

Kamila Vargas, a senior at Thomas Jefferson High School in Dallas, second to left, was presented with a Green-Garner $10,000 college scholarship at a school board meeting. She is congratulated by, left to right, school board trustee Edwin Flores, Dallas Schools Superintendent Michael Hinojosa and Thomas Jefferson principal Sandi Massey.

Kamila Vargas will attend Dallas College at Brookhaven and then the University of Texas at Austin, majoring in radio and television. She wants to help transform the way Latinos are portrayed in popular media.
Green-Garner Award Winners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>District</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>James Griffin, Retired Member</td>
<td>St. Paul School Board</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Timothy Dyer, Former Superintendent</td>
<td>Phoenix Union High School District</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>Paul Houston, Former Superintendent</td>
<td>Tucson Public Schools</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Richard Wallace Jr., Superintendent Emeritus</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Public Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Constance Clayton, Superintendent</td>
<td>School District of Philadelphia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Holmes Braddock, Board Member</td>
<td>Miami-Dade County Public Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Curman Gaines, Superintendent</td>
<td>St. Paul Public Schools</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>James Williams, Superintendent</td>
<td>Dayton Public Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Maxine Smith, Retired Board Member</td>
<td>Memphis City School Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Gerry House, Superintendent</td>
<td>Memphis City Public Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Rod Paige, Superintendent</td>
<td>Houston Independent School District</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Judy Farmer, Board Member</td>
<td>Minneapolis Public Schools</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>Barbara Byrd-Bennett, Superintendent</td>
<td>Cleveland Municipal School District</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>John Simpson, Superintendent</td>
<td>Norfolk Public Schools</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Arthur Griffin, Board Member</td>
<td>Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Franklin Till, Superintendent</td>
<td>Broward County Public Schools</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Tom Payzant, Superintendent</td>
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<td>Anna Dodson, Board Member</td>
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<td>Beverly Hall, Superintendent</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Reilinger, Board Member</td>
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<td>Pascal Forgione, Superintendent</td>
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<td>Emmett Johnson, Board Member</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Arlene Ackerman, Superintendent</td>
<td>The School District of Philadelphia</td>
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<td>Candy Olson, Board Member</td>
<td>Hillsborough County Public Schools</td>
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<td>Carol Johnson, Superintendent</td>
<td>Boston Public Schools</td>
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<td>Denise Link, Board Member</td>
<td>Cleveland Metropolitan School District</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>Terry Grier, Superintendent</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>Bill Isler, Board Member</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Public Schools</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>Eric Gordon, Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>Cleveland Metropolitan School District</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>Felton Williams, Board Member</td>
<td>Long Beach Unified School District</td>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>Alberto Carvalho, Superintendent</td>
<td>Miami-Dade County Public Schools</td>
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<td>2019</td>
<td>Lawrence Feldman, Board Member</td>
<td>Miami-Dade County Public Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Michael Hinojosa, Superintendent</td>
<td>Dallas Independent School District</td>
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## Financial Report

### Revenue

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>AUDITED REPORT FY 19-20</th>
<th>ESTIMATE FY 20-21</th>
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<tr>
<td>Membership Dues</td>
<td>$3,209,032</td>
<td>$3,213,129</td>
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<td>Grants &amp; Contracts</td>
<td>1,955,392</td>
<td>3,082,094</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sponsor Contributions</td>
<td>796,200</td>
<td>411,100</td>
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<td>Registration Fees</td>
<td>322,068</td>
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<td>Interest and Dividends</td>
<td>444,707</td>
<td>413,248</td>
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<tr>
<td>Royalties and Other Income</td>
<td>146,334</td>
<td>38,562</td>
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<td>Net Gain on Investments</td>
<td>141,889</td>
<td>242,739</td>
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<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$7,550,987</strong></td>
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### Expenses

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<td>Public Advocacy</td>
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<td>$262,425</td>
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<td>Legislative Advocacy</td>
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<td>Research</td>
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<td>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</td>
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<td>29,129</td>
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<td>Executive Leadership</td>
<td>682,582</td>
<td>781,374</td>
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<td>Member Management Services</td>
<td>181,236</td>
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<td>Admin &amp; Financial Management</td>
<td>675,792</td>
<td>884,115</td>
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<td>Fundraising Activities</td>
<td>27,903</td>
<td>21,519</td>
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<td>Conferences &amp; Meetings</td>
<td>1,273,698</td>
<td>502,214</td>
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<td>Categorical Projects</td>
<td>2,509,529</td>
<td>2,034,390</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$5,865,526</strong></td>
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### Change in Net Assets

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<th>Net Assets, Beginning</th>
<th>AUDITED REPORT FY 19-20</th>
<th>ESTIMATE FY 20-21</th>
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<td>$9,585,345</td>
<td>$222,837</td>
<td>$1,559,927</td>
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<td><strong>Net Assets, Ending</strong></td>
<td><strong>$9,362,508</strong></td>
<td><strong>$10,922,435</strong></td>
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### SPONSORS

THE COUNCIL THANKS THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS FOR THEIR SUPPORT IN 2020–2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blue Ribbon Corporate Advisory Group</th>
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<tr>
<td>Amplify Education</td>
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<td>Cenergistic</td>
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<td>Curriculum Associates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blackboard</td>
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<td>The Harris Institute/ Foundation</td>
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<td>McGraw Hill Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Savvas Learning Company</td>
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<td>Wilson Language Training</td>
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2020 Virtual Annual Fall Conference
- Advocacy & Communication Solutions, LLC
- Allovue
- Amplify
- Apple
- bulb Digital Portfolios
- Cambridge Assessment International Education
- Centegix
- ClassLink
- CT3
- Curriculum Associates
- Discovery Education
- ENA
- Enome, Inc.(Goalbook)
- Frontline Education
- Great Minds
- hand2mind
- Hayes Software Systems
- Imagine Learning
- Infosys
- JW Affinity IT
- K-12 by Elior
- Kinolved
- LearnPlatform
- LEGO Education
- McGraw Hill Education
- Microsoft
- Mosaic by ACT
- Naviance by Hobsons
- Nearpod/Flocabulary

Newsela
Oracle
Otus
PresenceLearning
Qualtrics
Raptor Technologies
Renaissance
Revolution Foods
Savvas Learning Company
School Safety Giant
SchoolMint
Sodexo
TCG
The Princeton Review/Tutor.com
Twig Education
Whetstone Education
Wilson Language Training
XanEdu Publishing
Xello

Education
Savvas Learning Company
SchoolCNXT
WIDA at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research

2021 Virtual HRD/Personnel Directors Meeting
- CherryRoad Technologies
- Curriculum Associates
- ESS
- Innive, Inc.
- K12 Insight
- Nimble
- Ultimate Kronos Group
- Upbeat

2021 Virtual Legislative/Policy Conference
- Advocacy & Communication Solutions, LLC
- Amplify
- Cambridge Assessment
- ClassLink
- Curriculum Associates
- Infosys
- K-12 by Elior
- Lightspeed Systems
- NWEA
- Raptor Technologies
- Reading Plus
- SchoolMint
- Wilson Language Training

2021 Virtual Chief Operating Officers Conference
- ALC Schools
- Audio Enhancement
- BlueBird
- Cenergistic
- ClassLink
- Intrado
- K12 Insight
- McKinstry
- National Schools Safety and Security Services
- ProTeam Foodservice Advisors
- Public Consulting Group
- Raptor Technologies
- Revolution Foods
- Sodexo
- Zonar
Publications

Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively, Guidance for School Districts  
June 2021  
The purpose of this document is to lay out a framework for the nation’s large city school systems to spend new Covid-19 federal dollars strategically and effectively.

Advancing Instruction and Leadership in the Nation’s Great City Schools: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining High-Quality Professional Development  
April 2021  
This guide aims to present district instructional leaders and staff with a core set of criteria for what high-quality professional development entails.

Academic Key Performance Indicators, 2020 Report  
October 2020  
The refined set of Academic Key Performance Indicators are designed to measure the progress among the Council’s membership toward improving the academic outcomes for students.

Managing for Results in America’s Great City Schools 2020, Results from Fiscal Year 2018-19  
October 2020  
In 2002, the Council of the Great City Schools and its members set out to develop performance measures that could be used to improve business operations in urban public school districts.

Communications Toolkit for Reopening Schools after COVID-19, Recommendations for Communication Departments  
September 2020  
This document offers a checklist of considerations, sample communication materials drawn from urban school districts across the country, and recommendations for effective messaging during the COVID-19 crisis.

Supporting English Learners in the COVID-19 Crisis  
August 2020  
This guide is the ninth in a series developed by the Council of the Great City Schools to help districts as they prepare to reopen schools—whatever that may look like—in the 2020-21 school year.

Guidelines for Supporting Technology-based Learning Environments  
July 2020  
The document identifies the challenges and accompanying recommendations in the areas of organizational structure; systems; instruction; and technology infrastructure.

Addressing Unfinished Learning After COVID-19 School Closures  
June 2020  
This guide presents district curriculum leaders and staff with an instructional framework for addressing unfinished learning and learning losses.
Council Staff

ADMINISTRATION
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Michell Yorkman, Manager of Conferences and Partnerships
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Marilyn Banks, Administrative Assistant

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Joanne Coley, Communications Manager
Kalin Hicks, Communications Intern

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Denise Walston, Director of Mathematics

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Gabriela Uro, Director of ELL Policy and Research
Julie Wright Halbert, Legislative Counsel
David Lai, Special Projects Manager

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Ray Hart, Director of Research
Renata Lyons, Research Manager
Moses Palacios, Legislative and Research Manager
Eric Vignola, Programmer/Technology Specialist

SPECIAL PROJECTS
Amanda Rose Corcoran, Special Projects Manager
Thank You

MICHAEL CASSERLY

After more than 30 years as executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, Michael Casserly will step aside in June 2021 and remain as a Strategic Adviser. The Council thanks Casserly for his leadership, vision, drive, work ethic and most of all, his deep and abiding belief in the potential of all eight million youth in America’s largest cities.
## Executive Committee 2020–2021

### CHAIR OF THE BOARD
Michael O’Neill  
Boston School Committee

### CHAIR-ELECT
Barbara Jenkins  
Orange County Superintendent

### SECRETARY/TREASURER
Kelly Gonez  
Los Angeles School Board

### IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR
Eric Gordon  
Cleveland CEO

### MEMBERS
- Thomas Ahart  
  Des Moines Superintendent
- Siad Ali  
  Minneapolis School Board
- Marcia Andrews  
  Palm Beach County School Board
- Marcelo Cavazos  
  Arlington Superintendent
- Sharon Contreras  
  Guilford County Superintendent
- Valerie Davis  
  Fresno School Board
- Leslie Grant  
  Atlanta School Board
- Guadalupe Guerrero  
  Portland Superintendent
- Michael Hinojosa  
  Dallas Superintendent
- William Hite  
  Philadelphia Superintendent
- Ashley Paz  
  Fort Worth School Board
- Robert Runcie  
  Broward Superintendent
- Sonja Brookins Santelises  
  Baltimore City Superintendent
- Elisa Vakalis  
  Anchorage School Board
- Van Henri White  
  Rochester School Board
- Sylvia Wilson  
  Pittsburgh School Board
- Darrel Woo  
  Sacramento School Board
- Ex Officio  
  Deborah Shanley  
  Lehman College Interim Dean

### ANNUAL REPORT PREPARED BY:
Joanne Coley, Communications Manager  
Tonya Harris, Director of Communications  
Kalin Hicks, Communications Intern  
Tanya Borman-Voit, Graphic Design Consultant  
Photography by Clarence Tabb Jr.

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Page 7 Photo: Students from Dallas Independent School District  
Page 10 Photo: Student from Dallas Independent School District, Student from Fresno Unified School District  
Page 14: Student from Des Moines Public Schools  
Page 17: Student from Dallas Independent School District  
Page 25: Student from Des Moines Public Schools
## Council Board of Directors and Member Districts

(AS OF MARCH 2021)

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<th>SCHOOL DISTRICT</th>
<th>SUPERINTENDENT</th>
<th>BOARD MEMBER</th>
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<tr>
<td>Albuquerque</td>
<td>Scott Elder</td>
<td>David Peercy</td>
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<td>Deena Bishop</td>
<td>Elisa Vakalis</td>
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<td>Marcelo Cavazos</td>
<td>Kecia Mays</td>
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<td>Lisa Herring</td>
<td>Leslie Grant</td>
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<td>Aurora</td>
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<td>Kyla Armstrong-Romero</td>
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<td>Austin</td>
<td>Stephanie Elizalde</td>
<td>Geranimo Rodriguez</td>
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<td>Sonja Santelises</td>
<td>Martha James-Hassan</td>
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<td>Birmingham</td>
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<td>Daagye Hendricks</td>
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<td>Bridgeport</td>
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<td>Sendhil Revuluri</td>
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<td>Justin Henry</td>
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<th>SCHOOL DISTRICT</th>
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<td>Kansas City (MO)</td>
<td>Mark Bedell</td>
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<td>Kelly Gomez</td>
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<td>Alberto Carvalho</td>
<td>Marga Perez</td>
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<td>Keith Posley</td>
<td>Larry Miller</td>
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<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>Ed Graff</td>
<td>Siad Ali</td>
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<td>Adrienne Battle</td>
<td>Rachael Anne Elrod</td>
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<td>Roger Leon</td>
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<td>Henderson Lewis Jr.</td>
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<td>Melissa Porter</td>
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<td>Rodney Jordan</td>
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<td>Jumoke Hinton-Hodge</td>
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<td>Paula Lewis</td>
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<td>Cheryl Logan</td>
<td>Shavonna Holman</td>
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<td>Pedro Martinez</td>
<td>Richard Barrera</td>
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<td>San Diego</td>
<td>Lamont Jackson (Interim)</td>
<td>Mark Sanchez</td>
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<td>Vincent Matthews</td>
<td>Valerie Amezcua</td>
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<td>Jerry Almendarez</td>
<td>Chandra Hampson</td>
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<td>Seattle</td>
<td>Denise Juneau</td>
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<td>Joris Ray</td>
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<td>Romules Durant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Karen Falconer (Interim)</td>
<td>Stacey Woolley</td>
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<td>Angela Taylor</td>
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<td>Kristen McNeill</td>
<td>Ron Rosales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wichita</td>
<td>Alicia Thompson</td>
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Members

Albuquerque • Anchorage • Arlington • Atlanta • Aurora • Austin • Baltimore • Birmingham
Boston • Bridgeport • Broward County • Buffalo • Charleston County • Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Chicago • Cincinnati • Clark County • Cleveland • Columbus • Dallas • Dayton • Denver
Des Moines • Detroit • Duval County • East Baton Rouge • El Paso • Fort Worth • Fresno
Guilford County • Hawaii • Hillsborough County • Houston • Indianapolis • Jackson
Jefferson County • Kansas City • Long Beach • Los Angeles • Miami-Dade County
Milwaukee • Minneapolis • Nashville • New Orleans • New York City • Newark • Norfolk
Oakland • Oklahoma City • Omaha • Orange County • Palm Beach County • Philadelphia
Pinellas County • Pittsburgh • Portland • Providence • Puerto Rico • Richmond • Rochester
Sacramento • San Antonio • San Diego • San Francisco • Santa Ana • Seattle • Shelby County
St. Louis • St. Paul • Toledo • Toronto • Tulsa • Washington, D.C.

Washoe County • Wichita

1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 1100N
Washington, DC 20004
tel: 202-393-2427       fax: 202-393-2400
INDIVIDUAL MEMBER SERVICES REPORTS
Report to the Orange County Public Schools
on the
Benefits and Services
of the
Council of the Great City Schools
in the
2020-21 School Year
Report to the Orange County Public Schools

on the
Benefits and Services
of the
Council of the Great City Schools
in the
2020-21 School Year

Benefits to the Orange County Public Schools

1. Provided Washington's premier and most effective urban education legislative advocacy, resulting in the following additional federal funds to Orange County in the 2020-21 school year that would not have been available without Council intervention:

- Title I Targeting $10,766,872
- Title II Targeting $893,188
- Bilingual Education Targeting $3,130,321

Total Extra for Orange County Schools in 2020-2021: $14,790,381 ¹

Orange County’s Return on 2020-2021 Membership Dues:

$285 return for each $1 paid in dues.

¹This Total Extra amount does not include the millions in additional Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds that Orange County will receive due to the Council’s efforts to target the COVID-19 stimulus money based on Title I. The Total Extra amount also does not include the funds that Orange County stood to lose annually had the Council not prevented a Title I formula amendment from being approved during the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or the additional funds in the federal Title IV grant that Orange County received in 2020-21 due to the Council’s advocacy for a targeted poverty-based formula.

Council of the Great City Schools
2. Provided the following other services directly to Orange County between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021—

- Elected Orange County Superintendent Barbara Jenkins Chair of the Council of the Great City Schools.

- Invited Orange County Superintendent Barbara Jenkins to serve on the Council’s Task Force on Federal Funds Optimization to provide guidance to the membership on strategic and effective ways to use new federal ARP funds.

- Updated Orange County Superintendent Barbara Jenkins on the revised provisions in the Family and Medical Leave program in the year-end CRRSA and new ARP stimulus bills.

- Provided governance coaching for individual Orange County school board members.

- Held 49 ZOOM calls for Great City School superintendents, including Orange County Superintendent Barbara Jenkins, between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 to discuss issues emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic and share lessons.

- Held 49 ZOOM calls for Great City School board representatives and board presidents, including Orange County board member Teresa Jacobs, between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 to discuss issues emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, race, school police, and other topics.

- Held over 700 other ZOOM calls during the 2020-21 school year for Great City Schools chief academic officers, chief financial officers, chief operating officers, bilingual education directors, special education directors, general counsels, transportation and food service directors, facilities directors, chief information officers, security directors and others that staff from the Orange County school district regularly participated in.

- Sent a copy of the Council’s report, Financial Issues in the Reopening of Schools During the COVID-19 Crisis, to the Orange County superintendent, school board representative, and chief financial officer.

- Sent talking points to the Orange County superintendent to aid in discussing with the U.S. Senate delegation the need for additional federal education aid to offset COVID-19 expenses.

- Sent periodic status reports on member district reopenings and sample reopening plans to the Orange County superintendent and school board representative.

- Arranged for the Orange County school district board of education and superintendent to participate in the Harvard University-Great City Schools ABC Institute on School Governance.
• Testified before the National Assessment Governing Board arguing for a postponement of the National Assessment of Educational Progress test from 2021 until 2022. The request was granted. Sent notification of decision to the Orange County superintendent and school board representative.

• Provided the Orange County superintendent with results from a Council survey on whether teachers who were teaching remotely must do so from their classrooms or can teach from home.

• Sent the Orange County superintendent, school board representative, and bilingual education director a copy of the Council report, Support English Learners in the COVID-19 Crisis.

• Sent the Orange County superintendent a notice of U.S. Department of Agriculture rules under the previous administration on school meals during remote instruction.

• Arranged for the Orange County superintendent and CIO to participate in a national effort to improve technology interoperability in urban school systems.

• Sent the Orange County superintendent and school board representative a copy of the ruling from a federal judge striking down the Department of Education’s regulation sending CARES Act funds to private schools who were not poor enough to receive aid through Title I. (The Council was the only national education organization to challenge the DeVos rule on this “equitable services” aid.)

• Sent repeated updates throughout the year to the Orange County superintendent, school board representative, and federal program director on the status of deliberations in Congress—House and Senate—about federal education aid in response to the pandemic.

• Sent the Orange County superintendent, school board representative, and chief operating officer a Council spotlight report, Increasing Ventilation and Improving Air Quality in Schools.

• Sent the Orange County superintendent, school board representative, and communications director a copy of the Council’s report, Communications Toolkit for Reopening Schools after COVID-19.

• Sent the Orange County superintendent, school board representative and chief operating officer a copy of the Council spotlight report, Water Safety in Reopened School Buildings.

• Sent the Orange County superintendent copies of New York City’s testing policy guide and principals’ playbook along with the Washoe County’s school reopening guide and data dashboard per the weekly superintendents call.

• Sent the Orange County superintendent results of a Council survey on grading policies in the member districts during the pandemic.

Council of the Great City Schools
Report to the Orange County Public Schools

- Provided the Orange County school board representative on one of the weekly school board calls data from other Great City School systems on the demographic characteristics of students remaining in remote instruction.

- Sent draft and final Legislative, Regulatory, Administrative, and Policy Recommendations for the President-elect Biden Education Transition Team from the Great City Schools to the Orange County superintendent and school board representative for comment and information.

- Sent the Orange County superintendent information on the status of state COVID-19 vaccination efforts and vaccine distribution plans, and a summary of preliminary member local vaccination efforts.

- Sent the Orange County superintendent, school board representative, and federal programs director a summary of the provisions of the CARES II funding bill and its $54 billion for Elementary and Secondary Education.

- Sent the Orange County superintendent, school board representative, and federal programs director a summary of the initial Biden proposal to Congress for COVID relief to elementary and secondary schools. The Council urged support of the proposal.

- Sent periodic status reports on member district efforts to vaccinate teachers, staff, and students to the Orange County superintendent and school board representative.

- Sent the Orange County superintendent and school board representative a copy of new U.S. Department of Education and Centers of Disease Control guidance on the reopening of schools.

- Sent notices to the Orange County superintendent and school board representative of the availability of Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarships for graduating African American and Hispanic students in Council member districts.

- Sent the Orange County superintendent, school board representative, and federal program director a summary of the American Rescue Plans fund (CARES III) approved by Congress with $122 billion in school aid and other assistance.

- Sent links to Orange County’s superintendent and communications directors to public service announcements from the Ad Council and COVID Collaborative on the importance of getting vaccinated that the school district could use on their own outlets.

- Sent the Orange County superintendent a copy of the response that the CDC sent to the Great City Schools and the Council of Chief State School Officers on a joint letter the two groups sent asking for clarification on CDC guidance on community spread and the “six foot” rule.
Report to the Orange County Public Schools

- Sent the Orange County superintendent the U.S. Department of Education announcement on the specific allocations to states of new American Rescue Plan funds for elementary and secondary schools.

- Arranged to have Orange County superintendent Barbara Jenkins introduce House Education and Labor Committee chair Bobby Scott (D-VA) at the Council’s Annual Legislative Conference.

- Provided results to the Orange County superintendent and school board representative from a survey of Great City School member districts on whether they were modifying their reopening plans based on new “three foot” school guidance from the CDC.

- Sent the Orange County superintendent, school board representative, and chief academic officer a copy of the Council report, Advancing Instruction and Leadership in the Nation’s Great City Schools: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining High-Quality Professional Development.

- Sent the Orange County superintendent, school board representative, and federal programs director a summary of President Biden’s proposed FY22 federal education budget.

- Sent the Orange County superintendent and school board representative copies of three Council spotlight reports on social-emotional and mental health that addressed the issues of suicide, grief, and loss on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Sent a copy of the Council guidance, Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively, to the Orange County school superintendent, school board representative, chief academic officer, and other staff.

- Held a legal webinar titled “Beyond the Bathroom: Navigating Legal Issues in Schools Related to LGBTQ Status” that Orange County staff members Keshara Cowans and Eileen Fernandez and school board member Teresa Jacobs attended.

- Held a legal webinar titled “First Amendment Issues in Public Schools” that Orange County staff member Eileen Fernandez attended.

- Held a legal webinar titled “Possible Legal and Policy Changes under the Biden Administration” that Orange County staff member Amy Envall attended.

- Held a legal webinar titled “Vaccines, Testing, and Other COVID-related Issues in Public School Districts” that Orange County staff members Amy Envall and Sarah Koren attended.

- Planned and facilitated three webinars focused on Addressing Unfinished Learning attended by Orange County staff members Kathryn Shuler Rob Bixler, Shauana Hughes, Glenna Wyatt, Kathryn Chwalisz, Kim Gilbert, Terri Varn, and Jenny Ainslie.

Council of the Great City Schools
Report to the Orange County Public Schools

- Provided **Orange County** staff member Kathy Shuler with responses on policies in other member districts regarding requiring students to have their cameras turned on in order to be counted as present in remote learning.

- Advised **Orange County** staff member Chen An on managing the process of conducting background checks for researchers and staff and providing vendor badges to conduct research activities.

- Held an academic team discussion with **Orange County** staff member Andrew Gold.

- Provided **Orange County** staff member Robert Curran with information on the benefits and drawbacks of leasing vs. purchasing Window devices.

- Provided **Orange County** staff member Roberto J. Pacheco with strategies used by other school districts to provide student meals while complying with COVID-19 CDC guidelines.

- Emailed monthly copies of the Council’s award-winning newsletter, the Urban Educator, to the **Orange County** superintendent, all school board members, and senior staff.

- Carried story on **Orange County** in the *Urban Educator*: “New Leadership at Council Begins” (June/July 2020).

- Carried story on **Orange County** in the *Urban Educator*: “2020-2021 School Year Kicks Off With Virtual Learning” (September 2020).


- Carried story on **Orange County** in the *Urban Educator*: “Urban Districts Awarded Best Communities for Music Education” (April 2021).

- Posted **Orange County** job announcement for Chief Financial Officer.
3. Individuals from **Orange County Public Schools** attending Great City School conferences and meetings in 2020-21—

| Annual Fall Conference |  
| October 13 – 17, 2020  
| Virtual  
|  
| • Susan Abb  
| • Shari Bobinski  
| • Patricia Bowen-Painter  
| • Tashanda Brown-Cannon  
| • Nathalie Cumbie  
| • Robert Curran  
| • Maurice Draggon  
| • Angie Gallo  
| • Kathleen Gordon  
| • Pamela Gould  
| • Arabia Henley  
| • Teresa Jacobs  
|  
| • Barbara Jenkins  
| • Amol Karkhanis  
| • Mariel Milano  
| • Jennifer Sasser  
| • Kathryn Shuler  
| • Melanie Stefanowicz  
| • Bonnie Toffoli  
| • Wesley Trimble  
| • Maria Vazquez  
| • Teasha Williams  
| • Glenna Wyatt  
| • Stephanie Wyka  

| Bilingual, Immigrant & Refugee Education Directors Meeting  
| November 3 – 21, 2020  
| Virtual  
|  
| • No One  

| Annual Legislative/Policy Conference  
| March 20 – 22, 2021  
| Virtual  
|  
| • Karen Castor Dentel  
| • Eileen Fernandez  
| • Teresa Jacobs  
| • Barbara Jenkins  

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Council of the Great City Schools
## Chief Human Resources Officers Meeting
**February 16 – 18, 2021**
**Virtual**
- Leigh Ann Blackmore
- Theresa Harter-Miles
- Stephanie Heron
- James Preusser
- Bonnie Toffoli

## Chief Operating Officers & Directors of Support Services Meeting
**April 13 – 15, 2021**
**Virtual**
- Jamila Adams
- Celena Cutts
- Michael Eugene
- Scotty Ferguson
- Kimberly Frye
- Lora Gilbert
- Bryan Holmes
- Cesar Molina
- Roberto Pacheco
- Christopher Solomon
- Javier Vazquez
- Mark Watson
- Bill Wen
- Kenneth Winter
General Benefits to the Membership

Highlights

- Secured some $1,142,418,028 in targeted federal funds for member school districts for the 2020-2021 school year. (An average of $348 return for every $1 spent on dues.)
- Convened the Annual Fall Conference remotely featuring former First Lady Laura Bush; author and advocate Ibram X. Kendi; former presidential candidate Julian Castro; *New York Times* columnist and author Tom Friedman; a national student town hall on race and equity; and scores of sessions and workshops on how urban school districts are working during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Held over 700 weekly conference calls for school board members, superintendents, chief academic officers, chief financial officers, chief operating officers, and others to coordinate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and plan for next school year.
- Wrote and disseminated COVID-19 school reopening guidance and reports in the areas of unfinished learning, mental health and social-emotional wellbeing, ELL screening, special education, testing and data, finance, communications, and district operations.
- Named a member task force and developed detailed guidance for member districts on the use of new federal COVID-relief funds, *Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively*.
- Successfully filed suit in multiple federal courts to block the DeVos Department of Education from implementing “equitable services” rules that would have cost Council-member districts hundreds of millions of dollars.
- Designed and scheduled the second professional development program at Harvard University for member school boards and superintendents.
- Released the Council’s Academic and Operational Key Performance Indicators to allow members to compare performance across districts.
- Developed and released a new Professional Development Framework to help member districts improve staff capacity.
- Expanded the Council’s new Professional Learning Platform to help members meet the needs of struggling students.
- Released a major new study on how well urban schools mitigated the effects of poverty and other barriers.
- Testified before the National Assessment Governing Board to delay NAEP testing from 2021 until 2022.
The Council of the Great City Schools works to give the public and the press a balanced and accurate view of the challenges, developments, and successes of urban public schools. In 2020-21 the Council—

- Convened over 700 ZOOM calls with member school boards, superintendents, and senior staff, including regular calls with member communications directors, to share best practices, discuss strategies, and provide personal and professional support to the membership during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Launched a reopening schools tracker with Education Week to provide up-to-date information on the operating status of the nation’s largest school districts.
- Held an introductory conference call with communication directors from urban school districts and the new communications team from the U.S. Department of Education.
- Emailed eight issues of the Council’s award-winning digital newsletter, the Urban Educator.
- Created the Communications Toolkit for Reopening Schools after COVID-19 to provide district leaders and communications staff in urban school districts with recommendations for effective messaging during the COVID-19 crisis.
- Hosted the organization’s 64th Annual Fall Conference featuring Laura Bush, Ibram X. Kendi, Julian Castro, Tom Friedman, an all-student panel discussing issues of race and equity, and dozens of best practices panels with member districts.
- Published the organization’s Annual Report.
- Issued more than a dozen press releases on Council activities.
- Issued statements on the killing of George Floyd and the storming of the U.S. Capitol.
- Managed the CGCS-Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarships Program.
- Participated in the Education Writers Association Conference.
- Managed the organization’s Blue Ribbon Corporate Advisory Group.

In voicing its proposals and ideas to Congress and other federal policymakers, the Council helps shape national legislation and policy to strengthen the quality of schooling for the nation’s urban children. In 2020-21, the Council—

- Successfully advocated for the use of the Title I formula to distribute Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding, including $54 billion under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act and $122 billion under the American Rescue Plan, resulting in more than $50 billion in funding for Council member school districts.
- Coordinated Council districts’ participation in three state lawsuits and filed supporting Amicus briefs opposing the Education Department’s Interim Final Rule on Equitable
Services that would have diverted an additional $300 million in COVID-19 relief funding from Council members to private schools beyond the amount required in the CARES Act.

- Conducted regular ZOOM calls of member legislative liaisons, federal program directors, general counsels, special education directors, and others during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Sent detailed policy recommendations to President-Elect Biden and the incoming administration’s Education Transition Team, focusing on substantial financial shortfalls in school districts, the safety and health of students and staff due to the pandemic, and racial and ethnic equity and justice.
- Circulated detailed summaries of the six enacted pandemic relief and recovery bills including education funding, health related funding, tax credits, and employment and benefit provisions, as well as similar summaries of the various major interim proposals.
- Provided hundreds of briefings to CGCS school boards, superintendents, chief financial officers, general counsels, and other senior district officials on the status of federal COVID-19 funding, including congressional proposals, enacted legislation, and agency regulations and waivers.
- Hosted the 2021 Annual Legislative/Policy Conference virtually, with remarks from the new Secretary of Education, the Chairs of the House Committees on Education & Labor and Ways & Means, and the Labor Secretary-Designate, as well as Q&A sessions with staff from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Education, and Congress.
- Supported proposals from the Biden Administration and continued to advocate for $100 billion in school infrastructure support through the American Jobs Plan, over $200 billion in universal pre-school and child-care grants under the American Families Plan, and doubling annual Title I funding in the FY 2022 Budget Proposal.
- Submitted regulatory comments to the Education Department on the interim final requirements for the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief fund (ESSER) and provided testimony on Title IX regulatory revisions to the Office of Civil Rights.
- Encouraged the U.S. Department of Education to enforce strict compliance with the State Maintenance of Effort provisions for ESSER funds under the American Rescue Plan to ensure federal stimulus funds are not offset by reductions in state aid.
- Supported the $1 billion Emergency Operations relief for school meal programs in the December 2020 Consolidated Appropriations bill.
- Submitted comments to the U.S. Department of Agriculture supporting additional regulatory simplification and streamlining in the regular school meal and summer food programs, and successfully promoted the extension of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) COVID-19 waivers for school meals to continue to allow districts to provide free meals to all students through pick-up, drop-off, and other delivery methods.
- Briefed the White House multiple times on Council members’ efforts to vaccinate citizens, staff, and students at school sites.
- Filed multiple comments with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to ensure that $10 billion in COVID-19 funding for emergency broadband connectivity and remote learning was targeted to poverty, required minimal application burden for school districts, and protected student and family privacy.
Report to the Orange County Public Schools

- Filed recommendations with the Federal Communications Commission supporting the permanent use of the E-Rate program for off-campus student internet access and petitioned the agency to make school district cybersecurity costs eligible for reimbursement.
- Hosted a series of legal webinars with Husch Blackwell on issues affecting urban school districts, including COVID-19 testing and vaccination requirements; LGBTQ+ issues; legal and policy priorities of the Biden Administration; and First Amendment and hate speech issues.
- Coordinated efforts among member legal counsels to oppose an IDEA-related national class-action lawsuit.
- Opposed the Trump Administration’s Education Freedom Scholarship proposal, which would provide $5 billion in federal tax credits for donations that could be used for private school tuition.
- Fielded scores of legislative and regulatory questions and interceded for member school districts to resolve problems with federal agencies.

RESEARCH

Timely data collection and analysis allow the Council to prepare comprehensive reports, predict trends, and assess the effects of various policies, reforms, and practices on student performance. In 2020-21, the Council—

- Coordinated bi-weekly COVID-19 ZOOM calls with research, evaluation, and assessment leaders and staff in member districts to discuss district needs and plans for responding to the pandemic.
- Conducted bi-weekly COVID-19 mental health and social/emotional learning meetings with member districts to discuss district needs and plans for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Relaunched [www.edwires.org](http://www.edwires.org) to coordinate document and information sharing among district leaders across member districts and expanded its capacity to host discussions among Council role-alike staff.
- Analyzed NAEP and Academic KPI data to assess the progress of young men and women of color across Council member districts and presented it at the Council’s Black and Latino Young Men and Boys Task Force and Black and Latina Young Women and Girls Task Force meetings.
- Provided data analysis on disproportionality for young men and women of color to support district efforts to improve student achievement and social/emotional outcomes for students.
- Completed three national surveys in collaboration with the RAND Corporation as part of the American School District Panel on district plans and progress related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
• Collected, analyzed, and reported on the Council’s Academic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on student achievement levels, attendance, suspensions, course participation, AP attainment, graduation rates, special education trends, and principal and teacher demographic data.
• Expanded the Council’s Academic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to include annual data collection on the performance of English Language Learners in member districts.
• Enhanced the Council’s online data dashboard of Academic KPIs to include longitudinal data.
• Served as the lead evaluator on a Kellogg Foundation grant to improve early literacy achievement in the San Antonio Independent School District.
• Conducted data analysis to support the Council’s reviews of district academic and operational functions.
• Conducted research on urban school progress on the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
• Testified before the National Assessment Governing Board arguing for a delay in 2021 NAEP testing until 2022. Request was granted.
• Finalized and published *Mirrors or Windows: How Well Do Large City Public Schools Overcome the Effects of Poverty and Other Barriers?*
• Provided technical support to districts on NAEP and other National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) results during U. S. Department of Education Workshops.
• Convened two meetings of the Trial Urban District Assessment Task Force to advise the National Assessment Governing Board and the National Center for Education Statistics.
• Represented urban school district interests at meetings of the National Assessment Governing Board; National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine; American Educational Research Association; Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium; National Center for Education Statistics; National Association for the Education of Young Children; National Network of Education Research –Practice Partnerships; Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents; National Association of Assessment Directors; Directors of Research and Evaluation; Council of Chief State School Officers; Council of Large Public Housing Authorities; and the Educational Testing Service.
• Responded to numerous member requests for statistical information and research assistance.
• Provided technical assistance to member districts on setting up or enhancing programs for males of color.

**ACHIEVEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Improving the performance of all students and closing achievement gaps is one of the Council’s most important priorities. In 2020-21, the Council—

• Convened weekly ZOOM calls with chief academic officers and instructional leaders across member districts so they could confer on rapidly evolving issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
• Convened a committee composed of chief academic officers, experts in the field, and researchers to develop and release detailed guidance about high-quality professional
development, including exemplars from member districts illustrating key principles, *

- Worked with expert consultants and curriculum staff and leaders to develop and release a document guiding planning and responses to accelerate student learning, *Addressing Unfinished Learning After Covid-19 School Closures.*
- Arranged through the Wallace Foundation to provide technical assistance to member districts on strategically and effectively using federal American Rescue Plan Funds.
- Collaborated with IES to co-host a Reading Summit using NAEP data on addressing the declines in reading proficiency across grades four, eight, and 12, featuring panels of national reading experts and representatives from member districts.
- Collaborated with Student Achievement Partners, the Kellogg Foundation, and the San Antonio Independent School District to implement an early reading accelerators pilot project to improve early literacy skills. Lessons learned were shared with other CGCS member districts in multiple ways.
- Provided Strategic Support Teams to review the special education programs in Omaha and Norfolk.
- Published a series of three Spotlight reports on best practices among the member districts in social/emotional learning and mental health.
- Collaborated with Student Achievement Partners to facilitate three webinars about the early reading accelerators pilot project in fall 2020. Each webinar featured expert speakers and one or more member districts who shared their current implementation status as well as lessons learned.
- Worked with Student Achievement Partners to review and provide feedback on their *Priority Instructional Content in English Language Arts and Mathematics* and revisions to their *Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool* publications intended to support standards-based instruction in member districts.
- Planned and facilitated three webinars on addressing unfinished learning and defining models for accelerated instruction when schools reopened in the fall of 2020.
- Provided virtual support to districts on ways to apply the principles of unfinished learning to their summer programming and curriculum guidance for the upcoming school year.
- Facilitated district networking to share approaches, successes, and lessons learned in developing quality curriculum guidance in reading, English language arts, and mathematics.
- Enabled and facilitated district collaboration on problems of practice in a range of areas, including scheduling, instructional technology, learning management systems, and professional learning.
- Continued to elevate and leverage the work of member districts that have shown substantial gains on NAEP among disadvantaged students and students of color to share characteristics, strategies, and lessons learned in publications and presentations.
Convened the Achievement and Professional Development Task Force virtually at the Annual Fall Conference in October 2020 and the Legislative Conference in March 2021 to update district leaders on newly-released publications and trends in district data.

Participated on NAEP’s Visioning Panels for Reading to update the assessment’s Reading Frameworks, and briefed member CAOs, ELL Directors, ELA Directors, and Task Forces. Wrote two letters to NAGB arguing for a more equitable framework.

Collaborated with strategic partners in supporting urban districts with standards implementation and school turnaround initiatives.

Provided virtual support to districts on their curriculum initiatives using the Council’s resource *Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum* and its accompanying rubric.

Connected the work of the Council to work done by leading mathematics and literacy organizations to keep the membership informed and to help shape the work of those organizations in addressing urban education.

**BILINGUAL, IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE EDUCATION**

America’s urban schools serve around 26 percent of the nation’s English language learners. In 2020-21, the Council—

- Convened 22 weekly and bi-weekly ZOOM calls with ELL program directors and staff to share information and provide mutual assistance to address ELL needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Developed and published *Sample Questionnaires for Provisional Screening of ELLs* with input from experts and ELL program directors to facilitate remote English language proficiency screening while in-person screening was not possible during the pandemic.
- Convened working groups of ELL program directors and staff from across the membership on *Assessing & Addressing Unfinished Learning, Family Engagement/Communication & Translation and Interpretation, EL Student Engagement, and Technology and Opportunities to Practice Listening and Speaking* to develop the *Supporting English Learners in the COVID-19 Crisis* guide.
- Successfully lobbied the U.S. Department of Education to include provisionally identified ELLs in the official ELL count for purposes of Title III funding and to include additional flexibility in the administration of the annual English Language Proficiency Assessment.
- Hosted a two-part webinar series on ELD standards to support ELL access to grade-level content.
- Collaborated with Student Achievement Partners (SAP) and the Council's academics team to plan and host *Early Reading Accelerators*, a three-part webinar series on instructional practices to support early readers.
- Co-planned and participated in two joint task force meetings on Achievement & Professional Development and ELL & Bilingual Education.
- Responded to numerous information requests on issues and policies related to serving ELLs and immigrant children and youth in Council-member districts, especially on pandemic-related virtual instruction.
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- Enrolled and supported over 10 member districts implementing professional development on supporting struggling students with the Council’s Professional Learning Platform (PLP) courses.
- Held a four-part series for the new PLP subscribers to train facilitators on the 3Ls™ courses.
- Hosted virtual sessions on a range of topics including the use of technology to support virtual instructional delivery, meeting unique needs of newcomers, and addressing foundational skills within the context of English language acquisition.
- Assisted several districts in planning the rollout of the Council’s professional development courses on Complex Thinking and Communication in addition to providing technical support to previously subscribed districts.
- Supported Baltimore City Schools with their development of a strategic plan for ELLs as part of the EL Plan Guiding Coalition.
- Participated in the National English Learner Roundtable meeting with Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona.
- Presented the Educator’s Toolkit on Preventing Female Genital Mutilation, a resource jointly developed by the Council and the Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation, during a webinar for attendees from across the globe, including Australia and the United Kingdom.
- Began designing writing courses for ELLs in partnership with the Pathway to Academic Success project of the University of California Irvine’s National Writing Project, funded by an Education Innovation and Research (EIR) expansion grant.
- Included Los Angeles Unified School District in the Pathway to Academic Success Education Innovation and Research (EIR) expansion grant project, providing over three years of quality professional development.

LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, AND MANAGEMENT AND SCHOOL FINANCE

The Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and School Finance addresses the quality and tenure of leadership and management in and funding of urban schools. In 2020-21, the Council—

- Designed and organized a professional development program for member school boards and superintendents with the Harvard Business School, Harvard Graduate School of Education, and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.
- Provided on-site technical assistance, coaching, and professional development on effective governance to some 35 member boards of education and superintendents.

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- Published guidance document during the pandemic on finances and budgets, operations (food service, security, transportation, and facilities), technology, air quality, and water safety.
- Conducted a Strategic Support Team review of the finances of the Hillsborough County schools.
- Convened the Annual Meetings of the Human Resources Directors and the Chief Operating Officers, including the Directors of Transportation, Food Services, Facilities, and Safety and Security to discuss COVID-19-related issues.
- Convened meetings of the Council’s Governance, Management and Finance Task Force at the Annual Fall Conference and March Legislative Conference.
- Published *Managing for Results in America’s Great City Schools* with an expanded set of operational key performance indicators.
- Recommended numerous people for key administrative positions in the member districts and responded to member requests for management and operational information and services.
- Coordinated an effort to provide technical assistance to 20 Council-member districts to help them strengthen their technology interoperability.

**ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

The Council works to manage its resources and ensure the integrity of its programs. In 2020-21, the Council—

- Conducted an all-virtual external audit of the organization’s 2019-20 spending and received unqualified audit results for FY2019-20.
- Coordinated travel to 12 districts for School Board Retreats
- Managed financials for Board Retreats and Strategic Support Teams, 15 grant projects, 12 programs, and 5 virtual conferences.
- Due to the pandemic, in-person meetings were not held. Hosted an all virtual 2020 Annual Fall Conference and 2021 Legislative/Policy Conference as well as multiple meetings and forums throughout the year.
- Maintained online conference registration for all virtual meetings.
- Maintained work-from-home technology for staff during pandemic lockdown.
- Replaced all computers/laptops at the start of the fiscal year.
- Replaced copier at the beginning of the calendar year.
- Continued implementation of the alternative to payables processing during lockdown.
- Reviewed options for renewal of medical/dental/life/disability insurances.