



**Council of the  
Great City Schools®  
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- Toledo
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- Tulsa
- Washington, D.C.
- Washoe County
- Wichita

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April 9, 2020

Mr. Robert Runcie  
Superintendent  
Broward County Public Schools  
600 SE 3rd Avenue  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301

Robert,

Attached you will find an invoice for the 2020-21 membership dues to the Council of the Great City Schools. We encourage your prompt payment in order to keep your national organization in good financial standing.

Later this summer, you will also receive reports on the Council’s activities during the 2019-20 school year and the services provided specifically to your district and to the membership generally—along with a Return on Investment calculation for your district. These reports are designed to answer the question, “What did we get for our dues?”

The Council was incredibly productive again this year. Currently, the Council is marshalling its membership daily to exchange information, share best practices, and provide early lessons learned as the coronavirus takes its toll on the nation. Our weekly calls with school board members, superintendents, chief academic officers, chief financial officers, chief operating officers, bilingual directors, directors of special education and general counsels, research and testing directors, and chief information officers are providing a powerful forum for connecting members around common challenges during the pandemic.

The exchange of information during the health crisis is also allowing the Council to tell a positive story to the nation’s press, including the *New York Times*, *NBC News*, *NPR*, *Education Week*, and others, about the extraordinary work that urban schools are doing to teach and feed their students each and every day. And the Council is one of the lead organizations in lobbying Capitol Hill for some \$3.5 billion in supplemental federal aid that will flow to the membership shortly. The organization is now working on a larger aid package.

To be sure, the Council remains the most effective and aggressive advocate for urban public schools in the nation. Good examples include the Council’s work on federal school meals regulations, the E-Rate program, equitable services, the public charge rule, and other issues. In addition, we filed a successful brief with the U.S. Supreme Court opposing the citizenship question on the 2020 Census. We supported Congressional testimony on school safety and infrastructure, provided you with summaries of important legislation as it was signed into law, and conducted quarterly legal webinars on critical urban education issues of the day.



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Palm Beach County  
Philadelphia  
Pinellas County  
Pittsburgh  
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But the Council is not just about federal advocacy—as effective as it is in this arena. It is also about our ability to work together in addressing the many challenges we face—in the short and long term.

The group has made major contributions over the years to the development and implementation of college- and career-readiness standards in reading and math. The Council has convened numerous meetings, workshops, and forums to help its members improve instruction. In addition, the Council recently released new guidance to help members assess and strengthen their curricula, and it will soon release new tools on professional development.

Last year, the Council also launched its automated academic key performance indicators (KPIs). These indicators build on the nearly 400 operational KPIs that the Council and its membership developed some years ago. The new academic KPIs are a breakthrough that will allow the members to compare themselves with other urban school districts on instructional benchmarks that predict graduation and performance.

The Council also successfully intervened with the National Assessment Governing Board this year to adjust the NAEP math frameworks that were misaligned with the standards and erroneously dampening large city scores.

Moreover, the Council launched an unprecedented effort to harness the joint-purchasing power of the membership to incent publishers to produce better materials for English learners; developed criteria for selecting instructional materials that support English language development; and unveiled a new video-based professional learning platform to help teachers address the language-development needs of struggling students.

In addition, the Council continues to provide monthly copies of its award-winning and now digital *Urban Educator* newsletter to keep the nation posted on major big-city school developments. The group published ground-breaking work on principal supervisors, and it provided scholarships through the Bernard Harris Foundation to graduating African American and Hispanic students.

The Council continues to strengthen the capacity of its member districts with new Strategic Support Teams, which provide technical assistance in areas ranging from instruction to staffing, special education to bilingual instruction, and transportation to facilities management. These teams are a perfect example of how urban school districts under the Council's umbrella are pulling together to help each other meet our toughest challenges and improve.

The Council also provides on-site support and technical assistance to school boards to strengthen their governance capacity. Moreover, we designed and convened a unique



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professional development institute at Harvard University for our superintendents and school board members, and it is our plan to continue this excellent professional development and partner with Harvard again this summer.

Finally, the organization continues to convene the highest quality forums and conferences to allow you to share your successes and learn from each other. Our annual conference in Louisville (with teacher of the year Rodney Robinson, Valerie Jarrett, Jon Meacham, and a town-hall on the 2020 Census) was hailed as our best.

To be sure, some of our positions are controversial, but no organization fights more aggressively or successfully for the nation’s urban schools and urban schoolchildren than the Council of the Great City Schools. The Council remains the only independent education coalition located in Washington whose sole mission and purpose is the same as yours: the improvement of public education in our Great Cities.

The Council is a group “fully committed to its constituents” and is listed along with only the NEA, AFT, and the CCSSO by the *Washington Almanac* as one of the most powerful education groups in Washington. In fact, the Council is considered one of the most effective organizations on Capitol Hill in any field. *Lessons from the Hill* calls the Council “relentless” and critical to Washington’s understanding of urban school needs. *USA Today* calls the Council “a crusader for urban education,” the *New York Times* describes the group as “influential,” and *Education Week* refers to us as “stalwart.”

In short, the Council is an organization that belongs solely to urban educators for urban education and urban kids—all the time. That commitment is needed now more than ever as we work to move past the coronavirus crisis, improve academic outcomes, and fend off budget cuts. The many challenges we face will require urban schools to be more vocal, united, and forceful than ever. Your prompt payment will ensure that we can continue our work during these challenging times. Thank you for your commitment to the Council of the Great City Schools and our urban schoolchildren.

Sincerely,

Michael Casserly  
Executive Director

cc Laurie Rich Levinson