



Council of the Great City Schools  
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. ♦ Suite 702 ♦ Washington, D.C. ♦ 20004  
<http://www.cgcs.org>

FOR RELEASE  
June 1, 2010

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(202) 393-2427

## **Nation's Urban School Leaders Endorse Common Core Standards**

WASHINGTON, June 1 – More than 50 superintendents, chancellors and CEOs of the nation's big-city public school systems have signed a letter supporting common core state standards to prepare students for success in college and careers.

The open letter to the public by the Council of the Great City Schools, representing urban public schools, coincides with the release of new common academic standards by the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Leaders of the large city school districts believe the kindergarten to 12th-grade common core standards in English-language arts and mathematics will help them advance reform efforts in their respective districts.

"Public education is supposed to promote a level playing field for our young people. Instead, the standards now in place do the opposite by institutionalizing uneven expectations and outcomes," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly and co-signers of the letter in calling for a change to the variety of state-by-state standards.

"The common core standards finally make real the promise of American public education to expect the best of all our schoolchildren," Casserly stresses, regardless of which state they come from.

Fifty-five big-city school leaders, from New York to Chicago and Miami to Seattle, individually co-signed the letter, urging the states to "work with us on the adoption and implementation of the new standards" and the nation to support the grade-by-grade standards.

The Council contributed to the development of the common core standards through a review committee of urban school leaders led by Boston Public Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson. The organization was the first national group of education officials to endorse nationwide academic standards.

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## An Open Letter from America's Great City School Superintendents, Chancellors and Chief Executive Officers in Support of the Common Core State Standards

June 2, 2010

Efforts to raise student achievement in the nation's urban schools are paying off. Math and reading scores are going up—in most cases outpacing the national average for improvement—while superintendents are staying on the job longer and more schools are debunking the myth that urban students can't perform at high levels.

Leaders of urban school systems have made innovation and excellence a priority. They have experimented with nontraditional leadership, smaller schools, instructional reforms, and aggressive interventions in low-performing schools. They have moved to attract and retain qualified teachers with new compensation systems that reward performance, and by providing better training and support for teachers. And they are becoming smarter and more targeted in their use of limited resources. The efforts are producing results.

However, even the best efforts will not get all students to the levels of performance needed to compete in today's global economy until we repair the patchwork system of U.S. standards that encourages high expectations in one community while discouraging those expectations in another.

Public education is supposed to promote a level playing field for our young people. Instead, the standards now in place do the opposite by institutionalizing uneven expectations and outcomes. In the absence of a clear and consistent set of common academic standards for what should be expected of all children, each state instead sets its own standards for what kids should know and be able to do. Sometimes these standards are high; often they are not. Either way, the inconsistencies between them serve to perpetuate the nation's educational inequities at a time when we should be working to overcome them. This issue is particularly important in America's largest cities, which educate millions of the students the nation most desperately wants to help.

With proper support for implementation, the Common Core State Standards will help us solve these problems. These standards will help us ensure that high school graduates across the country are adequately prepared to compete in the global economy, no matter which state they come from. These standards will give all our schools common targets, clarifying what we expect teachers to be teaching and what we will hold schools and districts accountable for. These standards will give us, for once, a common definition of what academic proficiency means and what it doesn't mean, rather than having 50 different definitions. Not only will this help schools focus their efforts on one set of high standards, it will undercut the temptation by individual states to lower their standards or dumb down their tests to meet federal targets.

The Common Core State Standards will allow us to determine more effectively who is making the most progress and how they are doing it, something that is nearly impossible to do under the fractured system now in place. These standards would give curriculum and test developers, publishers, and education schools a way to align their work. (In an attempt to include every state's standards, textbooks now cover more material than can be mastered in a school year, resulting in more remedial work in subsequent grades.)

There is little reason to think, as some critics have claimed, that common standards would undermine the nation's tradition of local control of schools. Not many of those critics are superintendents in the nation's largest cities, where we have more than enough local decisions to make. The freedom to teach to inconsistent standards that don't prepare our students for college and careers is not a freedom we would fight for. We the undersigned are urban school leaders from across the country who support the new Common Core State Standards and will be working hard in the coming years to implement them.

We believe it is only through common standards that we can deliver on the promise of equity implicit in the purpose of public education, and give all our young people a real shot at the American dream. We are pleased that the Council of the Great City Schools, the first national education membership organization to come out in favor of having common standards, has helped spearhead the effort and has represented us in the standards development process. We urge the states to work with us on the adoption and implementation of the new standards, and we recommend that the nation support them. Thank you.

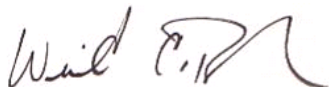
Sincerely,



Michael Casserly, Executive Director  
Council of the Great City Schools



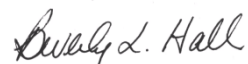
Carol Johnson, Chair of the Board  
Council of the Great City Schools  
Boston Public Schools Superintendent



Winston Brooks, Superintendent  
Albuquerque Public Schools



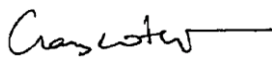
Carol Comeau, Superintendent  
Anchorage School District



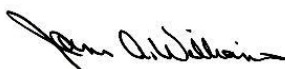
Beverly Hall, Superintendent  
Atlanta Public Schools



Andres Alonso, Chief Executive Officer  
Baltimore City Public Schools



Craig Witherspoon, Superintendent  
Birmingham City Schools



James Williams, Superintendent  
Buffalo City School District



Nancy McGinley, Superintendent  
Charleston County Public Schools



Peter Gorman, Superintendent  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools



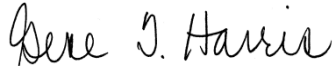
Ron Huberman, Chief Executive Officer  
Chicago Public Schools



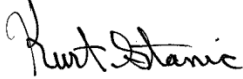
Mary Ronan, Superintendent  
Cincinnati Public Schools



Walt Rulffes, Superintendent  
Clark County School District



Gene Harris, Superintendent  
Columbus Public Schools



Kurt Stanic, Superintendent  
Dayton Public Schools




Michelle Rhee, Chancellor  
District of Columbia Public Schools



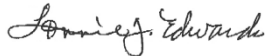
John Dilworth, Superintendent  
East Baton Rouge Parish School System



Michael Hanson, Superintendent  
Fresno Unified School District



Terry Grier, Superintendent  
Houston Independent School District



Lonnie Edwards, Sr., Superintendent  
Jackson Public School District



J. William Covington, Superintendent  
Kansas City Missouri School District



Christopher Steinhauser, Superintendent  
Long Beach Unified School District



Kriner Cash, Superintendent  
Memphis City Public Schools



William Andreopoulos, Superintendent  
Milwaukee Public Schools



Eugene Sanders, Superintendent  
Cleveland Metropolitan School District



Michael Hinojosa, Superintendent  
Dallas Independent School District



Tom Boasberg, Superintendent  
Denver Public Schools



William Pratt-Dannals, Superintendent  
Duval County Public Schools



Melody Johnson, Superintendent  
Fort Worth Independent School District



MaryEllen Elia, Superintendent  
Hillsborough County School District



Eugene White, Superintendent  
Indianapolis Public Schools



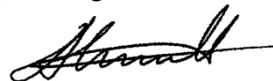
Sheldon Berman, Superintendent  
Jefferson County Public Schools



Linda Watson, Superintendent  
Little Rock School District



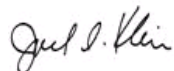
Ramon Cortines, Superintendent  
Los Angeles Unified School District



Alberto Carvalho, Superintendent  
Miami-Dade County Public Schools



William Green, Superintendent  
Minneapolis Public Schools




Joel Klein, Chancellor  
New York City Department of Education



Stephen Jones, Superintendent  
Norfolk Public Schools



Karl Springer, Superintendent  
Oklahoma City Public Schools



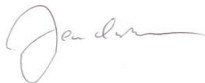
Ronald Blocker, Superintendent  
Orange County Public Schools



Mark Roosevelt, Superintendent  
Pittsburgh Public Schools



Thomas Brady, Superintendent  
Providence Public Schools



Jean-Claude Brizard, Superintendent  
Rochester City School District



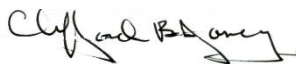
William Kowba, Interim Superintendent  
San Diego Unified School District



Maria Goodloe-Johnson, Superintendent  
Seattle Public Schools



Valeria Silva, Superintendent  
St. Paul Public Schools



Clifford Janey, Superintendent  
Newark Public Schools



Anthony Smith, Superintendent  
Oakland Unified School District



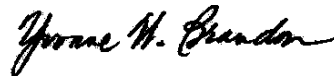
John Mackiel, Superintendent of Schools  
Omaha Public Schools



Arlene Ackerman, Superintendent  
Philadelphia Public Schools



Carole Smith, Superintendent  
Portland Public Schools



Yvonne Brandon, Superintendent  
Richmond Public Schools



McKell Withers, Superintendent  
Salt Lake City School District



Carlos Garcia, Superintendent  
San Francisco Unified School District



Kelvin Adams, Superintendent  
St. Louis Public Schools



John Foley, Superintendent  
Toledo Public Schools