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**STATEMENT ON *THE NATION'S REPORT CARD*:
*2013 Mathematics and Reading—Trial Urban District Assessment***

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Good afternoon. I am Michael Casserly, the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools. Thank you so much for your interest. Before I start, I want to thank Cornelia Orr and her great team at the National Assessment Governing Board, and Jack Buckley and Peggy Carr and their terrific team at the National Center for Education Statistics. We owe you all a debt of gratitude for your dedication and expertise. Thank you.

It may not have occurred to all of you on this call, but these 2013 results mark the 10th anniversary since we received our first round of both reading and math scores in 2003. Since the initial TUDA assessment, we have been through lots of developments in public education, but not until now will we have garnered a long enough trend line to be crystal clear about the progress urban public schools are making.

Between 2003 and 2013, the large cities have improved their fourth-grade reading performance on NAEP by 8 scale-score points and narrowed the gap between our schools and the nation by 32 percent. At the eighth-grade level, our reading scores on NAEP have improved 9 points since 2003, and we have narrowed the gap with the nation by 34 percent.

In math, we have gained 11 scale-score points in the fourth grade, and narrowed the gap with the nation by 38 percent. And at the eighth-grade level in math, we have gained 14 points, and narrowed the gap with the country a whopping 43 percent.

In all, our gains as urban schools have been significantly larger than the nation itself over the last decade. The gains are evident however one looks at the data. We have made progress since 2003. And we've made progress since 2011 in eighth-grade reading and fourth-grade math. Over the decade, we have made progress raising average scale scores.

We have made progress increasing the percentage of students scoring at or above the *Basic* achievement level. We have also made progress increasing the percentage of students scoring at or above *Proficient*. And we have *decreased* the percentage of urban students scoring below the *Basic* level.

Our gains over this last decade are statistically significant and educationally significant—maybe politically significant as well.

In all, a number approaching 100,000 more of our large-city fourth graders score at or above the *Proficient* level in math and nearly 50,000 more of our fourth graders score at or above the *Proficient* level in reading compared with 10 years ago.

If you look solely at any two-year testing cycle, the results are sometimes less conclusive and they sometimes lead observers to conclude that urban schools are not making any progress. But if you stand back from the individual trees, you will see a forest that is growing taller and getting stronger.

Several of the individual trees, however, deserve special recognition for their growth since 2011. The District of Columbia Public Schools improved in all four grade and subject combinations—the only city to accomplish this. Los Angeles improved in three of four. Fresno improved in two. And Atlanta, Baltimore, Charlotte, Chicago, and Dallas improved in one.

In addition, I should point out that several other cities have scores that are comparable to or above national averages in at least one subject and grade, including Austin, Boston, Charlotte, Hillsborough County, Jefferson County, Miami-Dade County, and San Diego. Other cities held their own in the face of substantial budget cuts and the inclusion of many more children in their assessments.

In general, the cities have devoted substantial energy over this last decade to improving the quality of their instructional programs. And it is hard to believe that these efforts aren't reflected in the numbers we are seeing today. Remember that 10 years ago we started this initiative to help us in three ways.

One, we—as urban school systems—wanted to demonstrate that we were fully committed to the highest academic standards for our children. Two, we wanted to be able to compare ourselves with those that share many of the same challenges. Finally, we wanted a way to gauge our progress and evaluate our reforms in ways that the current 50-state assessment system does not allow.

In general, we are encouraged by the new results, but we are not satisfied with them. We know we need to accelerate. And we know that our gaps are still too wide. But these NAEP data give us the tools we need to ask hard questions about our instructional practices. And the results are giving us even greater confidence that urban education in this nation can be substantially improved.

And that's the point behind all the numbers. It is why we volunteered in the first place. So we could tell what was working and what wasn't. So we could raise the quality of public education in our great cities. So we could give our kids a shot at the American dream.

We have a long way to go. But inertia in urban public education has ended. And it has been replaced by progress. I am very proud of the work that our cities have done over these years and am profoundly optimistic by the additional progress I know lies in front of us.

Thank you.