



**USA TODAY AND COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS HOST  
INAUGURAL EDUCATION FORUM  
"Unite to Make a Difference"  
*Brings Industry Leaders Together for Day-Long Event***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 3, 2011

McLean, Va. — USA TODAY and Council of the Great City Schools will host an Education Forum on Friday, March 18, at USA TODAY Headquarters in McLean, Va. "Unite to Make a Difference" ([www.usatodayeducate.com/unite](http://www.usatodayeducate.com/unite)) will bring together leaders from America's largest urban school districts and industry representatives for a day-long exchange of ideas aimed at improving education in the United States.

The invitation-only event will feature more than a dozen superintendents from across the country, and will partner them with influential business leaders, members of the media and other top leaders in education to address the successes and challenges that face America's urban schools. Participants will also hear from keynote speaker Alma J. Powell, Chair of America's Promise Alliance, who has worked for more than a decade to build education and business alliances.

"USA TODAY has shown a continued dedication to education and we couldn't be more excited about partnering with the Council of Great City Schools and hosting this forum. We have an unwavering commitment to raise awareness of education issues in our communities and we hope this forum will shed light on the challenges that face our nation's schools," said Dave Hunke, president and publisher of USA TODAY.

"This historic forum brings together USA TODAY and the nation's leading urban educators to discuss progress in our big-city schools and how we make more. Few conversations about the challenge and promise of urban education could be more important," said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools.

The Forum's presenting sponsor is Microsoft Partners in Learning (<http://www.microsoft.com/education/pil>). Additional sponsors include: Best Buy and SMART

Technologies. To view a live webcast of the event, participate in the dialogue on key questions being addressed by leading superintendents, or to learn more about USA TODAY's education initiatives and partners visit [www.usatodayeducate.com/unite](http://www.usatodayeducate.com/unite). To join in the conversation, please follow #uniteforum on Twitter.

The event agenda for the March 18 forum includes:

**9:30 a.m. "State of Urban Education"**

Michael Casserly, executive director - Council of the Great City Schools

**10:10 a.m. "Partners in Learning"**

Siegfried Behrens, general manager, U.S. Education – Microsoft

**10:30 a.m. "What are public education's greatest challenges and how do we address these key issues?"**

Panel moderated by John Hillkirk, executive editor, USA TODAY

Panelists: Superintendents Winston Brooks (Albuquerque), Carol Johnson (Boston), Peter Gorman (Charlotte-Mecklenburg), Arlene Ackerman (Philadelphia) and Carlos Garcia (San Francisco); and Gerald Robinson, Virginia Secretary of Education.

**1:00 p.m. Keynote address by Alma J. Powell, Chair, America's Promise Alliance**

**2:00 p.m. "How can the business community support the changing student population and how do we measure the impact/success of new programming?"**

Panel moderated by Stephen Jordan, senior vice president and executive director - Business Civic Leadership Center

Panelists: Superintendents Beverly Hall (Atlanta) and James Williams (Buffalo); Carolyn Berkowitz, vice president of community affairs, Capital One Financial Corporation and President of Capital One Foundation; Robin D. Thurman, corporate communications and corporate social responsibility, Bechtel Corporation; and Steve Kurtz, vice president of digital development for USA TODAY.

**3:15 p.m. "United to Make a Difference - How can education and business work together to meet goals and how can the media help?"**

Panel moderated by Dave Hunke, president and publisher – USA TODAY

Panelists: Superintendents Mary Ellen Elia (Hillsborough County-Tampa), Eugene White (Indianapolis) and Alberto Carvalho (Miami-Dade); Paula Prahm, senior vice president of communications, public affairs and corporate responsibility for Best Buy; and Andrew Ko, senior director, education strategy and innovation for Microsoft.

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. Composed of 65 large city school districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban schools and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research and media relations. The organization also provides a network for school districts sharing common problems to exchange information, and to collectively address new challenges as they emerge in order to deliver the best possible education for urban youth. [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org)

Since 1983, USA TODAY has made a commitment to education that is unparalleled in the industry. USA TODAY's Education program is currently in place in over 30,000 K-12 classes across the country and on more than 450 university and college campuses, impacting over one million students daily. Educators have reached out to USA TODAY for over 25 years because of the unique format, credible non-fiction text, and topics that are relevant and motivating for students. Students like reading USA TODAY because of our unique style, bold color and graphics and easy-to-access information. USA TODAY covers contemporary issues that students can relate to and easily understand.

USA TODAY is a multi-platform news and information media company. Founded in 1982, USA TODAY's mission is to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation. Today, through its newspaper, website and mobile platforms, USA TODAY connects readers and engages the national conversation. USA TODAY, the nation's number one newspaper in print circulation with an average of more than 1.8 million daily, and USATODAY.com, an award-winning newspaper website launched in 1995, reach a combined 5.9 million readers daily. USA TODAY is a leader in mobile applications with more than seven million downloads on mobile devices. The USA TODAY brand also includes USA TODAY Education and USA TODAY Sports Weekly. USA TODAY is owned by Gannett Co., Inc. (NYSE: GCI).

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\*Note to press: Members of the press are encouraged to attend/cover. Please contact Heidi Zimmerman in advance to confirm admittance to the event.

*FOR MORE INFORMATION:*

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