

BALTIMORE CITY

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Monday, November 14, 2011

Dear City Schools Colleagues, Staff, Partners and Friends,

Last week, Baltimore City Public Schools got the fantastic news that it was selected for a federal, multi-million dollar grant to help our middle school students improve their STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) skills during the summer. City Schools was identified as one of 23 finalists—out of nearly 600!—because educational experts across the country believe in what we are doing in the area of STEM education, and they believe it could be something that benefits students nationwide. The grant, which has to be matched by our local foundation partners, will provide \$3 million to fund our STEM summer learning program for middle school students for the next three years.

This is huge. We have done much to strengthen our STEM programming in City Schools, but we have far to go before all students have the science knowledge and math skills they need to succeed in today's world. We know that our efforts in this area to date—our new math and science curricula, our summer learning programs—are having an impact. Our students are showing real achievement gains in math in particular, and they are responding with enthusiasm to the increasingly hands-on, real-world and fun instruction they are receiving. How can you not love learning math by building robots? This new federal funding will keep the current momentum going, and it will go a long way to ensuring our students' continued progress moving forward.

But there's another cause to celebrate this federal grant. The grant is called an Investing in Innovation (i3) grant, because it funds promising practices that leverage both public and private sector expertise and have the potential to transform public education. What our teachers and students are doing in the area of STEM—with the support of many of our partners—could strengthen the teaching and learning of math and science for millions of students beyond Baltimore. We will track our results closely for the three-year duration of the grant, with the expectation that all participating students advance in math and science, and experience zero learning loss during the summer. If that happens, it would be worth replicating far and wide.

This cutting edge work is the result of some extraordinary partnerships. The Fund for Educational Excellence and the Baltimore Education Research Consortium helped prepare the grant and the actual STEM programming for the next three summers will include IBM, Northrop Grumman, the Johns Hopkins University, Morgan State University and Coppin State University. And as always, there is the hard, day-in and day-out work of our students and school-based staff, and the steady support of our families, community leaders and organizations and our elected officials. Working together, we are making a tremendous difference for our students.

I look forward to sharing more with you in the weeks ahead about what we are doing to strengthen not only STEM education, but teaching and learning in City Schools overall. And again, many thanks for all that you do make innovative programs like this happen, and ensure our students' success in school.

Sincerely,

*Andrés A. Alonso, Ed.D.
CEO, Baltimore City Public Schools*