COMMUNITY VOICES ON BALTIMORE SCHOOLS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the culmination of an almost year-long effort to hear from a large and diverse sample of Baltimore residents about their views of our city’s public schools. From conversations with citizens across the city, we learned a lot about how communities experience schools, what roles they want schools to play in their lives and in their neighborhoods, and what they think should be done differently.

Toward the end of 2013, we at the Fund for Educational Excellence spent a lot of time discussing the reforms that Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) had implemented over the past several years and how they had changed the trajectory of the district. Following the arrival of Dr. Andrés Alonso as CEO in 2007, the district de-centralized budgeting for schools, pushing responsibility and accountability for programming and spending decisions out to school leaders. City Schools developed a set of standards for teacher, school leader, and school effectiveness to define what excellence looks like. A team of trained reviewers now uses these standards to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each school; their detailed reports are available to the public on the school system’s website. The district also took up the cause of a coalition of community, faith-based, and parent organizations, working with the Mayor’s Office to orchestrate an overhaul of City Schools’ crumbling school buildings. Last year, state legislators passed a bill that assured the system the first one billion dollars in funding for the 21st Century Buildings Initiative. The district worked hand-in-hand with the Baltimore Teachers Union to develop and implement a new compensation system for teachers that rewards them for the things they do to improve instruction and make learning gains with students, rather than seniority and course credits earned. All of these were big changes for City Schools, and they were scaled up quickly based on the promise they held for positive impact on Baltimore students.

While working to support City Schools’ reforms in a variety of ways, it struck us that we did not really know how families and community members had experienced these efforts. We decided to embark on an intensive study of Baltimore residents’ views on our public schools and began planning a large-scale outreach effort. By design, our aim was to reach a demographically representative sample of Baltimore residents. It is our belief that public education affects everyone in the city in some way, whether or not they choose to send their children to City Schools. (However, we also broke out discussion themes by income bracket in order to explore the concerns of lower-income participants. This was of particular interest and importance to us, because City Schools’ student population is disproportionately low-income.) Over the course of four months in 2014, we heard from 859 Baltimore residents representing all 55 community statistical areas in Baltimore City through a series of intimate conversations about schools and neighborhoods.
The ten themes featured in this report comprise our findings about how Baltimore City communities think about our schools. Key findings fall under Community and Parental Involvement in Schools; Teachers and School Staff; Standards, Curriculum, and Instruction; and Activities, Programs, and Opportunities for Kids. Taken together, they paint a picture of what Baltimore residents most want for their students:

1. **Increased parent and community involvement in schools coupled with more welcoming school environments,**
2. **Talented teachers and other school staff who are invested in students,**
3. **Increased academic expectations for students along with the support they need to meet more rigorous standards and succeed beyond their high school years,** and
4. **Structured activities for children within and beyond the school day and the school year.**

With the arrival of the new CEO, Dr. Gregory Thornton, this is an opportune moment for a larger dialogue about what is working and what we should be doing differently for Baltimore City students. Based on the full set of findings (see page 9) from our conversations with Baltimore residents, our recommendations to City Schools are as follows:

1. **Create more welcoming school environments.** Making a district-wide cultural shift to more open, responsive interactions with families and community members is a prerequisite for addressing many of the other concerns participants identified.
2. **Leverage the tools at your disposal to reward, retain, and develop teachers.**
3. **Develop a comprehensive set of college and career readiness benchmarks and report out to individual students and families where students are performing against these benchmarks.**
4. **Offer a wider variety of courses during school and more after-school activities for students.**

The Fund will brief a number of groups on the findings from this study, including Dr. Thornton’s cabinet, the City Schools Board of Commissioners, and Baltimore City’s delegation to the State legislature. If you are part of a parent or community group that would like to learn more about the full set of findings, please contact us to schedule a briefing in your community. You can see the full set of findings from our study, including community snapshots, at cityspeaks.ffee.org. We also plan to hold a citywide conversation between the new CEO’s team and representatives from each Baltimore community to agree on a set of priorities for City Schools over the next several years.
Increased parent and community involvement in schools coupled with more welcoming school environments.

Talented teachers and other school staff who are invested in students.

Increased academic expectations for students along with the support they need to meet more rigorous standards and succeed beyond their high school years.

Structured activities for children within and beyond the school day and the school year.

THEMES

1. Increased parent and community involvement in schools coupled with more welcoming school environments.

2. Talented teachers and other school staff who are invested in students.

3. Increased academic expectations for students along with the support they need to meet more rigorous standards and succeed beyond their high school years.

4. Structured activities for children within and beyond the school day and the school year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create more welcoming school environments. Making a district-wide cultural shift to more open, responsive interactions with families and community members is a prerequisite for addressing many of the other concerns participants identified.

Leverage the tools at City Schools’ disposal to reward, retain, and develop teachers.

Develop a comprehensive set of college and career readiness benchmarks and report out to individual students and families where they are performing against these benchmarks.

Offer a wider variety of courses during school and more after-school activities for students.

The complete child is important, not just the part of the child that can pass the test, not just part of the child who is successful in scores or academic competition.

- Southwest participant

When we want to talk about real solutions, real problems, everybody has to be on board.

- Edmondson Village participant

I’ve had parents ask me how can you volunteer at the school? Well right now, I’m not working and I ask them how can you not?

- Westport participant

There are not enough arts and extracurricular activities for children to express themselves...and to communicate with each other.

- Pimlico/Arlington/Hilltop participant
Founded in 1984, the Fund for Educational Excellence is a Baltimore-based non-profit organization that works to secure the resources necessary to support innovation and increase student achievement in City Schools. At the Fund, we focus our efforts on systemic changes to make City Schools a district where all children can thrive and succeed academically. For more information, call 410-685-8300, email info@ffee.org, or visit us online at ffee.org
A CITYWIDE LISTENING CAMPAIGN: WHY AND WHY NOW

The first half of 2014 seemed like the right moment in time to dig into attitudes about education in Baltimore City. After several years on an upward trajectory, student learning gains had plateaued. According to a poll commissioned by the Fund in September 2013, just behind jobs and the economy, the issue Baltimore voters and Baltimore City Public Schools parents most wanted to see addressed was public education. Sixty-five percent (65%) of voters and fifty-five percent (55%) of City Schools’ parents were dissatisfied with the quality of education children receive in public schools.ii

The district was also in the midst of a major transition in leadership—long-time CEO Dr. Andrés Alonso departed in July 2013, and the Board of Commissioners was searching for a new leader to build on the progress made in the district.

During a similar period of transition in 2011, the Jacksonville Public Education Fund (JPEF) undertook a community study that was helpful in forging a collaborative relationship between the communities in Duval County, Florida, and the new leader of that district. Inspired by JPEF’s One by One campaign, we kicked off our own Community Voices on Baltimore Schools listening campaign at the beginning of 2014 with the twin goals of:

1. Engaging community members across the city in defining priorities for our public schools, and
2. Bringing those community-generated priorities to the attention of Dr. Thornton as he started in his new role as City Schools’ leader.

HOW WE DID IT

The Fund’s community listening campaign kicked off with its first “kitchen table conversation” in the Madison/East End area in March 2014 and concluded with a July gathering in Pigtown. Kitchen table conversations were the primary method of data collection for this study. Each conversation typically involved between eight and twelve people taking part in a facilitated discussion in an informal, community-based setting. To ensure a consistent experience for participants citywide, the Fund trained hosts and conversation facilitators using a toolkit that included a conversation guide and tips for facilitators to keep conversations focused and inclusive of all participants.iii

In addition to kitchen table conversations, the Fund collected supplementary responses through one-on-one interviews and an online survey. All told, 859 individuals from all 55 neighborhood clusters, or CSAs, in Baltimore City engaged in discussion about a vision for City Schools and what the new CEO’s priorities should be.
Our participant sample of 859 significantly surpassed our target of 750 participants. While more affluent and far more female, the demographics of our sample otherwise largely mirror the demographics of Baltimore City (see Table 1).

Baltimore citizens who participated in the community listening initiative were asked a total of six broad questions to guide conversations. The aim was to generate discussion about impressions of the current state of City Schools; an ideal vision for City Schools; and actions all stakeholders could take to close the gap between the two.

ANALYSIS

The Fund’s community study team examined hundreds of hours of conversations and survey responses using an inductive approach to identify key findings citywide. Five people performed the analysis of these conversations with the team lead conducting checks at every step for data quality assurance.

In order to generate themes, the community study team transcribed and analyzed the conversations using mixed methods analytical software. Team members applied codes to statements in each transcript, one-on-one conversation,
and survey response reviewed. These codes were typically short phrases that described the content of the statement. The team then grouped the codes into like categories and quantified them. In this way, we were able to identify findings from the conversations.

**WHAT WE HEARD**

From hundreds of hours of conversations and more than a hundred survey responses, ten large themes emerged that illustrate the community’s concerns about City Schools and outline a vision for public education in Baltimore City. Beginning with the largest (i.e., what was heard most from participants), key themes are listed on the following pages in descending order. Each theme encapsulates several findings that provide a more detailed look at what was discussed in conversations and what citizens want for their schools. Some findings are descriptions or perceptions of how things are now. Some are suggestions for different ways of doing things. All come directly from participants.

**KITCHEN TABLE CONVERSATION QUESTIONS**

1. How would you describe your neighborhood today?
2. How do public schools contribute to your vision for this neighborhood?
3. What are your impressions of Baltimore City Public Schools?
4. What is City Schools doing well? What could be improved?
5. What, if anything, does City Schools need to do differently to achieve the vision we outlined earlier?
6. What role should City Schools play? What role does the neighborhood play?
7. What role could you play?
THEME: Community & Parental Involvement in Schools

- Parents and community members should be more involved and actively support schools.
- Parents and community members need to hold schools accountable and demand more from the schools.
- Many schools currently are not welcoming, and parents and community members do not know how they can help.
- The district should encourage and fund initiatives that increase involvement, including hiring community liaisons and forming better school/community partnerships.

THEME: Teachers & School Staff

- There are many great teachers who deserve praise for their work.
- There are also too many inexperienced, unqualified teachers and the training they receive is inadequate.
- Many teachers lack care for students and passion for their work.
- The district should alter its teacher hiring strategy, pay teachers more, and offer them better professional development and support.

THEME: Standards, Curriculum, & Instruction

- Schools have low academic standards and do not adequately prepare students for college or careers.
- The curriculum is too narrow and test-focused.
- There are programs within schools that are very strong, including Ingenuity, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and vocational/trade programs.
- Curriculum needs to be more flexible, so it can be personalized to student learning styles, and students should be offered a wider variety of courses to choose from.

THEME: Activities, Programs, & Opportunities for Kids

- Students need activities available to them after school to keep them engaged in positive opportunities. This could involve keeping schools open later and/or opening recreation centers.
- Schools do not offer a wide enough variety of courses (art, music, foreign language, home economics, physical education, etc.).
- Students should have more choice in their schedules so that they can pursue personal interests.
- There was vocal support for more summer programs.

THEME: District Policies & Practices

- Interactions with the district’s central office are frustrating. There is also a clear sense that bureaucracy slows decision-making down.
- Social promotion is a cause for concern.
- Support for school choice was mixed; some people saw it as a positive for the city, while others focused on the challenges raised by choice.
- The district’s use of data received praise.
THEME: Schools Should Serve/Help Community

- Schools should be the hub of the community and open to community members.
- Schools should be resources for their community and provide services for community members.

THEME: Resources & Their Allocation

- Schools are under-funded and poorly resourced.
- The perception is that there is inequitable investment/resource allocation – within Baltimore City and between City Schools and schools in other counties.
- The district does not manage its money/resources well.

THEME: Communication/Branding

- There is currently poor communication from schools and inadequate communication with community members.
- There are many misperceptions about City Schools.
- The district should highlight student successes and change the narrative of City Schools.

THEME: School Quality

- Schools in the district vary widely in terms of their quality – some are great, while others are very low-quality.
- Most schools have low achievement levels and are failing.
- District should work toward a goal of ensuring that every neighborhood has quality schools.

THEME: Supporting & Prioritizing Students

- Schools should develop the whole child. The goal should not just be academic achievement, but helping children become well-rounded individuals.
- Many students are dealing with emotional issues, and schools should acknowledge this and provide supports for them. Schools should also provide wraparound services that help prepare students for success.
Because our participant sample was more affluent than the city as a whole and because families of City Schools students are disproportionately lower-income\textsuperscript{viii}, we wanted to ensure that the perspectives of low-income participants were well represented in our findings. To that end, we examined key themes by income level to the best of our ability. To do so, we isolated CSAs in which more than 50\% of participants reported annual household income of either less than $25,000 or greater than $75,000. Table 2 illustrates the most frequently heard themes for these two groups. Community and Parental Involvement in Schools and Teachers and School Staff were key themes for both groups, which is not surprising, as both were identified as key themes citywide.

There were differences in the key themes by income, though, too. Low-income participants were very interested in seeing a wider array of in- and out-of-school programming and activities for students, and this, too, was a key theme citywide. They also called for schools to provide services to their communities. High-income participants were focused on district policies and practices, as well as on the quality of instruction. Three of the four key themes identified by low-income participants rose to the level of key themes citywide (highlighted below).

**Table 2 - Top Four Conversation Themes By Household Income**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Theme #1</th>
<th>Theme #2</th>
<th>Theme #3</th>
<th>Theme #4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $25,000</td>
<td>Community and Parental Involvement in Schools</td>
<td>Teachers and School Staff</td>
<td>Activities, Programs, &amp; Opportunities for Kids</td>
<td>Schools Serve/Help Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $75,000</td>
<td>Community and Parental Involvement in Schools</td>
<td>District Policies and Practices</td>
<td>Teachers and School Staff</td>
<td>Standards, Curriculum, &amp; Instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also among the top four themes citywide. (See page 9)
KEY THEMES

Key findings—those points that came up most often in conversations—fall under the themes of Community and Parental Involvement in Schools; Teachers and School Staff; Standards, Curriculum, and Instruction; and Activities, Programs, and Opportunities for Kids. We dig a little deeper into each of these themes in the pages that follow.

Community & Parental Involvement in Schools

Participants wanted to see greater involvement in schools from both students’ families and community members. They expressed frustration at the lack of engagement and indicated that it is a major contributor to poor school performance. As such, many participants called for parents not only to engage with schools but also to demand a better education for their children.

“I would like to mentor a child from my neighborhood, but I don’t know where or how to become involved.”
– Penn North/Reservoir Hill participant

However, we also heard that one reason parents do not engage at the level they might want to is that many schools are not welcoming environments. Participants across the city shared stories about being disrespected by school staff, talked down to, or ignored. In addition, many parents and community members are unsure of how to advocate for students, and the negative experiences they have had with schools only push them further away. We heard stories from many people who had volunteered to help at schools only to be rebuffed and, more commonly, from people who wanted to help but had no idea what the school needed or how to engage with the school in a productive way.

“Invite community members and parents into the classroom to help teachers manage these enormous numbers of kids. I would love to be asked to come into the classroom and help out—there seems to be resistance to this by both teachers and administrators.”
– Greater Roland Park participant

To address some of these challenges, conversation participants suggested that all schools should have community liaisons. These individuals would be able to build relationships in neighborhoods and then foster parents’ and community members’ engagement with the schools. We also heard suggestions that these liaisons should be from the communities they aim to engage, as personal relationships are critical for getting people and organizations involved.

“I wanted to visit our neighborhood school before my daughter started kindergarten, and though folks were friendly, they were not really set up to have a visit on any particular day, and when I showed up the principal and the teacher did not have time and the kindergarten teacher didn’t seem to understand why I would want to visit.”
– Cedonia/Frankford participant
Teachers and School Staff

We heard a wide range of thoughts and feelings about teachers in Baltimore City. Many told us about outstanding teachers and about how valuable great teachers are. There were plenty of anecdotes about how caring and professional teachers in the city are and about how much respect and praise they deserve. One participant from Greater Charles Village advocated for “[making] good teachers feel like the heroes they are.”

On the other end of the spectrum, many participants expressed the belief that there are too many inexperienced or unqualified teachers in the district. They called for increased mentoring for new teachers, as they questioned whether teacher training programs adequately prepare new teachers for the challenges they often encounter in City Schools. Participants advocated for building teachers’ cultural competency during their training to help them understand the communities in which they are working.

“In order to be successful, they have to be warriors. Not just teachers, but warriors.”
— Forest Park/Walbrook participant

Other participants separately shared a belief that some teachers do not truly care about students or their work. To them it feels like these teachers are not truly invested in their students and their work but are there because it’s a job. These participants called for the district to hire teachers who truly care about their students and saw this as necessary for student success.

“I’ve known a lot of new teachers, and they came prepared to teach. They did not come prepared for the challenges that they had in real life. They did not come prepared for children who were angry and had been angry all their little lives. They weren’t prepared to have their own notions about race and class and poverty challenged.”
— Howard Park/West Arlington participant

To address some of the challenges raised, participants suggested that the district should hire teachers who take a joyful approach to teaching, are committed to building relationships with students (inside and outside of the classroom), and understand that the demands of the profession are not limited to the school day. Participants clearly appreciated the challenging job that teachers in City Schools have and advocated for increased pay for teachers. They also called for more personalized professional development for teachers on topics such as classroom management, instructional strategies, and the communities their schools are situated in.
Standards, Curriculum, & Instruction

The most prevalent theme about academics in City Schools is that schools’ standards and expectations for students are too low. The feeling is that the district’s focus is on getting kids to graduation, rather than preparing them for what lies beyond. Some people talked about higher graduation rates for the district as a negative, as they may be a sign that more kids are being passed despite not having mastered concepts. Combined with participants’ comments about how many City Schools graduates need remedial courses in college, there was a clear call for the district to increase rigor and standards so that kids are prepared for college or a full-time job when they graduate.

“I worked at a college, and I was amazed that...one year...the salutatorian at a high school in Baltimore City had to take remedial courses. So she’s the third top student in the school....why does she have to take remedial courses? So that lets me know that there is something that needs to be fixed with City Schools.”

— Greater Rosemont participant

Participants also expressed a belief that the curriculum is too test-focused. Education was described as test-driven rather than knowledge-driven, and participants worried that the over reliance on testing is hurting kids. Many participants feel that the current system, in which teachers and administrators feel pressure to increase test scores, should be changed. One participant from Remington sums it up well: “Everyone—teachers, administrators—seem to be so worried about these standardized tests. If I had a magic wand, I would either get rid of standardized tests altogether or, at least, much reduce their impact on kids.”

Respondents also commented on strong programs within schools, including Ingenuity (a highly accelerated math and science curriculum for middle school students), Advanced Placement courses, and the International Baccalaureate program. There was also praise for the vocational or trade programs offered at schools and a call for more of these offerings for students.

“[Let’s have] multiple pathways to success. Not everybody’s going to college. Let’s have a lot of career tracks, too, and let’s validate and reward that. Make, for example, different diploma options so that not everybody is doing exactly the same thing. If I’m going to Rome, I don’t need to prepare for a trip to Florida.”

— Lauraville participant

In general, participants requested that the curriculum be more flexible so that students receive instruction that is appropriate for their learning style and academic needs. We heard a number of comments about how the pace of instruction in many classrooms is determined by low-performing students, leaving higher-achieving students bored. Participants also suggested that schools need a richer curriculum and that students should have access to a wider variety of courses.
Activities, Programs, & Opportunities for Kids

Participants clearly felt that schools did not provide enough variety of courses for students. They focused mostly on music and art but also requested more access to foreign languages, home economics, and physical education. Participants also commented that schools should offer these courses daily, rather than in a limited way (for example, one art class per week).

“Even if you come from a very challenged background, if you have a drama teacher, if you have a soccer coach, or if you have an art teacher that will keep you in a place kind of like Creative Alliance, or Hampstead Hill, or...a rec center and will be with you, engaging you until 8:30 or 8:00 at night, then you’re going to be okay - as long as you’re sparked, as long as you’re invested, and you’re into it.”
— Highlandtown participant

Along with the request for a wider array of courses, participants voiced their belief that students should have more extracurricular activities available to them. Citizens are concerned that when children do not have structured after-school activities available to them, they are more vulnerable to the lure of the streets. Suggestions included keeping school buildings open later and/or opening up recreation centers in communities that do not have them.

We also heard from students, many of whom feel like they have little input about the classes that make up their school schedules. They described situations where they had no choice about which foreign language they took or which arts option was included in a schedule.

“We don’t have anything to foster this talent, because that could take care of half of our problems on the street. Half of the problems that we have with these children could be eliminated if we had an art program or music program or something to keep them busy.”
— Cherry Hill participant

Although respondents weighed in more on the lack of activities, some participants voiced support for the programs available in schools. Specifically, people praised the summer programs available to students and said that they provided kids with positive options.
DIDN’T GET A CHANCE TO WEIGH IN?
You can keep the discussion going on Facebook or Twitter.

#CITYSPEAKS
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

We hope that what we heard from participants in this community study will inform new CEO Dr. Gregory Thornton’s thinking about how to tackle the challenges of Baltimore City Public Schools and build on its recent successes as well. Acting on any of these findings would signal a real willingness to listen to and collaborate with communities, but based on what we heard most, our recommendations to City Schools are to

1. **Create more welcoming school environments.** This involves everyone in a school from front-office staff to teachers and support staff to the principal, and it’s not necessarily confined to the school building. Making a district-wide cultural shift to more open, responsive interactions with families and community members is a prerequisite for addressing many of the other concerns participants identified.

2. **Leverage the tools at your disposal to reward, retain, and develop teachers.** The compensation system created jointly by City Schools and the Baltimore Teachers Union pays teachers more for the things they do to improve their instruction and make learning gains with students. Continuing and refining that system, as well as using performance evaluations to inform professional development for individual teachers, will help to retain and develop talented, invested staff.

3. **Develop a comprehensive set of college and career readiness benchmarks and report out to individual students and families where they are performing against these benchmarks.** Creating an explicit roadmap to a bright future for students, then telling students where they are on track and where they are falling short, demonstrates high expectations. It also engages families as partners in college and career readiness.

4. **Offer a wider variety of courses during school and more after-school activities for students.** This might involve engaging with the Mayor’s office, other City agencies, university partners, and community organizations to allow students opportunities to explore new interests and figure out what they love to do. It would have the added benefit of keeping kids off the streets after school hours.

The Fund has already begun briefing interested groups—including Dr. Thornton and his cabinet, the Mayor’s office, and the City’s delegation to the State legislature—about the findings from this study and will continue to do so. If you would like to have someone from the Fund come out to talk with your parent organization, neighborhood association, or community- or faith-based group, please contact us at info@ffee.org or 410-685-8300.

We are also planning for a citywide meeting this fall between City Schools’ leadership and representatives from each of Baltimore’s CSAs. On the agenda: what we heard from you, Baltimore’s citizens, about the state of education in our city and what we can agree to tackle together over the next few years. The aim of this meeting is for City Schools and city residents to define together what our educational priorities should be and to come to an agreement about how best to tackle them. Look for information about this meeting on cityspeaks.ffee.org, as well as the Fund’s Facebook page and Twitter feed in the coming weeks.
THANKS

Huge thanks to the many people—interns, volunteer hosts and facilitators, advisors—who made it possible for us to complete this fascinating study. We are so inspired by the time and energy you lent to help us learn what Baltimore thinks about its schools.

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Sabree Barnes
Valerie Barnes
Carol Beck
Jake Berzoff-Cohen
Courtney Bettle
Whitney Ward Birenbaum
Sharicca Boldon
Angela Burnett
Mary Campbell
Edith Gilliard Canty
Candace Chance
Edie Cimino
Karen Cohen
Julius Colon
Faith Connolly
Chicquita Crawford
Trey Csar
Dorothy Cunningham
Dante Detablan
Meldon Dickens
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Elizabeth Kennedy
Kim Lane
Derrick Lennon
Jane Lindenfelser
Kimberly Manns
Leslie Margolis
Maira Martelo
Jasmin Martinez
Maggie Master
Andy Masters
Carol Ann McCoy
Marvin McDowell
Sarah McLean
Kedri Metzger
Altrema Mukuria
P.J. O’Neill
Keith Paige
Mark Parker
Celeste Perilla
Anita Pilch
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Stephanie Krey Vollentine
Vernon Wallace
Monique Washington
Joan Wharton
Fatima Wilkerson
Donald Williams
Steve Wolverton
Carly Yetzer
Ursula Young
i CSAs are based on United States Census tracts, which remain consistent from year to year. More information about CSA boundaries is available at bniajfi.org/vital_signs/cprofiles/.


iii See cityspeaks.ffee.org for a copy of our Conversation Toolkit developed in collaboration with Leadership for Educational Equity.

iv On July 14, 2014, the Baltimore Brew published a link to our online survey in a piece titled “Survey seeks your thoughts on Baltimore schools: Fund for Educational Excellence will use results in a report to new city schools CEO Gregory Thornton.”

v U.S. Census Bureau, 2010.

vi Three participants identified themselves as ‘Other race.’

vii The inter-rater reliability statistic, a measure of agreement, validity, and consistency among team members was a high of .81 (81%). This reliability statistic of .81, also referred to as Cohen’s kappa statistic, is rated as “excellent agreement” according to University of California at Los Angeles qualitative researchers and developers of the qualitative analytical online application Dedoose. A rating of “excellent agreement” indicates the highest quality of data was produced by the community study’s analysis team through strict adherence to the proper protocols of qualitative data analysis.

viii According to the Baltimore City Public Schools website (http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/about/by_the_numbers), 84.5% of City Schools students are low-income based on eligibility for free and reduced-price meals.