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Organizing for Family and Community Engagement in the Baltimore City Public Schools

Packing up his office in June 2014, Michael Sarbanes reflected on his six years as the executive director of the Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) Office of Partnerships, Communication, and Community Engagement.¹ Sarbanes was leaving his post and the office that he helped create to follow a lifelong dream: becoming a middle school teacher in his neighborhood in Baltimore City. As he sifted through mementoes of his tenure, he thought about some of his proudest moments. Among them was a rally outside the Maryland State House in February 2013, when more than 3,000 families from Baltimore City as well as the mayor and other public officials urged the legislature to pass a bond bill to deliver \$1.1 billion for school construction and repairs.²

More than five years earlier, in the fall of 2007, community activists with the group Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development (BUILD) had documented the conditions in some of the schools where they worked. According to Bishop Douglass Miles, a longtime member and leader of BUILD, “we found the conditions totally deplorable... mold in bathrooms, rat holes in classrooms, schools where one end of the building would be 90 degrees in the winter and the other end would be freezing, schools that actually had windows missing.” Andrés Alonso, hired as the new chief executive officer of City Schools just months earlier, was quickly becoming aware of the poor state of the school facilities, as well, so when BUILD submitted its list to him he directed \$2.6 million be spent to address some of the shortcomings.³ But with 183 buildings across 163 campuses, 70 percent of which were in various states of disrepair, \$2.6 million was 1/1000th the estimated cost of repairs.⁴

In an immediate sense, the 2013 rally in Annapolis was meant to bring attention to the deficient facilities in Baltimore and to advocate for a long-term solution, but more generally it represented the culmination of a focused and broad-based effort aimed at engaging families and communities in the cause of improving public schools and transforming neighborhoods. The new family and community engagement strategy in City Schools, engineered by Sarbanes and his team and under the leadership of Alonso, seemed to turn conventional wisdom about family engagement on its head. Rather than seeking to manage families and communities, Sarbanes believed that families and community members needed to be fully integrated into the district’s work and seen as equal partners. “The idea was that we would partner community-based organizations with schools ...[and] build a network of relationships or leverage relationships around the school,” Sarbanes said. After five years of work, thanks in part to this growing network of partners focused on school and community improvement,

Senior Lecturer Karen L. Mapp and Research Associate James Noonan prepared this case. PELP cases are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management.

Sarbanes and the coalition he engaged were on the verge of securing the largest commitment of state funds to a single school district in Maryland's history.

At the end of the 2013 legislative session, the bond bill passed both houses of the legislature with large bipartisan majorities. In May 2013, Governor Martin O'Malley signed the bill into law, assuring guaranteed yearly block grants that would fund 15 new schools and renovate 20 more.⁵ Quoted in the *Baltimore Sun*, Rob English from BUILD proclaimed that "[t]he school construction will be to our neighborhoods what the Inner Harbor is to downtown."⁶

Even though there was much to celebrate, many questions remained for Sarbanes as he packed his boxes. Could such a diverse coalition of stakeholders be sustained after the renovations were underway or would diverging interests fracture the coalition before additional phases of construction could be funded and completed? Within the district, could a community organizing philosophy be integrated into a hierarchical bureaucratic system? Could such a constructive collaboration be sustained given the high turnover at the school and district level? These questions had particular relevance, since just weeks after the final passage of the school construction bill – in May 2013 – Alonso, who had been a well-respected and galvanizing figure in the school system and the city, announced his retirement as CEO.⁷

Background and Context

Baltimore had a rich history of community organizing. In the 1930s, Frances Morton graduated from Smith College and returned home to Baltimore, where she went to work for the city's Department of Public Welfare.⁸ Appalled at the conditions of Baltimore's growing slums, she co-founded the Citizens Planning and Housing Association (CPHA), an organization that advocated for affordable housing and urban planning and that in 2013 was one of the oldest and most respected civic organizations in Baltimore. In addition to its own work, CPHA also convened networks of neighborhood groups and community organizers across Baltimore.⁹ In 2003, Sarbanes was hired as the executive director of CPHA, where he worked until he was hired by Alonso in 2008.

BUILD was another highly respected and well-established community organizing group. According to Bishop Miles, BUILD began in 1978 when a group of clergy invited the Chicago-based Industrial Areas Fund (IAF), founded by noted community organizer Saul Alinsky and with affiliates in 24 states plus the District of Columbia and four countries¹⁰, to come to Baltimore and "help consolidate... the work of the Civil Rights movement into a permanent organization." Since its founding, BUILD orchestrated dozens of community actions, including campaigns to improve police protection, end housing discrimination, and ensure a living wage for all municipal contract workers.¹¹

In response to one of its signature "listening campaigns" in 1995, during which they heard concerns about crime and youth opportunity, BUILD founded the Child First Authority to run afterschool programs and be a hub for neighborhood organizing. Carol Reckling, who became the executive director of Child First in 1997, explained that "the DNA of Child First is organizing. ...I very much value what afterschool programs bring to young people. But if our organization was just about afterschool programs, I wouldn't be here." Rather, Reckling said, she viewed afterschool programs as "a way to ...build relationships between parents, community partners, school staff, and really say, 'What do we want for our young people and how do we make it happen? How do we all work together?'"

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Maryland was also deeply involved in both education and community organizing in Baltimore. Bebe Verdery, the director of the Education Reform

Project at the ACLU, was also a well-known advocate among district staff and community members. Prior to coming to Baltimore and the ACLU, Verdery worked as a community organizer in North and South Carolina during the Civil Rights movement. As a result, she said, “I come at my lobbying and policy work from an organizing perspective.” Calling the Education Reform Project “unique in the ACLU world,” Verdery explained that it grew out of a lawsuit filed in 1994 aimed at guaranteeing funding adequacy and equity, but the project’s work has gradually expanded to include advocacy for fair discipline policies, pre-kindergarten, and improved school facilities.

BUILD, Child First, and the ACLU were central to the school department’s new family engagement strategy and the passage of the bond bill, but they were only three of many key players. Other partners included neighborhood groups, school-based personnel, city and state government, private sector donors, and central office staff.

Disinvestment and Division

Accompanying Baltimore’s rich organizing tradition was a history of disinvestment and racial division. Bishop Miles of BUILD asserted that “race plays a role in everything that happens in Baltimore... It’s the 900-pound gorilla in the room that sits there unspeaking but yet claiming every decision.” Tom Wilcox, president of the Baltimore Community Foundation (BCF) and an ally in rallying private sector support for the facilities campaign, similarly suggested that the city’s balkanized history still cast a long shadow in 2013: “the fact that [Baltimore] didn’t have a community foundation until 1972 tells you something about the history of the city, because community foundations are only good if they’re white and black, Jewish and protestant, Catholic and Muslim, and liberal and conservative. They only work if they represent a broad variety of constituencies and attitudes and cultures. And nobody ever crossed lines. ...So we’re coming a distance but we still live our history.”

As with many cities, housing segregation by race had a durable history in Baltimore. Responding to the steady influx of black families from the south and outlying rural areas throughout the 20th century, city leaders sought to preserve racial separation through a variety of means. In 1910, the City Council passed the nation’s first municipal ordinance mandating residential segregation based on race.¹² Following Baltimore’s lead, many other cities passed similar laws. When these laws were struck down by the Supreme Court in 1917, city leaders and white residents found new ways to enforce residential segregation, including legal covenants that barred racial and religious groups from buying or occupying real estate, systematic condemnation and land acquisition of black neighborhoods allegedly for health reasons, restrictive zoning laws, concentration of segregated public housing in poor African-American communities, and the federal government’s Depression-era practice of “redlining” that rated neighborhoods on their relative risk for housing loans in part based on the ethnoracial composition of those neighborhoods and that subsequently set up large barriers to black home ownership.¹³

Long-simmering racial tensions in Baltimore burst into vivid view in 1968, during more than a week of rioting and violent unrest following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. that left six people dead and more than 700 injured.¹⁴ During the 1970s, Baltimore lost 13 percent of its population, mostly the result of “white flight” to the surrounding suburbs.¹⁵ (By 2007, the enrollment of the school system had dropped to 81,284 from 193,082 in 1969.¹⁶ It was not until 2008 that enrollment began to rise for the first time in four decades, contrary to state projections.) The persistence of Baltimore’s patterns of inequality burst again into national prominence again in April 2015, with massive protests over the death in police custody of Freddie Gray, a 25 year-old unarmed African-American man from West Baltimore.¹⁷ Gray’s death was another in a long national series of police-involved deaths of unarmed Black men across the country. In Baltimore, large-scale peaceful protests were accompanied by

spontaneous direct confrontations of heavily armed police with high-school age youth near a shopping mall, and with sporadic looting and arson in various parts of the city.¹⁸

Attempts to combat disinvestment throughout Baltimore and improve neighborhood services – including education – were complicated by the steady stream of working- and middle-class families who left the city when their children became old enough for school. Karen DeCamp, the director of neighborhood programs at Greater Homewood Community Corporation, explained that “Baltimore is a city that’s experienced 50 years of de-industrialization and middle class flight; we do not have the tax base in the city to provide ...excellent funding for excellent schools.” She continued, “A big destabilizing force in neighborhoods ...[is] families, particularly middle income, moderate-income families, working-class families ...[who are] not confident in the local neighborhood school... and they’re moving to a county where they can get a school that they’re not worried about for their kid.”

Against this backdrop, efforts to improve education and engage families were uneven across neighborhoods and focused largely on individual schools and in neighborhoods with well-established community groups and high levels of private sector support. For example, Greater Homewood worked with individual schools near the Johns Hopkins campus. BUILD continued to partner with willing clergy across the city on a range of education initiatives, and Child First expanded their afterschool programs and community organizing efforts. New charter schools were being launched across the city, as well. However, there was little engagement by community groups with the school system as a whole.

In fact, the school system was often seen as inaccessible to families and communities. Sarbanes remembered his work at CPHA in the early 2000s and said, “The schools were great fortress institutions at that time [and] you really didn’t have time to bang your head against that wall... There was a tremendous amount of anger at the school system, the sense being that it’s sort of failing kids and disrespecting families and communities. At the same time there’s tremendous belief in education and in the importance of it. But ...the school system was pretty squarely stuck in this narrative of ‘failing Baltimore City Public Schools.’ Our acronym was almost ‘FBCPS.’ It was part of the title.”

It was this dominant narrative of disinvestment and failing schools that greeted Andrés Alonso when he arrived in Baltimore in July 2007.

A New Direction

In a system that had seen six chief executives in six years, expectations were high when Alonso, a deputy chancellor in New York City, was hired as CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools. This feeling was partly born out of a perception that he was coming from a highly successful tenure in New York (a perception that seemed justified when, in September 2007, New York was awarded the prestigious Broad Prize for Urban Education¹⁹). However, these high expectations were also coupled with frustration at the seemingly slow pace of reform that preceded Alonso, who recalled a meeting early in his tenure with Michael Carter, a parent advocate and community activist. Carter was characteristically blunt, according to Alonso: “He told me... that he had seen the ‘likes of me come and go’ ... He told me if I wasn't serious about making changes, that he'd drive me back to the airport.”²⁰

In his first six months on the job, Alonso embarked on a 6-month “listening tour,” during which he held community meetings at more than 150 of Baltimore’s 192 schools. DeCamp recalled one of these meetings: “He brought a giant legal pad and he sat up there for two hours and he actually took notes as people spoke. I was blown away. I had never seen that before or since.” Bebe Verdery, of the ACLU, similarly observed a difference in tone during these meetings, “People would complain, and he would agree with them. ‘That is not acceptable. No, that is not okay.’ And usually people [in Alonso’s

position] would say, 'Well, that's probably the teacher ...or the school doesn't have this or that,' but he aligned himself with parents from the very beginning."

Although it may have seemed to an outside observer that Alonso was listening more than he was talking, he intended for his meetings with parents to be two-way dialogues: "I always felt that if parents thought that I was honest, and that I had integrity in my commitment to kids and to them, then there was so much that could happen and the conversation could be really honest." He continued, "It was never about how do we get everybody to agree. It was always about, 'This is what I see, and how do you see it differently?'" From these conversations, Alonso came away convinced that "the old myth about parents not being engaged and not caring are just myths... People were showing up, people were sophisticated in how they engaged in the conversations, people cared deeply." Deborah Demery, president of the PTA Council of Baltimore City and mother to a son in City Schools, agreed that Alonso welcomed conversations with families: "he had an open-door policy. If you had something that you felt wasn't right, or if you knew that there was a situation going on in the school where parents didn't feel that the climate was good for them, you would let him know, and things were put in place to help engage parents."

As he listened to parents' concerns (and their points of pride) about the schools, Alonso was also seeking recommendations from community leaders for someone who could direct the district's efforts on communications, community partnerships, and family engagement. By the end of summer 2007, these conversations led Alonso to Sarbanes, who was still at CPHA but also locked in a competitive campaign for City Council President. After a close race all summer, Sarbanes lost the Democratic primary in September 2007 to the incumbent Stephanie Rawlings-Blake – who would go on to become mayor in 2010 – by a margin of 49 to 38 percent.²¹

Bringing Sarbanes to City Schools

Three months following the primary election, in December 2007, Alonso and Sarbanes met and began to talk about what a new district strategy for family and community engagement might look like and how it could begin to change the relationship between the school district and its families and community members. "From the [first] conversation," Sarbanes said, "part of what we were trying to do was organize the city around the schools... Literally it was a back-of-a-napkin conversation... [where we] sketched out... the basic outlines of the overall strategy."

The principles emerging from early conversations between Alonso and Sarbanes included a commitment not just to building support in the community but also to transforming the relationships between the schools and the communities they served. Alonso believed that parents needed to be seen "as people who bring new capital, not as people who you need to pacify." Sarbanes added, "We talked about ...[how] the reform had to be substantially about building the base of community support and mobilizing the social capital that existed in communities... and connecting that up with schools so that the reform was structural about what's happening in the entire school system ...but at the same time it was about changing the relationship between the school system and the city and the dynamic back and forth between those." Moreover, Sarbanes said that the school system needed to build relationships with institutions that shared these principles. "Relationships are always between people," he said, "but [relationships] can also be between institutions if institutions understand ...what the values of the other institution ...are and what people care about. That makes it a lot easier for the relationships between people to be able to happen."

In February 2008, Alonso hired Sarbanes to be the executive director of the district's new Office of Partnerships, Communications, and Community Engagement, combining three previously

independent functions. Alonso explained this consolidation by pointing out that, “partnerships, parent engagement, and communication was all the same thing: it was all about framing, it was all about engaging, it was all about changing the nature of the conversation.” Sarbanes later recalled that “it was an unusual move to have the communications and the family and community engagement functions ...in the same entity,” in part because it was difficult to find someone who could adequately supervise both. Sarbanes, however, had worked in community organizing for decades and had experience in communications through previous jobs and from his just-completed political campaign.

Under the new organizational structure and direction for family and community engagement, Sarbanes reported directly to Alonso, an arrangement deliberately intended to position the Office of Engagement in a “constructive tension ...with the rest of the organization,” according to Sarbanes. He added, “We were going to be pushing the organization to do things differently and to think about things differently, to act differently, to raise expectations.” (See **Exhibit 1** for the 2008-2009 organizational chart.)

Sarbanes appeared well suited for his role as a constructive agitator given his organizing background, first as a lawyer at the Community Law Center and most recently at CPHA. In both of these roles, Sarbanes worked closely with neighborhood associations on a range of community issues, and he recalled that “neighborhood organizing was critical.” According to Tom Wilcox of BCF, Sarbanes brought an organizing frame to City Schools because “that’s Michael’s DNA.” Bishop Miles agreed, calling Sarbanes “a breath of fresh air that the school system needed and... one of the best hires that Dr. Alonso made. [Sarbanes] gets it because he comes out of an organizing background.”

Sarbanes also brought to his work a long list of relationships developed in his community organizing work and an understanding that he could not do the work alone. “[T]he first thing I did [when I was hired] was to hire on as a consultant Michael Carter,” the same activist who was so blunt in welcoming Alonso to Baltimore. Sarbanes explained, “Michael ...[had] been doing organizing work for over 30 years, with a great deal of integrity. So he was respected in lots of different places and not disrespected anywhere.” Michelle Greene, a parent who worked with Carter when he chaired the Parent Community Advisory Board (PCAB), saw a symbiotic relationship between the two of them: “Michael Carter was good at bringing communities together. He could go into the roughest of neighborhoods and bring those parents together... But then Michael Sarbanes could take all the feedback that was captured from all of those different places and challenge you to come up with something that was going to speak to the spirit of everybody involved.” Bringing Carter into City Schools was a strategic choice, but it was only one of many attempts to bridge the divide between the district and the neighborhoods.²²

Changing the Narrative About City Schools

At the beginning of Alonso’s tenure in Baltimore, the schools were still reeling from their portrayal in HBO’s acclaimed television drama “The Wire,” especially Season 4, which aired in fall 2006. “The Wire” was created, written, and produced by David Simon, a former *Baltimore Sun* reporter, and Ed Burns, a former homicide detective and then a teacher in City Schools for seven years. Season 4 of the show centered on four middle school students, caught between their failing school and the allure of street life, specifically the power and standing of drug dealers. Simon and Burns explained that the story they wanted to tell was of how young people are pulled in competing directions and that in the competition between school and the streets the schools were losing. In an interview before the Season 4 premiere, Burns said, “It’s stunning how bad the school system is. It takes your breath away.”²³

And so Sarbanes believed that one of his first tasks at City Schools needed to be re-framing the dominant story being told about the district and its students not only to Baltimore's families, community members, and the corporate and business community, but to residents across the state. Sarbanes' extensive communications background taught him that people saw the world through "frames" which defined what people knew, believed, and how they interpreted information. Sarbanes believed that there were three "monstrous" negative frames that existed in 2008 around City Schools: one around violence, in particular the violence of the students, one around district corruption, and one around the perceived ineptitude of the bureaucracy. But he also felt that there were three positive frames that were emerging, albeit barely, from Alonso's leadership:

The three positive frames [were] a frame around progress, which in 2008 actually didn't really exist; a frame around urgency, which did exist and basically Andres had created...; and then the third one, which again was almost non-existent, [was] this idea that ...we've got some really exceptional kids.

Sarbanes felt confident in his analysis of the negative frames, but he was initially less sure about how to enact the positive frames. Eventually, he realized that "[t]he one that we had an opening on was the urgency." Sarbanes explained that this opening was largely thanks to Alonso's determination to connect with families. Families who came to Alonso's listening tour meetings were often "the ones who were most invested in the schools... [and they] were actually face-to-face getting a sense of that urgency ...a sense that, 'You know what? The school district actually desires to be in a relationship with us.' ...For a lot of people it was the first time they'd encountered a superintendent." Sarbanes did his part to build relationships and convey this sense of urgency by meeting with various community organizations and institutions.

In March 2008, two weeks after Sarbanes' first day on the job and eight months after Alonso launched his listening tour, the Office of Engagement sent out Alonso's first formal communication to families in Baltimore. In a letter headlined with a new slogan for City Schools that especially highlighted the third positive frame - "Great Kids, Great Schools" - Alonso meticulously sought to reframe the conversation (see **Exhibit 2** for the full text of Alonso's letter):

We have great kids in Baltimore, with great potential. And they all deserve great schools. Right now, we have great teachers in every school, but we only have a handful of great schools. We need an entire system of them. But we cannot build that system by making excuses or maintaining the status quo. Schools must be responsible to kids. Great schools happen when everyone in the school, the system and beyond takes that responsibility to heart.

Recalling this letter in May 2014, Sarbanes smiled and said, "This was a countercultural assertion, like a punch in the teeth to the way kids were perceived and the schools were perceived: we have great kids with great potential and they all deserve great schools. Boom, that was it! We said that - we must have said it a million times. You'll see it in almost everything. ...The kids are *great*, and *everybody* is responsible for supporting them."

Alonso then laid out three guiding principles for the work ahead: fair, clear, open decision-making; school freedom equals school responsibility; and families as partners. On this third principle, Alonso spelled out the essence of what would become the new Family Community Engagement strategy for City Schools: "You—parents, family and community members—are essential to the education of our children; we need to treat you like real partners. ...And we will engage organizations that are trusted in the community to help you stay connected to your children's school."

A New Strategy

Over time, the new family and community engagement (FCE) strategy came to include at least three components: targeted *funding initiatives* that built the capacity of families and school staff to partner and spurred partnerships between community-based organizations (CBOs) and individual schools; a new *family and community engagement policy* that shifted real decision-making power to families and communities; and a *movement to fully engage families and community members in the creation of community schools* across the district.

Funding family and community engagement. With \$500,000 of general funds reallocated to the Office of Engagement's budget for SY 2008-2009 and supplemented with private foundation money, Sarbanes and his team began to build a network of CBOs to partner with schools. In June 2008, three months after Sarbanes started working at City Schools, the district authorized the Family League of Baltimore, the city government's local management board, to put out a Request for Proposals to CBOs. CBOs could compete for small grants (less than \$15,000 per school) to fund parent mobilization and community engagement efforts at individual schools.²⁴ Although the grant program was seen as a way to make targeted investments in family and community engagement, it also represented a shift in the way school principals and CBOs had worked together, expressing a new district expectation that schools should open themselves to working with community partners.

Schools and CBOs were measured on a range of concrete actions involving the interaction of parents and schools. For example, each year schools were expected to collect Free and Reduced-price Meals (FARM) forms from parents. Traditionally, this was treated as a low-visibility bureaucratic exercise within the Food Services division of the district, and its relevance explained to parents solely as a question of whether their students wanted to eat school meals. Under the state funding formula, however, the number of qualified FARM students was also the proxy for the "low income" status of students, and each eligible FARM form was worth an additional \$4,800 in state funding for the district. Bebe Verdery of the ACLU had been pointing out to the district for years the critical connection between FARM form collection and increased state funding, but collection rates had stagnated around 73% for years. Verdery sought out Sarbanes on his first day on the job to point out the funding issue and the need to organize parents to complete and return the forms. Under the Community Support for Schools Initiative (CSSI), the Family League issued its Request for Proposals. CBOs awarded funding were asked to work with school staff to reach out to all parents about the importance of returning completed FARM forms as a key source of funding for schools. With increased attention from community groups on obtaining a FARM status from 100% of students, Sarbanes explained that district staff also used existing databases like Food Stamps eligibility to establish income qualifications. The result of all these efforts was that between 2008 and 2010, the FARM form return rate for the district increased from 73 percent to 84 percent, resulting in an additional \$43 million in the state aid targeted to low-income students.²⁵

A new family and community engagement policy. Beginning in 2008, Sarbanes launched a process to revise the district's family and community engagement (FCE) policy. This process included consultation with community groups and parent advocates, focus groups with school principals, and a series of public forums. The revised policy was adopted in February 2009.²⁶ The goal, Sarbanes said, was to create "a structure that could shift sufficient power... to parents and community at the school level while maintaining accountability for principals for school performance." Michelle Greene, a member of the Parent Community Advisory Board (PCAB) when it worked with the district to craft the new policy, agreed that the vision for family and community engagement was "to have more parents at the table as decisions for students were being made and to respect those opinions of parents."

With this in mind, under the revised policy all schools were required to hold annual meetings for families and community members. The agenda for these meetings was prescribed by the regulations accompanying the new policy. Specifically, schools were required to hold annual open meetings where they would review school performance data, discuss school improvement plans, present budget priorities, and explain the school's implementation of its family and community engagement strategy.²⁷

In addition, the new policy directed that each school establish a "recognized, organized parent group if one does not currently exist," as well as a School Family Council to involve families and community members in school governance. The name of the council was deliberately crafted to be inclusive and emphasize "school family" as a single entity, as opposed to distinguishing between schools and families. Greene remembered, "it was very deliberate that it not have any division in the name. I believe it was Michael Sarbanes who really was very sensitive to that. He would push back on anything that represented that type of division." The Council was required to have at least three parents and two community members. These five members additionally made up the core of a new school-based structure, the Advisory Team. Members of a school's Advisory Team also needed to include at least one member representing each of the following populations: special education, Title I (meaning low-income), and English language learners (in schools where at least 10 percent of students were English language learners).

A school's Advisory Team was tasked with providing input to the CEO on principal hiring and school budgets. Regarding the budgets, principals were required to present and explain their budgets to the Advisory Team, which would then submit their feedback to the CEO as either "approve," "support," "do not support," or "support with comments." Although the CEO had final say over school budgets, Alonso was clear that school budgets would not be approved without the input of families. Said Sarbanes, "If [the feedback] was a 'do not support' or a 'support with comments,' we needed to follow up." Regarding principal hiring, the policy stated that a principal selection panel including the Advisory Team would present three names to the CEO, who would then select one. Alonso was consistent in following this process, allaying historical concerns in many school communities that the district would impose principal appointments regardless of input from the school community.

To assist with the implementation of the new policy, Sarbanes created a new position called the family and community engagement specialist. FCE specialists were assigned a roster of schools, where they were responsible for providing technical assistance and acting as a liaison between the schools, communities, and central office. Said Sarbanes, the specialists were directed to "help the schools understand what structures they're required to have in place, what structures will be helpful to them to have in place, and how to identify people in the school and build the capacity of those people to make those structures come alive. ...They can coach people, they can problem solve, they can identify issues, they can mediate where there's challenges." Julia Baez, a former teacher in City Schools and one of the first FCE Specialists hired (who later went on to work at the Family League), explained that the FCE specialist was "always sort of an interesting role within [City Schools] because we were a school system employee, but so much of the core of the work that we did was really pushing against the systems." With this in mind, FCE specialists received initial organizing training from BUILD.

Although the new FCE policy encountered some resistance at first, especially from principals reluctant to share the budgeting process, the new direction quickly attracted support from the community. Bishop Miles of BUILD said of the new FCE policy, "I think it's the most revolutionary thing that has happened in Baltimore City Schools in the past 50 years. ...[It takes] seriously parental engagement and [wants] parents to be at the table to make decisions about their own children, the directions of their schools, who leads those schools, the budgets, and what the schools have to offer."

Movement toward community schools. Both the funding initiative and the new family and community engagement policy proved instrumental in the shift toward community schools across the district. When Sarbanes was hired in 2008, there were 18 community schools, largely perceived as an isolated top-down initiative and overseen by an office “in a basement classroom in the Professional Development Center up on Northern Parkway somewhere.” In 2008-2009, the community schools work was brought into the Office of Engagement, so that it could be coordinated with other efforts to strengthen school-community relationships. Defining what it meant to be a community school was an important clarifying process involving a wide range of stakeholders. This process eventually articulated a definition of community schools that emphasized creating “a network of partnerships between the school and other community resources that promote student achievement, family and community well being.”²⁸ Each community school had one community-based partner organization and a full-time coordinator, paid for by a combination of City, schools, and state funds, coordinated through the Family League.

An early success of the community schools transition was the Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove, a struggling school converted to a community school as part of a school turnaround process. Dante de Tablan, the community schools coordinator, emphasized that “community schools really need to be – can be engines of community revitalization. You know, when people go to their realtors and [are] thinking about moving to a community, the first thing they ask is, ‘How are the schools?’” Alonso added that, “We needed parents to see public schools as generative rather than destructive to community.” The movement toward community schools also embodied a more strategic practical approach to community partnerships as a key resource for school improvement. Historically, after school programming had been regarded in many schools as an isolated and independent set of programs, not necessarily linked into the functioning of the school. Meanwhile, community schools had been regarded as a separate effort to coordinate other kinds of partnerships. According to Sarbanes, coordination was often inconsistent and depended on fragile personal relationships between principals, after school providers, and community schools coordinators.

In 2010, funding for after school and community schools was incorporated into a single strategy that needed to be closely coordinated with the school’s vision and operations. Samantha Mellerson, who worked as the director of education and social justice at the Family League (which disseminated community schools funding), explained that the message to principals, after school providers, and community schools coordinators was now a unified message:

We were saying, ‘[You] have to partner together. The principal has to choose *one* partner. You guys have to collaborate. You could have one organization being the lead, as the community schools coordinator, and the after school program could be run by a different organization, but that would be a partnered effort and they would apply together as a package to support this school and this community, and then you would have to show us... how are you going to be that hub in the community?’

Greater Homewood and Child First were two of the organizations receiving funding under the new initiative. At the end of the 2013-2014 school year, Greater Homewood was partnered with four schools and Child First with eight. Ron Covington from Child First explained that “how each organization approaches [its partnership with schools] is vastly different. [Child First is] going to focus on organizing. We’ll have our community resource coordinator in there and then support them with an organizer.” Greater Homewood, founded in 1969, had a deliberately broad mission to “build and strengthen vibrant urban communities.” For example, a 10-year campaign led in part by Greater

Homewood to rebuild the Waverly Elementary/Middle School served as a model for the subsequent school construction campaign and the system-wide movement toward community schools.²⁹

This coordinated approach built a more unified and stronger constituency for both community schools and after school programming and provided a stronger programmatic argument for increased city funding. By May 2014, there were 43 community schools and 22 more undergoing a planning process.

All three components of Sarbanes' new strategy relied heavily on community organizing principles and community organizing groups like BUILD. In February 2009, the *Sun* reported that community organizers were working at 63 schools.³⁰ However, at this point, the strategy was still focused on individual schools. In contrast, the school facilities campaign – what would become known as the 21st Century Building Campaign – leveraged the organizing capacity of individual CBOs, advocacy groups, and community schools in order to improve the system as a whole and on an unprecedented scale.

The 21st Century Building Campaign

On Friday, January 23, 2009, a story appeared in the *Baltimore Sun* outlining what it described as “devastating” cuts to state aid for school districts throughout the state, as part of the governor’s proposed budget.³¹ Given steady increases in funding for City Schools as a result of ACLU-led legal settlements aimed at funding equity, coupled with the first increase in student enrollment in 40 years, the proposed cuts came as a surprise to many people. The cuts to City Schools were even more of a surprise since several well-resourced districts were slated to receive *increases* in state aid. (See **Exhibit 3** for the full table). In the *Sun* article, Alonso called the budget proposal “economizing on the backs of the neediest students in the state.”

Looking back, several community members pointed to this budget cycle – and the story in the *Sun* in particular – as a galvanizing moment in the push for a broad-based coalition aimed at investing in and improving City Schools. Karen DeCamp of Greater Homewood remembered, “When we looked at the *Sun* article it was unbelievable. Baltimore City was sustaining a much bigger cut than Montgomery County which is ...one of the wealthiest counties in the entire country and it was, the inequity, the injustice was so palpable.” Sue Fothergill, a parent at the City Neighbors Charter School and volunteer board member of the City Neighbors Foundation, recalled the flurry of activity in the wake of the budget and *Sun* article:

There were a series of phone calls that Friday and over the weekend between the Baltimore City Public Schools’ Michael Sarbanes, BUILD, City Neighbors Foundation, Child First Authority and the ACLU of Maryland. And ultimately, the conversation was, “Well we’re all upset about this. What do we do?” And we decided that we needed to have a meeting and invite a bunch of people to join us at that meeting and the meeting happened on Tuesday at [Child First] and there were about 40 organizations in the room all saying, “This is unacceptable. What are we going to do about it?”

The meeting on Tuesday, January 27th turned out to be the first meeting of what would become the Baltimore Education Coalition (BEC), an umbrella group bringing together the district and a diverse array of school- and community-based groups to work for large-scale school improvement.

From a Fight for Funding to a Fight for Facilities

In many ways, the fight for school facilities began as a fight for funding equity. One of the leaders in this fight was the Education Reform Project at the ACLU of Maryland. Bebe Verdery, the project's director, attended the first BEC meeting on January 27th, and she was well known among district staff and community members as a longtime activist. She traced the long-running fight for funding equity in Baltimore to a lawsuit filed in 1994 by the ACLU on behalf of parents – later joined by the city of Baltimore – against the state. The lawsuit (*Bradford v. Maryland State Board of Education*) claimed that children in City Schools, a low-wealth district, were being deprived of their (state) constitutionally mandated right to a “thorough and efficient education.” The *Bradford* suit was settled in 1997, awarding the city school system an additional \$50 million a year. Verdery called the settlement a “down payment” and added, “We knew that was only a portion of what they needed. But we ...settle[d] the suit because otherwise suits can last for 10 years and the kids get no money.” The settlement allowed the ACLU to go back to court, if needed, and in 2000 a judge ruled that City Schools was owed an additional \$260 million a year to ensure an adequate education for its students. The state then established the Thornton Commission to rewrite the education funding formula and passed a law that sent additional aid to all school districts in the state, including the \$260 million for City Schools.³²

Despite the boost in operational funding guaranteed to City Schools through the Thornton formula, the state regularly proposed funding cuts as part of the annual budgeting process. Both the ACLU and community groups like BUILD turned out parents and community members to lobby for the restoration of funding. It took the 2009 budget, with its proposed \$23 million cut to City Schools coupled with proposed budget increases to wealthier districts, to galvanize and unite the district and community organizers behind a shared purpose.

Meeting regularly throughout the 2009 legislative session -- which runs from January to April each year – members of BEC mobilized community members and lobbied legislators. BEC delegates, including parents, went to Annapolis each week to attend the Friday meeting of the Baltimore legislative delegation. By spring 2009, all proposed cuts were restored. BEC's success prompted some reflection among its core group of leaders, especially since the recession seemed to guarantee a continued budget crisis. As Fothergill explained, “During legislative session it was just all about lobbying but after the legislative session, then we started meeting as a group and saying, ‘Who are we? What do we do? Do we continue to work together?’” Shannen Coleman Siciliano, the director of strategic initiatives at Child First, recalled that “there was conversation leading up to that celebration and afterwards that we're going to have to continue coming together and we should start thinking about how to organize and build a base.” After deciding that the coalition would continue beyond the short-term budget crisis, Fothergill and Siciliano were selected as the first co-chairs of BEC.

Their first task was to cultivate an *organizing* mindset within the coalition, which would have implications for how the group worked together and for the group's focus. Initially, BEC was focused on restoring budget cuts, but Fothergill and Siciliano imagined more of a grassroots coalition. Said Siciliano,

[In 2009] we weren't organizing, we were mobilizing. ...[I]t was telling people, “We need to be there, get on the bus at this time and show up.” ...When we were mobilizing, we were saying, “This is why we need you to come.” And then when we started organizing we started asking, “What is your interest? What do you want to fight for? And let's build around that.”

In order to shift from mobilizing to organizing, the leaders of BEC realized that they first needed to develop leadership and organizing capacity at all levels of their member organizations and at the schools with which they partnered. Fothergill remembers a small cadre of BEC leaders meeting at the Child First offices in late 2009 when they took steps in this direction:

There [were] probably like eight of us sitting around a table and we were talking about our capacity to organize versus mobilize... And folks around the table really recognized that they didn't have an organizing background. So then we said, "Okay, take a step back. How many people can you turn out to a smaller internal action?" And we got legitimate numbers from the members of the table who hadn't done this sort of work before and we turned out 100 people to an internal action [in December 2009] with the goal of building our capacity with those leaders, really, within our organizations to become trained as organizers ...and to build and grow our capacity to be organizers.

At this meeting in December 2009, BUILD and Child First organized the first of several trainings for BEC and their member organizations. Carol Reckling of Child First explained that the trainings were geared toward building an even broader coalition: "We spent the first two years training [BEC members] how to do the one-on-one meetings with parents, how to get into the schools and meet with the staff and the principals and get them on board, and to know what it meant to be accountable... So, if I say 'I can do this much, how much can you do?' we come back together and we count and we say, 'Did you [do] what you said you were going to do or do you need help doing what you want to do?'" Karen DeCamp of Greater Homewood remembered feeling an acute sense of accountability to the group, saying, "I've done community organizing in different ways but not like that ...We would go around the table and ...I had to commit a number of people that we would bring and ...I would just ...say my number and pray... that my number sounded significant enough but not too big [that] I couldn't deliver 'cause if I couldn't deliver that would look terrible because it would, it just would. We held each other to really high standards."

When the 2010 state budget was announced the following month and it once again included cuts to school funding, BEC turned out 600 people to meet with legislators and lobby for the cuts to be restored, which eventually they were. Because the 2010 cuts affected all districts, BEC's lobbying efforts had the effect of attracting support from other parts of the state. As Siciliano explained, "Every win we won for Baltimore City was a statewide win for every public education institution in this state." This ability to build alliances across district lines would be instrumental.

With two years of successful lobbying, BEC was demonstrating that it could be a powerful force for improving public education in Baltimore. In the summer of 2010, they began to turn their attention to an issue that had long lingered as one of the biggest impediments to educational equity and achievement for students in Baltimore: the poor state of school facilities.

The Need and Vision for Improved Facilities in City Schools

The increase in operational funding for City Schools won through the *Bradford* lawsuit and the Thornton formula did not include money for repairs and renovations to school facilities. Informed in part by reports from the ACLU, a state task force on public facilities headed by state treasurer Nancy Kopp estimated in 2004 that \$3.85 billion was needed to bring Maryland's school facilities up to a standard of "minimal adequacy" and recommended that the legislature spend an additional \$250 million annually over eight years to address the problem.³³ However, the considerable needs of City Schools were still left under-addressed by these efforts.

Organizations like the ACLU, BUILD, and Child First had been aware of the deteriorating condition of school facilities for years. Reckling from Child First recalled when the facilities issue hit home for her: "I went into a building for a meeting. It was so cold in there. I said, 'God, I can't wait to get out of here.' And then it hit me. The children have to stay. The teachers have to stay. ...I was freezing

and when I'm cold I can't think. So I'm thinking to myself, as a child, what would I be learning if I'm cold?"

Alonso was well aware of the problem. In fact, the poor conditions of school facilities were increasingly becoming a distraction. Karen Stokes, executive director of Greater Homewood, recalled having a conversation with Alonso in which he expressed frustration that "so much of his time was spent with boilers breaking down." Each year, as CEOs before him had done, Alonso would request state funding to upgrade facilities, but no matter how much he received it was never enough to keep up with the rapid pace of disrepair. In one of her first meetings with Alonso, Verdery of the ACLU was direct:

I said, "One of the reasons you're not getting as much money as you could get from the school construction fund is that *you're not asking for enough*. ...Look at this county, they're asking for \$200 million, and then when they get \$40 million they can say, 'We only got 20 percent. Poor us.' But you asked for \$20 million and you get \$20 million and then on the chart it says you got 100 percent of what you wanted." So it's just fundamental ...[and] Dr. Alonso immediately got it.

Using money from the state fund for school construction, Alonso was able allocate modest funding in response to pressure from community-based groups and school partners like BUILD, Child First, and Greater Homewood, but he began to see that the problem could not be solved on a case-by-case basis. The need to think systemically and proactively – instead of locally and ad hoc – immediately resonated for Reckling. She recalled a conversation with Alonso about facilities early in his tenure after Child First had organized parents to lobby for facilities money:

I remember he said to me, "Well, all of our schools have problems. Why should we invest in just these schools?" And I said, "Because we are here, because these parents have organized, and because here you can see it makes a difference because people care about it and will work on it" ...And he said, "Baltimore is thinking too small." He said, "I have a bigger vision that we need to redo all the schools in the district." And when he said that, I'm telling you that for me, that was like – that was the energy. I'll never forget that day because I said, "Yes." And then you started thinking about what that could mean... Think about what a new school building could do to a neighborhood. Is this going to do something around housing in the neighborhood? Will people who live there see that this new school means I can invest in my home? Will it draw people back to the city? Will the job created by the building go to people who live in the city?

Fothergill also saw that the facilities issue had the potential to be a unifying campaign in much the same way that the funding cuts had been. "In the same way that operation funding cuts weren't unique to northeast Baltimore, schools being in really horrible condition weren't unique to any part of the city. It was the whole city and kids in every part of the city were suffering from really, really dilapidated, dangerous, unsafe school buildings." Moreover, Fothergill said, organizations like Child First and others had already recognized the salience of the issue. "[A facilities campaign] was already something that was bubbling ...from the grassroots," she said.

Sarbanes connected this vision for improvement at scale to the belief laid out by Alonso in his first parent communication: that everyone is responsible for all kids. "A really important early decision was that we were gonna be doing a strategy that was about every school," he said, adding that the strategy needed to shift the conversation "from, 'They've got a new school building over there. How do I get my kid into that one?' to 'They've got a new school building there and there and there and

there and my kids deserve the same thing. How can we get a new school building?' ...You've established that this is what all kids deserve."

Many of the stakeholders – district officials, school personnel, community leaders, parents, and students – intuitively knew that the school facilities were in poor condition. However, the scale of the problem became more concrete when the ACLU published a report, co-authored by Verdery, which estimated that 70 percent of the schools in Baltimore were in substandard condition and that it would cost an estimated \$2.8 *billion* – later revised to a still-formidable \$2.4 billion – to fix them.³⁴ Verdery explained, "[W]e made the case that city kids had made progress but they were still hampered by the insufficiencies of the buildings, the lack of science labs, the poor air quality, and we laid it all out with footnotes and research. Then we laid out how unfair the school construction funding distribution in the state was and called them out pretty strongly." But equally as important as documenting the problem and building coalitions to address it, Verdery believed, was proposing a solution that could work.

Building the Momentum

Given the scale of the problem, having a policy solution around which to organize was critical. "I have organized lots of things with community groups and state-wide groups for years," Verdery said, "and you can do a lot of good organizing and not win ...if you're waiting for someone else to tell you what the solution [is]." Moreover, a problem as seemingly insurmountable as the condition of City Schools facilities may have caused policymakers to turn their attention to more solvable problems. As Verdery said, "Our first recommendation... was [that] the city, the state and the school system should come together to come up with a plan of how to solve this. [But] as I went along and worked more with the finance people at the city, I realized that they didn't know how. ...[We had what] turned out to be \$2.4 billion need. And people ...were like, 'Well, that clearly can't be solved. Next problem. Give me something I can solve because that's what I can work on.'"

The ACLU report released in June 2010 detailed a solution inspired by districts or states that had managed to undertake ambitious school construction plans in relatively short order. Among these districts was Greenville, South Carolina. In Greenville, the district modernized the majority of their schools in five years for a total of \$800 million. Half of the schools were rebuilt and the other half renovated. Using traditional bond financing, with the district's debt limit of \$60 million, such a plan would have taken over 20 years and cost an additional \$1.5 billion in construction and inflation costs. Instead, Greenville set up a new non-profit organization called Building Equity Sooner for Tomorrow (BEST). BEST in turn sold the necessary \$800 million of bonds and managed the school construction, while the school system used their \$60 million annual allotment to buy back the schools from BEST over 25 years.³⁵ Greenville officials likened the scheme to a home mortgage.³⁶ (See **Exhibit 4** for an outline of the plan and roles in Greenville).

That same summer, BEC held a retreat to decide on a focus issue for the coalition. Fothergill and Siciliano designed a process by which member organizations could propose issues to the group for deliberation. Fothergill said, "You had to make the case that it was connected to the mission, how many kids it affected, why this mattered, what the problem was, what the solution is that your organization was proposing." The ACLU, which had been working on legislative and lobbying efforts dating back to the Kopp Task Force, proposed a school facilities campaign.

Meanwhile, in November 2010, Alonso and Rawlings-Blake formed a task force to study the school facilities issue and the Greenville-inspired solution. The press release announcing the formation of the task force included the \$2.8 billion estimate from the ACLU report and quoted Rawlings-Blake,

who reportedly was wary of committing city money to the effort, as saying, “While we do not have a solution to address this massive problem today, one thing is clear: doing nothing is not an option.”³⁷

Forward momentum was building in favor of funding school facilities. The ACLU report provided much-needed clarity on the scale of the problem and a model solution. The member organizations of BEC, many of whom were also partnered with schools and receiving organizing grants through City Schools, were committed to a long-term campaign. And notably, the outside perception of City Schools was becoming more positive, which meant that the district could throw its weight behind a high-profile campaign for more funding. Importantly, the shift in perception also reflected tangible results: between 2006 and 2011, student proficiency rates on state tests rose by double digits, graduation rates increased by 20 percent, and the dropout rate plummeted 55 percent, with African American male students showing the largest decreases in dropouts.³⁸ The progress frame that had been absent in 2009 when Sarbanes was hired at last had a firm foothold. Sarbanes explained that people began to believe that Baltimore City schools were improving. “It’s no longer a pit in which you throw money and you see nothing,” Sarbanes said. “The schools are getting better.”

Launching the Campaign

In the spring of 2011, BEC members reached a consensus decision to formally take up the school facilities issue and joined the ACLU’s “Transform Baltimore: Build Schools, Build Neighborhoods” campaign.³⁹ A few months later, with the mayoral election heating up, BUILD hosted an election forum and pressed all of the candidates, including Mayor Rawlings-Blake, to commit city funds for school construction. In October, prompted by Verdery, BCF president Tom Wilcox and Heather Mizeur, who represented Montgomery County in the state House of Delegates, co-authored an op-ed in the *Baltimore Sun* outlining the problem and the proposed third-party solution, as well as identifying benefits for students, communities, and the business community.⁴⁰ Wilcox then used the op-ed to introduce the facilities plan to the philanthropic community and build support among private sector allies, a job he conceded was made easier by growing confidence in Alonso and the recent progress made by City Schools students.

At the same time as Mizeur and Wilcox’s op-ed, member organizations from Transform Baltimore and BEC attended over 50 back-to-school nights and collected testimony about the conditions of school buildings. Verdery estimated that over 2,000 sets of comments were received. Quotes were compiled into a 20-page document, which was then submitted to the mayor. (See **Exhibit 5** for selected quotes from this document). On the evening of November 2, 2011, over 200 residents gathered at the War Memorial Hall across from City Hall and held a “speak-out,” at which comments were read out loud and interspersed with reminders about the proposed solution.⁴¹ In addition, BUILD organized protests to challenge the notion that the city could not afford facilities upgrades by spotlighting millions of dollars of city subsidies that were supporting commercial and luxury housing developments in Baltimore’s Inner Harbor.⁴² Less than two weeks after the speak-out and the BUILD campaign, newly re-elected Mayor Rawlings-Blake announced her support for an increase in the municipal bottle tax as a way to raise revenue for new school construction.⁴³

These high-profile introductions to the issue and the proposed solution helped to set the stage for the 2012 and 2013 legislative terms, both of which would be central to the success or failure of the facilities campaign.

Building Support

The 2012 legislative term opened with city legislators filing a bill to fund school construction by using the existing stream of state school construction funds flowing to Baltimore City (funds derived from state bond sales) as the basis for issuing school construction bonds.⁴⁴ After the bill was filed, the city and district lobbied for passage. In February 2012, Mayor Rawlings-Blake testified before the House Appropriations Committee and estimated that the new bonds would allow the city to cover \$2.8 billion in construction costs.⁴⁵

The bill's chances of success were admittedly slim. Verdery explained that "in Annapolis the Baltimore school system doesn't have a huge amount of credibility. ...[State officials were] very skeptical. The [state] treasurer's office hated the idea... the head of the school construction agency for the State that doled out the money with his board didn't like the idea. So everywhere we were trying to sell it ...all the state players were saying, 'No way.'" In addition, after BEC's consensus decision on the facilities campaign, the abrupt introduction of a bill seemed to pre-empt community organizers' process. Fothergill and Siciliano said that the 2012 bill was not part of the agreed-upon BEC strategy and did not even come up at their annual rally in Annapolis. Nevertheless, BEC members were regular visitors in Annapolis every Friday at the delegation meeting of Baltimore City legislators. Because of this standing presence, BEC wound up being a highly visible and credible advocate during the legislative process. Siciliano recalled, "We would show up [at the regular Friday meetings] even if education was not talked about. Even if there were only five of us, someone from the BEC was always there. And over time, I mean, it got to a point after a year or so doing that where [Delegate] Curt Anderson - who is the chair - he would say, 'Okay BEC, do you have anything to say today?' or, 'You're here; our advocates from BEC are here.'"

In January 2012, shortly after the bill was introduced, Alonso went to Annapolis to testify in favor of it.⁴⁶ In February and March, Dante de Tablan, the community schools coordinator at Benjamin Franklin High School and a clinical faculty member at the University of Maryland School of Social Work, also testified before the House Appropriations Committee and Senate Budget Committee. After its conversion to a community school in 2010, Benjamin Franklin had received a series of physical improvements and was seen as an exemplar for how community schools could improve not only student outcomes but also uplift entire neighborhoods. Testifying in his role as a faculty member at the University of Maryland, de Tablan presented Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove as a "proof of concept" and testified that "if you change the environment of a school, the physical building condition, creating optimal learning environments, it's possible that you can actually affect some changes in terms of student achievement."

At the city level, Mayor Rawlings-Blake introduced the bill to double to the city's bottle tax from two to five cents in February 2012. Raising taxes was not popular among City Council members, but it was seen as necessary in order to win support at the state level. Fothergill said, "Many members of the City Council were not in support of the bottle tax at all." Verdery agreed, "There was a lot of angst on the part of a number of usually sympathetic City Council members who just didn't want another tax on Baltimore city residents. And they're right. Baltimore City is over taxed. We shouldn't have to have another tax. But the term is 'skin in the game,' state legislators wanted to know that the city and the mayor were invested in the program." Despite the bill's unpopularity among city council members and general uneasiness with a new tax, BUILD organized in support of the bill. Bishop Miles recalled, "We made it a campaign - 'two cents for our kids' - and leveraged our organizational strength within the city, with both the city council and standing with the mayor... to help create the bottle tax." When passage seemed uncertain, thanks in part to vocal opposition of local businesses and beverage industry lobbyists, BEC also organized a rally of 750 people to support the bill. In June 2012, the bottle tax increase - estimated to raise \$10 million - was passed by the City Council, with some council members giving impassioned testimony about the poor conditions in their own children's schools.⁴⁷

At the state level, the 2012 school construction bill did not pass. However, the state legislature did direct the Interagency Committee on School Construction (IAC) to study the implications of a block grant program for City Schools. Most importantly for Verdery was the addition of language framing the summer study as one that would “assess the implications of providing, *or not providing*, a block grant to improve Baltimore City’s school facilities” (emphasis added). Verdery explained that because the committee was also asked to study what would happen in the *absence* of a facilities overhaul, organizers could make a new argument “about the way they’re currently spending the money on the school buildings, [saying that it] is not only bad for the kids but it’s just financially stupid ... They would [spend] about \$30 million a year and literally they never built a new building. Nothing was ever built from scratch. So all they were doing was going around putting roofs on buildings or replacing boilers in buildings that were 80 years old. It wasn’t smart financially.” In addition to directly lobbying members of the study group, BEC organized tours of school buildings for state legislators as a way to elevate awareness of the high need for action among who Siciliano called “the people who actually make the decisions.”

Final Push and Passage

Heading into the summer of 2012, the campaign faced a series of challenging hurdles, each of which had to be successfully navigated for the campaign to move forward. First, the school system needed to present a clear, compelling and externally validated assessment of the scope of the need, building by building. Second, Baltimore City needed to present a plan for modernizing school facilities that would include bringing the overall portfolio in line with its enrollment; in other words, in a district with an overall utilization rate in middle and high schools of just over 50%, some half-empty schools would have to close. Third, a base of community support for the plan had to be broadened and deepened enough to effectively demand that the entire delegation of city legislators make school construction their top priority in the upcoming session. Fourth, in the horse-trading among different jurisdictions in the 2013 legislative session, there would have to be an opportunity for that united bloc of city votes to effectively demand a major state investment in City Schools buildings in return for supporting priorities of other parts of the state.

The first challenge was to get a credible estimate of what needed to be done in each building and how much that would cost. In 2011, City Schools had hired the firm Jacobs Project Management to evaluate the relative conditions in all city-owned school facilities, identify those schools with the greatest need, and estimate the full cost of improving facilities. The resulting report was released in June 2012, a month after the 2012 legislative session ended, and it largely corroborated the ACLU’s earlier findings about the scale of the problem. Between June and September 2012, City Schools hosted 16 “community conversations”, facilitated by Sarbanes, throughout the city about the 10-year plan, which were attended by over 800 people representing 171 of the 177 schools located in district-owned buildings.⁴⁸ Participants included teams of parents, community partners, teachers and administrators, forming a nucleus of leaders at each school with an understanding of the overall vision for the district and of the particular situation at their school. Each community conversation also included a presentation by BEC on the campaign and an opportunity for participants to join the coalition. The conversations resulted in a set of principles articulated by the Board that provided a consistent rationale, based on community input, that would guide every recommendation in the school construction plan. (See **Exhibit 6** for the Board-approved principles).

Also, during the summer of 2012, City Schools convened an advisory board to give feedback on a proposed 10-year construction plan that would form the backbone of a new legislative proposal in 2013. Serving on the advisory board were representatives from BEC, as well as members from

Alonso's cabinet, the City Council of PTAs, the mayor's office, and the city Department of Planning.⁴⁹ This group provided a sounding board to give feedback on the complex, interrelated set of recommendations and options that were initially developed by a district group, coordinated by Alonso's chief of staff Tisha Edwards, and involved virtually every department within City Schools.

The result of this process was a document, known as the "10-Year Plan", in which City Schools laid out a plan for modernizing *every* school building in the district (acknowledging that 26 existing school buildings would need to be consolidated or closed), as well as a timeline according to which the renovations would occur. The timeline prioritized schools with the greatest need and schools that would house students from schools scheduled for closure under the plan. These priorities reflected feedback from the community conversations over the summer, in which there was broad agreement that communities where a school was to be closed should be the first to have their children go to school in a state of the art 21st-century facility. The timeline could have been a point of conflict for members of BEC, with a potential division into "winners" and "losers." After all, some schools were not slated for renovation until after Phase 1, and even Phase 1 was not by any means guaranteed to occur without the passage of legislation guaranteeing funding. In fact the absence of tension turned out to be a testament to the coalition's strength. Karen Stokes, executive director at Greater Homewood, recalled that everyone agreed that there needed to be an objective measure of schools' condition. When the final list was released in the 10-year plan, none of the schools partnering with Greater Homewood were slated for Phase 1 funding, but that outcome was less important than the inclusive process. Stokes said, "We as an organization got nothing for the first five years. Yet why are we still at the table? ...Because we were so involved, the stakeholders in this whole thing, we bought into the process, we agreed to the process."

To build broad and deep support for the plan, in addition to the ongoing organizing work by BEC in support of state funding, the release of the plan in November 2012 was accompanied by an intensive round of meetings at every school in the district to review the specific proposed action for that school under the 10-year Plan, all of which occurred before the Board forum on December 19, 2012.⁵⁰ Sarbanes and other district administrators facilitated meetings at each of the 26 school buildings scheduled for closure, while FCE specialists facilitated meetings at other schools. BEC members were also present at most meetings, particularly the most sensitive ones, and continued to organize parents and staff in support of state funding to move forward on the plan. Over 160 school level meetings were held over a period of less than six weeks. The goal of this activity, according to Sarbanes, was to "ensure that everyone who had questions had a chance to have those questions answered at the school level, and that everyone who had a concern about a recommendation understood the reasoning behind the recommendations in a very transparent way, and understood how they could make their concerns known to the Board."

After the city-wide hearing on December 19, 2012, attended by over 500 people, and featuring testimony from a wide range of stakeholders, mostly in support of the plan but including some pointed opposition from several school communities slated for closure, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners unanimously approved the 10-year plan in January 2013.⁵¹

That same month, the 10-year plan and an accompanying financing plan were introduced by the Baltimore City delegation in the Maryland General Assembly as House Bill 860 and Senate Bill 743. One notable change in the bill from the 2012 version was that the legislation did not create a new non-profit entity to issue the bonds (as had been done in Greenville), nor did it rely on state school construction money as the revenue source for issuing bonds (as had been done in the bill introduced during the 2012 session). Instead, the proposed bill directed the Maryland Stadium Authority (MSA), which had built and managed numerous public works projects throughout the state since its founding

in 1986, to issue the bonds and manage construction, using dedicated streams of funding from state, city, and school system sources to support the bonds.

Support for the final bill extended beyond Baltimore City and beyond the public sector. At the BEC rally in late February 2013, speakers included House Speaker Michael Busch, a Democrat from Anne Arundel County, Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, and the former CEO of Legg Mason, Mark Fetting.⁵² Within a month, the bill passed both the House (102-30) and the Senate (40-7) with large bipartisan majorities and was signed into law by Governor O'Malley on May 16, 2013.⁵³

In its final form, the Baltimore City Public Schools Construction and Revitalization Act of 2013 directed that the MSA be paid \$60 million per year over 30 years, allowing it to leverage \$1.1 billion in construction costs and fully fund the first phase of the 10-year construction plan. The \$60 million annual contributions came from three different sources⁵⁴:

- \$20 million from the state, from state lottery proceeds;
- \$20 million from the city, approximately half of which came from the new bottle tax and half from money already budgeted for renovation of City Schools facilities; and
- \$20 million from City Schools, from increased revenue due to projected enrollment increases, savings generated by greater efficiencies in renovated buildings, and savings from reduced operating costs after closing 26 of the district's older school buildings.

The MSA would also oversee spending on all projects and manage all new construction.

Much of the post-mortem on the bill viewed it as a political compromise, as in a *Baltimore Sun* article outlining the behind-the-scenes negotiations among legislators and legislative staff.⁵⁵ However, in a letter to the *Sun*, Greater Homewood's Karen DeCamp told the story about the family and community engagement that preceded and occurred out of view of the political debates:

The deeper story [of the school construction law] must include the herculean efforts of the Baltimore Education Coalition (BEC), the innovative policy advocacy work done by the ACLU of Maryland and the powerful community organizing of groups like BUILD and Child First. Our elected officials don't do this by themselves. They were propelled to act by the incredible urgency and public will created by the BEC. BEC made the problem of broken-down, substandard schools real, laid out a vision for a solution and created the imperative so elected officials had to act.... Congratulations to all the elected and appointed officials who worked hard to make our vision a reality, but also look behind them at the thousands of parents, students, non-profit advocates, teachers and citizens who pushed them forward and enabled them to pass this bill. BEC and its member groups expect to stay on it to ensure that the money is spent well and we continue to create the kind of schools our children deserve.⁵⁶

Moving Forward

With the money for the first phase of school construction secured thanks in no small part to the coalition's advocacy, City Schools then looked toward designing a process for implementing its 10-year plan that would prioritize ongoing family and community engagement. The reciprocal relationship between schools and communities was apparent in the final draft of the school design process, unveiled in March 2014. The final "subway map" schematic (see **Exhibit 7**) outlined not only a process for rebuilding schools, but also a community schools design process facilitated and funded by the Family League and a neighborhood planning process in partnership with the city Department

of Planning. Each process included numerous opportunities for communities and schools to exercise power and offer input.

The ideal process on paper was still subject to complications in practice. As Sarbanes explained, “Policies create possibilities, they don’t create realities.” Throughout the long and complex campaign for school facilities and community improvement, a broad coalition of district officials, community groups, families, politicians, and private sector partners held together and shepherded the plan through design and early implementation, but there were challenges at the school-, community-, and system-levels that would need to be addressed if the coalition was to remain intact and the policy was to reach its full potential.

At the school level, the transition to community schools meant a dramatic change in the roles of school personnel. Specifically, it was unclear whether school leaders who had been hired to run a traditional school had the capacities needed to run a more complex full-service community school. Demery, president of the PTA Council, applauded changes at the district level but observed that there was still variation across schools: “Parents are considered partners now, where before we weren’t. ...But that is only going to go as far as the [school] administrator who allows it to happen.” In addition, the work of ongoing partnership and organizing – both of which are valued as part of City Schools’ family and community engagement strategy – are difficult and demanding. DeCamp of Greater Homewood observed that some school leaders needed to build their understanding and capacity for working effectively in partnership, saying, “it takes a little extra time [to work with us] and frankly I’ve come to the conclusion that you need to have a totally separate hiring process for principals who are gonna work in community schools.” Sarbanes agreed, conceding that even though frameworks for school and principal effectiveness now included a family and community engagement dimension, the district needed to develop trainings and support systems as well.

Furthermore, while schools were seen as engines of community revitalization, the success of the community schools planning process – and the community schools themselves – also depended considerably on the strength of infrastructure within the communities. Verdery admitted that capacity was uneven across the city, “[I]n some neighborhoods, you have the neighborhood organization. ...So then you can help connect them to be the group that helps get people to meetings and helps make sure that people are informed... [but] some neighborhoods [lack] infrastructure. No neighborhood organization that you could find and weak parent leadership or weak organization if any organization at all.” Julia Baez from the Family League, which had responsibility for managing the community schools design process and for funding community partners, talked about the need to be creative and collaborative when working with neighborhood leaders “to figure out how can we get funding to them to build their capacity organizationally.”

One neighborhood where the planning process struggled to gain traction was Cherry Hill, an isolated peninsula south of downtown. Cherry Hill was founded at a time of increasingly severe housing shortages in the lead-up to World War II. In 1939, the federal government sought to build 700 units of public housing for black defense workers in East Baltimore, close to defense plants in an area where the majority of residents were white. In 1943, after four years of protest and with the housing shortage in a state of crisis, the Federal Public Housing Authority acquiesced and moved the project to Cherry Hill, then a barren patch of land near the municipal incinerator, over the objections of the NAACP and the newly-formed CPHA. Since its inception, Cherry Hill has been an almost entirely black neighborhood and its high density of low-income housing made it “one of the largest housing projects east of Chicago.”⁵⁷ Reflecting on the neighborhood’s origins and demographics, Cathy McClain, the executive director of the Cherry Hill Trust and a lifelong resident, observed that “because [Cherry Hill] was planned as a poor community for veterans of color, our history will bear out the fact

that things were done to us rather than with us.” In spite of this impression – or maybe because of it – Cherry Hill had a core group of committed and outspoken neighborhood leaders. Many of these leaders, including McClain, were involved in co-writing the neighborhood’s 2008 Master Plan with the Baltimore City Department of Planning. However, as the 21st-century facilities design process ramped up, the outspoken but relatively underfunded organizing infrastructure in Cherry Hill appeared to put the community at a disadvantage relative to neighborhoods served by larger and more established organizations like Child First or Greater Homewood. As a result, community leaders in Cherry Hill felt increasingly marginalized by City Schools, which had closed one community-designed school (Southside Academy) in 2013.⁵⁸ After months of deliberation and community meetings, leaders presented a concept paper proposing a linked campus for the three remaining schools in Cherry Hill. Believing that community preferences would be honored by the district, McClain was disappointed to hear from her state legislator that there would not be money for three schools and that one of the three schools would need to be closed. Hearing the news from her legislator before hearing it from the district was especially frustrating and reinforced the impression that Cherry Hill was marginalized:

I understand the political part of it. I do. ...And I think that we would feel differently had ...somebody just said, “Look...we’re doing the best we can. We have a finite amount of money. We have to equitably spend it in Baltimore City. We can’t in good conscience give you three schools when we’re giving this neighborhood none.” Explain it to me that way. Then I’d be okay with two buildings. Because I’m still getting two buildings. But that wasn’t the way it was explained. The community came to the meeting where it was now explained that we were gonna get two schools, and you’ve got people enraged because, again a promise that was made was broken.

These feelings of frustration were made sharper by a sense of betrayal after leaders had helped to galvanize community support for the financing bill. McClain said: “We lobbied in the neighborhood, sent people on busses to Annapolis ...We did what we were supposed to do. And then all of a sudden, nothing. ...I can’t tell you how disappointed I am about that.”

Finally, at the system level, leadership transitions posed perhaps the biggest challenge. Alonso left City Schools at the end of June 2013, succeeded on an interim basis by his chief of staff and then permanently by former Milwaukee superintendent Dr. Gregory Thornton in July 2014. Such transitions, as in any large organization, were inevitable. Baez, when she left her job in the Office of Engagement and went to the Family League, tried to anticipate ways to alleviate the effect of high-profile transitions on the community schools strategy. As a result, she helped set up a citywide steering committee to oversee the strategy. “We were strategic about the seats at the table,” said Baez. “Really thinking about: who are the key players that needed to be engaged in that conversation around pushing the vision forward? Who was going to stand shoulder to shoulder with us when those transitions happened and say, ‘This is what we need for Baltimore?’” With this in mind, the committee included school board members, philanthropists, university faculty, community schools coordinators, teachers union representatives, school principals, as well as many of the coalition members who had been instrumental in launching the facilities campaign: Karen DeCamp of Greater Homewood, Sue Fothergill of City Neighbors, Bishop Douglass Miles of BUILD, Carol Reckling of Child First, and colleagues of Bebe Verdery’s at the ACLU, among many others.⁵⁹

A Lot of Extra Trips

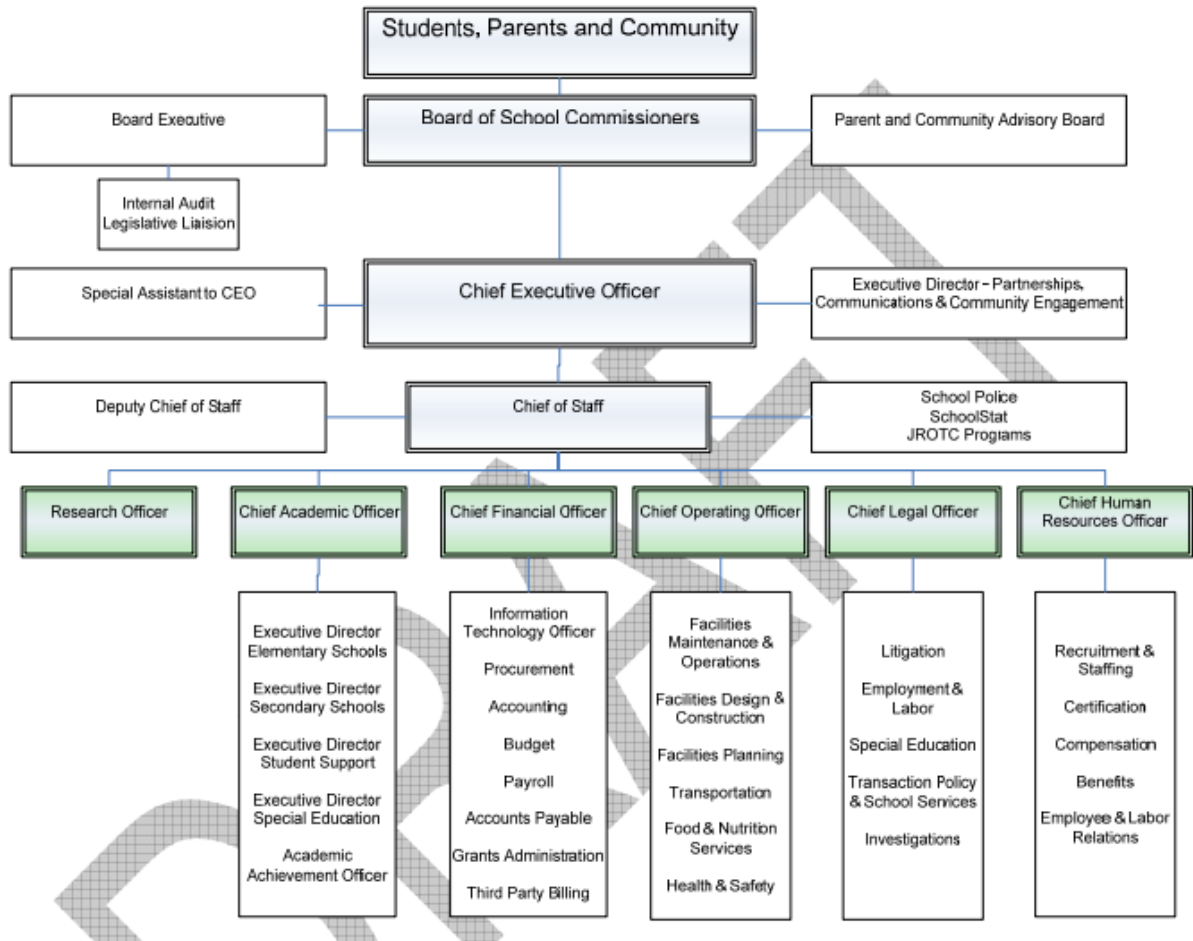
The six years spent helping to design and enact a new strategy for engaging families and communities with the school system left Michael Sarbanes feeling both extremely gratified and extremely tired. The perception of City Schools was changing for the better. Enrollment in City Schools

was still increasing, as were graduation rates and test scores. Community and parent activists who for years had organized against the schools were now seen as viable and valued partners. And schools were being rebuilt and reorganized as integral community institutions. All of these accomplishments were made possible in large part because of the sturdy coalitions built between City Schools, community members, politicians, philanthropists, and families.

Sitting in a conference room in the Office of Engagement near the end of the 2013-2014 school year with many questions still unanswered, Sarbanes reflected on his tenure, so much of which had involved coalition-building. Coalition building, he explained, was a riddle:

You know that old story about the wolf, the goat, and the cabbage? The guy's got a wolf, a goat, and a cabbage that he's carrying on this trip and he comes to a river and there's a small boat there and he can only fit one of them – himself and one of them. And if he leaves the goat with the cabbage the goat's gonna eat the cabbage and if he leaves the wolf with the goat, the wolf's gonna eat the goat. He's trying to get them all across safely. So of course, how do you do that? And the answer is... that *you gotta make an extra trip*. So you gotta take the goat over, come back, get the cabbage, bring the cabbage over, bring the goat back, take the wolf over, then come back to get the goat... You gotta make an extra trip. And with this work, you gotta make *a lot of extra trips*. And that's a lot of phone calls late in the day and it's just like a whole other level of work, which is tiring. And I mean, I've reached the point where I'm tired. But you have to own that. And to make this work, you have to own taking those extra trips. There's no way around it. ...It's a lot. It's very hard to do this approach to the work if you're not cultivating it in that way.

Exhibit 1 Baltimore City Public Schools organizational chart (2008-2009)



Source: City Schools Proposed Operating Budget (FY 2009), http://www.pcab.baltimorecityschools.org/departments/finance/pdf/FY09_Proposed_Budget_Book.pdf, accessed April 2015.

Exhibit 2 Text of Dr. Andrés Alonso’s first letter to families

A Letter from Dr. Andrés Alonso, CEO, Baltimore City Public Schools



March 6, 2008

Dear Families of Baltimore City,

Thank you for welcoming me to Baltimore with such warmth and hope for our children. My first eight months here have been productive and, personally, very fulfilling.

I have spent those months getting to know your children and our schools. Of course I don't know them all personally. But between weekly visits to schools and meetings with organized parent groups, I have been in 112 of our 190 schools so far. I have also had hundreds of conversations with you about what it will take to put all of our children on a path to success.

I have heard you loud and clear. You believe that every one of our 81,500 public school students in Baltimore City can succeed in school. I know first-hand that this is possible. I spent my early years in Cuba, going to schools with 45 kids to a classroom and not enough textbooks to go around. But despite the poverty, we were expected to learn.

I arrived in the United States when I was 12 and attended Union City, N.J. public schools, another poor place where my teachers saw through poverty and focused on potential. With their help I attended some of the best colleges in the country. Eventually, I returned to Newark, N.J., one of the most troubled school systems in the country, where I taught students who were emotionally disturbed and learning English as a second language. I knew that with adults who believed in them, they could excel. And I felt a deep responsibility to them – just as I do here, now.

We have great kids in Baltimore, with great potential. And they all deserve great schools.

Right now, we have great teachers in every school, but we only have a handful of great schools. We need an entire system of them. But we cannot build that system by making excuses or maintaining the status quo. Schools must be responsible to kids. Great schools happen when everyone in the school, the system and beyond takes that responsibility to heart.

It's that simple. It will also be hard. But together, we will create great school options for all children in Baltimore City.

HERE'S HOW WE DO IT:

At great schools children learn, but they don't just read, write, do math, and perform well on tests. They develop a broad body of knowledge that will carry them through life, and the skills to make the most of that knowledge; they learn to think, research, analyze, discover, and question. To be great, schools in Baltimore must have:

- Great principals.
- Great teachers in every classroom.
- Instruction that reaches all kids, with their many different needs.
- The freedom to create a unique learning community.
- Involved parents and communities.

To meet these demands, schools need the full support of the central administration—or “North Avenue,” as most of you know it. That will require changes. So, effective immediately, three key principles will guide all that we do.

1. Fair, clear, open decision-making. Key decisions at all levels of the school system will be made in the best interests of our children, with public participation and in the public view.

2. School freedom = school responsibility. Schools should have the authority to make the decisions that affect their students, from how to spend money to who to hire to teach science and math. In exchange, we will hold them individually and directly responsible for their students' progress.

3. Families as partners. Families and members of school communities will be at the heart of all of our efforts to make schools great. It may take time for these principles to take root across the whole school system. But they have firmly taken hold in my office. They have guided the following big steps we will take towards building a system of great schools, starting this spring:

FAIR STUDENT FUNDING

We will move money and people from North Avenue to the schools. Baltimore City's current process for disbursing money is hard to understand, complicated and frequently unfair. Starting in the 2008-09 school year, all schools will receive funding based on the number of students they have, with extra dollars depending on those students' needs. This way dollars follow the student, and the same amount of public money is invested in the education of students with the same characteristics. This is a fair and simple way to help schools get better results for our kids.

TRANSFORMATION SCHOOLS

In districts like ours where the struggles of adolescence are compounded by poverty, the seeds for dropping out of high school are sown in the middle grades. Too many students fall behind: fewer than half our middle school students are proficient in reading; fewer than a quarter are proficient in math; and of those that enter high school, barely half receive a diploma. Starting this year, we will address this crisis head-on. We will strengthen existing neighborhood schools by creating more options to prepare our students for college and career success, and by expanding alternative programs. We will also create Transformation Schools, small and innovative schools that combine grades six through 12 to eliminate the difficult middle to high school transition. These schools will transform secondary education in Baltimore by providing models for other struggling high schools that aren't getting better. What's more, we will open not just a few of them, but up to two-dozen over the next four years.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

You – parents, family and community members – are essential to the education of our children; we need to treat you like real partners. We will put technology to work for you and make current information about your children and their schools available around the clock, every day of the week. If you need to email a teacher, we will make that not just possible, but easy to do. And we will engage organizations that are trusted in the community to help you stay connected to your children’s school.

These changes and programs are an important start to creating great schools in Baltimore City. But they aren’t enough. Just as we hold schools responsible for student success, we must be able to measure whether we are successfully supporting them. To do that, we must constantly be asking the following questions:

- Are our schools attracting more students, and are they staying?
- Are more students progressing and improving?
- Are more students completing high school, working and going to college?
- Are our kids secure and happy in school? This one is harder to measure, but just as critical. Through tools such as school climate surveys, we will determine whether students feel safe, supported and happy in learning. When they do, they thrive.

I am confident that the answers to these questions will be yes, yes, yes, and yes – week after week, year after year. I am confident because city students are already making important strides.

State test scores for Baltimore City are up across all grades since 2003, in some grades by as much as 30 percent. I am confident because we have a new and talented team at North Avenue to lead the way. And I am confident because of your commitment to city schools. You entrust 81,500 children – your future and the city’s – to Baltimore’s public school system each day, and it is our moral responsibility to earn your trust in return. We must work hard to do that, I know. But you have my word, we will.

You share my strong sense of what we can, and must do. We need to enter this era of transformation together. When I arrived here in July 2007, the Board of School Commissioners charged me with ensuring that all students in Baltimore City reach high, learn well, and succeed. In closing, I ask you to join me in that mission.

Let us insist together that all of our great kids get what they deserve: great schools.

With warmest wishes,

Dr. Andrés Alonso

Source: Andrés Alonso, “Great Kids, Great Schools” letter to Baltimore City families, March 6, 2008.

Exhibit 3 Proposed education spending changes in governor's fiscal 2010 budget

District	Proposed 2010 budget	Change from 2009	Percent Change
Baltimore City	\$811,391,000	(- \$23,591,000)	(- 2.8%)
Baltimore County	\$508,143,000	(- \$8,465,000)	(- 1.6%)
Carroll	\$139,046,000	(- \$4,028,000)	(- 2.8%)
Harford	\$207,329,000	(- \$3,417,000)	(- 1.6%)
Howard	\$196,216,000	\$628,000	+ 0.3%
Montgomery	\$449,413,000	\$27,083,000	+ 6.4%
Prince George's	\$871,833,000	(- \$35,241,000)	(- 3.9%)

Source: Liz Bowie and Laura Smitherman, "Overall state education aid to localities will fall by \$69 million," *Baltimore Sun*, January 23, 2009.

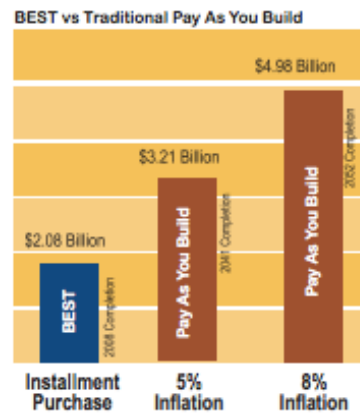
Exhibit 4 School construction plan in Greenville County (SC), a model for City Schools

Schools Built at Lower Costs

Financing the BEST School Construction Program is similar to a home mortgage or an installment purchase. Schools are built when needed and the costs are paid off over time.

The BEST School Construction Program cost at least \$1 billion LESS than a “pay as you build” construction plan (based on an annual five percent inflation rate and projected completion in 2041). The cost savings increase to almost \$3 billion when compared to a “pay as you build” plan with a six percent annual inflation rate and projected completion in 2052.

Cost savings are realized through the accelerated construction timeline by avoidance of increasing construction costs due to inflation, standardization of school designs, bulk purchase, and cost effective designs. The total cost of the BEST Construction Program includes \$1.06 billion in construction and program management costs and \$1.02 billion in interest costs over 25 years.



Roles

School Board/School System

- The School Board approved the Facilities Plan, including educational specifications, school capacities, costs, and locations.
- Process to construct schools remained “design, bid, build” as required by the Procurement Code.
- The School Board and GCS administration worked with Institutional Resources to ensure success by monitoring compliance with the contract for construction quality, schedule, costs, and safety.
- The school system makes payments for 25 years to BEST, its non-profit funding corporation, to acquire renovations and new schools, which BEST uses to pay off bonds sold to finance the Facilities Plan.

BEST - (Building Equity Sooner for Tomorrow)

- The non-profit funding corporation provides financing for the Facilities Plan. Established by the School Board, BEST acts on matters referred by the School Board.
- The school system provides BEST with a maximum 50-year lease of the land and existing school buildings and agrees to make payments for 25 years in return for BEST providing renovated and new schools. The lease ends when all payments are made. BEST uses its right to payments and its lease to sell bonds to pay for school construction and renovation.

Institutional Resources

- Institutional Resources served as the school construction program manager, acting as the owner’s representative to ensure schools are built to specifications. (The program management agreement ended December 2008.)

Source: Greenville County (SC) Facilities Plan, http://www.greenville.k12.sc.us/Departments/docs/fac_plan.pdf, accessed April 2015.

Exhibit 5 Selected quotes from families about the conditions of City Schools, collected by BEC members at 2011 back-to-school nights

Barclay Elementary/Middle

- "Every time it rains my pre-k room floods"
- "My child has asthma and at times it's very uncomfortable"
- "Everything about the condition of the building bothers me: the bathrooms, ceilings, chipping paint, and how old it is"

City College High

- "It should look like a school in Montgomery County"
- "It should be safe, inviting, clean, and reflecting the beauty of the historic building and caliber of academic offerings"
- "It is embarrassing when visitors come and unacceptable for students who attend"
- "Everything is in disrepair; bathrooms don't function and athletic fields are run down; concrete steps coming into the school are chipped and unsafe"

Freedom Academy

- "Every time I walk in the building I see a roach"
- "The school should look presentable to graduating 8th graders and their parents"
- "Extreme heating conditions, poorly constructed, almost like an abandoned building"
- "No working water fountains, leaks, no air conditioning, broken lockers, rusty radiators, and not enough student restrooms"

Guilford Elementary/Middle

- "It has a musty odor no matter how much the building staff cleans"
- "It is hot in the lunch room and the ceiling is falling down"
- "The cafeteria is horrid and the school needs a happy aura"
- "Half the school building is in a temporary portable building that is too old; it was meant for certain number of years and that time has come and gone"

KIPP Harmony/Ujima Village

- "It should not look like a bomb shelter"
- "No gym, standing water when it rains in both the back and front of building, uneven heat in winter, and it's not cool enough in summer"
- "This school should be welcoming, cheerful and have a moderate temperature throughout the building"
- "The school has no air conditioner and my son has asthma"

Roland Park Elementary/Middle

- "Water leaks, which leads to mold and sickness; there is no a/c, and the heat in gym is often off"
- "Roaches should not be in the bathroom and kids should be able to drink out of the water fountains"

- "It is a beautiful historic building that is in such disrepair; it should be as magnificent on the inside as on the outside"
- "The building should look and feel like the city understands that the children who attend are its most precious assets"

Source: Transform Baltimore, <http://www.transformbaltimore.org>, accessed April 2015.

Exhibit 6 School construction vision and principles**The Vision: To Give Students the Buildings They Deserve—Now**

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners has set a bold vision for Baltimore City Public Schools:

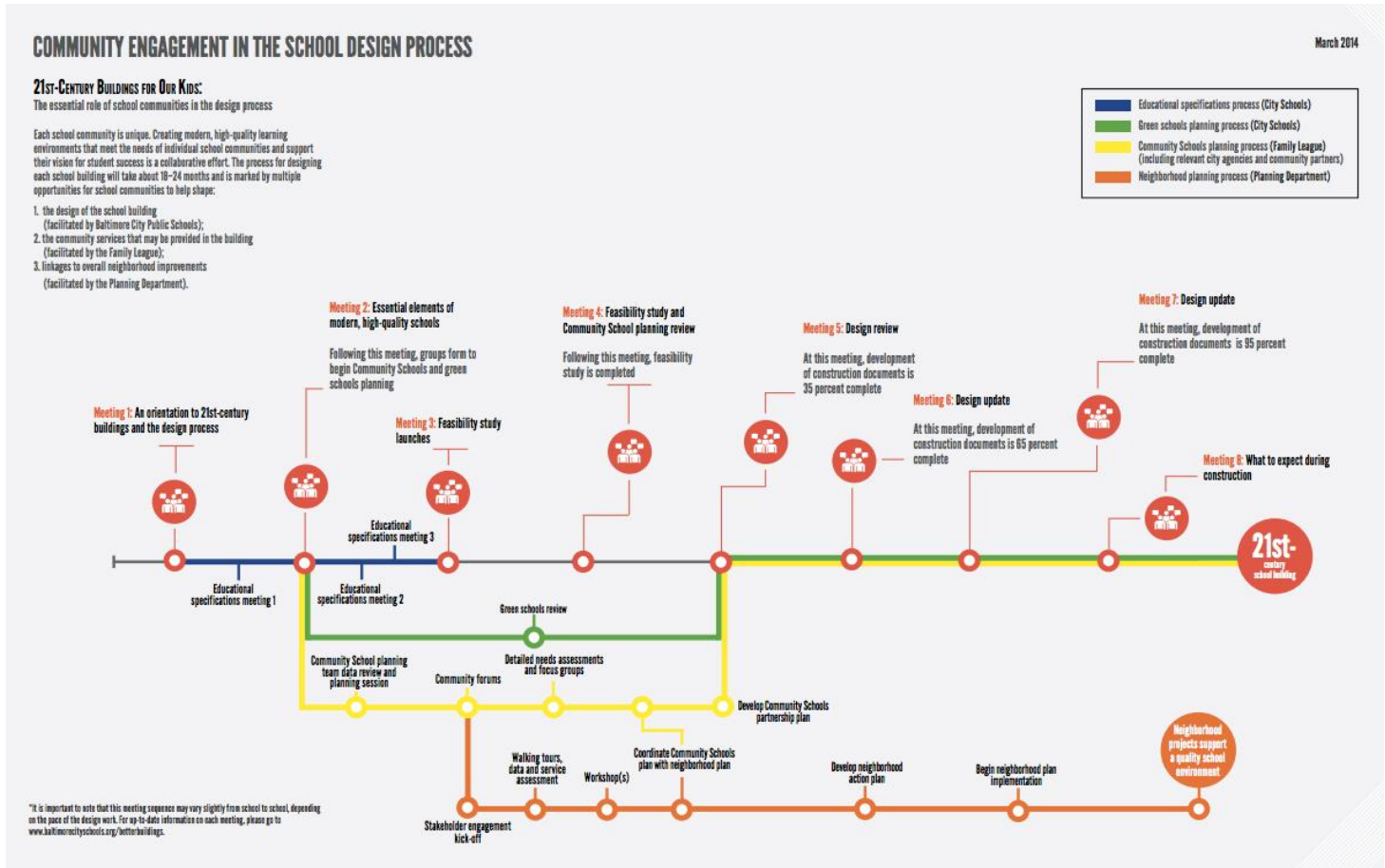
In 10 years, all City Schools students will learn in buildings that embody 21st-century standards of excellence.

To fulfill that vision and to inform development of City Schools' 10-year buildings plan, the Board has articulated a set of guiding principles:

1. Invest to support academic success for all students
2. Maximize fiscal responsibility and stewardship of resources
3. Engage school communities to inform the creation of excellent school buildings for their students
4. Align school buildings with demographic trends, enrollment trends and parent and student choices
5. Invest to have maximum impact on community stability, growth or development
6. Provide diverse options in every geographic area of the city
7. Create school buildings on the cutting edge of technology and environmental sustainability

Source: Baltimore City Public Schools, "21st Century Schools for Our Kids: 10-Year Plan."

Exhibit 7 Community Schools Design Process



Source: Baltimore City Public Schools.

Endnotes

¹ Because “BCPS” is the accepted acronym for Baltimore County Public Schools, school officials in Baltimore City elected to have their school system know by the shorthand “City Schools.”

² Michael Dresser, “Thousands rally in support of Baltimore schools,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 25, 2013. Accessed from http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-02-25/news/bs-md-schools-annapolis-20130225_1_school-construction-baltimore-education-coalition-andrs-alonso

³ Sara Neufeld, “Turn it around,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 10, 2009. Accessed from http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2009-02-10/news/bal-te.alonso10feb10_1_city-school-markel-williams-first-day

⁴ Frank Patinella and Bebe Verdery, *Buildings for Academic Excellence: A Vision and Options to Address Deficient Facilities in Baltimore City*, ACLU of Maryland Education Reform Project, June 2010. Accessed from http://www.aclu-md.org/uploaded_files/0000/0220/buildings_for_academic_excellence.pdf

⁵ Michael Dresser, “\$1 billion for new city schools: From non-starter to law,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 16, 2013. Accessed from http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-05-16/news/bs-md-schools-bill-analysis-revised-20130516_1_new-city-schools-schools-bill-house-speaker-michael-e

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Statement from Andres Alonso on his retirement, *Baltimore Sun*, May 6, 2013. Accessed from http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-05-06/news/bs-md-ci-alonso-resigns-statement-20130506_1_transition-city-schools-chief-kids

⁸ Sandy Banisky, “Veteran activist looks forward, not back,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 17, 1992. Accessed from http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1992-06-17/news/1992169222_1_alleys-taboo-slums, October 28, 2014.

⁹ See <http://www.cphabaltimore.org/organizers/>. Accessed October 28, 2014.

¹⁰ See <http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/affiliate-members#intl>. Accessed August 20, 2014.

¹¹ See <http://www.buieldiaf.org/victories-history/>. Accessed October 28, 2014.

¹² Antero Pietila, *Not In My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Michael Yockel, “100 Years: The Riots of 1968,” *Baltimore Magazine*. Accessed from <http://www.baltimoremagazine.net/2007/5/100-years-the-riots-of-1968>, October 27, 2014.

¹⁵ Edward Berkowitz, “Baltimore’s Public Schools in a Time of Transition,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Volume 94, Issue 4 (Winter 1997), pp. 413-432. Accessed from http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5800/sc5881/000001/000000/000369/pdf/msa_sc_5881_1_369.pdf, October 27, 2014.

¹⁶ Baltimore City Public Schools, “Press Release. Enrollment Rises: Baltimore City Public Schools Ends Four Decades of Decline,” November 8, 2008. Accessed from <http://www.pcab.baltimorecityschools.org/News/PDF/Enrollmentupnov82008.pdf>, May 28, 2015.

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¹⁸ Kevin Rector, Scott Dance, and Luke Broadwater, “Baltimore descends into chaos, violence, looting,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 28, 2015. Accessed from <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-police-student-violence-20150427-story.html#page=1>, May 28, 2015.

¹⁹ Sara Neufeld, "New York City wins urban schools prize," *Baltimore Sun*, September 19, 2007. Accessed from http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2007-09-19/news/0709190242_1_andres-alonso-baltimore-school-broad-prize, August 29, 2014.

²⁰ Frederick N. Rasmussen, "Michael Penny Carter," *Baltimore Sun*, April 6, 2012. Accessed from http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2012-04-06/news/bs-md-ob-michael-carter-20120406_1_baltimore-education-network-harlem-park-family-and-community-engagement

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²² Carter was eventually hired as director of family and community engagement, a position he held until his death from prostate cancer in April 2012. (See Frederick N. Rasmussen, "Michael Penny Carter," *Baltimore Sun*, April 6, 2012).

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²⁴ Sara Neufeld, "Parents to help govern schools," *Baltimore Sun*, June 11, 2008. Accessed from http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2008-06-11/news/0806100294_1_parents-involved-parent-and-community-school-improvement, August 28, 2014.

²⁵ Baltimore City Public Schools, "You Make A Difference," August 2010 communication to families. Accessed from: http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/Domain/87/2010_11_PDFs/FARM_2010_11.pdf, May 29, 2015.

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