

BALTIMORE CITY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



A BRIEF GUIDE TO

BUILDING A GENERATION:

CITY SCHOOLS' BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

“All of the students in all of our schools deserve all that a high-quality education makes possible—talents that are discovered, doors that open, and lives that change.”

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises, CEO, Baltimore City Public Schools



Every day, students walk through the doors of Baltimore's schools filled with talent, dreams, and enormous potential. Our responsibility is to provide the world-class education that will empower them to hone their gifts and give them the skills they need to pursue the future that calls them.

To meet our responsibility, we must look to best practices not only in our city, state, and country, but in the many countries that outperform the United States in academic achievement and educational equity. We must use what we learn to improve all our schools, to create opportunities for students no matter their needs or interests or neighborhood.

Our students, families, staff members, and community stakeholders have shared their experiences of our schools, and they point to three areas with significant promise for ensuring our students' success:

WE NEED TO KNOW OUR STUDENTS as unique people with unique experiences, talents, challenges, and social, emotional, and physical lives. By keeping the wholeness of our students in mind, hearing their voices, and building partnerships with their families and communities, we can ignite their passion for learning.

WE NEED TO IMPROVE LITERACY TEACHING across all grades and subjects, and provide richer literacy experiences for all students. To meet and exceed high academic standards and access the opportunities they deserve, our students must be able to comprehend challenging content and express themselves powerfully.

ALL STAFF MEMBERS NEED TO TAKE LEADERSHIP ROLES in connecting with, supporting, inspiring, and challenging students and contributing to their success.

By taking what we know from national and international research and tying it to the real experiences and needs of Baltimore's students, City Schools has created a blueprint for progress in these key areas of student wholeness, literacy, and staff leadership. The blueprint will guide our work as we continue the transformation that began a decade ago, when City Schools launched a reform agenda that has seen us introduce middle and high school choice, open schools with different academic focuses and approaches, increase school control over budgets, sign contracts with teachers and administrators that encourage professional growth, and forge partnerships with parents and community stakeholders.

Our goal is to create learning communities where a generation of Baltimore's young people will thrive and grow, graduating from our high schools with the skills, knowledge, and understanding to succeed in college, careers, our community, and wherever their dreams will take them.

STUDENT WHOLENESS

City Schools students are inspired to pursue their passions and develop their potential when schools provide engaging, safe, and supportive environments that foster well-being and meet academic, social, emotional, and physical needs.

IN OUR SCHOOLS, WE WILL...

BUILD communities of students, staff, families, volunteers, and partners, where every member is known and valued, and where learning is celebrated every day

RESPECT students' backgrounds and experiences, and teach in ways that connect to students' real lives

TEACH academic and non-academic content, including self-awareness, social awareness, goal setting, decision making, and relationship building

SET shared expectations for healthy school communities and positive behavior, using restorative practices to resolve conflict

OFFER enrichment and extracurricular activities that spark students' interests and promote their curiosity

PROVIDE a safe space where students in crisis get the support they need to return to the classroom

CONNECT students and families with resources in the community

SUPPORT health and well-being with free meals, sports and fitness, and medical services such as vision screenings, dental care, and immunizations



LITERACY

When reading, writing, speaking, and listening are part of learning in all subject areas, students gain complex knowledge, deep conceptual understanding, and the ability to write well and express themselves powerfully.

IN OUR SCHOOLS, WE WILL...

PRIORITIZE literacy as the foundation for all learning and the key to opportunity

SUPPORT a staff member in every school to serve as a resource on literacy instruction for all teachers

IMPLEMENT a highly coherent framework for literacy instruction, aligned to state and international standards and incorporating instructional approaches to meet all students' needs

GROW as professional learning communities, where teachers have time to plan, reflect, and collaborate, and instructional leaders provide ongoing feedback to improve literacy instruction in all grades and subjects

PROVIDE engaging opportunities for students to read and produce texts of all kinds, online and in print, in ways that connect to their real lives

EMPOWER students to take charge of their learning, with opportunities to share their work with real audiences and track their growth over time

CELEBRATE student work, with community events such as displays of student writing, debate tournaments, research forums, or spoken word presentations

PROVIDE families with information about and resources for reading and writing at home



LEADERSHIP

When staff members have opportunities to grow as professionals and leaders, they inspire, create, and participate in high-performing learning communities that promote equity and excellence for all students.

IN OUR SCHOOLS, WE WILL...

CREATE a culture of learning for all members of the school community, where adults seek out new information and ideas and become models of lifelong learning for students

CREATE opportunities for all members of the school community to take leadership roles, including staff, students, families, and partners

DEVELOP deeply knowledgeable, highly effective instructional leadership teams to coach staff members and provide feedback

PROVIDE targeted professional learning and mentors for new teachers and new principals

PROVIDE time in the work day for teachers to plan, reflect, collaborate, and participate in a community of professionals

USE data from a range of sources to inform continuous improvement of practice

OPTIMIZE professional pathways for teachers and school leaders, maximizing opportunities for developing content knowledge, coaching, research, and new leadership roles





BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

PARENTS AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS will be recognized as essential partners in their children's education, with ongoing two-way communication taking place between school and home. Families will be encouraged not only to attend school events and celebrations, but to review portfolios of their children's work, take roles on advisory teams at both school and district levels, and advocate for their children, their schools, and the district.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS will be welcomed as valued members of the City Schools community and encouraged to participate in the life of the school. Options for supporting students in and out of class time will provide volunteers, community organizations, businesses, and other groups with ways to contribute that match their needs and resources.

AT THE DISTRICT OFFICE, staff will be aligned to the needs of schools, providing resources directly tied to improving student outcomes; supporting professional learning; honing data systems to make sure school leaders and teachers have the information they need; improving customer service to schools and families; reviewing and revising curriculum, instructional materials, and assessments; and designing accountability systems for school staff and themselves.



NEXT STEPS

IN THE 2017-18 SCHOOL YEAR, these changes will begin to take hold in all schools. In addition, more than 55 schools will become “intensive learning sites” focused on either literacy or student wholeness, with accelerated implementation of the blueprint to transform these sites to districtwide resources whose leaders and staff will serve as mentors for peers at other schools.

City Schools is also developing critical partnerships to support this work. Successful implementation depends on the support of students, families, staff, and community partners. Through transparent communication and opportunities for participation and feedback from all stakeholders, we will gain ideas and expertise to adjust, adapt, and continue to move forward. That’s what happens in a community of learners.

For more about City Schools’ blueprint for success, please visit www.baltimorecityschools.org/blueprint.