Building a PORTFOLIO OF SCHOOLS

Review and Recommendations 2016-17
The 83,000+ students who attend Baltimore City Public Schools are future artists and scientists, skilled tradespeople and entrepreneurs, teachers and managers, business owners, engaged citizens, problem solvers, leaders. Our job is to give them the knowledge, tools, skills, and support to become the adults they were meant to be.

At City Schools, that means recognizing students’ differences and organizing the district to meet their unique needs.

In most school districts, students and families have little or no opportunity to seek out a school that meets those unique needs. Students are assigned to schools based on where they live, with the school district setting zone boundaries, taking into account population trends, major streets, and locations and sizes of school buildings. Schools are managed centrally by the district office, which assigns staff, provides curriculum and textbooks, and oversees programs and budgets. Sometimes, a school district has “magnet” programs that are open to all students and offer a particular focus. But, for the most part, students go to the schools that are closest to home.

Some school districts are trying a different approach, based on the idea that the starting place should be students and that, for schools, one size should not fit all. These districts create a “portfolio” of schools with different structures and programming. Families have the option to choose among schools within and beyond neighborhood boundaries. School leaders are empowered as decision makers by the district and their school communities, working with those communities—students, parents and other family members, school staff, neighborhood leaders,
More than 10 years ago, City Schools began moving toward a "portfolio approach." Today, it reflects the district’s values and commitment to excellence in education for every child at every level.

**EVOLUTION OF CITY SCHOOLS’ PORTFOLIO APPROACH**

- **2005-06**
  - Baltimore’s first 12 charter schools open

- **2006-07**
  - For the first time, the incoming 9th-grade class chooses their high schools

- **2007-08**
  - Introduction of a budgeting approach ("Fair Student Funding") that increases schools’ discretionary dollars

- **2008-09**
  - First annual structured review of the school portfolio

- **2010-11**
  - For the first time, the incoming 6th-grade class can choose their middle schools

- **2013**
  - Legislation launches the 21st Century School Buildings Plan to bring new and renovated schools to neighborhoods across the city

- **2015-16**
  - First groundbreakings for construction and renovation of school buildings in the 21st-century plan

The district office shifts its focus to infrastructure and overseeing school success.

and other partners—to decide how best to meet the needs of each school’s unique students. Today, it reflects the district’s values and commitment to excellence in education for every child at every level.
In 2016-17, City Schools has 181 schools and programs that provide an extensive range of options for students and families.

**Types of schools**

**Neighborhood elementary and elementary/middle schools** serve families who live in a particular geographic area close to the school building.

“Citywide” middle schools and middle school programs are available to all students, regardless of where they live. Fifth-grade students can choose to attend a citywide middle school or apply to citywide middle school programs that admit students based on academic criteria.

“Citywide” high schools are also available to all students. City Schools has no “zoned” neighborhood high schools. Each winter, 8th-grade students choose the school they wish to attend the following year. Some high schools have entrance criteria, admitting students to specialized programming based on things like grades, test results, and attendance.

**Charter schools** are operated by independent nonprofit organizations, with charters awarded by the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. These schools have significant autonomy over their operations and frequently offer a particular instructional approach or special programming. City Schools’ charter schools are open to all students, and places are filled by lottery when there are more interested students than available seats.

**Neighborhood charter schools** (also called “zoned” or “conversion” charters) serve families who live close to the school. If there is room, they accept students from outside their zone, conducting a lottery if there are more students wishing to attend than available seats.

**Operator-run schools** are similar to charter schools, but are governed by a contract with the district rather than a charter granted under the state’s charter school law. Admission can be based on a number of factors, including neighborhood, an interview, and available seats.

**Alternative programs** provide extra support for students who may have experienced challenges or circumstances that have caused them to fall off track for high school graduation.

**Separate public day schools** serve students with disabilities whose needs must be met in a specialized setting. These schools meet needs with, for example, staff members trained to work with students with significant developmental delays or facilities that accommodate medical or therapeutic services.

**A Different Kind of Charter School**

Baltimore’s neighborhood charter schools were originally traditional neighborhood schools that applied to convert to charter status. Like other charter schools, they are managed by independent nonprofit organizations. But, unlike other charter schools, they continue to serve the neighborhood in which they are located.

Frederick Elementary School will open as a neighborhood charter school for the 2017-18 school year (in a brand new building, one of the first constructed as part of the 21st Century School Buildings Plan), bringing the district’s total of these schools to eight.
2016-17
Snapshot

1 school for pre-k & kindergarten

50 elementary schools
including 4 charters, 4 neighborhood charters, and 1 separate public day school

75 elementary/middle schools
including 12 charters, 3 neighborhood charters, 2 operator-run schools, and 1 separate public day school; 1 charter serves just boys

8 middle schools
including 4 charters; 1 charter serves just boys and 1 serves just girls

15 middle/high schools
including 2 separate public day schools, 3 operator-run schools, and 3 charters; 1 citywide school serves just boys, and 1 charter serves just girls

24 high schools
including 3 charters, 1 operator-run school, and 1 separate public day school; 1 citywide school serves just girls

1 separate public day elementary/middle/high school

7 programs serving students across ages and grades
School configurations

The way a school is set up—the grades or populations it serves—has a big impact on the learning environment it provides. For example, City Schools serves students in 6th to 8th grade in settings that provide different levels of support and different atmospheres for learning. In elementary/middle schools, young children begin at age four or five and grow into early adolescence in the same educational environment, leaving only to begin high school. These are mostly neighborhood schools, so students who attend them are also close to home.

There are also middle schools, where students are all closer in age, attending from 6th to 8th grade and taking a two-step path from the elementary to the high school environment. And there are middle/high schools, where the transition from middle grades to high school can be more seamless.

The district’s portfolio also includes middle and high schools that serve all girls, all boys, and both, as well as schools that serve from a few hundred students to more than a thousand.

School programming

Supported by the range of school types and configurations, the portfolio approach gives City Schools the flexibility to offer a range of programming.

Schools follow numerous approaches and ways of thinking about teaching and learning, from expeditionary learning to Reggio Emilia to International Baccalaureate at elementary, middle, and high school levels. There are schools that focus on the arts, STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) and Career and Technology Education (CTE). One school offers language immersion, where students not only learn Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Russian, or French, they learn in those languages—gaining bilingual language skills as they gain skills across academic areas.

At another, college faculty teach seminars for high school juniors and seniors who are working toward associate’s degrees. In others, professional artists, designers, theatrical producers, actors, and musicians provide experiences for students who will become the next generation of artists and performers. Many schools facilitate real-world career opportunities, including paid internships.

City Schools students can graduate not only with high school diplomas, but also career certifications, International Baccalaureate diplomas, and college credit up to two-year associate’s degrees.

“I chose to be in The Teacher Academy because I wanted to make a difference in the world; I believe that education is the most important thing that anyone could give to a child.”

- Jeri, Career and Technology Education student at Western High School
School buildings

To achieve at their maximum potential, students need

- Learning spaces that support innovative, high-quality instruction
- A physical infrastructure that allows use of current technology and ensures safety and security
- A healthy environment for learning, with good air quality, lighting, heating and ventilation, and water that is safe to drink
- Schools that are integrated into their communities, providing resources and support that extend beyond the school day

For years, too many City Schools students have been learning in school buildings with old boilers and no air conditioning; drinking fountains that can’t be used; windows that are old, yellowed, and can’t be opened; and classrooms that lack the wiring for computers, let alone the state-of-the-art STEM labs, collaborative spaces, and other facilities that support the way people learn and work in today’s world. At the same time, too many City Schools buildings are either too full or too empty.

This is why City Schools works not only to ensure that families have a range of strong school programs to choose from, but also that steadily increasing numbers of communities have access to new or renovated school buildings.

In fall 2010, City Schools and community stakeholders began a campaign to bring state-of-the-art school buildings to neighborhoods across Baltimore. With the signing of funding legislation in spring 2013, the implementation phase of the 21st Century School Buildings Plan got underway. In 2016-17, construction is moving forward on the first nine school buildings, with the next set of buildings now in stages from assessing feasibility of different construction options to architectural design of new buildings and renovations.

To ensure that the new and renovated buildings meet the needs of students and communities, each project is a collaboration among a large group of stakeholders, with meetings occurring throughout the planning and design phases. The school community shares in developing a vision for educational excellence in the neighborhood, and community members, students, school and district staff, local officials, and architects and construction managers work together in a spirit intended to spur neighborhood revitalization—with schools as hubs for community engagement. This work includes participation in developing

In August 2017, the first two new school buildings in the 21st Century School Buildings Plan will open their doors. A new building for Fort Worthington Elementary/Middle School is replacing an outdated, under-used 52-year-old facility in the Berea neighborhood on Baltimore’s east side. The new building is designed to serve both the Fort Worthington Elementary community and the community served by the now-closed Dr. Rayner Browne Elementary/Middle School, with state-of-the-art facilities to accommodate students from the youngest learners to adolescents.

On the west side, Frederick Elementary School in Millhill is being expanded and completely renovated. The existing building, dating from 1983, is too large for a declining population—as is the nearby Samuel F.B. Morse Elementary School building. To provide both communities with modern, 21st-century facilities, City Schools is making a recommendation to close Morse and open a new school program in the renovated Frederick building, operated as a neighborhood charter school for all pre-k to 5th-grade students in an enlarged enrollment zone.
Buildings for Charter Schools

Some of City Schools’ charter schools are housed in buildings they own themselves; others lease facilities from City Schools or other building owners. This is because charter schools receive a larger portion of their resources in the form of cash than do traditional schools and must cover costs that the district budgets centrally for other schools. One of these costs is for facilities.

When a charter school leases a building owned by City Schools, that building is included in the district's buildings plan. Frederick and Govans elementary schools and Independence School Local I are charter schools that lease City Schools' buildings included in the first phase of the 21st Century School Buildings Plan.

Green Street Academy, a charter middle/high school on the city's west side, recently exceeded the LEED Silver standard: It's the 2nd largest LEED Platinum project...in the world.

Occupying the former Gwynns Falls Park Junior High School building, it’s a testament to what’s possible when a school goes green.

City Schools has many more buildings than are currently funded for construction in the first phase of the 21st-century plan, and many of them are in need of extensive upgrading. District staff meets several times a year to evaluate existing buildings, identify critical needs, and prioritize projects. Each year, the most critical systemic upgrades are included in the district’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) submission to the state, along with requests for modernizations, renovations, and new schools. Prioritization of CIP projects also takes into account City Schools’ obligation to “right sizing”—that is, to ensuring that the district’s buildings portfolio as a whole is at an appropriate level of utilization that allows for growth but avoids waste.

A large portion of funding from the State of Maryland for the CIP comes from the Public School Construction Program on an annual basis, with additional dollars from local Baltimore City bonds. Funds are requested for specific projects, which must meet strict standards defined by state regulations. Within existing allocations, City Schools’ CIP is currently funding upgrades to heating and air-conditioning systems, windows and doors, roofs, and other systemic and minor renovation projects, along with construction of new school buildings for Holabird, Graceland Park/O’Donnell Heights, and Armistead Gardens elementary/middle schools, which are in outdated and overcrowded buildings.

A note about City Schools’ commitment to green. The district is working to create buildings that are filled with natural light and clean air, are temperature controlled, have good sound quality and offer ample outdoor space, all while conserving resources and energy. More than 30 of our schools have been awarded Green School status, and all new or substantially renovated buildings are designed to meet the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver standard. The district recently received a Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) grant to support its first “net zero” school: Graceland Park/O’Donnell Heights Elementary/Middle School will generate as much energy on site as it uses, primarily through rooftop solar panels.

Green Street Academy, a charter middle/high school on the city’s west side, recently exceeded the LEED Silver standard: It’s the 2nd largest LEED Platinum project...in the world.

Occupying the former Gwynns Falls Park Junior High School building, it’s a testament to what’s possible when a school goes green.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First School Buildings under Construction in the 21st Century School Buildings Plan</th>
<th>Construction Type</th>
<th>Planned Occupancy*</th>
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<tr>
<td>Arlington Elementary School</td>
<td>Renovation and addition</td>
<td>August 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arundel Elementary School</td>
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<td>Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School</td>
<td>Renovation and addition</td>
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<td>Forest Park High School</td>
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<td>Fort Worthington Elementary/Middle School</td>
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<td>Frederick Elementary School</td>
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<td>John Eager Howard Elementary School</td>
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<td>Lyndhurst Elementary/Middle School</td>
<td>Renovation and addition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patterson building (to house Patterson High School and Claremont High School)</td>
<td>Replacement</td>
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<td>Pimlico Elementary/Middle School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Poole building (to house Academy for College and Career Exploration and Independence School Local I High School)</td>
<td>Renovation and addition</td>
<td>August 2018</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Dates after 2017 subject to change.
Managing the Portfolio:
City Schools’ Annual “Portfolio Review”

In a portfolio approach, individual schools have more flexibility and autonomy over many aspects of decision making than do schools in districts that have a more traditional management structure. School leaders identify staff they want for their schools, collaborate with staff members to provide school-based professional development, seek out partnerships with organizations to enhance school life, and select vendors that offer services from after-school programming to academic tutoring, enrichment, facilities enhancements, technology services, and more. In this way, each school is encouraged to find its unique identity, making it an appealing option for families in the neighborhood and—in the case of many middle schools, all high schools, and most charter schools—across the city.

Meanwhile, the district office takes on the role of ensuring that the portfolio as a whole succeeds in making high-quality academic programming accessible for Baltimore’s students, no matter where they live or what their particular needs, talents, and interests may be. This means not only monitoring the success of individual schools, but considering whether specific student populations and specific geographic areas are equally well served with a range of high-quality elementary, middle, and high school options. The district office must also ensure that its resources are distributed fairly and equitably to schools and students, a challenging task in times when budget dollars are limited and needs are great.

Programmatic review

Every year, City Schools reviews its portfolio of schools and programs with a broad range of measures, including:

- **Student achievement**: Schoolwide performance on state assessments (e.g., PARCC) and academic progress among students as shown by results on districtwide tests, national assessments and, for high schools, graduation rates.

- **School climate**: Student attendance, suspensions, enrollment, and dropout rates; data for middle and high schools on how many students selected the schools on their middle and high school choice applications; and school survey results from parents, teachers, and students.
These measures are considered within the context of enrollment trends, the range of options for families in a given geographic area, and opportunities for creating new schools or reconfiguring existing ones—for example, by expanding an elementary school to serve elementary and middle grades.

As part of the annual programmatic review, the district looks at achievement and climate data from all schools — but charter and other schools managed by outside operators go through a more detailed, rigorous review in the year an operator applies to renew its charter or contract. This “renewal review” usually occurs on a three- to five-year cycle and includes review of academic programming and climate, including suspension practices, attendance, and chronic absence data for all student populations; annual audits, school budget submissions, and grants management to assess the operator’s financial and governance practices; school compliance with laws, rules, policies, and regulations as measures of effective management; the operator’s renewal application; and the district’s most recent School Effectiveness Review for the school.

In accordance with Board of School Commissioners policy, the New and Charter School Advisory Board (whose members represent foundations, nonprofit organizations, school choice advocates, school operators, and district staff) reviews each charter or contract school’s renewal materials and makes recommendations to City Schools’ chief executive officer regarding whether the charter or contract should be renewed for five years, renewed for three years, or not renewed. The CEO uses these recommendations in turn to make recommendations to the Board of School Commissioners as part of the annual portfolio review; the Board of School Commissioners then votes on the CEO’s recommendations.

The renewal process generates ratings (“highly effective,” “effective,” “developing,” or “not effective”) on measures in the following categories:

- **Academics (at least 50 percent of the overall rating)**
- **Climate**
- **Financial management and governance**

### Looking at School Effectiveness

About every three to five years, every school goes through a School Effectiveness Review. This review helps schools identify strengths and weaknesses in order to contribute to school-based planning and budgeting, and helps the district office know how schools are performing in order to guide district-level decision making related to support and accountability.

The review process involves classroom visits, focus group sessions, and document review that results in ratings of “highly effective,” “effective,” “developing,” or “not effective” in four areas:

- **Highly effective instruction**, with actions including planning and delivering instruction, using data to inform instruction, and creating effective environments for learning
- **Talented people**, focused on systems to select, retain, evaluate, and develop effective staff in all positions
- **Vision and engagement**, including creating a safe and supportive environment and communicating effectively with families and other stakeholders
- **Strategic leadership**, with actions designed to set and achieve growth goals
At one time, City Schools served more than 100,000 students; with the decline in Baltimore’s population over the past several decades, school enrollment has also declined. Overall, the district’s current “utilization rate” for all its buildings is approximately 83 percent, though it is somewhat higher among elementary and elementary/middle schools and significantly lower in middle, middle/high, and high schools.

The MOU that governs the work of the 21st Century School Buildings Plan requires that the district reach 86 percent utilization by 2019-20. To meet that goal, the MOU also requires the district to vacate 26 school buildings and return them to the city for disposition — a process the district calls “surplusing.” While it is possible to change the buildings originally identified to be vacated (Exhibit 6 of the MOU), the number cannot decrease.

**Building review**

Part of a high-quality educational experience includes attending school in a high-quality building that supports best practices in teaching and learning for the 21st century. The annual portfolio review therefore includes consideration of the buildings in which programs are delivered. This became an area of increased focus beginning in 2012-13, when that year’s annual review (titled *21st-Century Buildings for Our Kids*) laid out a plan for renovation or replacement of every school building in the district’s portfolio.

That review formed the basis for the 21st Century School Buildings Plan, the initial program to address City Schools’ buildings needs on a scale far beyond what could be accomplished with CIP dollars alone. Under the terms of the spring 2013 state legislation that enabled funding of the program, the plan is overseen by four partners—City Schools, the Maryland Stadium Authority, the City of Baltimore, and the state’s Interagency Committee on School Construction—governed under terms of a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

As part of its portfolio review, City Schools revisits the 2012-13 plan each year, adjusting it based on updated information and data, changes and developments in the intervening years, and requirements of the construction program as it moves into implementation.

Ultimately, the goal of the buildings component of the annual portfolio review is to make allowable adjustments within the 21st Century School Buildings Plan and the Capital Improvement Program, ensuring access to updated facilities for as many students as possible.
Schools with too few students struggle with too few dollars to deliver the rich and varied academic programming and supports that contribute to student success. On the other hand, too many students in a school can mean less ability to provide individualized attention. In both cases, the district experiences a negative impact on facilities, either expending financial resources to maintain buildings that are not fully in use or providing portable classrooms and addressing heightened maintenance demands in buildings that are over their capacity.

This is why enrollment and neighborhood demographic trends are part of the district’s annual review of schools. In making enrollment projections, the district takes into account historical trends, patterns in middle and high school choice, and construction plans already in place as part of the 21st Century School Buildings Plan or CIP, along with state and local data on things like birth rates, housing starts, and neighborhood revitalization plans.

Recommendations made as part of the annual portfolio review can include rezoning for neighborhood elementary and elementary/middle schools to address over and under use of buildings, particularly when other recommendations include a plan to open, close, or reconfigure nearby schools.

Recently, in an effort to look at zoning more comprehensively, the district commissioned a study to explore the feasibility of different approaches to zoning—beyond simply redrawing boundary lines for individual schools. Results of that study are anticipated in spring 2017, and the district will seek community participation in how to use those results to guide the work and determine next steps.

In the shorter term, the portfolio review lists recommendations that are presented to the Board of School Commissioners, either as information items or for vote. These recommendations may include the following.

**Creation of new schools**

In the early implementation of the portfolio approach, the district created several new noncharter schools to fill specific areas of need. Most recently, new schools approved to open have been charter or contract schools (approval for which follows a process outside of the annual presentation of portfolio review recommendations). In 2016-17, Brehms Lane Elementary School opened as a neighborhood charter school; Frederick Elementary School is approved to open as a neighborhood charter school in 2017-18.

At present, new school creation focuses on “re-creation” or “re-envisioning,” with the merging of school communities as they prepare to move into newly constructed or renovated buildings under the 21st Century School Buildings Plan.

For example, in 2012-13, the Cherry Hill neighborhood in southwest Baltimore had four elementary/middle schools within a half-mile radius. At that time, enrollment projections indicated that only three schools would be needed, and one (Patapsco Elementary/Middle) was subsequently recommended to close. In subsequent years, enrollment projections shifted, and it became clear that three elementary/middle schools would be too many. Working with the community, a unique solution was found. This year, the recommendation is being made to open
one school as an early learning center for children from pre-k to grade 2 (with support for preschool children under age 4) and a second school to serve grades 3 to 8. Both buildings are part of the first phase of the 21st Century School Buildings Plan, and will be designed and built to provide programming and supports specific to the age groups being served. In subsequent years, the district anticipates recommending that the remaining elementary/middle school be closed.

This is one example of how the portfolio approach considers schools not in isolation, but with clusters of inter-related recommendations affecting communities—and in this case involving a school closure, grade reconfigurations, and participation in the buildings plan.

As schools move into their new buildings, they take steps to mark the changes that have occurred along the way—for example, displaying artifacts from closed schools or including aspects of those schools' traditions in their own—as well as introducing new programming to meet the needs of a changing student population and school community.

In the 2016-17 portfolio review, no schools are recommended for permanent relocation. However, Furley Elementary School is proposed to move to the Thurgood Marshall building for three to five years to allow for needed extensive repairs at its current location. (Vanguard Collegiate, currently located in the Thurgood Marshall building, is proposed to remain there for approximately 2.5 years.)

In the 2016-17 portfolio review, the following schools are recommended for grade reconfiguration:

- Arundel Elementary/Middle School, recommended to serve pre-k to grade 2 as part of a cluster of decisions related to schools serving the Cherry Hill community in southwest Baltimore
- Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School, recommended to serve grades 3 to 8
- Lyndhurst Elementary School, recommended to add grade 6 for 2017-18 as it prepares to convert to an elementary/middle school in 2018-19

Since the enactment of the Public Charter School Act of 2003, local education agencies in Maryland are able to authorize new public charter schools to operate in the state.

Each year, City Schools invites applications from organizations that wish to open charter schools in Baltimore. These applications must include extensive information regarding proposed academic programming; plans for developing a strong, positive culture and climate; and details of financing, governance, and operations. Applications go through internal technical review, followed by a committee evaluation according to a formal evaluation rubric. Interviews may be scheduled and applicants may also be requested to present their proposals at a public meeting of the Board of Commissioners based on success of the technical review or evaluation.

Charter school applications must be submitted to City Schools for consideration in early spring.

Opening a Charter School

School relocation

Part of using resources effectively means ensuring that school programs are located in school buildings that can be operated and maintained at a sustainable level. This may require the “colocation” of more than one school program in a single school building or the relocation of a program to a building of a more appropriate size, configuration, and condition.

Reconfiguring schools

As already noted, the portfolio review can lead to recommendations to reconfigure existing schools—for example, adding middle grades to an elementary school or removing middle grades from an elementary/middle school. These recommendations can be made to ensure adequate enrollment and building utilization as well as to strengthen academic programs.

In the 2016-17 portfolio review, the following schools are recommended for grade reconfiguration:

- Arundel Elementary/Middle School, recommended to serve pre-k to grade 2 as part of a cluster of decisions related to schools serving the Cherry Hill community in southwest Baltimore
- Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School, recommended to serve grades 3 to 8
- Lyndhurst Elementary School, recommended to add grade 6 for 2017-18 as it prepares to convert to an elementary/middle school in 2018-19
Operator renewals
The outcome of the review for operator-run schools whose contracts or charters are up for renewal is included in the annual portfolio review and voted on by the Board of School Commissioners. Schools may be recommended for a five-year renewal, the maximum term; a three-year renewal, which indicates positive results overall but room for improvement in one or more key areas; or non-renewal. In the latter case, the school may then become a traditional or citywide school within the district or may be recommended to close.

For the 2016-17 portfolio review, the following schools went through the renewal process:
- City Neighbors Hamilton, a charter school serving kindergarten to 8th grade, whose recommendation for renewal is pending
- NACA Freedom and Democracy II, a contract school serving 6th to 12th grade, recommended for a 3-year renewal
- The REACH! Partnership School, a contract school serving 8th to 12th grade, recommended for a 3-year renewal

Going from Grade 9 to Grade 14
In 2016-17, Maryland’s first two Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH schools) opened as part of City Schools. Students graduate from this six-year program with a high school diploma, associate’s degree, work experience, and a foot in the door for jobs in health sciences or information technology.

P-TECH operates as a “school within a school” at Paul Laurence Dunbar and Carver Vocational-Technical high schools, and reflects a partnership among the district, the State of Maryland, IBM, Kaiser Permanente, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Maryland, Baltimore, and Baltimore City Community College.

Buildings plan amendments
As part of the MOU among the partners in the 21st Century School Buildings Plan, decisions affecting the plan must be reviewed and documented. In addition, when school buildings are vacated or school programs are relocated, a formal state-approved process must be conducted to solicit community input prior to the Board voting on the recommendation.

In the 2016-17 portfolio review, the following changes are proposed for the 21st Century School Buildings Plan:
- Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts, recommended to remain open through 2017-18
- Edmondson-Westside Skills Center, recommended to be retained in the district’s buildings portfolio
- Joseph C. Briscoe building, recommended to be retained in the district’s portfolio to house New Hope Academy
- Guilford Elementary/Middle School building, recommended for addition to Exhibit 6 of the MOU for surplusing to the City of Baltimore should the Board approve closure of the school program in 2018-19
Closing schools

The most difficult recommendation to make as part of the annual portfolio review is the recommendation to close a school program. Even if the recommendation has been anticipated, it nevertheless causes disruption to students, staff, and families, a sense of loss in communities, and a period of anxiety and adjustment for all affected.

Nevertheless, faced with the reality of limited resources that hinder the ability to pay for and provide rich academic programming, under-used school buildings, programs that struggle to support student success, and obligations to meet commitments under the buildings plan, City Schools as a good steward of public resources must make recommendations to close schools as needed and warranted. In all cases, the district works hard to ensure that students, staff, families, and communities served by those schools have opportunities to provide feedback and that stakeholders are able to advocate for their schools. This is a requirement not only of the law, but of district policy and practice. Should the closure recommendation be accepted by the Board of School Commissioners, the district also works hard to ensure that the needs of affected students are met in their school placements for subsequent years.

In the 2016-17 portfolio review, the following schools are recommended to close in summer 2017:
- Baltimore IT Academy (and surplus building to the city)
- Northwestern High School (and surplus building to the city)
- Renaissance Academy
- Samuel F.B. Morse Elementary School (and surplus building to the city)

One additional school is recommended to close in summer 2018:
- Grove Park Elementary/Middle School

Engaging the public

Each year, the recommendations from the annual portfolio review are presented to the Board of School Commissioners at a public Board meeting, which is also broadcast on cable television and streamed live online. The full report including the recommendations is made available online, in schools, and on request to members of the public; the Board then welcomes feedback at public meetings and in writing by email or postal mail. Meetings are held at schools affected by recommendations, where staff are on hand to answer the community’s questions.

The Board and district staff consider the feedback received from the public. Then, 30 or more days after receiving the recommendations, the Board votes on them at another public meeting, and the results of the vote are shared online and with school communities.

The remaining sections of this report provide more details regarding the recommendations arising from this year’s review of City Schools’ portfolio of schools, including a summary of the recommendations, data and rationales for each, and opportunities for public feedback. For more information, visit City Schools’ website at www.baltimorecityschools.org or call 443-984-2000.
### Recommendations from the 2016-17 Portfolio Review

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<tr>
<td>Arundel Elementary/ Middle School</td>
<td>Serve pre-k to grade 2 beginning in the 2018-19 school year</td>
<td>No new recommendation (open new building in August 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry Hill Elementary/ Middle School</td>
<td>Serve grades 3 to 8 beginning in the 2018-19 school year</td>
<td>No new recommendation (open renovated building in August 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyndhurst Elementary School</td>
<td>Add grade 6 beginning in the 2017-18 school year</td>
<td>No new recommendation (open renovated building in January 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operator Renewals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Neighbors Hamilton</td>
<td>Pending</td>
<td>Not in a City Schools building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NACA Freedom and Democracy Academy II</td>
<td>Renew charter for a 3-year period</td>
<td>No new recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The REACH! Partnership School</td>
<td>Renew charter for a 3-year period</td>
<td>No new recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buildings Plan Amendments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts / Harlem Park building</td>
<td>Remain open through the 2017-18 school year</td>
<td>No new recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmondson-Westside Skills Center</td>
<td>No new recommendation</td>
<td>Retain in City Schools’ buildings portfolio for continued use by Edmondson-Westside High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilford Elementary/Middle School building</td>
<td>No new recommendation (move toward closure in summer 2019)</td>
<td>Add to Exhibit 6 of the 21st Century Buildings Plan MOU and move toward surplusing to the City of Baltimore in summer 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hope Academy / Joseph C. Briscoe building</td>
<td>Remain in Joseph C. Briscoe building</td>
<td>Retain in City Schools’ buildings portfolio for continued use by New Hope Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore IT Academy* / Chinquapin building</td>
<td>Close effective summer 2017</td>
<td>Surplus to the City of Baltimore in 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grove Park Elementary/ Middle School*</td>
<td>Close effective summer 2018</td>
<td>Retain in City Schools’ buildings portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern High School*</td>
<td>Close effective summer 2017</td>
<td>Surplus to the City of Baltimore effective summer 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renaissance Academy*</td>
<td>Close effective summer 2017</td>
<td>No new recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel F.B. Morse Elementary School*</td>
<td>Close effective summer 2017</td>
<td>Surplus to the City of Baltimore effective summer 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Additional documentation regarding these recommendations, as required by Board of School Commissioners policy and the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), appears in the appendix to this report.*
Rationale for 2016-17 Recommendations

Grade Reconfigurations

Arundel Elementary/Middle School

Recommendation
Program: Reconfigure to serve pre-k to grade 2
Building: No new recommendation

As part of earlier portfolio reviews, staff has worked extensively with the community in the Cherry Hill neighborhood of southwest Baltimore on plans for school programming to serve students up to 8th grade. As part of that work, a determination was made to reconfigure one existing elementary/middle school to focus on early learning, serving children from pre-k to grade 2; a second school will be reconfigured to serve grades 3 to 8. Both school buildings are part of the 21st Century School Buildings Plan, scheduled to open in the 2018-19 school year. These plans were approved previously by the Board of School Commissioners.

The recommendation included in this year’s portfolio review formalizes the previous decisions and designates Arundel Elementary/Middle School as the program that will be reconfigured to serve pre-k to grade 2.

Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School

Recommendation
Program: Reconfigure to serve grades 3 to 8
Building: No new recommendation

As noted above, staff has worked extensively with the community in the Cherry Hill neighborhood of southwest Baltimore on plans for school programming to serve students up to 8th grade. These plans were approved previously by the Board of School Commissioners.

The recommendation included in this year’s portfolio review formalizes the previous decisions and designates Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School as the program that will be reconfigured to serve grades 3 to 8.

Lyndhurst Elementary School

Recommendation
Program: Reconfigure to serve grade 6
Building: No new recommendation

As part of decisions made following previous portfolio reviews, Lyndhurst Elementary School will be reconfigured as an elementary/middle school in a renovated and expanded building, currently scheduled to open in January 2018 under the 21st Century School Buildings Plan. To ensure that current 5th-grade students will not have to find another middle school program for a single year, the school community requested to begin the transition to an elementary/middle school in the 2017-18 school year.

The proposal ensures stability for 5th-grade students and families, provides them with access to the renovated and updated building (which would not necessarily be the case if they were to leave the school through the middle school choice process), and assists the school staff with the transition to middle grades programming.
**Operator Renewals**

**City Neighbors Hamilton**

**Recommendation**
- **Program:** Pending
- **Building:** No recommendation (not a City Schools building)

City Neighbors Hamilton is a charter school in northeast Baltimore, serving kindergarten to grade 8. The renewal review of the school's operator, City Neighbors Hamilton, Inc., generated ratings of effective for academic performance and highly effective for climate and governance. The rating on financial management is pending receipt of additional information.

The complete renewal report for this school can be found in the appendix.

**NACA Freedom and Democracy Academy II**

**Recommendation**
- **Program:** Renew the operator's contract for a 3-year term
- **Building:** No new recommendation

NACA Freedom and Democracy Academy II is a transformation school in northeast Baltimore, serving grades 6 to 12. The renewal review of the school's operator, Northwood Appold Community Association, generated ratings of developing for academic performance and climate, meets expectations for financial management, and effective in governance. Based on these ratings, City Schools recommends renewing the operator's contract for a 3-year term. With this action, City Schools retains the ability to offer students and families a school option for middle and high school grades in the northeast quadrant of the city.

The complete renewal report for this school can be found in the appendix.

**The REACH! Partnership School**

**Recommendation**
- **Program:** Renew the operator’s contract for a 3-year term
- **Building:** No new recommendation

The REACH! Partnership School serves high school students on the city's east side, offering academic programming and several pathways in Career and Technology Education. The renewal review of the school's operator, Civics Works, Inc., generated ratings of developing for academic performance and climate, meets expectations for financial management, and effective in governance. Based on these ratings, City Schools recommends renewing the operator's contract for a 3-year term. With this action, City Schools retains the ability to offer students and families a school option with varied programming for high school grades.

The complete renewal report for this school can be found in the appendix.
Buildings Plan Amendments

Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts / Harlem Park building

Recommendation
Program: Remain open through 2017-18
Building: No new recommendation

As part of a grouping of recommendations in the portfolio review for the 2013-14 school year, the Board of School Commissioners agreed to consider closing Augusta Fells Savage Institute, a high school on the city’s west side, at the end of the 2016-17 school year.

In reviewing high school programming as part of the portfolio review for 2016-17, the district now recommends keeping the Augusta Fells Savage program open through the 2017-18 school year, delaying consideration for closure until summer 2018. This will allow a year of continuity for the school community as the district works to increase the number of high-quality high school options in this area of the city.

Edmondson-Westside Skills Center

Recommendation
Program: No new recommendation
Building: Retain the Skills Center in the district’s buildings portfolio, to support programming at Edmondson-Westside High School

The Edmondson-Westside High School program currently occupies two buildings, with the Skills Center used for specialized Career and Technology Education pathways. In the 2012-13 portfolio review, the Edmondson-Westside High School building was proposed to be renovated to bring the entire school under one roof.

Today, in 2016-17, the district does not have funding for the subsequent phases of the buildings plan, during which this renovation would have occurred. The district therefore recommends that the Skills Center be retained in the district’s buildings portfolio, to provide students with continuing access to the specialized facilities for CTE programs. District staff will work to identify a partner to occupy a portion of the Skills Center building, to address concerns regarding low utilization.

Guilford Elementary/Middle School

Recommendation
Program: No new recommendation (move forward with consideration of closure in summer 2019)
Building: Add to Exhibit 6 of the MOU among the partners in the 21st Century School Buildings Plan and move toward surplusing to the City of Baltimore in summer 2019

As part of the 2014-15 portfolio review, the Board voted to consider closing Guilford Elementary/Middle School at the end of the 2018-19 school year. This recommendation will be included in the portfolio review that year. The recommendation is being made this year that the school building be formally added to the list of school buildings that the district intends to vacate under the 21st Century School Buildings Plan (“Exhibit 6” of the memorandum of understanding among the plan’s partners).
**New Hope Academy / Joseph C. Briscoe building**

**Recommendation**

**Program:** No recommendation  
**Building:** Retain the Joseph C. Briscoe building in the district's buildings portfolio

New Hope Academy, a separate public day school serving students with special needs, is located in the district’s Joseph C. Briscoe building. In the 2012-13 portfolio review, the program was proposed to be relocated in year 5 of the districtwide plan, with the Briscoe building vacated and surplused to the City of Baltimore.

Today, in 2016-17, the district does not have funding for the subsequent phases of the buildings plan, during which this relocation would have occurred. The district therefore recommends that the Briscoe building be retained in the district’s buildings portfolio, to ensure that this program can continue to serve students in the specialized facility they require.

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**Baltimore IT Academy/Chinquapin building**

**Recommendation**

**Program:** Close in summer 2017  
**Building:** Surplus to the City of Baltimore in 2021

Baltimore IT Academy, a middle school in northeast Baltimore, has struggled with low academic performance and concerns regarding its climate for supporting high-quality teaching and learning. Although the school received additional funds through a School Improvement Grant (SIG) and designation by the state as a priority school, the district has been unable to effect sufficient improvement to ensure students’ success. In addition, the school has had difficulty solidifying its identity as a technology-focused program and is not a popular selection among potential incoming students during middle school choice. Finally, the district has excess capacity at the middle grades level; closing a low-performing option will improve the district’s overall utilization rate.

Students now in 8th grade at the school are already participating in high school choice for next year. Those in lower grades or not on track to graduate in June 2017 will be assisted in identifying stronger middle school options that meet their needs for next year.

More details regarding this recommendation are included in the appendix.
**Northwestern High School**

**Recommendation**
*Program:* Close in summer 2017  
*Building:* Surplus to the City of Baltimore in summer 2019

As outlined in portfolio reviews from previous years, there is excess capacity of high school seats in the northwest area of the city. To ensure that students have access to rich, varied programming in a modern facility, nearby Forest Park High School is now being renovated as part of the 21st Century School Buildings Plan. Once completed, it will support the programming currently offered at both Forest Park and Northwestern high schools, including academic offerings, Career and Technology Education pathways, and a full range of extracurricular and other opportunities.

The new Forest Park building will be ready for occupancy for the 2018-19 school year. With the closure of the Northwestern program in summer 2017, the Forest Park and Northwestern communities will have the opportunity to merge while located together in the Northwestern building. They will then move together to Forest Park at the beginning of the 2018-19 school year.

More details regarding this recommendation are included in the appendix.

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**Grove Park Elementary/Middle School**

**Recommendation**
*Program:* Close in summer 2018  
*Building:* Retain in the district’s buildings portfolio

For a number of years, Grove Park Elementary/Middle School has had a small population of students and has required supplemental funding to support rich and varied academic programming. The declines in enrollment will accelerate by 2019-20, when Grove Park was scheduled to be reconfigured as an elementary school, with middle grade students attending a newly renovated Calvin Rodwell Elementary/Middle School. By that time, the school will become unsustainable, with too few students at each grade level to ensure high-quality programming.

Nearby Calvin Rodwell Elementary/Middle School is entering its feasibility study for construction under the 21st Century School Buildings Plan, with occupancy anticipated in the 2018-19 school year. With the approval of this recommendation, Grove Park students will have access to a high-quality Calvin Rodwell program in a modern school building.

Students now in 8th grade at Grove Park are already participating in high school choice for next year; because this recommendation would take effect in summer 2018, those in 7th grade in the current year would complete middle school at Grove Park. Students in lower grades would be zoned to Calvin Rodwell in 2018-19.

More details regarding this recommendation are included in the appendix.
Renaissance Academy

Recommendation
Program: Close in summer 2017
Building: No new recommendation

Renaissance Academy is a high school on the city’s west side that has struggled for a number of years to ensure successful outcomes for students and to provide a positive climate for teaching and learning. Last year a number of tragic events occurred in and around the school, and the effects continue to be felt by students and staff.

Closing this program will allow students to pursue high school graduation in higher quality programs. For students not on track to graduate in June 2017, district staff will provide individual support to each student and family to discuss all the options and ensure the best fit to meet student needs.

More details regarding this recommendation are included in the appendix.

Samuel F.B. Morse Elementary School

Recommendation
Program: Close in summer 2017
Building: Surplus to the City of Baltimore in summer 2017

Samuel F.B. Morse Elementary School is located within one mile of Frederick Elementary School. The neighborhood cannot support two elementary school programs with sufficient enrollment to ensure rich and varied programming at each. In portfolio reviews from previous years, the Board of Commissioners approved inclusion of Frederick Elementary School in the 21st Century School Buildings Plan because, of the two schools, Frederick occupies a larger site more suitable for renovation.

The new Frederick building will be ready for occupancy for the 2017-18 school year. With the closure of the Samuel F.B. Morse program in summer 2017, students from both communities will have access to a new building. School programming will also be new, with Frederick Elementary School opening in 2017-18 as a neighborhood charter school operated by the Baltimore Curriculum Project.

More details regarding this recommendation are included in the appendix.
Baltimore City Public Schools’ Notice of Nondiscrimination
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