

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Sheila Dixon
Mayor, City of Baltimore

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School Commissioners

Andrés A. Alonso, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

October 5, 2009

The Honorable Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Members of the Baltimore City Council
100 N. Holliday Street
Suite 400
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

RE: #09-0148R

Dear President Rawlings-Blake:

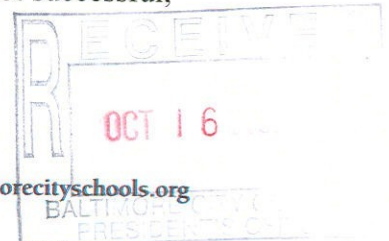
This letter will provide insights from the perspective of Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) on the feasibility of instituting a single identification card system to make accessing services easier and more convenient for Baltimore City residents. City Schools has strong interest in utilizing a "one-card" technology in the delivery of services to our students and their families. In prior years City Schools has researched the applicability of this type of system in terms of both benefits and barriers to entry.

City Schools has identified potential benefits of a "one-card" system in the following areas:

- Identification of students by name and photo ID
- Processing of meals in school cafeteria facilities
- Tracking of transportation services through the MTA
- Access to library services
- Tracking for access and egress in all City Schools facilities
- Tracking for special services (e.g., tutoring)

City Schools' experience with a Maryland Transportation Authority (MTA) pilot program is illustrative of the challenges involved in implementing "one-card" technologies. During the 2005 school year, City Schools and the MTA explored the feasibility of using a "smart card" technology to replace the use of coupon books by students using free MTA service to go to and from school. While this program promised significant benefits in terms of efficiency and accuracy, it also demonstrated some of the barriers to successful implementation. The technology proposed by the MTA was estimated to cost \$7.00 - \$9.00 per card. While the MTA proposed to cover the expense of the first 35,000 cards, City Schools would not have been able to incur the expense of the additional cards needed. The initial pilot program with the MTA was not successful,

Comments



and the project was abandoned in 2007.

While we recognize the potential benefits of utilizing a “one card” technology, City Schools has also identified the following potential barriers to entry of such a system:

1. Utilization and acceptance of one universal technology across all avenues of service.

The marketplace offers multiple technologies in the “one card” arena. The choice of one specific technology must be made carefully, since it will drive the requirements for all infrastructure setup and configuration.

2. Infrastructure costs and production/distribution of “one cards” to all students.

City Schools currently serves nearly 83,000 students in more than 150 buildings. Providing each student with a “one card” could incur a significant initial investment (depending upon which technology is used), as well as infrastructure costs associated with setup and operation of each service across all facilities.

3. Maintenance of equipment and replacement costs for a “one card” system.

Infrastructure equipment will require maintenance through a joint effort of the internal City Schools IT Department and the supplying vendor. As students predictably lose cards in the course of the school year they will need to be replaced in order to avoid interruption of service.

In summary, City Schools recognizes the potential value of “one card” technology in serving our students and their families, and we feel that the feasibility of such a system should be investigated. The issues discussed in this letter are meant to assist in defining the parameters that should be considered in such an investigation.

I trust that you will find this information to be useful as you proceed. Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional input. Thank you for including us in the discussion, and for your ongoing support for City Schools.

Sincerely,



Andrés A. Alonso, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

C: Dawana Sterrette, Legislative Liaison

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