

Education, Youth, and Older Adults Committee Hearing; 25-0043R - Informational Hearing - Process of Permanent School Closures

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2025-26 ANNUAL REVIEW AND OPERATOR RENEWAL PROCESS

Action	Date
Mandated meetings with elected officials and members of the Board	October 28, 2025
Annual Review Recommendations Report shared with Board and elected officials and made available publicly	November 12, 2025
Annual Review recommendations (includes Operator Renewal) presented to Board in special public meeting	November 12, 2025
Notifications sent to affected school communities	November 12, 2025
School based community and staff meetings	November 18 – December 10, 2025
Steering Committee process for traditional schools recommended for closure	November 17, 2025 – January 9, 2026

2025-26 PUBLIC ANNUAL REVIEW AND OPERATOR RENEWAL PROCESS

Action	Date
Board Work Session for Operator Renewal	December 4, 2025
Board Hearings for Annual Review	December 11, 2025 & January 8, 2026
Board votes on Annual Review and Operator Renewal in a special public meeting	January 14, 2026
Final Reports for Annual Review and Operator Renewal	February 13, 2026

REVIEW OF SCHOOLS: AN ANNUAL PROCESS



Focuses on ensuring that all students have access to rigorous, robust academic programs in safe, healthy environments that promote success. City Schools considers a range of factors including:

- Academic performance and access to programs
- Climate indicators and availability of supports
- Access, quality, and distribution of school programming and assessing whether specific student populations and specific geographic areas are equitably served
- School enrollment and school size
- Building utilization and condition
- Actions necessary for 21st Century School Buildings Plan and Built to Learn
- Renewal framework for operator-run schools

PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE ANNUAL REVIEW PROCESS

Our strategy is grounded in the core belief that **all students deserve a high-quality education**. Guided by this foundation, we focus on the following principles in our work:



We focus on **continuous improvement**.



Communities that have experienced the most disinvestment and have the most need should be the first communities in which we focus investments



We make changes only with the **right conditions for success** in place (e.g., strong leadership, facility capacity, strong partnerships).



Historical context matters.



TYPES OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Approval of the 21st Century Buildings Plan
- Approval of the High School Plan (Built to Learn)
- School relocation
- Grade reconfiguration
- New traditional school creation
- Building or land surplus
- School combining
- School Closure
- Operator Renewal



WHAT CHALLENGES ARE WE TRYING TO SOLVE?

City Schools has significant less funding for facilities than other districts while still having the oldest infrastructure within the state.

County	SY23-24 Students	10-year average annual county capital budget allocated to K-12 education (FY12-22; 24)	10-year average annual CIP allocation to LEAs (FY12-22; 24)	Local Funds per Pupil*
Montgomery	160,223	\$325,999,900	\$48,004,648	\$2,035
Prince George's	131,325	\$180,170,000	\$38,785,008	\$1,372
Baltimore County	110,275	\$123,795,478	\$41,761,323	\$1,123
Anne Arundel	84,346	\$160,446,455	\$34,147,770	\$1,902
Baltimore City	75,811	\$17,545,800	\$31,538,638	\$231

Source: [Comptroller of Maryland's State Spending Series: School Construction, September 2025](#) *This column was added by City Schools

WHAT CHALLENGES ARE WE TRYING TO SOLVE?



The current maintenance and capital budget is approximately \$375M less than what is needed.

Given our building portfolio, we require a combined \$530M of capital and maintenance funding to upgrade and maintain District buildings to industry standards.

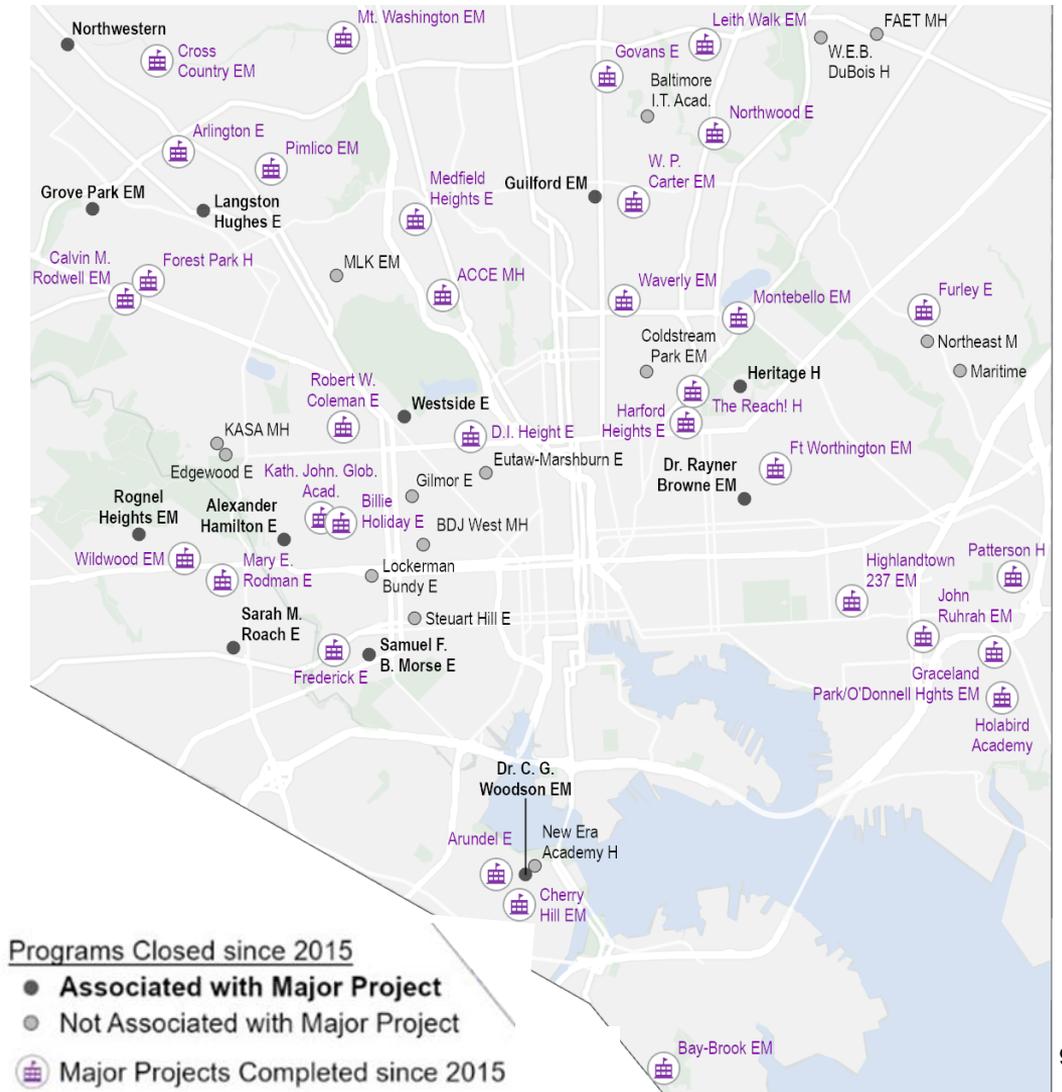
COMPLETED 21ST CENTURY BUILDINGS AND MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS AND SCHOOL CLOSURES 2015-16 – 2025-26

The original commitment in the 21st Century Buildings Plan was to obtain enough funds to renovate or replace every school that houses students.

Given available funding, the plan prioritized the following:

- Communities that have had less community investments
- Communities where schools needed to be closed and merged; and
- Communities that were experiencing overcrowding.

In last decade, the majority of school closures have been the result of the requirements of the 21st Century School Buildings Plan and/or decreased enrollment.



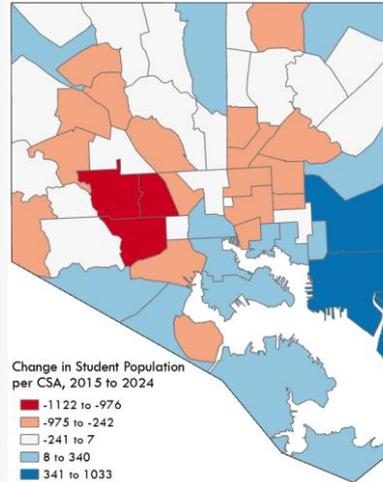
WHAT CHALLENGES ARE WE TRYING TO SOLVE?

Often, we do not have open seats where we need them.

- Ex: We have enrollment gains in Southeast Baltimore, but our West Baltimore schools have the most space for additional students.

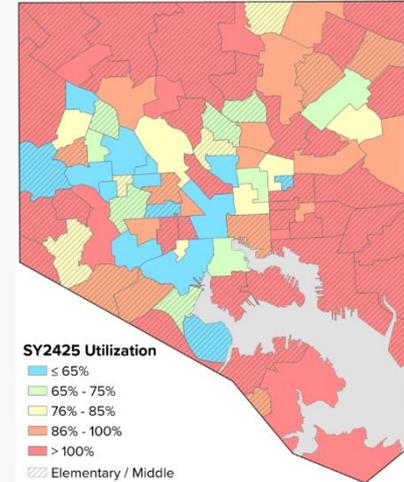
This leads both to under-utilized buildings and undersized schools. This, in turn:

- Limits student access to academic and co-curricular opportunity
- Limits our access to capital project funding
- Creates operational inefficiencies



Student Population

We have more students in SE Baltimore...



Open Seats

...But our open seats are in West Baltimore.

WHAT CHALLENGES ARE WE TRYING TO SOLVE?

Due to funding limitations, undersized schools struggle to provide:



Elementary-level elective access (e.g., arts, physical education, middle school specialization (e.g., honors courses, pre-CTE), and high school college and career readiness courses (e.g. honors, AP, dual enrollment, CTE)



Staffing in roles such as assistant principals, academic coaches, more than one teacher in core content areas



Diverse array of academic and social-emotional support services



Student activities, such as athletics and after-school clubs

HOW DOES COMMUNITY PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS?

Prior to the vote:

- Share feedback on recommendations at school-based meetings
- Participate in steering committee meetings
- Send written feedback to the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (Board).
- Participate in Board hearings via in-person testimony, video testimony or written feedback



After vote:

- Parents/students can appeal to MSBE
- Participate on the Transition Committee
- Attend events
- Participate in focus groups
- Participate in school budget process
- Complete surveys



WHAT HAPPENS AFTER IF THE BOARD APPROVES?

2-3 YEARS OF TRANSITION SUPPORT

Supporting
Existing
Academic
Program

Transition
Meetings with
School
Community

Working with
Other Agencies

Specific
events/meetings
with stakeholder
groups

Alignment of
Resources

TRANSITION SUPPORT

Creating shared identity –
school mission/vision,
uniform, customs, school and
space names

Identifying needs – focus
groups with students, staff
parents; reviewing needs
analysis or budget priorities;
working with school leaders
on student specific supports

Working with City agencies,
parents, students, school
staff on safe walking routes

Events to get to know new
school leaders, parents,
students

Alignment of Resources –
prioritizing resource allocation
through facilities funding,
partner funding, etc.

Focused Social Emotional
support work and collective
memory work

2-3 YEARS OF TRANSITION SUPPORT



Community walk with representatives from Franklin Square EMS, Steuart Hill ES, parents, DOT, and other city agencies looking at school walk paths and traffic calming elements needed along the walk route.



Students, families, and staff from Eutaw-Marshburn and The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor danced to DJ Porkchop during a joint Family Arts Night at Samuel Coleridge Taylor. Families were able to interact with staff, other families and tour the building.



Members of the joint MLK-Edgecombe Transition Committee in spring 2020 created a joint mission and vision for the combined school, based on the values, beliefs, and core commitments from both schools.

PARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY

- **Enrollment increased: 30%** from 215 to 300 students in 2020-21 after merging with the elementary grades from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary Middle School. The school's 2025-26 enrollment is 375.
- **Improved access to academic programming and resources:** the school offers more resource classes, including visual arts, music, PE, dramabary, computer science, and health; went from one to two teachers per grade level; and hired instructional coaches and a climate coach
- **Facilities investments and enhancements:**
 - City Schools: new painting & lighting throughout; HVAC, new doors and windows, new roof in design; new restrooms expected in summer 2026
 - Ravens and KaBoom: created a new playground
 - Heart of America, Ravens, and Baltimore Tree Trust: created an outdoor classroom area, Zen garden, and Peace and Meditation Room, and planted trees around the building



PARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY



- **Preserving the legacy of the closed school:** After the merge, the combined school community voted on a new name and also named spaces in the building after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other schools nearby that had closed: the MLK café; Malcolm X Gymnatorium; and Langston Hughes Library.

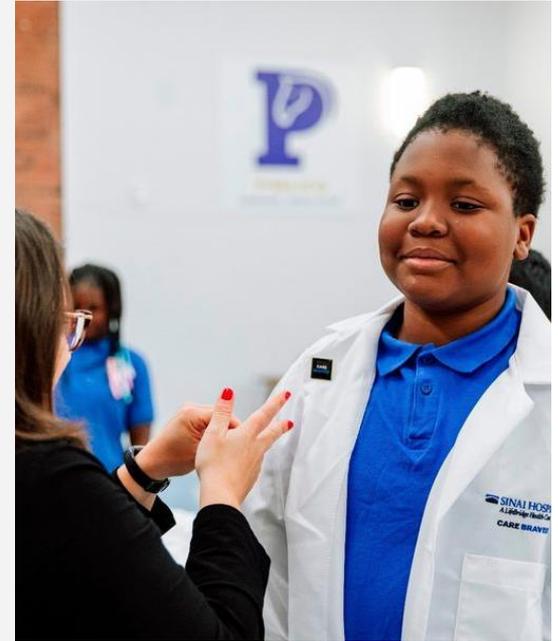


RESEARCH FINDINGS

Building Community Connections: A Qualitative Analysis on the Impact of Closing Schools on Communities ***A research partnership between JHU and City Schools***

Key Findings:

- School community members from closed and receiving schools hold vivid and cherished memories of their schools prior to the school closures and combining.
- Preserving and incorporating visible, symbolic and cultural elements of closed schools within receiving schools contributes to building unified school communities.
- School stakeholders value closure and opportunities for person-to-person interactions when closing and combining school communities.
- Empathetic and visionary school leaders play a critical role in the school transition process.
- In general, most combined school communities report feeling more like a family, have more opportunities for grade level collaboration and career growth for educators and staff, and have increased access to resources.



Operator Renewal Process

Baltimore City Public Schools
Administrative Headquarters

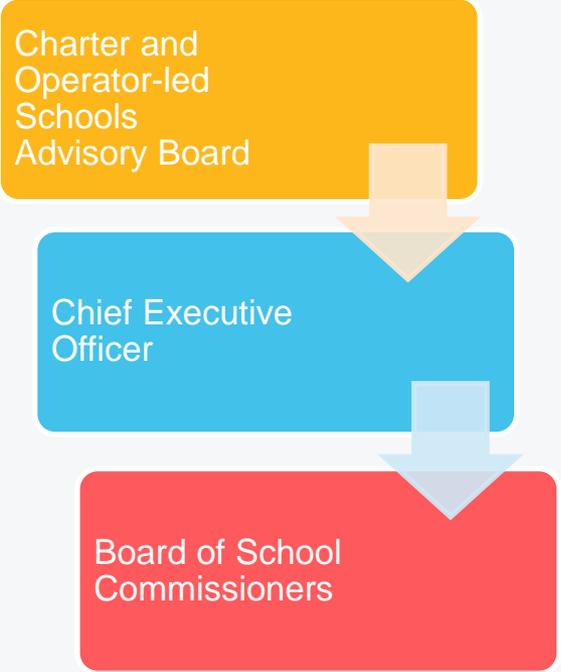
OPERATOR RENEWAL



- Assesses the performance of operator-run schools every 3, 5, or 8 years to ensure that our portfolio of schools continues to offer high quality educational options to Baltimore City students.
- Evaluates the efficacy of schools using multiple measures both quantitative and qualitative inclusive of site visits, focus groups, surveys, and evidence provided by operators in their applications for renewal.
- Aligns to the Board’s Charter Policy (IHBJ), the Renewal Rubric includes the key areas of measurement identified in Board policy.
 - Student Achievement/Academic Success (50% of the weight)
 - School Climate
 - Financial Management and Governance
- Can result in 8-year, 5-year, or 3-year contracts or non-renewal and/or school closure.

OPERATOR RENEWAL PROCESS

Charter and
Operator-led
Schools
Advisory Board



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graph TD; A[Charter and Operator-led Schools Advisory Board] --> B[Chief Executive Officer]; B --> C[Board of School Commissioners];
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The diagram illustrates a three-step process for operator renewal. It begins with the Charter and Operator-led Schools Advisory Board (yellow box), which provides input to the Chief Executive Officer (blue box). The CEO then provides input to the Board of School Commissioners (red box). Arrows indicate the downward flow of information and decision-making from the Advisory Board to the CEO, and then to the Board of Commissioners.

Chief Executive
Officer

Board of School
Commissioners

First level of review conducted by the **Charter and Operator-led Advisory Board:**

- Members represent community organizations, non-profits, school operators, and district representatives
- Functions to **provide advice to the CEO on renewal recommendations** and other issues as they relate to operator-led schools

Second level of review - **CEO/administrative review**

- Considers the Advisory Board's recommendations
- The quantitative and qualitative review
- **Through administrative review, makes final recommendations to the Board**

The **ultimate decision** on all operator renewals rests with **the Board**, which considers:

- The recommendations and rationale of the CEO
- The operator renewal report
- Testimony given at public Board meetings and work sessions
- The contents of the official record and the factors listed in policy IHBJ and administrative regulation IHBJ-RA for charter schools, and, for non-charter schools, policy FCA and administrative regulation FCA-RA

OPERATOR RENEWAL TIMELINE

Date	Event
September 4, 2025	Renewal applications due
September – October 2025	Charter and Operator-led Schools Advisory Board reviews applications and provides advice on renewal recommendations to CEO
Week of November 3, 2025	Operators receive CEO's preliminary recommendations and communications timeline; recommendations shared with elected officials
November 12, 2025	Recommendations presented to the Board in public meeting
December 4, 2025	Operator Work Session – Opportunity for Operators to present to the Board
January 14, 2026	Board votes on final recommendations



ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The Academic Success portion of the renewal rubric consists of:	Description:
Absolute performance on state assessments	✓ MCAP ELA and Math Absolute results from SY24-25
<i>Trend performance on state assessments</i>	○ <i>Not Available for 2025-26 process to allow for more time to gather feedback on alternative measures from stakeholders</i>
Growth performance on state assessments	✓ MCAP ELA and Math Student Growth Percentile median from 2022 through 2025 administrations; considers individual student improvement from SY21-22 to SY24-25
Fidelity to Charter/Application Overall	✓ Considers evidence presented in schools' applications, as well as data provided by City Schools
Programming for All Student Racial and Ethnic Groups (for schools with diverse student bodies)	✓ Programming for All Student Racial and Ethnic Groups (for schools with diverse student bodies); considers qualitative and quantitative data
College and Career Readiness (for schools with high school grades)	✓ Participation, success and college enrollment
4-year Cohort Graduation Rate (for schools with high school grades)	✓ 4-year Cohort Graduation Rate average over classes of 2022, 2023 and 2024
5 Essentials Findings	✓ 5 Essentials Survey Report indicates the degree to which schools are positioned for improvement (considers staff and student responses along 5 domains)



SCHOOL CLIMATE

The Climate portion of the renewal rubric consists of:	Description:
SER measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talented People Vision and Engagement Highly Effective Instruction <i>(Service and Support of Students with Disabilities - pilot not used for ratings for the 2025-26 process)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Classroom observation, focus groups and document review conducted during SER visit in spring 2025 ✓ New Key Action - <i>Pilot for 2025-26 process to allow for more time to gather feedback on alternative measures from stakeholders; information for this measure will be released to impacted schools and City Schools after the 2025-26 process has been concluded</i>
Family Satisfaction	✓ Family survey results, average from 2021-22 to 2024-25
Cohort Retention	✓ The percentage of students who remained at a school two years after entry at the normal entry grade, averaged over years 2020-21 – 2024-25
Student attendance: Chronic Absence	✓ Qualitative metric scored by the Advisory Board – considers attendance data and evidence of practices presented in renewal application
Suspensions	✓ Qualitative metric scored by the Advisory Board – considers suspension data and evidence of practices presented in renewal application
Effective Programming for Students With Disabilities	✓ Site visit done in accordance with MSDE guidance in winter/spring/summer 2025; evidence presented in renewal application, student outcomes



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT/GOVERNANCE

The Financial Management/Governance portion of the renewal rubric consists of:	Description:
Audit Content/Internal Controls	✓ Audits from the last three fiscal years
Operator Capacity	✓ Operator's ability to effectively manage and meet federal, state and district requirements; effective grant management; evidence provided in renewal application
Strategic Leadership (SER)	✓ Classroom observation, focus groups and document review conducted during SER visit in spring 2025

HOW DOES COMMUNITY PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS?

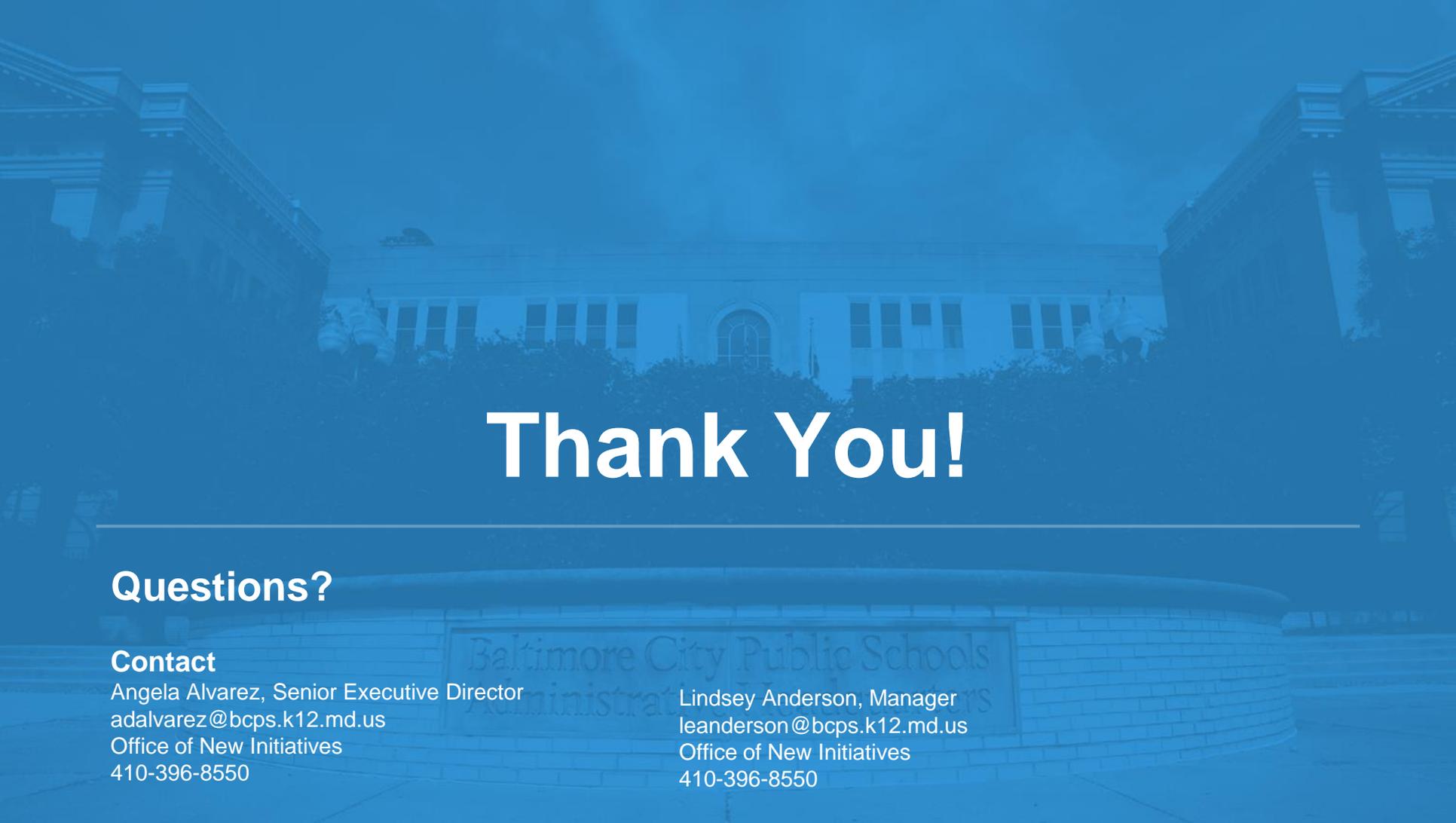
Prior to the vote:

- Students and staff participate in the 5Essentials
- Students, staff, parents, operator participate in focus groups as part of School Effectiveness Review
- Send written feedback to the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.
- Participate in hearings via in-person testimony, video testimony or written feedback
- Operators participate in the Operator Renewal Work Session with Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners

After vote:

- Operators can appeal to MSBE
- Participate in transition meetings
- Attend events
- Participate in focus groups
- Complete surveys





Thank You!

Questions?

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BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS

Robert Salley, *Board Chair*

Ashiah Parker, *Vice Chair*

Emily Ames-Messinger

Andrew Coy

Ashley Esposito

Kwame' Jamal Kenyatta-Bey

Mujahid Muhammad

Amber Scott-Woodruff

Larry Simmons Jr.

Khalilah Slater Harrington

Zayra Chicas-Guzman, *Student Commissioner*

Yousuf Ahmad, *Board Executive Officer*

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises, *Chief Executive Officer*

Angela D. Alvarez, *Senior Executive Director - Office of New Initiatives*

Joshua I. Civil, *Chief Legal Officer*

Dr. Joan Dabrowski, *Chief Academic Officer*

Dr. Stacy Place Tosé, *Chief of Schools*

Christopher Doherty, *Chief Financial Officer*

Dr. Tracey L. Durant, *Senior Executive Director - Equity*

Tina Hike-Hubbard, *Chief of Communications, Engagement, and Enrollment*

Theresa D. Jones, *Chief Achievement and Accountability Officer*

Thomas T. Jones, *Chief Information Technology Officer*

Emily Nielson, *Chief Human Capital Officer*

Alison Perkins-Cohen, *Chief of Staff*

Dr. Lynette Washington, *Chief Operating Officer*

Baltimore City Public Schools
Administrative Headquarters

APPENDIX

Mary Ann Winterling Elementary School



Enrollment increased:

- The school's enrollment grew from 185 to 381 after combining with Lockerman Bundy Elementary School, representing a 50% increase. The school's SY 2025-2026 enrollment is 288, 36% higher than in school year 2020-21 before the merge.

Improved access to academic programming; the school offers:

- Art, vocal music, instrumental music, drama, and physical education, as well as students continue to have access to the partnership with OrchKids.
- **Strategic staffing** - The school initially added one teacher per grade level, allowing for more collaboration, and a librarian, an Assistant Principal, Educational Associate, and Intervention Specialist.

Facilities improvements made include:

- City Schools: creation of additional classrooms, office spaces, and small group spaces; upgrades to lighting throughout the building, replaced all chalkboards with whiteboards, renovated all group bathrooms, and created a gender-neutral bathroom
- In 2023, the school auditorium was renamed The Lockerman Bundy Auditorium to preserve the legacies of Joseph Lockerman and Vivien Hall (Bundy) and was renovated through the Maggie McIntosh Arts Center Grant in fall 2024.
- The school is in the process of replacing and expanding their playground through the City Schools' partnership with KaBook.

Dancers at Mary Ann Winterling rehearsing in the school's recently renovated auditorium.

Franklin Square Elementary/Middle School



Franklin Square students brainstorming designs for their new KaBoom playground.

Enrollment increased:

- The school's enrollment increased from 317 to 460 after combining with Steuart Hill Academic Academy, representing a 30% increase. The school's SY 2025-26 enrollment is 478 so it remains healthy sized.

Improved access to academic programming; the school offers:

- Art, music, PE, photography, and coding
- Springboard literacy afterschool program, Chapter One literacy tutoring, Cognition math tutoring, and Empowerment Through Aviation
- Clubs such as Manga Book Club, band, step team, and a Student Government Association (SGA)
- Strategic staffing: after combining with Steuart Hill, the school added a math coach, literacy coach, Reading Intervention teacher, Lower Grades Lead, and a Behavior Management Lead and Support, in addition to moving from a 1-section elementary school to a 2-section elementary school.

Facilities improvements made include:

- City Schools: HVAC replacement; new windows and doors; secure vestibule and remodeled front office, new health suite; painting, new lighting, and floor tile replacement as needed
- CarMax: Kaboom playground
- Heart of America, Ravens, and Baltimore Tree Trust: outdoor classroom area and improved the cafeteria, gym, computer lab, and teacher's lounge.

The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School

Retaining the legacy of the closing school:

- In 2023 the school community renamed their community center after Theresa Marshburn, the parent, community activist, and crossing guard after whom Eutaw-Marshburn was named.

Facilities improvements made include:

- In spring 2024, the school received a school makeover through Heart of America and the Ravens, which provided: a renovation to the Theresa Marshburn Community Center; renovations to 2 staff lounges and a VIP lounge for students; new painting in classrooms throughout the building; repairs and upgrades to the school's playground; renovations and new furniture in the school's courtyard; repainting in the gym; refreshes to outdoor classroom space; and tree planting and landscaping work.
- In spring 2024, the school was awarded a Maggie McIntosh Art Center grant to renovate the auditorium and auditorium foyer.



Ribbon cutting for the renovated Theresa Marshburn center in 2024.

Augusta Fells Savage Institute for Visual Arts



In 2025, former Bluford Drew Jemison and Augusta Fells students participated in an internship program through the school's partnership with Urban Alliance.

Enrollment increased:

- In fall 2024, Augusta Fells Institute for Visual Arts received 62% of the rising 9th-12th graders from Bluford Drew Jemison STEM Academy West when that school closed after school year 2023-24.

Improved access to academic programming; the school offers:

- Augusta Fells has increased its AP course offerings as well as its offering in the arts, adding photography and digital media to bridge the art and STEM focus of both schools.
- The school added a full-time librarian to support literacy across the school.

Creating a combined school culture and honoring the legacy of the closed school:

- ReDesigning Minds, a partner that provided mentoring to male students at BDJ, was brought over to provide male mentoring at Augusta Fells during the first year of the combined school.
- The school went through a naming process in spring 2025 to name spaces in the building after Guion Bluford, Charles Drew, and Mae Jemison.

Facilities improvements made include:

- Summer 2024 renovations include: a new health suite a school-based health center; upgrades to several classrooms, including new flooring, lighting, painting, and storage; security enhancements; and an upgrade to the PA system.
- In fall 2024 the school was awarded a Maggie McIntosh Arts Center₃₃ grant to renovate their art gallery spaces which feature student work.

GWYNNS FALLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Edgewood Elementary School combined primarily with Gwynns Falls Elementary School after Edgewood closed in summer 2025.

Improved access to academic programming and resources:

- Gwynns Falls was able to increase their visual art teacher and IEP Chair from part-time to full time; add a part-time guidance counselor; and add one classroom teacher so that all grades have two sections.
- The school is offering after-school tutoring and enrichment in ELA and math for all grade levels. Moving History is providing after-school theater and dance programming.
- Students have access to many clubs and sports, including robotics, SGA, gardening, cooking, basketball, cheer, and golf.

Safety along the walking Route:

- Baltimore City's Department of Transportation added additional traffic calming elements along students' walking route from the Edgewood zone to Gwynns Falls.
- City Schools designated a safe walking route and City Schools' partner The Movement Team provided support in the beginning of the school year to familiarize students and families with the safe route.



Edgewood and Gwynns Falls students and families at the joint family Art and Game Night at Gwynns Falls Elementary School.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CLOSURE OF TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS

As required by COMAR and City Schools' Board Policy FCA: Closing of Schools and its accompanying Administrative Regulation FCA-RA, the Board considered these factors when voting on whether the recommended schools should be closed:

- Student enrollment trends:
 - Including student enrollment trends for the last five school years, including disaggregated data on students with disabilities and multilingual learners, for both the school proposed for closure and the school or schools to which students are proposed to be rezoned.
- Age or condition of the school building:
 - Including dates of the last major renovation(s) of both the school proposed for closure and the school or schools to which students are proposed to be rezoned.
- Transportation:
 - Including transportation and considerations for safe travel of students, regarding both the school proposed for closure and the school or schools to which students are proposed to be rezoned.
- Educational programs:
 - Educational programs in both the school proposed for closure and the school or schools to which students are proposed to be rezoned, including:
 - specialized programs like Advanced Placement (“AP”), Honors programming; special education programs; athletics; restorative practice designations; before and after care; tutoring/mentoring, and/or community and other partnerships, as available;
 - school performance data, including state assessments, as available;
 - school climate/culture data, as available; and

REQUIREMENTS FOR CLOSURE OF TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS

- staffing including teacher retention and MSDE licensure data, as available.
- Racial composition of the student body:
 - Including information regarding both the school proposed for closure and the school or schools to which students are proposed to be rezoned.
- Financial considerations:
 - Including information regarding both the school proposed for closure and the school or schools to which students are proposed to be rezoned, including additional allocations needed to stabilize school budgets, the ability of the receiving school or schools to provide robust academic programming, pending facilities challenges, and facility debt at the school proposed for closure.
- Student relocation:
 - Including geographic challenges/opportunities, distance of students from the school proposed for closure and the school or schools to which students are proposed to be rezoned; movement of citywide educational programs associated with the school proposed for closure; and impact on student access to specialized programming.
- Impact on the community:
 - Including opportunities and challenges in the geographic attendance area for the school proposed for closure and the school or schools to which students will be relocating.