

Report on the Baltimore Library Project: Years 1-3

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The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
Baltimore City Public Schools
MDRC



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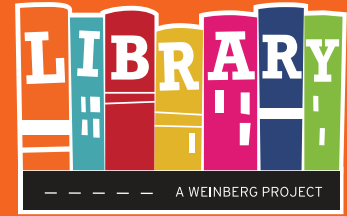


Baltimore Education Research Consortium
Informing Policy and Practice to Benefit Baltimore's Children



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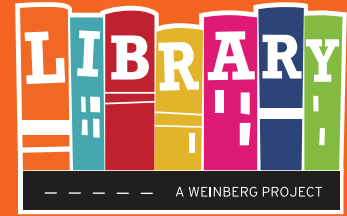
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Introduction



Established in 2011, the Baltimore Elementary and Middle School Library Project (the Library Project) is a public-private partnership of The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Baltimore City Public Schools and nearly 40 nonprofit and corporate partners. The Library Project’s goal is “to transform inner-city school libraries into inspirational spaces in order to impact educational achievement.”¹ The Weinberg Foundation has allocated a total of \$10 million to build up to 24 libraries. To date, the Library Project serves more than 6,000 children and their families within 11 renovated spaces. In total, the Weinberg Foundation has provided more than \$5 million in funds toward the initiative and leveraged more than \$1.5 million in partner support.

This report provides a comprehensive look at the project from its inception in 2011 through 2014, when new libraries opened in the first nine schools:

- Arlington Elementary/Middle School
- Elmer A. Henderson: A Johns Hopkins Partnership School
- Harford Heights Elementary School
- The Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School
- Moravia Park Elementary School
- Morrell Park Elementary/Middle School
- Southwest Baltimore Charter School
- Thomas Johnson Elementary/Middle School
- Windsor Hills Elementary/Middle School

At the time of publication of this report, libraries had also been opened in The Commodore John Rodgers School and Westport Academy and were under construction at George Washington Elementary School and Hampden Elementary/Middle School.

This report builds on earlier reports prepared by the Baltimore Education Research Consortium (BERC)², which were prepared to assess and help strengthen the Project in its first two years. In 2014, the Foundation commissioned Nanette Falkenberg³ to work with BERC to prepare a report tracing the development and progress of the Library Project over its first three years and to comment on areas where the Project might be strengthened.

1. Library Project website: www.baltimorelibraryproject.org.

2. Launched in fall 2006, BERC is a partnership among Johns Hopkins University (JHU), Morgan State University (MSU), and Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools). BERC’s mission is to conduct and disseminate long- and short-term strategic data analysis and research that informs decisions about policy and practice to improve the educational and life outcomes of children in Baltimore. To prepare full reports on each of the Library Project’s first two years, BERC collected and analyzed data from students and school professionals through surveys and interviews and the analysis of publicly available data.

3. Ms. Falkenberg is a consultant to nonprofits and foundations. She has worked in collaboration with MDRC, which has been evaluating the Weinberg Foundation’s grantmaking strategies. She led this review.

The report details the Project's achievements: implementing a plan for the libraries based firmly in research and best practice; successfully opening nine libraries on time and on budget; obtaining initial data suggesting that the libraries are spurring increased interest in books and reading and supporting improvements in academic achievement. It also identifies a number of ways to strengthen and support the libraries and to help sustain them beyond the Library Project's initial years.

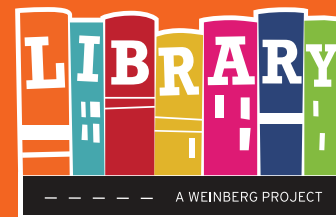
Key findings include

- An analysis of book checkouts in Baltimore City Public Schools that are using a tracking system called DESTINY shows that six of the ten highest checkout rates were at Library Project schools. In a four-year period, book checkouts in Library Project schools increased 400 percent.
- Reading fluency scores among third grade students in two of the first three library schools showed dramatic improvement with scores in reading fluency (DIBELS) increasing from 33 percent of students at benchmark to 64 percent at benchmark.⁴
- Library Project students in the third grade were almost three times as likely to meet reading fluency proficiency standards as students in comparison schools.
- The first three Library Project schools outperformed more than 120 Baltimore City Public Schools on PARCC tests in reading proficiency.



4. The third school in that year did not participate in this reading assessment.

Genesis of the Baltimore Library Project



The Baltimore Library Project was a departure for the Weinberg Foundation. The Foundation’s philanthropic strategy had traditionally focused on responding to proposals from individual organizations for program and capital grants. In the education arena, the Foundation supported “organizations that ensure children are ready for kindergarten; achieve grade-level academic performance in reading, math, and science; and graduate from high school prepared for college and the workplace.”⁵

While the Foundation’s grants supported students of Baltimore City Public Schools, they did not directly support the improvement of the schools’ physical structures—despite the fact that a considerable portion of Weinberg Foundation funding supports capital projects. The size and complexity of the school system’s finances and related concern about how to effectively target the funds and ensure accountability represented obstacles for the Foundation.

In 2011, the Foundation’s Board and staff decided the time was right to engage with City Schools in what for the Foundation would be a more proactive strategy. The Foundation’s leadership fully understood that improving the performance of the schools and the academic achievement of their students would not be easy.

“We wanted to find a way to support Baltimore City Public Schools.... Improving libraries and reading seemed like the perfect fit” (Weinberg Foundation Trustee).

Like other large city school systems, Baltimore City Public Schools reflects the demographics of its city (see text box below).⁶ Basic measures of academic performance taken as recently as 2015 underscore the ongoing challenges school administrators face: 80 percent of all students in third grade did not meet grade-level standards for English; scores for low-income students were considerably lower.⁷ Baltimore City Public Schools also has significant physical infrastructure challenges.

In 2011, City Schools commissioned Jacobs Project Management to conduct an infrastructure analysis that estimated a total of \$2.4 billion was needed to replace and renovate existing school buildings.

Baltimore City Public Schools Demographics – 2016-2017

181 schools total

- 50 elementary schools
- 74 elementary/middle schools

82,354 students total

- 44,082 students in Pre-k through grade five
- 16,891 students in grades six through eight

64.7% of students are classified as low-income

80.6% of students are African American

\$1.12 billion school budget

5. Weinberg Foundation website: www.hjweinbergfoundation.org.

6. Baltimore City Public Schools *City Schools at a Glance* 2016-2017.

7. Data from Baltimore City Public Schools updated May 18, 2016.

The Foundation sought to develop a substantial multi-year initiative that had the potential to improve the academic achievement of students and, at the same time, the schools' physical infrastructure. As part of its strategy, the Foundation was interested in building a formal partnership with the School District itself, providing the opportunity for the Foundation's capital dollars to be leveraged with public funds. To some inside and outside the Foundation, this seemed a bit risky, after all, the Foundation had little experience in leading such collaborations. Further, there was concern about City Schools' capacity to be a reliable partner in this endeavor and even whether or not key individuals would want to embrace such a project.

To conceptualize and define the Project, Foundation President and CEO Rachel Monroe, along with the Foundation's Board of Trustees and grant staff, scheduled a series of meetings and interviews with a wide range of educational professionals; students; and civic, corporate, and foundation leaders. These interviews laid the groundwork for a project development that crystallized through an iterative process; the Foundation did not begin with a fixed plan. Instead, it was informed and strengthened by the advice, cautions, and expectations of the dozens of local leaders who were consulted.

The consultations with community leaders were not purposefully intended with a goal of seeking participation or support. But to the great pleasure and surprise of the Foundation, these conversations generated great interest as well as the active participation of nonprofit, philanthropic, government, and corporate partners which have become a hallmark of the Project.

Through the interview process, the Foundation heard a consistent set of ideas that essentially became the criteria for the initiative (see box below).

- Keep a limited focus and scale the Project appropriately to the funding available—pick one thing and do it well.
- Provide opportunities to leverage public funding, ideally at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Provide roles for a broad array of nonprofit, philanthropic, government, and corporate partners.
- Set clear, measurable goals for educational improvement.

It soon became apparent that renovating school libraries was a good match to the criteria.

As the potential Project began to take shape, there were skeptics who questioned whether libraries—and indeed physical books—were still relevant or forward-looking in an age of e-readers and the internet. Still others wondered whether renovating a physical space really could even improve learning.

Library experts, and an extensive literature review shed light both on the real potential for a school library initiative and the multiplicity of resources that had to be included if the libraries were to impact academic achievement.

In addition, the Foundation spoke with Baltimore City Public School's (BCPS) Library Media Services Manager and also reached out to leaders of other school library projects in New York; Washington, DC; and Baltimore.⁸ The following is the key learning from these discussions and the more than 61 evidence-based studies:

"A well-equipped library, staffed by a full-time certified librarian and appropriate support staff, contributes significantly to gains in student learning. High-quality school libraries not only help students read more, but also help them learn how to use and process information better and to perform better on achievement tests. Levels of library funding, staffing levels, collection size and range, and the instructional role of the librarian all have a direct impact on student achievement."⁹

8. Input stemmed from the following projects:

- **The Library Initiative** partnership of the Robin Hood Foundation and the New York City Department of Education, which funded 58 library renovations from 2001-2009, and provided guidance on design and lessons learned.
- **The Capitol Hill Community Foundation's** public-private partnership with Washington, DC Public Schools completed eight library renovations in 2006 and 2007. This project's accomplishments helped convince the Foundation that these partnerships could succeed: all eight renovations were completed on time and under budget.
- **The Baltimore Community Foundation's Library**, which was spearheaded by the vision of two community leaders, renovated three libraries in Baltimore City from 2001-2008, helping lay the foundation for the Baltimore Library Project.

9. School Library Impact Studies: A Review of Findings and Guide to Sources, page 2.

The following research-based principles shaped the framework of the Library Project:

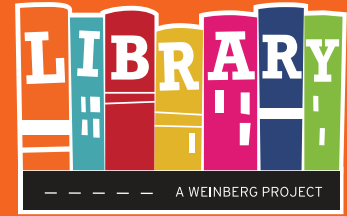
- School libraries can positively affect student learning, especially for at-risk children.
“School libraries have the ability to bridge the gap between privileged and at-risk students by providing equal access and resources for learning. Results of some recent studies suggest that access to books, either at home or at the school library, can mitigate or balance the effect of poverty.”¹⁰
- Renovated libraries must be attractive and welcoming spaces that foster 21st-century skills, including collaborative work styles, ability to use multiple platforms for acquiring information, and support for the use of diverse and emerging technologies.
“Guests may walk in and gasp: ‘Wow, this is beautiful’ but you have to ensure that it’s also an energetic, inviting space packed with students who are busy gathering information and exchanging ideas.”¹¹

- Renovated library spaces *alone* will not improve learning.
The physical space, while critical, does not *by itself* improve short-term or longer-term learning outcomes. Libraries must have high-quality book collections; up-to-date technology; and certified, full-time librarians who are trained and skilled in managing diverse responsibilities and who closely collaborate with teachers. This focus on success factors beyond the physical spaces sharply distinguishes this Project from its predecessors in New York City; Washington, DC; and Baltimore.
- Books still matter.
Experts suggest that students learn differently when they use physical books, and librarians confirm that their students are likely to choose physical books over electronic readers.¹² The strength of the collection, whether electronic or physical, is the “secret sauce.” It needs to be up-to-date, relevant to the demographics and culture of the school, and contain books students want to read, like graphic novels.



10. School Library Impact Studies; Evans, 2010, Schubert, 2010, Achterman, 2008, Krashen, 2011.
11. Divine Design: How to create the 21st-century school library of your dreams by Margaret Sullivan on April 1, 2011, School Library Journal.
12. Education Week; Published Online: January 22, 2013, as Children Still Prefer Print Books to E-Books.

The Baltimore Library Project Model



The year-long research and development process shaped a practical design framework for the new libraries, known as the Baltimore Library Project Model. The model is consistently carried through each of the Library Project libraries. But, the design framework was not rigid; it permitted considerable flexibility so that the model's elements could be adapted to individual schools, the vision of the principal and librarian, and the demographics of the student body. Although visitors instantly know that they are in a Library Project library, they will also notice the personality of each site, reflecting the real differences among schools, physical spaces, and the school leadership. Each school presented its own idiosyncrasies: for example, although it seemed advantageous for a library to be sited close to the school entrance, this could be accomplished in some schools but it was inadvisable in others.

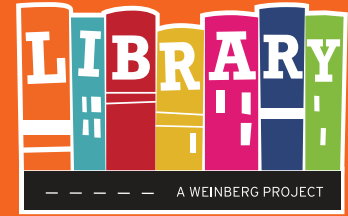
Baltimore Elementary and Middle School Library Project Components

Design and Physical Space

- A flexible floor plan with separate areas for study and research, instruction, and group discussion
- Informal reading areas with comfortable seating to encourage students to read
- An administrative area with a circulation counter and librarian's desk
- Durable furnishings and fixtures that can be easily maintained and cared for
- Book shelving to accommodate a collection of at least 7,500 hard- and soft-cover books
- An "Enoch Pratt Parent Place" for parents/guardians

Resources

- A full-time, certified librarian (funded by the school)
- A part-time library clerk (funded by the Weinberg Foundation)
- A bank of 10-15 computers and other technological, instructional devices such as interactive white boards
- E-readers, including training and a content management system
- Increased collection size and quality
- Professional development for library staff



The Library Project's Core Funding Partners

For the Library Project to be successful, three elements needed to be put in place. First were the conceptual underpinnings described previously. The other key building blocks were an adequate funding structure and a durable partnership between the Foundation and City Schools.

Funding Structure

The Weinberg Foundation's charter indicates that capital grants cannot exceed 30 percent of a total project's cost. As a result, for this Project to move forward, additional funding was needed. Luckily for the Foundation, City Schools had used a funding mechanism, called Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZAB), since 2001 to renovate libraries. While not the only approach to filling the funding gap, QZAB funds have been used in the majority of library renovations to date.

Qualified Zone Academy Bonds

The US Department of Education allocates QZAB funds to each state, which are then dispersed to the local school districts. The goal of the program is to allow for certain schools to finance the renovation of school facilities through the allocation of tax credits. One hundred percent of QZAB funds must be used for renovation, repair or rehabilitation of existing public school facilities, or for equipment to be used at the school. Funds are not able to be used for books, technology, furniture, or staffing. Further, the renovation, repair, and rehabilitation work must support a board-approved education plan with the goal of enhancing the academic curriculum, increasing graduation and employment rates, and better preparing students for college and the workforce, with verifiable student performance evaluations. For schools to qualify for QZAB funding they must be located in an Enterprise or Empowerment Zone and have at least 35 percent of the students coming from low-income families.

QZAB funding was used by Baltimore City Public Schools, through the Maryland State Department of Education, to renovate 51 of its school libraries before the start of the Library Project. This report refers to these libraries as "QZAB-Only" libraries and uses them as a comparison group for evaluation purposes. In these QZAB-Only libraries, funding was limited to purely physical renovations (or as one staff member explained, the features in the space that if you shook the building would not fall out). Many of the projects lacked new books, technology, furniture, or qualified staffing at completion.

QZAB funds were leveraged in seven of the nine spaces reviewed in this report. Funds from City Schools and other private funders have also been utilized during renovations to fill budget gaps or extend the scope of a specific site. Access to these resources, especially QZAB funds, as well as City Schools' willingness to direct its own funds, have been critical to the success of the program and the partnership.¹³

13. As QZAB funding declined in recent years, the range of choice has also decreased. The Foundation's goal is always to complete three renovations annually, as able.



Building the Partnership

There are inherent challenges in bringing together a private organization like the Foundation with a large public agency like City Schools. The collaboration needs to encourage best use of the assets that each partner brings, while fitting comfortably into the cultures of the two disparate organizations.

The Weinberg Foundation brought to the table new resources—a total commitment of \$10 million—and the ability to move quickly and nimbly, without the encumbrance of large bureaucratic processes and the laws and rules that govern them. A stable, self-contained organization, it had the capacity to make and adhere to a long-term strategy and commitment. But the Foundation's charter also placed limits on its capital spending, and it was clear from the outset that Foundation program funding would be time-limited.

City Schools brought not only the schools and students, and access to QZAB funding, but also an experienced library team with knowledge of the field and of the existing school library facilities; an experienced facilities development capacity that had already renovated dozens of libraries; and a sophisticated understanding of regulations and building codes.

Relationships and Governance Structure

The Library Project was strengthened by the combination of the effective relationships that developed among the leadership team and the Project's legal underpinnings codified in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and annual Operating Agreements (OA).

The attitudes and enthusiasm at both organizations brought assurances of the Library Project's importance and standing. Leadership mattered: The Foundation's President and CEO, Rachel Monroe, remained involved and enthusiastic about various components of the Project, which set the tenor and tone of the Foundation's participation. When the Project was launched, the commitment of the Baltimore City Public Schools' CEO, and two of his key aides, conveyed the importance of the Project throughout the District.

At the Library Project kick-off, Dr. Andrés Alonso, then CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, described the Library Project as uniting "some of my favorite things: books and broad-based, private-public support for our schools."

Representatives from City Schools, the Foundation, and outside contractors formed an implementation team that functioned in a more collaborative and engaged manner that was not often seen in similar projects. The Foundation's decision not to turn management of this complex project over to an outside organization was critical; the Foundation's staff approach helped both build relationships and hold people accountable.

Nonprofit, Corporate and Foundation Partners

Many of the organizations that were involved in early discussions of the Library Project expressed interest in having a continuing role. To harness this passion and expertise, the Foundation established an Advisory Committee comprising business and nonprofit leaders, funders, and government partners. The Committee has met four times a year since the Project's inception and capitalizes on a robust and shared agenda to support the Library Project and improve literacy. A full list of Library Project partners is included at the beginning of this report and can also be found at www.baltimorelibraryproject.org.

Structure

As noted previously, the Library Project is supported both by the detailed Memorandum of Understanding and annual Operating Agreements. Together these documents outline the roles and responsibilities of each partner as well as the scope of the entire partnership. More specifically, the MOU and subsequent addendums specify the responsibilities of each partner during the construction portion of the initiative. On the other side, the Operating Agreements document the commitments of the Foundation and individual school sites in relation to operations and maintenance of the spaces. More specifically, the documents note that each school should maintain a full-time, certified librarian, participate in data collection, and ensure each student has access to the space at least once a week. In exchange, the Foundation commits to providing the funds for a part-time support staff position (known as the library clerk), professional development, non-profit and corporate partners, new books, and a range of new technology.

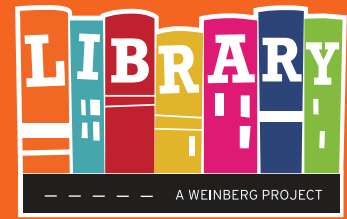
School districts are often impacted by changes in public leadership, economic and educational trends, and competing demands and priorities. The MOU and OAs provide a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. These documents proved to be critical to maintaining the involvement of City Schools and of the individual schools as leadership changed, finances decreased, and priorities shifted.

In addition to the legal agreements, the Weinberg Foundation brought in The Fund for Educational Excellence¹⁴ (The Fund) to serve as an independent, intermediary organization for the Project. The Fund played a critical role in resolving some of the Library Project's biggest initial challenges. The Fund met several important needs:

- **Fiduciary:** Like many foundations, the Weinberg Foundation was reluctant to award grants to a large public entity where accountability and control are difficult within the realities of a system with billion dollar budgets and bureaucracies. The Fund afforded the Foundation the comfort of an intermediary that would not only disburse grant funds but also provide project-specific, ongoing fiscal oversight.
- **Implementation:** The Fund managed many of the components of the Project that the Foundation was responsible for such as technology orders and staffing for the library clerk positions. This provided the flexibility to move quickly on components of the building and staffing process, as well as the ability to pay vendors expeditiously, which prevented potential delays and setbacks.

14. The Fund for Educational Excellence is a nonprofit organization working to improve student achievement in Baltimore City Public Schools. It works side-by-side with City Schools providing invaluable support and flexible resources for many of the District's most important reform initiatives.

How it Worked



With the three elements—the conceptual foundation, the funding plan, and the partnerships—in place, the Library Project launched in “start-up” mode on December 5, 2011. Among its participants, there was a belief in the importance of succeeding that came in part from the newness of the process, the additional flexibility that Foundation funding brought, and the luck of the draw in terms of the personalities working together for the first time. For those on the front lines of implementation, this was described as “we were building the engine while we were flying the plane.”

Just nine months after the formal kick-off of the Initiative, the Library Project met its first big benchmark—opening three libraries: Moravia Park Elementary School, Thomas Johnson Elementary/Middle School, and Southwest Baltimore Charter School—an accomplishment that pleasantly surprised interested observers of school improvement projects.

Site Selection and Development

As noted previously, The Weinberg Foundation, by its charter rules, can only support 30 percent of the actual capital costs of each library renovation. Because of the goals and scope of this Project, however, an additional operating grant was also provided for up to four years for each renovated space. The goal of this operational funding is to increase staff support in the library, provide the Maryland Food Bank’s backpack program, and provide additional professional development opportunities for each librarian.

Nine of the eleven schools evaluated in this report secured capital funding through the federal QZAB process. Additional sites utilized other funding, including private sources. All sites, regardless of funding makeup, have been chosen in cooperation with Baltimore City Public Schools. It was City Schools that was responsible for identifying the schools that would utilize QZAB funding to renovate the library space.

Because almost every school met the QZAB requirements, the District’s selection of QZAB schools simplified the Foundation’s selection process. City Schools informed the Foundation which of the QZAB schools also met the Foundation’s criteria, after which the Foundation staff met with each qualifying school to determine which were most suitable and interested in committing to the requirements of the Library Project.

Consistent with operating rules, the Foundation only considered schools with a FARMs rate of at least 50 percent. The Foundation’s rules also limited consideration to K-8 schools that were not scheduled for closing, sought a strong administrative support team committed to utilizing libraries within their school community, and required a full-time librarian in each library.¹⁵

In Baltimore, principals have a limited amount of discretionary funding to fill positions such as art teachers, sports coaches, or librarians. By requiring that each principal allocate funding for a full-time certified librarian, the Project both affirmed the commitment of the school leadership and ensured that each library would be appropriately staffed, one of the critical “success factors” in building a 21st-century library.



To some extent, the principals and librarians in the first-year schools had to make a leap of faith that funding would come, that the partnerships would work, and that the promises of the Project would be met. In subsequent years, principals and librarians were able to look to the experience of prior years and often sought out how to be considered for such a partnership.

Design Team

With its experience in building libraries, the school design team already had a history of working together, as well as a deep knowledge of regulatory requirements; the Foundation team and its design partners fit easily into this group.

The following includes some notable aspects of the design team:

- The expertise of the City Schools' Director of Facilities Design and Construction was essential in getting the schools built on time and on budget. With a sophisticated understanding and full appreciation of the rules governing facilities development, he was able to identify contractors who would best support the Project. As a result, over its first three years the Foundation worked with a stable group of builders, overseen by JMT Construction Management, who shared the same enthusiasm as the rest of the implementation team.
- Although JRS Architects, an architecture firm with extensive school construction experience, and Kirk Design, the Foundation's lead designers, had never worked together, their collaboration created a structure and design that brought out both the consistent elements of the model and the individuality of the schools.
- While the team remained generally intact for the first three years, personnel changes and reductions within City Schools led to significant turnover among library experts assigned to the Project. Because the team embraced a shared philosophy, and clear model and plan, these turnovers caused minimal disruption.
- The design team learned from experience, and while design and implementation challenges were by-and-large constant from year-to-year, the team became adroit in anticipating challenges and devising solutions.

Library Design

When entering a library renovated by this Project, the first thing a visitor might notice is the mix of spaces, colors, furniture, and lighting. It looks nothing like the stereotypical library of long rows of shelves and reading tables.

Each element of the space implements a component of the Library Project model for a 21st-century library. The library is divided into flexible and distinct spaces designed for different purposes: instruction using high-tech video equipment against one wall; books shelved in different sections tailored

to reading levels and interests; a circular listening area with kid-comfortable seating and good acoustics for group discussions and reading; and comfortable chairs and tables in flexible layouts for reading, research, and team work. A set of common design elements appears in each library: a wall mural that ties to the school's heritage or community such as the Baltimore Aquarium or Oriole Park at Camden Yards; wallpaper with "Welcome to the Library" displayed in multiple languages; and window shades with historic images of animals and plants.

Staffing

Librarians

Each Library Project school is required to have a full-time, certified librarian for five years, which is not the case in many Baltimore City Public Schools. In 2011, BCPS had 55 full-time librarians, who often split their time between schools, and 55 part-time librarians. For many schools, principals either could not afford a librarian or were faced with a limited pool of candidates. As recently as 2014, the Maryland State Department of Education had declared a shortage in librarian/media specialist positions.

On top of traditional roles of building collections, cataloging books, and managing checkouts, librarians today are expected to teach reading and research skills, introduce and support students in the use of technology, and encourage collaborative work styles. Nationally, many schools give their librarians a "media specialist" title, to reflect the broader range of skills expected of them.

One response to the shortage of librarians has been to train experienced teachers to become librarians, and several Library Project librarians have followed that path. While they have a steeper learning curve in traditional library skills, they are able to use their background to support teaching and learning.

The curriculum that each librarian uses reflects the principal's priorities and both the interests and prior practice of librarians. In one school, fifth graders learned haiku; in another, students participated in a competition called "Black-Eyed Susan Awards" that had been in place long before the new library; and in another, third graders learned to use e-readers to find books that would help in a classroom project. Regularly scheduled visits of each class to the library had been the practice previously in some Library Project schools, but it was a change for others.

Librarians, particularly in the Library Project's first year, seemed overwhelmed. This is understandable given the sheer volume of tasks: opening the new library, cataloging and shelving the collection, teaching students throughout the day, making good use of the technology while also working closely with teachers, managing the project partners, and keeping the library well-maintained.

In addition to feeling the pressures of their job responsibilities, the most consistent challenge seen and heard from librarians related to their comfort level or expertise in supporting students in the use of technology. Not all were technology-savvy, and banks of computers frequently sat unused for long periods, despite student interest.

Recognizing that taking on these new responsibilities would entail a significant learning curve, the Foundation provided \$2,000 annually for professional development. The expectation, as spelled out in the Operating Agreements, was that the librarian would have the opportunity to attend professional association meetings to learn state-of-the-art techniques and be up-to-date on trends and practices. In the Library Project's first year, these funds were rarely used, as librarians found themselves too busy, even overwhelmed. "There was so much to do at the beginning, and everything took longer than I expected,"¹⁶ said one librarian. In addition, the support for professional development was an unfamiliar opportunity, not available to other librarians in the District. In subsequent years, and with the urging of the Library Project, librarians began to use the benefit more fully.¹⁷

Clerks

Recognizing that increased staffing levels were an element of successful libraries, the Foundation provided the funds for a part-time paraprofessional, called a "library clerk," to assist the librarian. Schools used this additional resource in various ways that reflected the librarian's needs and priorities. Some clerks were primarily responsible for managing the collection, shelving, and book checkout; others helped teach or applied their own technological expertise. Some were former students or young adults from the community interested in careers in education. In conversations with Project researchers, the librarians expressed how reliant they became on the clerks to handle these varied tasks, which permitted them to focus on other responsibilities.

Teachers

Another success factor for the Library Project was the level of collaboration between teachers and the librarian. This collaboration is designed to tie students' library work to teachers' classroom priorities. Some of this coordination was visible: displays of books focused on a subject being studied in class, a class on finding books, or using technology for research focused on a topic students were studying.

But there was wide variation in the levels of collaboration and how teachers participated in library activities. The amount and quality of this collaboration was tied to constraints on teacher and librarian time and interest. Although sometimes the teachers remained in the library with their students, this was the exception. Teachers often used their library time to manage their own work, have a break, or supervise students at meals or study. The principal's priorities and vision for the library affects how well this collaboration happens and how often teachers are allocated time to encourage this collaboration.

16. Falkenberg interview with librarian.

17. BERCC, Year 2 Report, page 20.

Resources

Technology

The growing importance of technology for accessing and managing information is well understood. Foundation support, typically at \$30,000 per library, equipped each library with a bank of computers, e-readers, electronic white boards, and a “networking-station” for team projects.

There was wide variation in how technology was used in the Project schools, largely driven by the librarian’s comfort and expertise. Although librarians spoke to the need for additional training in technology, they also noted how difficult it was to be absent from the library and students. This was especially true in Year 1, as reported by all three librarians.

Collections

A central goal of the Project is to increase the motivation to read and to improve reading in school and at home. The Foundation provided an average of \$50,000 to each school to purchase up to 4,000 new books for the school and three books for each student to take home. Funds were also used to strengthen the infrastructure around the collection, including improving cataloging and checkout systems. The process of building the collections has been inclusive. Librarians work with Project partners and with the students themselves to select new books that reflect the students’ culture and interests but also challenge them. The capacity to offer a wide range of books promotes growth and exploration.

Some libraries were open on a limited basis before or after school, both to increase access to books and to meet the requirement that students could be in the library at least once a week.

With books organized by grade level, students could find books appropriate for them, and librarians could encourage students to “stretch” when they judged it appropriate. The libraries increasingly became homes to books currently of greatest appeal to students, whether fictional books series or graphic novels. Students continually ask for more. One librarian started book clubs to discuss some of these favorite books, requiring several copies of the same book to be available.

Partner organizations, especially the Heart of America Foundation, as well as the Maryland Book Bank, Raising a Reader, and Reading Partners, were active in building collections, working with students, and supplying books to encourage parent involvement and reading at home. These organizations, with a clear link to books and reading, were perceived as good fits to work with the libraries, students, and teachers.

- The Heart of America Foundation (HOA) was one of the Library Project’s first partners and is contracted to help build the collections at the new libraries. Nationally, HOA serves students in need by distributing books and transforming school libraries, cafeterias, and educational spaces in high-need communities. HOA has also helped coordinate the Library Project’s annual Book Drive and family tour celebrations during the grand opening of each space.

- Raising a Reader provides students in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten with high-quality books that are taken home to read with an adult. It supports the Library Project in “promoting literacy-based habits and providing families the resources to continue these habits.”¹⁸
- Reading Partners is active in specific Library Project sites and provides trained volunteers to deliver individualized, one-on-one tutoring twice a week for 45 minutes, following a structured curriculum, to students who are behind grade level in reading.
- Maryland Book Bank invites teachers from Library Project schools to select books for their classrooms; most receive about 100 books per visit and are allowed to visit once per month.

BERC’s early feedback found that some librarians were overprotective of their new resources. Some did not want to let all students use the e-readers, fearing they would break; others instituted (or retained) fines or would not allow students to checkout books until they returned the ones they had borrowed. The Library Project attempted to remove as many barriers as possible in order to increase reading and library participation; although many restrictions were eased, some constraints on book checkouts remained.

Enoch Pratt Parent Place



Supported by the Enoch Pratt Free Library, each facility has an “Enoch Pratt Parent Place,” conceived as a means to engage greater parental participation in their children’s education, link the parents more closely to the schools and meet some of the needs of the community. By fostering interest and involvement among parents, it was expected that greater parental participation would promote greater interest and better reading habits among their children.

At a minimum, each Parent Place includes adult seating, shelving with a selection of books geared to parenting and adult interests, and access to a computer. How the spaces were used and the focus of their material were up to the individual schools. Some saw it as a place to help with parenting skills; others as a way to support language improvement; and others as a place to search for jobs or complete resumes.

To date, use by parents has been comparatively limited, with library staff lacking the time to give it the attention it requires. One librarian called it the “toughest nut to crack,” noting that, overall, only a small percentage of families have ever used it.¹⁹

In addition to supporting the Parent Place in each renovated library, the team from Enoch Pratt works closely with the schools in order to provide professional development opportunities and access to authors, field trips to the main library, and the Family Reading Circle program—a six-week program featuring high-quality books and dinner.

18. BERC Year 2 Report; Rebecca Armstrong interview.

19. BERC Year 2 Report.

SummerREADS



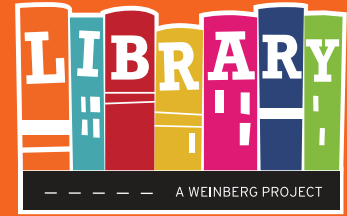
Low-income students have been found to lose up to three months of reading achievement each summer. During the second year of the Library Project, the Foundation, City Schools, and the Abell Foundation kicked off SummerREADS—a six-week, free literacy initiative geared to addressing summer reading loss and making use of the well-equipped, wireless, air conditioned library spaces that otherwise would sit empty in the summer. To date, the program has been coordinated by the Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST). Where possible, the program was run by the librarian or the library clerk, as well as two support staff members. While the program was held on a drop-in basis, many students came to SummerREADS regularly. In its

first year, six libraries worked with more than 400 students, and nine libraries worked with 500 students in its second year. The Project implemented an evaluation process to assess its impact and found that SummerREADS reduced summer reading loss with respect to students who regularly attended the program.



SummerREADS





Progress Toward Library Project Goals

Implementing the Baltimore Library Project Model

When the Foundation's Trustees approved funding for the Library Project, they set an ambitious long-term goal that the new libraries, with their staff and resources, would help improve reading levels in library schools.²⁰

To get to that point, there were interim benchmarks to be met. First, the libraries had to be built and supported based on the Library Project's 21st-Century Library Model. Then, behavior changes that are precursors to reading improvement had to be fostered. For students, these included increased interest in books, reading on multiple platforms, and gaining proficiency in information retrieval and research. For librarians, it meant adapting to their expanded role and strengthening alignment between classroom and library priorities.

To understand the impact of the renovated spaces, this report uses comparison schools, referred to as QZAB-Only schools. These schools were chosen because they had recently renovated library spaces and employed a full-time librarian, but did not have the other resources provided to Library Project schools such as additional books, a part-time library clerk, available professional development funds, external partnerships, new furniture, and computer resources.

In its first three years of operation, the Library Project has shown positive trends in increased literacy scores, librarian-teacher interaction, and space utilization. While it is too early in the course of the Project to speak to long-term success, the early indicators show the renovated spaces in combination with partner support; staffing; and resources are having an impact on academic achievement.



Harford Heights Elementary School



The Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School

20. The Weinberg Foundation Board grant approval write-up.



The Challenge to Measuring Success

There is currently an expectation among funders and policymakers that projects such as the Library Project will be able to go beyond “good stories” to demonstrate measurable progress toward a set of defined goals. While this is an important and worthy goal, definitive assessment of this Project’s impact will always be difficult for both programmatic and methodological reasons. In addition, the Project encountered unforeseen challenges including leadership changes at the School District. While these and other challenges, noted below, have impacted this evaluation, as more data becomes available, a deeper understanding of the Project’s impact will surface. In the short-term, it is important to note the following evaluation challenges:

- The intervention was conceived at the school level, so the analyses are also conducted at the school level. Additionally, with no source to measure student dosage or exposure to various elements of the library, the impact cannot be examined at a student level.
- Student mobility impacts academics. Six of the nine Library Project schools reported student transfer rates between 28 percent and 48 percent (see Table 1 below).²¹ As a result, tracking changes over time or making comparisons between grades is difficult.
- The Project’s scale (number of schools, librarians, teachers, and students) is small, and the time period being analyzed is short. This limits the ability to identify trends. Behavior change takes time and needs to be analyzed over a long term. With this small universe, changes or the practices of a single librarian or principal can dramatically affect how a library functions. For example, how dramatically are book checkout numbers affected when some librarians, but not others, restrict further checkouts until books are returned? When there are only nine schools to look at, and practices vary widely among schools, a single case can skew findings. When there are more schools, this effect will begin to smooth out.
- Maryland’s testing program transitioned from the Maryland School Assessment to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a test aligned with the new Common Core standards, during the period of this report. As a result, comparisons had to be adjusted to reflect appropriate data. As consistent assessments and results continue to be collected, better comparisons will be possible.

Table 1

Student mobility in Library Project schools (2013-14)	
School	% Student Mobility
Harford Heights Elementary	47.7
Windsor Hills Elementary/Middle	45.7
The Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary	38.2
Arlington Elementary/Middle	31.9
Morrell Park Elementary/Middle	29.7
Moravia Park Elementary	27.7
Thomas Johnson Elementary/Middle	10.8
Southwest Baltimore Charter	8.3
Elmer A. Henderson: A Johns Hopkins Partnership School	5.0

21. Data derived from BERC, Year 2 Report, Appendix B.

- The library is only one part of a student’s dynamic life. As a result, it is very difficult to demonstrate causality when dozens of factors both in school and out are affecting reading: quality of the teacher, presence of supplemental reading programs, parent involvement, unsettled home environments, exposure to violence—the list is long. Similarly, the school is a complex and multi-faceted system.
- The book cataloging and data collection system used throughout City Schools, known as KOHA, was found in Year 1 to be outdated and unreliable. With the Foundation’s assistance, the District began to adopt a new and more reliable cataloging and tracking system—called DESTINY—in the Library Project’s second year. Implementation of this new system, however, has been rolled out at the beginning of each year and takes time for staff to be trained and to troubleshoot. As a result, initial data for a school’s first year of reporting may not be representative of an entire year.

Long-term Goal: Improved Reading Achievement

Taking these cautions into account, it is useful to look at progress on the Project’s goals.

The long-term goal of the Library Project is to improve academic achievement, particularly in reading skills. Preliminary evidence shows that progress has been made. True measures of the Project’s impact, however, will take more time. So will determining which resource enhancements and changes in practice really take hold and have the ability to influence the learning. Nevertheless, early analyses do indicate some positive impact.

This evaluation focuses on the importance of measuring performance at the end of third grade, which has become a key benchmark in the literacy and education communities. Research published in 2010 by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, in “Early Warning, Why Reading by the End of the Third Grade Matters,” demonstrates that reading proficiently by the end of third grade is a key predictor of high school graduation and career success. The Baltimore Campaign for Grade Level Reading, a partner in the Library Project, is part of the Casey Foundation’s national effort to improve reading in early grades.

In this context, initial data from the Library Project schools is encouraging:

- Over a four-year period, starting the year before the library was opened, reading scores from two of the three Year 1 schools show a steady increase in the percentage of third graders reading at grade level.²² Looking at Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC) scores for third graders,²³ reading fluency scores (DIBELS) nearly doubled from 33.3 percent in the first year the library was opened to 64.4 percent when the library had been open for three years. Reading comprehension scores (TRC) increased from 38.6 percent to 64.2 percent in the same period.²⁴

Table 2

% of third-grade students reading at grade level in two Year 1 schools				
	2011-12 n=697	2012-13 n=643	2013-14 n=674	2014-15 n=684
DIBELS (fluency)	33.3	50.4	55.5	64.4
TRC (comprehension)	38.6	31.5	55.6	64.2

22. Only two schools are included because the third school did not administer these tests and collect this data.

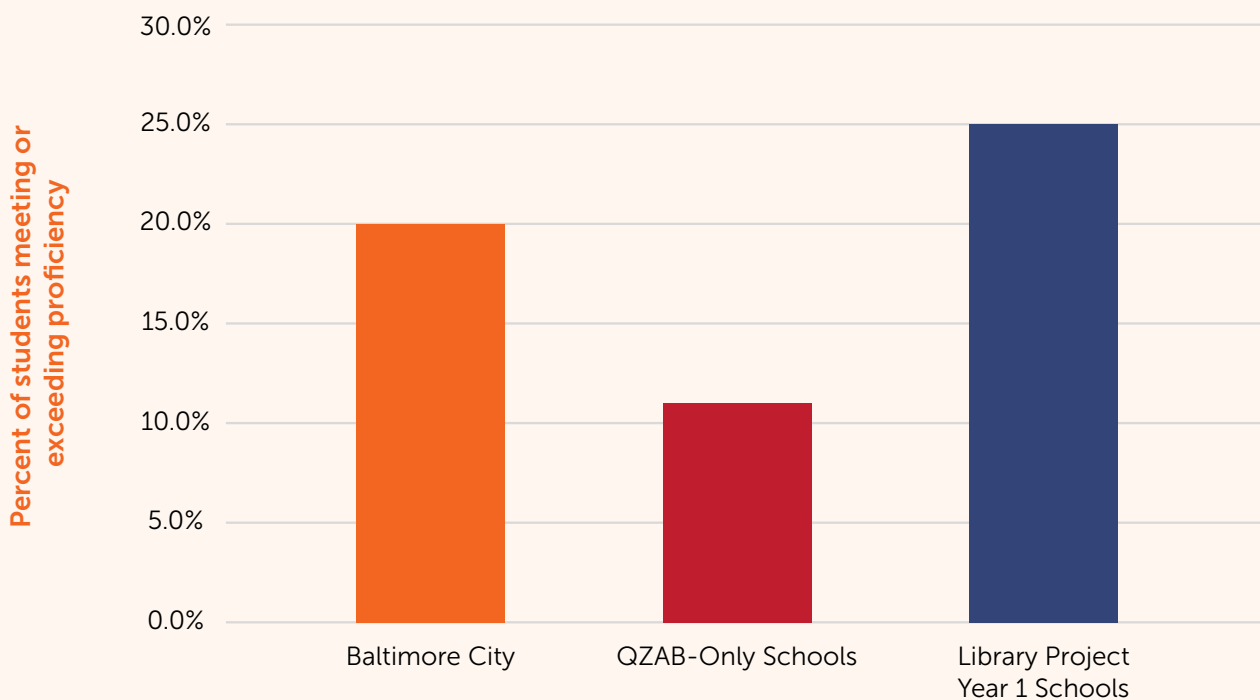
23. These tests measure student proficiency on reading fluency and reading comprehension, respectively.

24. BERC Update to Weinberg Foundation, August 2016.

- BERC’s report²⁵ of reading fluency test data for Year 1 schools, conducted in 2014, controlled for the effects of student mobility, attendance, limited English status, and socioeconomic status (FARMs data). It found that Library Project students in the third grade were almost three times (2.92 odds ratio) as likely to meet reading fluency proficiency standards as students in QZAB-Only schools.
- In the first year of PARCC testing, Year 1 Library Project schools, having experienced three years of the new libraries, outperformed 13 QZAB-Only schools and 110 remaining Baltimore City Public Schools in terms of reading proficiency.²⁶ Because QZAB-Only schools received physically upgraded libraries but not the staffing and resource enhancements that are integral to the Library Project, this data is suggestive of the importance of staffing and resources. While encouraging, it is important that this same data be looked at in subsequent years to identify whether this finding is consistent over time.

Figure 1

2014-15 PARCC Test Results, Comparisons Across Schools



QZAB-Only (n=13), Baltimore City (n=110)²⁷

25. BERC analysis.

26. PARCC is a summative national assessment aligned with Common Core standards, while DIBELS and TRC are early literacy assessments that include benchmark screening and progress monitoring to inform instruction. Comparisons are challenging as they measure different things.

27. BERC analysis.

Benchmark Attainment

In attempting to impact long-term goals, there are interim benchmarks that also need to be met. Such benchmarks include completing the spaces on budget and on time, engendering positive attitudes toward reading, collaboration between school staff, and book checkout rates.

The level to which libraries are implementing best practices has been documented in surveys, interviews, and analysis of school data collected by BEREC. In addition, a tool to measure the progress of this implementation, called the "Implementation Rubric," was developed for this report; it sheds light on each school's early implementation experience. By integrating measures from librarian, teacher, and student surveys, the Rubric looks at eight implementation characteristics; schools are then classified as high-, mid- or low-implementers.

Overall, four schools were ranked "high" (with two of the four in Year 2), three ranked "mid," and two schools (one in Year 1 and one in Year 3) ranked "low." This suggests that the strength of implementation does not depend solely on how long a school is open, but is also affected by other factors in the libraries, including principal and librarian priorities and practices.

Building the Libraries

Throughout this report there is recognition of the strength of the partnerships, the decision-making, and the smart allocation of funding that led to the Library Project's first successes. In the period of this report, nine libraries were designed, built, furnished, and resourced on time and typically at the beginning of the academic year. For the Library Project, and particularly for the library schools themselves, these new libraries represent real contributions, real progress, and success.

Building schedules are a good example of the efficacy of the private-public partnership that the Library Project represents. When construction times were analyzed from "punch in to punch out," Library Project schools were completed in roughly half the time as QZAB-Only schools. Library Project schools took about 13 weeks compared to QZAB-Only schools,²⁸ which took about 28 weeks to complete.²⁹

Motivation, Climate and Readiness for Reading

Library impact research suggests that engendering positive attitudes about the library is a beginning step toward the longer-term Library Project goals.

- The recognition that "somebody cares about us" stimulates motivation and readiness for reading.³⁰
- Pleasanter, even exciting, environments—"I like the walls with their fun colors and art, the cool technology, and fun furniture"—lay the groundwork for alleviating the impact of socioeconomic disadvantages and stimulating the motivation to read.³¹

Principals, teachers, librarians, and students consistently reported that these changes are occurring.

Principals recognized how the new library could affect the broader school climate, making the school a more interesting and accessible learning environment and setting an inviting tone. They reported that the libraries generated excitement among students and their teachers and, importantly, principals noted how more students were reading, reading more, and reading a greater variety of books.³²

28. Two comparison schools had recently renovated libraries and employed full-time librarians. Each had similar physical improvements in their library and a full-time librarian but no funding for a part-time library clerk, professional development, wall graphics, or technology.

29. JRS Architects Analysis 2016.

30. School Library Impact Studies.

31. BEREC, Year 2 Report.

32. BEREC, Year 1 Report, page 10.

Two principals commented:

- “I think, in terms of changing the face of the school, it is the first thing parents, students, and community members see when they enter our building, and it is such a lovely library space, and they see how engaged students are as well. So, it makes them feel proud that it is the face of our school.”³³
- “Everyone’s impression is ‘Wow’ as they walk in, and it is a place everyone wants to be.”³⁴

An enthusiastic leader at a Year 1 school witnessed what she called the “librification” of the school, as the physical improvement of the library stimulated upgrading throughout the building.³⁵

Teachers in the nine library schools, using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), rated libraries 2.89 or stronger across the following characteristics:

- The library is a welcoming place for students (3.5 to 4.0)
- My students ask to go to the library (2.89 to 3.5)
- The school library has a positive effect on classroom learning (2.89 to 4.0)
- It makes the school more conducive to teaching and learning (3.3-3.8)
- It is a valuable resource for student learning (3.3-4.0)³⁶

Librarians were proud of their new libraries and how they were influencing school climate.

- One librarian spoke of how the new library “validates” the school and signals it as a place of learning and literacy.³⁷
- A librarian, who lamented that her school’s atmosphere before the creation of the Library Project library was “almost like a prison” said, “Now it’s beautiful, inviting, and learning is taking place.”³⁸

Students echoed positive reaction to the spaces. The library openings were an important opportunity to celebrate the partnership, thank the design and construction teams, and introduce the libraries to elected officials. The openings also focused on the students’ reactions to the library; the videos from these events reflect the sense of pride and excitement among students that is also present in Library Project research.

Seven of nine schools scored well on the Implementation Rubric in terms of students “valuing the library” and being “able to locate books of interest.”

Elementary school students reported positively about their new school libraries, as summarized in Appendix Figure 2^{39,40}. While 70 percent or more of Library Project students, in the first year the library was opened, strongly agreed that they liked the library, just 40 percent of students in QZAB–Only schools answered the same way. While this may seem like a modest achievement, the comparison between Library Project and QZAB–Only schools suggests that student agreement with this statement is not a given and that there is more to generating enthusiasm in the library than renovating the spaces.

33. BERC, Year 1 Report, page 15.

34. BERC, Year 2 Report, page 22.

35. BERC, Year 1 Report, page 10.

36. BERC Update to Weinberg Foundation, August 2016.

37. BERC, Year 2 Report, page 22.

38. BERC, Year 1 Report, page 22.

39. BERC, Year 2 Report.

40. Data tables available in Appendix.

More Books and More Reading

When asked the question, “Do you use the library more this year than last year?” 66 percent of Year 1 students, 81 percent of Year 2 students, and 84 percent of Year 3 students replied positively⁴¹ (see Appendix Figure 3). This finding suggests that student access to books and other library resources is increasing year after year.

In terms of the impact of the improved book collections, when asked about their favorite things about the new libraries, “book variety and selection” topped the list of both Year 1 and Year 2 students, scoring more than 40 percent. Over the first three years of the Project, librarians, students, and teachers consistently asked for more books of interest.⁴² This may be a reflection both of the need to continually refresh the collections and an increasing interest and awareness about books in the library.

Another measure of how accessible and attractive the library is to students is the ease of finding books that they like. This is a statement not only about the efficiency and training at locating books, but a comment about whether the students were finding books that appealed to them, another key to motivating students to read. Although the differences are not stark, more students in each of the nine Library Project libraries reported that it was often easy to find books that they liked than did students in the QZAB-Only comparison schools. Ninety percent in all three years reported that it was “often or sometimes” easy to find books they liked, with half reporting that it was “often” easy⁴³ (see Appendix Figure 4).

Librarians in all nine libraries said one of the schools’ top priorities for their libraries was to allow students to checkout books to take home (90 percent). Seventy-eight percent said it was also a personal top priority. More than half of the schools expected librarians to provide students with additional Language Arts and Reading Instruction.⁴⁴

There is promising data showing how improved collections, more time in the library and increased attention to book checkouts affected the students’ motivation to read and their reading practices.

An analysis of book checkouts in Baltimore City Public Schools that are using the DESTINY book cataloging system shows that six of the ten highest rates of book checkouts are at Library Project schools⁴⁵ (see Appendix Table 2). In addition, a four-year analysis of book checkouts in Library Project schools shows an increase of 400 percent—with schools moving from 9,000 books checked out in 2011 to more than 45,000 in 2015.

This achievement takes on greater significance in light of the reality of the high percentage of low-income students at Library Project schools. A BEREC analysis of Districtwide checkout rates documented the very close fit (an r -square of $-.88$) between low-income student rates and checkout rates.⁴⁶ The Library Project student checkout rates represent a notable accomplishment.

41. BEREC Update to Weinberg Foundation, August 2016.

42. BEREC, Year 2 Report, Table 6, page 27.

43. BEREC, Year 2 Report.

44. BEREC Update to Weinberg Foundation, August 2016.

45. Data compiled from BEREC report on DESTINY usage.

46. Reports on internal memo to the Weinberg Foundation dated September 2, 2015.

The Challenge of Technology

E-Readers

The Library Project provides e-readers to each of the schools as well as \$3,000 in e-titles for the new devices. The availability of e-readers, and the ability to purchase new titles, was an attractive new resource for the librarians interviewed. Yet, pick-up in Year 1 schools has been slow: Over three years, the percentage of Year 1 students reporting that they “often” used e-readers rose from 24 percent to 36 percent, but fully a quarter of students (26 percent) in the third year reported “never” using one.⁴⁷ In Year 2 schools, just 13 percent of students were cited as “never” using an e-reader. With only one year of exposure, Year 3 schools showed an adoption rate similar to the first-year experience of the schools in Year 1. More than 75 percent of students in QZAB-Only schools reported never having used an e-reader in the library (see Appendix Figure 5).

There are likely multiple reasons for this slow rate of adoption of e-readers; many of which are addressed throughout this report: concern that the equipment will be lost or damaged, discomfort or lack of technology training of library staff, and technology not being emphasized as a priority for the libraries. Each of these can be addressed, and over time, these rates are likely to increase.

Computers

Use of computers follows a similar pattern: More than half of students in Year 1 schools reported “never” using a library computer; the percentage rose over the three years from 47 percent to 58 percent. Year 2 schools showed broader adoption in the first year with three-quarters of the students making some use of computers, but no improvement over the two years. Students at Year 3 schools reported the highest first-year

adoption rates, suggesting that as new libraries open, there is increasing computer use, but whether this is a trend will only be clear with more years of experience⁴⁸ (see Appendix Figure 6). Again, QZAB-Only schools show much lower rates of adoption, with nearly 70 percent reporting never using a computer in the library. In the Findings and Recommendations section, strategies for increasing technology adoption in the Library Project libraries are addressed.

Teacher/Librarian Collaboration

Teacher/Librarian collaboration is another key predictor of a successful library. As one librarian stated: “It is my goal to increase collaboration and meetings with the staff.”⁴⁹

A variety of data for both Year 1 and Year 2 schools shows teachers’ perception of active collaboration.⁵⁰

- 90 percent of teachers at one school in Year 1 reported meeting at least monthly with the librarian, but this activity was reported by only 16 percent of teachers at another Year 1 school.
- Almost all teachers at two of the Year 1 schools reported either “strongly agree” or “agree” with the observation that the “librarian works with teachers to support classroom activities” and “provides resources to teachers for instruction.” However, teachers at the third school reported significantly lower rates of collaboration: 60 percent for support and 40 percent for resources.⁵¹
- Teachers in Year 2 schools reported a high level of collaboration before implementation of the new library (91 percent), which increased to 97 percent in the following year.⁵²

45. Data compiled from BERC report on DESTINY usage.

46. Reports on internal memo to the Weinberg Foundation dated September 2, 2015.

47. BERC, Year 2 Report.

48. BERC, Year 2 Report.

49. BERC, Year 1 Report, page 12.

50. BERC, Year 2 Report, page 68.

- All the teachers in two of the three Year 3 schools reported that “the librarian works with teachers to support classroom activities” but only a third (35 percent) at the third school agreed with this statement.⁵³
- In response to a question about how often they meet with librarians to help find resources related to lessons, there is a slight trend suggesting that there is more teacher-librarian collaboration in schools the longer they have had a new library.⁵⁴ However, there is some work to be done in all schools to increase teacher/librarian collaboration, and that actual implementation may vary by site.

There is also data to suggest that these perceptions may not be finding their way into practice. In the Implementation Rubric, five of the nine schools did not meet the mark for successful implementation of the characteristic “teachers and librarians plan together.”⁵⁵

Additionally, student response to the question “How often do you look up information for my class projects?” suggests that students do not see the effect of this collaboration⁵⁶ (see Appendix Figure 7). Roughly half of all students in Year 1 schools (over all three years) replied “never.” The response from Year 2 students was better, but still one-third replied “never.” Students in Year 3 schools reported activity roughly similar to the Year 2 students. There is little difference between Library Project and QZAB-Only schools, reinforcing the potential that perceived collaboration in the Library Project schools is not yet having a real impact in practice.

This student feedback about using the library for a class project is supported by teachers’ responses to questions about how often they used the library. Teachers say they are about twice as likely to take

a class to the library to select books as they are to take a class to research a topic. This difference is consistent among Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 schools.⁵⁷

This may also be related to librarians’ perception that school leadership does not place a high priority on their responsibility to teach students how to conduct research. More than 40 percent see this as one of their personal top priorities, but none said that this was a top priority for the school. This may reflect the principal’s priorities for the library focusing on books and reading.⁵⁸

In summary, the data suggests that students at Library Project schools are realizing benefits from the additional resources and librarian attention that are not part of a QZAB-Only project. Data also suggests there may be greater progress on areas related directly to books and reading, which is seen by both school leadership and librarians as their top priority, a message likely gotten from the Library Project.

It is important for the Library Project to reinforce and support librarians and the schools at large to become more comfortable and proficient with technology and to develop real collaborations that have an impact on student learning.

After three years of experience with the new libraries, there is clear progress toward these interim benchmarks; early data on reading proficiency is encouraging. These findings need to be taken in context. It is not possible to attribute causality—whether and to what extent the efforts of the Library Project caused the change—or durability—whether the progress to date will continue and lead to long-term, sustainable improvement. But the early findings suggest that the Library Project has done many things well, and that the data gathering and analysis it has sponsored provide clear paths for improvement.

51. BERC, Year 2 Report, page 69.

52. BERC, Year 2 Report, page 28.

53. Implementation Rubric.

54. BERC Update to Weinberg Foundation, August 2016.

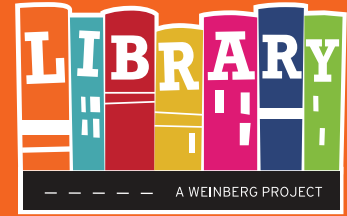
55. Implementation Rubric.

56. BERC, Year 2 Report.

57. BERC Update to Weinberg Foundation, August 2016.

58. BERC Update to Weinberg Foundation, August 2016.

Findings and Recommendations



This section identifies the most notable of the Library Project's early successes and makes several recommendations to help strengthen the Library Project as it continues to build new libraries and sustain those that are already in operation.

Finding 1: Best Practices in the Library Project Model

The model for and implementation of Library Project libraries integrates best practices and expert advice in going beyond the physical spaces to focus on staffing and outfitting the spaces. The model embraces the key factors that research demonstrates have the potential to improve student learning. This is the major factor distinguishing the Library Project from earlier school library projects and from QZAB-Only libraries.

Finding 2: Accountability and Responsibility

The carefully constructed written agreements between City Schools, the Foundation, and the Fund built in greater accountability than is often found in similar collaborative ventures and helped ensure the key elements identified in Finding 1 would be implemented. The best example is the requirement that in order to get a new library, a school had to commit to funding and maintaining a full-time librarian.

Finding 3: An Open Development and Implementation Process

The iterative nature of the Library Project's development continues to strengthen the original concept. The balance struck between creating a common brand and schools' ability to individualize their spaces gave the Library Project and the individual schools distinctive personalities.

Finding 4: Project Direction and Oversight

The decision by the Foundation to play an active leadership and management role throughout the Project's inception, rather than stepping back once it was developed and funded, was essential to launching and keeping the Project on track and budget, resolving problems, and building the teams. By engaging the Fund, the Foundation created an important mechanism for the Library Project to move quickly on components of the building and staffing process and to pay vendors more expeditiously than the District could.

Building on the Baltimore Library Project's Strengths

As City Schools and the Weinberg Foundation think about the libraries that are still to be built, and about enhancing and sustaining what has already been built, the following findings should be taken into account. Notably, none of these recommendations call for significant changes to the Library Project model and its partnerships—and some likely anticipate changes already underway—but identify ways to build for the future.

Finding 5: Strengthening the Librarians

This report repeatedly underscores the importance of the librarians; maintaining and strengthening the skills and capacity of these key players should be high on the Library Project's priority list.

Managing the Workload

As detailed in the Implementation section, librarians reported being overwhelmed in the first year. In addition to their responsibilities to organize the collection, teach classes, and orient students and teachers to the library, librarians were also asked to meet with many potential partners, host visits from "important people," support projects such as the Food Bank backpacks and coat distribution, take time to use their professional development funding, and develop a strategy to bring in parents and community members to the Enoch Pratt Parent Place.

Recommendation: Set the librarians up for greater success by allowing them, particularly at the outset, to take on a more limited number of responsibilities. As important as each element is, some can wait until late in the first year or into the second before librarians are expected to take them on. One straightforward way to do this is to develop reasonable phase-in schedules for librarians.

Professional Development

The decision to incorporate financial support for professional development activities was sound, given the innovative and challenging aspects of the new libraries and of the librarian's expanding roles. Dedicated support for librarian professional development is one of the components that makes the Library Project unique within the Baltimore school system. But librarians made little use of the resource in the Project's early years, reporting that they simply did not have the time to get away, a situation that has improved somewhat in the following years. Mostly they have used the money to attend conferences, but their subject focus is diffuse. City Schools' ability to provide specialized professional development to Library Project librarians has been increasingly hampered by budget cuts and increasing workloads.

Recommendation: Develop a more collective, tightly-structured approach to professional development that focuses on the topics most closely tied to improving student performance: the use of technology, promoting teacher-librarian collaboration, managing competing priorities, and supporting each school's priorities and curriculum. By pooling and modestly augmenting the available funding, Library Project librarians could work as a cohort on a common suite of activities. The effort could focus on the Library Project's priorities for improvement, generate a community of shared interests, and help get the "best bang for the buck" out of its limited professional development funding. The Weinberg Foundation can build on its own experience in sponsoring similar professional cohorts.

Finding 6: Library Resources

Books and Collections

One of the strongest and most consistent responses in BERCC surveys to what would make the library better is “more books.” It is worth treating this finding not as a criticism of the Project, but as an indication of student interest.

Recommendation: Librarians expressed an interest in being able to order and receive books several times throughout the school year. Currently, books are ordered late in one school year and delivered at the beginning of the next year. This limited the ability of librarians to identify new student preferences as they emerged during the year or to order multiple copies of a popular book that students want to read and talk about together. A staggered acquisition strategy would enable the librarians to be more responsive to student opinions.

Technology

The investment in e-readers, computers, shared workstations, and electronic white boards gave many of the schools more and better technology resources. Housing it in the library signaled that these were “not your grandmother’s libraries” and highlighted a commitment to support student reading, research, and learning on multiple platforms.

However, librarians’ comfort levels, skills, and interests in technology vary widely, leading to a wide disparity in the utilization of the technology from library to library. Given that this was a new resource for most librarians, these disparities are not surprising, but there is more to be done.

Recommendation: Making librarians both skilled and comfortable with technology should be a high priority for professional development and professional support. It also is worth exploring a strategy of identifying older students within the school or in neighborhood schools, particularly those specializing in technology, to become technology assistants in the schools. Also worth considering is the recruitment of additional partners with a technology expertise that can support librarians to become more proficient.

Finding 7: Partnerships

The wide range of partners brought a diverse array of public sector, nonprofit, and corporate resources to the Library Project. Partners reported some frustration with gaining access to the schools, finding a good fit, or sustaining their participation. This mirrors librarians’ reports that they were overwhelmed with tasks (especially in the launch year) and did not understand the full range of potential partners or how their needs could be addressed through partner support. As a result, it was somewhat of a “catch as can” process.

Recommendation: The librarians and the partners would benefit from a “matchmaker” function to help principals and librarians identify which partners would best aid the library, and help assess expectations on the part of librarians and partners. This approach would respect the interest and capacity of the school, the librarian, and the potential partner, likely leading to more appropriate and effective partnerships.

Finding 8: Parental Engagement

Increasing parental engagement is important not only in the library but also throughout the school. Yet by all reports, the Enoch Pratt Parent Places have been underutilized, even though there are reports about attracting parents through personal outreach, PTA newsletters, and the like. Some obstacles to attracting parents cannot be overcome; for example, not all of the libraries can be ideally located near the front door. But it is not clear whether the librarian is necessarily the best person to develop and manage an outreach strategy, which calls for the skills of an organizer or program developer.

Recommendation: It is worth considering whether the Enoch Pratt Parent Places can be tied to the broader school effort to bring in parents. The following includes possible approaches:

- Make outreach strategies a priority for librarians' professional development
- Work with the Enoch Pratt Library to better define expectations for the librarians and help craft community-specific strategies
- Ask principals, librarians, and teachers how the Parent Place can fit into and enhance other parent outreach efforts
- Consider whether someone other than the librarian is best suited to manage the Parent Place

These last two points would help link the library to the broader school culture and program.

Who is going to do all of this new work: professional development, technology skills development, partner and parent engagement?

It is theoretically possible to divide these responsibilities among City Schools, the Weinberg Foundation, and the Fund. But it is also worth considering a (relatively) modest investment in a staff person who could act as, for lack of a better word, a "coach" for the library and librarians. The role would encompass the workload of planning, organizing, and possibly conducting the professional development, as well as working with partners and librarians to strengthen the integration of the library into the school.

Of course, there are technicalities and complications to be resolved, but problem solving is something that the Library Project has done well to date. The question of whom the person works for and is accountable to would need to be addressed, as would related questions of work and union rules.

This staff person would need to meld with the professional library staff at City Schools, who are responsible for all libraries in the District. The introduction of this position would need to respect individual school and librarian priorities, keeping in mind that the Library Project's success has been grounded in its ability to negotiate—not dictate.

It is likely that the Foundation would have primary responsibility for contributing or raising funds for this new staff person. Taking on the responsibilities suggested above would represent an investment both in the libraries still to be built and those that are already functioning. This can be thought of as a second phase of the Library Project, incorporating a mid-way set of course corrections and additions based on what has been accomplished and learned in the first three years.

Finding 9: Sustainability

The prior discussion raises the question of how the Foundation views its ongoing relationship with the libraries. Once the libraries are built, opened, and maintained for a number of years, the Foundation’s original commitment to the Project will have been met. But at that point, the Foundation will have a considerable financial and emotional investment in seeing the libraries succeed over the longer term.

After a development period and the building of a fixed set of libraries, the Foundation will likely significantly reduce, if not end, its support. The District, however, will remain forever responsible for the libraries. The collective creativity and good thinking that the Foundation, City Schools, and nonprofit and corporate partners have demonstrated to this point need to be brought to the challenges of sustainability.

Perhaps because it is still early in the Library Project’s life, we heard less concern with sustainability post-Foundation support than we expected. Nevertheless, there was a quiet awareness that Foundation funding is finite, and that individual schools’ commitment to provide continued support for a full-time librarian would always be subject to competing pressures and priorities. Unfortunately, there is an almost universal assumption that the clerk role will “go away” when Foundation funding ends.

Recommendation: The challenge for the Foundation and City Schools is to protect their investments by institutionalizing a long-term sustainability plan. The Foundation should expand its commitment and leadership through a strengthening and sustainability stage that is more strategic than simply extending funding for a limited number of years.

To achieve sustainability of the Library Project’s libraries, we recommend the following strategies:

- The full partnership, including City Schools and the Advisory Committee, needs to turn its attention to the challenges of sustainability. Because City Schools, likely more than anyone else, will have long-term responsibility for the libraries, its preferences and ideas need to help shape a shared sustainability strategy. This approach will build on some of the greatest strengths of the project to date.
- Focus on securing a public-private commitment from City Schools to support, to the fullest extent possible, full-time librarians, part-time clerks and physical maintenance of Library Project schools. This strategy will require evaluation data to “make the case” and require close relationships with the school principals who, despite anticipated turnover, can be powerful advocates.



Elmer A. Henderson: A Johns Hopkins Partnership School



Harford Heights Elementary School

The following is a list of potential sustainability strategies:

- Structure the sustainability plan so that other foundations can “own” a part of the Library Project
- Direct fundraising activities to corporate sponsors (“adopt a library”)
- Link a sustainability plan, including longer term supporters to each new library at its inception
- Secure partnering organizations for both in-kind services and funding
- With convincing data, explore funding from larger, national foundations and individual donors, including millennials and technology-focused donors
- Use the Library Project’s documented successes as a rationale for advocating for policy changes that more firmly institutionalize funding for full-time librarians and perhaps the part-time clerks

The lead partners need to manage the Library Project’s maturing process in a way that best supports the long-range success of the Library Project and its libraries. Just as the first stages of the Library Project were carefully planned and implemented, a well-planned interim stage, where attention is paid to a sustainability plan, will be essential to the Project’s long-term success.

Finding 10: Evaluation Design and Implementation

Convincing evidence of success will be essential to a sustainability plan. Early in the Project, the Foundation contracted with BERC to “complete a series of reports examining the implementation and impact” of the Library Project,⁵⁹ linking the Project to the recognized experts in Baltimore on school research. BERC has conducted extensive interviews and surveys of key players, most particularly students, principals, teachers, and librarians, and thoughtfully plumbed their varied experiences and perceptions. It also has analyzed school data to measure student performance.

The iterative, developmental nature of the Project made sense in conceptualizing and building the Project, but it made it difficult for the Foundation and BERC to maintain consistent understandings both of evaluation priorities and what was possible to measure. At this point in time, an evaluation needs to be designed consistent with the current goals, expectations, and programs. As the Project stabilizes, explicit goals and measures can be defined prior to further data collection and analysis.

Recommendation: Fortunately, the Project is just getting to the point where reliable measurement of intermediate and long-term outcomes becomes more feasible. This measurement takes on additional importance because a rigorous and convincing evaluation will be important to maintaining public and private support for the Library Project’s libraries and, as it is hoped, promoting the replication of the model elsewhere.

59. BERC, Year 1 report.

It is an appropriate time for the Foundation and its evaluators to reassess and refine the research design. Expectations for the evaluation design must be calibrated to recognize not only the limitations of the data but also the difficulty in disentangling the effect of the new libraries from a host of other school reforms also in play. Just as observers and funders will want performance data, they will be skeptical of over-reaching.

- Focus on a limited set of goals to be evaluated, which will likely include increased interest in books and reading, improved research skills, increased integration of the library into the educational mission of the school, and whether or not reading skills improve in library schools at a higher rate than in the rest of the district, or in a consistent set of comparison schools.
- Craft a set of research questions that can be reliably measured with data that is available, even if it means changing the current data collection methodology. For example, comparisons over time would be stronger if the evaluation had been at the individual student level rather than school level. It may be that there are insurmountable obstacles to this, but it is worth reconsidering.
- Consistency is critical: To capture a baseline and change over time, the research needs to start with and stick with precise definitions and metrics and have data available from a consistent set of sources.

The Library Project is becoming a strong example of the power of public-private partnerships to leverage resources to benefit children in low-income communities. The groundwork is in place and early evaluation data is promising. This is the opportune time for partners to nurture their investments in these 21st-century libraries.



Westport Academy



Windsor Hills Elementary/Middle School

Appendix

Tables and Figures

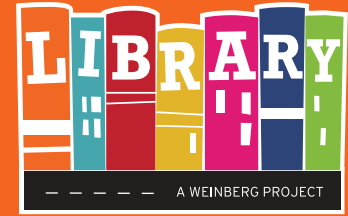


Figure 2

% Elementary school students agreed with the statement "I like the library in my school"⁶⁰

	Year 1 Schools			Year 2 Schools			Year 3 Schools			QZAB-Only Schools		
	A lot like me	Like me	Not like me	A lot like me	Like Me	Not like me	A lot like me	Like Me	Not like me	A lot like me	Like Me	Not like me
2012-13	73.6	23.8	2.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2013-14	66.4	27.5	6.1	69.5	22.7	7.9	-	-	-	40.1	42.0	17.9
2014-15	61.6	27.9	10.5	78.7	18.1	3.2	75.7	19.0	5.3	42.3	41.8	15.9

Figure 3

% Students who used the library more this year than last year based on survey question asked in 2016 to all students at all Library Project schools

Percent of Students	Year 1 schools n=526	Year 2 schools n=380	Year 3 schools n=172
I used the library more this year than last year	65.9%	81%	84.3%

Figure 4

% Students agreed with the statement "It is easy for me to find books I like at the library"

	Year 1 Schools			Year 2 Schools			Year 3 Schools			QZAB-Only Schools		
	Often	Some-times	Never	Often	Some-times	Never	Often	Some-times	Never	Often	Some-times	Never
2012-13	46.3	40.3	13.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2013-14	51.6	37.8	10.6	52.0	40.5	7.5	-	-	-	30.7	47.9	21.5
2014-15	44.2	45.5	10.3	52.8	41.1	6.1	55.4	35.9	8.7	41.5	47.3	11.2

Figure 5

% Students reporting use of e-readers

	Year 1 Schools			Year 2 Schools			Year 3 Schools			QZAB-Only Schools		
	Often	Some-times	Never	Often	Some-times	Never	Often	Some-times	Never	Often	Some-times	Never
2012-13	24.3	39.6	36.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2013-14	20.5	50.1	29.4	39.4	52.2	8.4	-	-	-	6.7	18.3	75.0
2014-15	35.9	38.5	25.6	32.7	54.7	12.7	20.8	41.9	37.2	8.5	13.3	78.2

60. The number of responses (n's) in subsequent figures, except where noted in the Figure, are summarized below. BERC, Year 2 Report.

Schools in	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	QZAB
2012/3	238	-	-	-
2013/4	345	206	-	167
2014/5	318	252	352	193



Figure 6

% Elementary school students reporting on use of computers												
	Year 1 Schools			Year 2 Schools			Year 3 Schools			QZAB-Only Schools		
	Often	Some-times	Never	Often	Some-times	Never	Often	Some-times	Never	Often	Some-times	Never
2012-13	15.0	38.5	46.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2013-14	11.9	37.9	50.1	26.8	47.0	26.3	-	-	-	12.8	18.3	68.9
2014-15	9.9	32.6	57.5	29.3	45.1	25.6	27.7	56.0	16.2	8.5	13.3	78.2

Figure 7

% Elementary school students reporting on "How often do I look up information for a class project"												
	Year 1 Schools			Year 2 Schools			Year 3 Schools			QZAB-Only Schools		
	Often	Some-times	Never	Often	Some-times	Never	Often	Some-times	Never	Often	Some-times	Never
2012-13	13.3	36.9	49.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2013-14	10.6	29.8	59.6	23.0	44.0	33.0	-	-	-	11.1	40.1	48.8
2014-15	12.5	31.5	55.9	24.7	43.5	31.8	17.2	40.8	42.0	16.1	37.3	45.1

Table 2

Book Checkout Rates in Schools Using the DESTINY System	
School	Books checked out per student
Thomas Johnson Elementary/Middle School	22.6
Tunbridge Public Charter Elementary/Middle School	20.4
Mt. Washington School	12.7
Roland Park Elementary/Middle School	10.9
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School	10.2
Morrell Park Elementary/Middle School	9.6
Southwest Baltimore Charter Elementary/Middle School	9.4
Violetville Elementary/Middle School	8.7
Moravia Park Elementary School	8.6
Arlington Elementary/Middle School	6.8

Library Project Schools

Year 1

Moravia Park Elementary School
 Southwest Baltimore Charter School
 Thomas Johnson Elementary/Middle School

Year 2

Arlington Elementary/Middle School
 Elmer A. Henderson: A Johns Hopkins Partnership School
 The Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School

Year 3

Harford Heights Elementary School
 Morrell Park Elementary/Middle School
 Windsor Hills Elementary/Middle School

Year 4

The Commodore John Rodgers School
 Westport Academy

Year 5

George Washington Elementary School
 Hampden Elementary/Middle School

Year 6

Francis Scott Key Elementary/Middle School
 (opening September 2017)