

# **Community Schools and Year-Round Learning for Baltimore City Youth: Need, Challenge, and Opportunity**

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### **About the Author**

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## Community Schools and Year-Round Learning for Baltimore City Youth: Need, Challenge, and Opportunity

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### Introduction

The future of Baltimore City is largely in the hands of its young people, the great majority of whom face significant challenges to enjoying healthy, productive, creative, and engaged lives. They live in racially-segregated neighborhoods where most households are below or near the federal poverty line. Sixty years after the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, they attend racially segregated, inadequately resourced schools. One-third of the City's children live in food deserts.

Not surprisingly, young people played a central role in the 2015 Baltimore Uprising, not just in confrontation with police near Mondawmin Mall, but in diverse demonstrations across the City, asserting (for example) that "We love Baltimore!" and calling for meaningful improvements in criminal justice, education, housing, and other key policy arenas.

Young people also played a leading role in convincing the Baltimore City School Board and Board of Estimates to cancel their agreements with developers of a proposed massive incinerator in the middle of Curtis Bay and surrounding residential neighborhoods. They argued that fair development would not assume that already marginalized communities should bear further burdens and even that large-scale incineration is not a viable waste management strategy.

These are important recent examples demonstrating the potential of Baltimore's young people. Such community engagement can influence public policy to help us fully realize that potential. A key focal point for such policy—addressing education, health, safety, and positive youth development—is Baltimore's community schools movement. Community schools identify needs of students and their families as well as existing community resources that can address those needs, and bring those resources into school for easy access.

Community schools ideally provide services whenever necessary, for example, daily nutritious meals for those who need them and intentional learning opportunities twelve months a year to support young people in realizing their potential. In reality, however, this rarely happens for students living in poverty. But is it possible? What are the opportunities to make it happen in Baltimore? What are the challenges and how can we address them? This paper's purpose is to stimulate discussion of the needs, opportunities, and challenges as a prelude to action.

## The need

### *The summer challenge*

Summer presents the greatest challenge to young people and families who need access to diverse resources. Research on the summer learning loss phenomenon has been happening for a century. Recent research is particularly compelling. A Johns Hopkins University study found that, for Baltimore City Public School students, two-thirds of the reading achievement gap at ninth grade is due to differences in summer experiences during the elementary grades.<sup>1</sup> Research further suggests that summer aggravates young people's tendency toward obesity due to the lack of both regular nutritious meals and organized opportunities for exercise.<sup>2</sup> When schools are closed in the summer, students in high-poverty neighborhoods often lose what access they have to health care during the school year as well as to safe places for recreation. All in all, summer presents special challenges to young people's education, health, and safety.

### *Poverty and racism*

Economic poverty remains a significant phenomenon in the wealthiest society in the history of the world. Institutional racism over centuries has resulted in poverty disproportionately impacting people of color throughout the United States. To understand how community schools might better serve their communities year-round, we need to acknowledge such key contextual factors contributing to the challenge.

Most people living in Baltimore City are African American and a large proportion of them endure economic poverty. This is not unusual among American cities, but it provides critical context for understanding the role of public schools here. Racial discrimination in employment, housing, education, health care, and public accommodations was the norm through the middle of the twentieth century. The 1954 Supreme Court decision on *Brown v. Board of Education* paved the way for the Baltimore City school board to officially desegregate the schools. But where students went to school depended on more than that. The history of housing segregation meant that schools remained *de facto* segregated. Legal housing desegregation did not end *de facto* discrimination or economic segregation (highly correlated with race).

The post-war federal programs in housing and transportation subsidized suburban development, facilitating middle class white flight from cities to suburbs and aggravating the concentration of poverty in inner city racial ghettos. In addition, the departure of industrial capital from Baltimore meant the loss of hundreds of thousands of industrial jobs, many of them relatively well-paying for people with little formal education. Among other things, this had the consequence of a huge increase in the number of single-parent families, especially in the African American community. The convergence of these macro-socioeconomic phenomena provide the context for the policy

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander, K. L., Entwisle D. R., and Olson L. S. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 167-180.

<sup>2</sup> National Summer Learning Association. *Healthy Summers for Kids: Turning Risk into Opportunity*. 2012. Pp. 3-6. [http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/resmgr/Healthy\\_Summers\\_/NSLA\\_Healthy\\_Summers\\_for\\_Kid.pdf?hhSearchTerms=healthy+and+summers+and+summit](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/resmgr/Healthy_Summers_/NSLA_Healthy_Summers_for_Kid.pdf?hhSearchTerms=healthy+and+summers+and+summit)

challenges we continue to face in supporting Baltimore's young people as they strive to make their place in the world today.

Although the April-May 2015 Baltimore Uprising was sparked by issues of police practices, demonstrators frequently called attention to additional concerns including under-resourced schools, food and health care deserts, and more. Advocates for improved community resources must acknowledge the long history of institutional racism and public policy that has contributed to the current situation.

The public school system in general and community schools in particular martial resources to help young people overcome poverty and racism. But there clearly have been limits to what they have been able to do so far. *Concerning access to nutrition, learning, safe and healthy recreation, and other resources, families in poverty—with or without employed adults—face gaps after school, on weekends, during breaks in the school year, and during the summer. Even if students in poverty participate in a summer program, it's rare that they have that opportunity to access resources for more than six weeks. And most don't have even that.*

### **How community schools address the need**

According to the Family League of Baltimore website:

The Family League's Community and School Engagement Strategy brings together a wide range of partners and community resources to promote student achievement, positive conditions for learning and the well-being of families and communities. While the core focus of our strategy is on children, we recognize that children grow up in families who are integral parts of communities.

Community schools bring together partner organizations to work with school staff to provide additional programming and services for students and families. This includes high-quality afterschool activities or tutoring, health check-ups or mental health counseling, or tax-preparation services or financial counseling for parents.

Each community school has a community school coordinator who develops partnerships with local community organizations to create an environment where academics, enrichment, health and social supports, family engagement, youth and community development improve student well-being.<sup>3</sup>

Baltimore's community schools initiative has grown significantly in recent years, reflecting the commitment of the Mayor and City Schools leadership as well as positive outcomes in higher attendance rates and lower chronic absence rates.<sup>4</sup> During the 2014-2015 school year, forty-five of Baltimore's 181 public schools were community schools organized under the Community and School Engagement Strategy (CSES) led by the Family League of Baltimore in partnership with the

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<sup>3</sup> [www.familyleague.org](http://www.familyleague.org)

<sup>4</sup> Linda S. Olson. *A First Look at Community Schools in Baltimore*. Baltimore Education Research Consortium. 2014. P. iv. <http://www.familyleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CommunitySchoolsReportDec2014.pdf>.

Mayor and City Schools. Recognizing that community schools' programs often address out-of-school time (OST), the Family League has aligned its OST programming with the CSES into a joint, comprehensive funding stream. This enables strong partnerships between schools and other public and private entities providing programs and other resources to students, families, and communities. It also facilitates relationships among these providers as well as between them and foundations, businesses, and other resources. Such partnerships can enhance diversity of opportunities for young people as well as cost-effectiveness for partners.

Research on Baltimore's community schools by the Baltimore Education Research Consortium (BERC) found:

Analysis of Out of School Time (OST) activities identified some significant findings for attendance in the middle grades in 2012-13 and 2013-14, as well as elementary students in 2013-14. Additionally, elementary grade students newly recruited to OST had significantly higher attendance and lower chronic absence rates than similar peers. Moreover, students who attended two years of OST had higher attendance rates and lower levels of chronic absence compared to similar peers who did not attend OST. While no causal claims can be made, these findings suggest encouraging trends.

These analyses find that students who regularly attended OST programs in 2013-14 had significantly higher school attendance than a group of similar students. The results also suggest that new recruits, especially those in the elementary grades, received significant benefits during their initial year of participation. In addition, students who participated for two years maintained consistently higher school attendance over that period.<sup>5</sup>

While it is difficult, as BERC noted, to attribute causality, student attendance in school may reflect improved achievement, relevance, and positive atmosphere supported by effective OST (including summer) programs.

Two recent national reports highlight the potential for community schools to support out-of-school time learning, including summer learning. The 2012 Child Trends report, *Expanding Time for Learning Both Inside and Outside the Classroom: A Review of the Evidence Base*,<sup>6</sup> is a review of research on extended school day, extended school year, and expanded learning opportunities models, including summer school and other summer learning models, both school-based and community-based. The reviewers found that for all models, including summer learning, community school models are supportive "because of their focus on partnering with community organizations

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* P. 19.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Child\\_Trends-2012\\_08\\_16\\_RB\\_TimeForLearning.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Child_Trends-2012_08_16_RB_TimeForLearning.pdf)

and extending the hours of operation to offer academic and other services and supports for students and their families.”<sup>7</sup>

In addition, the 2013 report, *The Growing Convergence of Community Schools and Expanded Learning Opportunities*,<sup>8</sup> from the Institute for Educational Leadership and Coalition for Community Schools, “illustrates the prevalence of expanded learning opportunities [ELO] in community schools across the country... [and] found that expanded learning opportunities are a core component of the community schools strategy.”<sup>9</sup> Using survey data, case studies, and blog series, the report presents best practices in ELO implementation by community schools. In brief, these include:

- Community Schools Align with School’s Core Mission
  - *Role of School Districts—Strategy Alignment*
  - *Data-Driven Decision Making*
  - *School Alignment: The Role of Site Coordinators*
- Community-wide and School Site Leadership Structures Support a Comprehensive ELO Strategy
- Quality is an Important and Shared Responsibility across Partners
- Community Schools Blend and Sustain ELO Funding<sup>10</sup>

These ideas are not new to Baltimore’s community schools practitioners and policymakers. Indeed, the report cites Baltimore’s integration of its community schools and out-of-school time strategies under the leadership of the Family League.

### Challenges and opportunities

To summarize, Baltimore’s young people face a variety of challenges related to poverty and institutional racism as they plan their futures as individuals and as a community. Addressing issues related to the school calendar will be far from a panacea, but ought to be integral to any comprehensive education strategy.

#### *What’s not a solution*

Rescheduling the state-required 180-day school year so that summer breaks are shorter and there are several gaps of two or more weeks throughout the year will not by itself solve the problem. School

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* P. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Reuben Jacobson et al. *The Growing Convergence of Community Schools and Expanded Learning Opportunities*. December 2013.

[http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/ELOReporT\\_TheGrowingConvergenceofCommunitySchoolsandExpandedLearningOpportunities.pdf](http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/ELOReporT_TheGrowingConvergenceofCommunitySchoolsandExpandedLearningOpportunities.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* P. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Pp. 16-22.

districts around the country that have tried this have faced the challenge of providing students with meals, safe places, opportunities for physical exercise, constructive social experiences, and stimulating learning opportunities through each of those breaks. That requires coordination among the public schools and other public and private resources, just as effective programming for summer does. It also requires financial and in-kind investment for staffing, space, supplies, and transportation, just as summer does.

Increasing the number of school days is usually even more expensive. In 2013, Baltimore City spent \$16,578 per student. That's \$92 per school day.<sup>11</sup> A six-week, five days per week, full-time, high-quality summer learning program typically costs under \$2,000 per student. That's \$67 per school day.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, extending the school year, even if accepted by students, families, teachers, and other staff (which is, of course, unlikely), would deny students and educators the opportunity for non-mandatory, innovative programming with a unique summer culture. Some public school students do not need new summer learning programs. If their families have the financial resources, they likely have opportunities for stimulating summer activities in healthy environments. The focus needs to be on students whose families do not have such resources as a result of economic poverty and/or institutional racism. In Baltimore, of course, that means most students.

*Summer as an opportunity for innovation*

We also need to appreciate that year-round learning does not require year-round school. Many community-based nonprofit organizations operate comprehensive summer learning programs that are clearly different from school. Indeed, many of the most successful summer learning programs—including some operated by school districts—do not self-identify as “summer school.” In part, this is an aspect of marketing summer learning to students and their families. It also reflects, however, a recognition that learning occurs outside (as well as inside) traditional classrooms. Super Kids Camp (Baltimore), NJ LEEP—The New Jersey Law Education Empowerment Project, Central Enrichment Summer Adventures (Fresno), CPEP Summer Gaming Challenge (Connecticut), D.C. Scores, Energy Express (West Virginia), Global Kids (New York City), Harlem RBI REAL Kids (New York City), and Project Exploration (Chicago) are just a few of the nationally acclaimed summer learning programs that offer a distinctive learning culture in the summer.

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<sup>11</sup> Sean Welsh, “Maryland public schools spend between \$12K and \$17K per student in 2013,” *The Baltimore Sun*, January 12, 2015. <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/blog/bal-maryland-per-pupil-spending-2013-20150111-htm1story.html>

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed discussion of summer learning program costs compared to school-year per-student costs, see Jennifer Sloan McCombs *et al.* *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning*. Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation. 2011. Pp. 37-56. [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND\\_MG1120.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1120.pdf)

Finally, summer can play a special role pedagogically. Its status outside the school year provides educators flexibility to innovate, to develop strategies in areas such as student engagement, competency-based learning, experiential/active learning, work-based learning, service-learning, leadership development, civic engagement, and the culture of the learning environment. Summer can provide an excellent opportunity for educators and students to implement student-centered strategies like those of the Baltimore Algebra Project, whose mission statement says:

The Baltimore Algebra Project is a democratic, student-run and organized program mainly focused on the one-on-one tutoring of math at the middle and high school levels. Our mission is to carve a community of leaders as well as exhibit leadership while remaining committed to the education of those in need of advancements in their socioeconomic status.<sup>13</sup>

Summer is unique in offering a substantial amount of time for Baltimore’s students and their communities to address the challenges they face in innovative ways.

*Community schools as platforms for year-round learning*

Given that providing year-round supports for young people’s learning, health, and safety will require resources not currently allocated, and given the fiscal constraints of a community like Baltimore City, cost-effectiveness has to be a key concern of any relevant strategy. Baltimore has the advantage of having underway a robust community schools initiative. Key characteristics of the initiative—numerous and diverse partners and resources, recognition that students “grow up in families who are integral parts of communities,” established relationships in individual schools during the academic year—reflect existing values and infrastructure on which to build year-round programming. Whether or not a community school already has a robust summer program, the costs of implementation or enhancement should be less than in other schools. Indeed, the Family League’s integration of its community school and out-of-school time programs is itself based on these premises.

But cost is not the only concern. Summer learning advocates promote data-sharing among schools and out-of-school time providers. This is critical to making summer offerings as individualized as possible to maximize benefit for every student. It is also important to institutionalize the relationship between school-year and summer providers with the aim of having a year-round learning plan for each student. Information must flow from the summer program to the school before doors open for the fall term, just as it is crucial that summer providers understand each student’s status before summer programming begins. BCPS and the community schools network have begun taking steps to develop systemic protocols to support essential data-sharing between schools and summer program providers while protecting student privacy.

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<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.baltimorealgebraproject.org/#!about1/c1x1t>.

*Challenges and issues*

Research by the RAND Corporation<sup>14</sup> suggests that a minimum of five weeks of a full-time, high-quality summer learning program may be adequate to stem summer learning loss. Given that the BCPS summer break is about ten weeks long, students participating in such a program still face five weeks of summer without programming.

While students may indeed “deserve a break” from organized learning, they also deserve routine access to safe places for recreation and exercise as well as to nutritious meals. Five weeks in the summer without these resources can be at least unhealthy, even deadly. While we may not need full-scale summer learning programs every week of the summer, young people in poverty do need nutritious meals every day. They need to be able to exercise and socialize in safe spaces. So, while a community school and its partners may not provide day-long academic and enrichment programs throughout the entire summer, we do need them to provide daily resources that support at least health and safety. In doing so, they can integrate mentally stimulating games and activities into their programs, even if they aren’t traditional classes.

*So the challenge is to imagine that community schools and their partners at least approach the ideal of 24/7/365 resources for students and communities by providing: (1) comprehensive summer*

***Learning from others’ experience...***

**Lincoln, Nebraska** has developed a significant summer component of year-round learning:

At CLCs [Community Learning Centers—Lincoln’s version of community schools], the strong connections that have developed between afterschool partners and the instructional staff during the school year continue over the summer. At Huntington Elementary, for example, the school and its partners offer a 10-week summer camp that, in the morning, focuses on academics, especially reading, and is led by certified teachers. About 100 students attend the camp, representing about 35 percent of the school’s enrollment, with all of the requests for program participation filled. The Family Service Association, the school’s lead agency, keeps the program running until 6:00 p.m.—providing activities that support what the students worked on in the morning but also blending in field trips and other enrichment opportunities. When possible, staff members from partner agencies spend time in the classrooms in the morning both to support the classroom teachers and to improve their skills in classroom management. (Reuben Jacobson *et al.* *The Growing Convergence of Community Schools and Expanded Learning Opportunities*. December 2013. P. 32.)

A ten-week program virtually fills the summer. Lincoln CLCs also provide weekend meals for students’ families in need. We cannot assume that Lincoln’s experience is easily adaptable to Baltimore. But it certainly deserves further investigation.

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<sup>14</sup> Catherine H. Augustine *et al.* *Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success*. Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, 2013. P. 40.

*learning programs for a significant part of the season; and (2) daily nutrition, physical exercise, and other activities in safe places for the balance of the summer. What would it take to make this happen in Baltimore?*

The first thing to understand is that today, even with the dramatic increase in YouthWorks and other summer jobs for older youth in the wake of the 2015 Baltimore Uprising, only about 30 percent of Baltimore’s K-12 youth are enrolled in summer programs. Seventy percent are cut loose for the full summer.

Costs and sources of finance are crucial issues. So is faculty and staff buy-in. The first key to addressing these is to recognize that an “all-summer” program need not and should not be mandatory for all students. Though a minority, many Baltimore families provide adequate learning opportunities, nutrition, exercise, and safe spaces for their students. What we need are the additional opportunities for the majority of students whose families cannot provide them. Recognizing this is essential to begin considering costs and finances. It also means that, though significant numbers of faculty and staff will be necessary, summer programming will not make school-year faculty and staff participation mandatory for all.

### **Recommendations for action**

The following recommendations are mostly about process. We need to set ambitious yet realistic expectations, but also to engage all relevant constituencies in developing both long-term goals and an immediate action plan. We should guard against being overly prescriptive.

The vision is that community schools provide year-round comprehensive resources—addressing learning, health, safety, and social development—to students, their families, and their communities. Baltimore is well on the way to realizing this vision in more than one-quarter of its public schools under the Community and School Engagement Strategy. Community schools, their site coordinators, and partners provide a wide range of services, resources, and opportunities during the school year. Some have summer learning programs. We need to increase the number with summer learning programs and address what else we need to do to provide seamless year-round programming.

To a significant extent, specific needs vary by age group. Older youth need decent-paying summer jobs in programs that promote postsecondary education, career exploration, and civic engagement as well as support for academic advancement. (See Appendix.) Students in middle school and those moving into middle school and high school particularly need socio-emotional support to support them in those transitions. All ages need and deserve high-quality, stimulating, engaging activities in literacy, math, science, the arts, social studies, and physical and social development. All ages need good nutrition and safe places at all times.

So what steps should we take to develop goals, objectives, and an action plan?

*Who?*

We don't have to start from scratch to build a Year-Round Community School Strategy leadership body. The Family League has in recent years convened the Community and School Engagement Strategy Steering Committee (CSESSC), including representatives of BCPS, the Mayor's office, other city agencies, community school principals, site coordinators and partners, local foundations, and others. The Year-Round group could be a special committee of the CSESSC. In addition, the Family League has convened a Summer Steering Committee and Summer Providers Group to lead development of summer learning community systems-building. Members of these summer groups overlap the CSESSC. So we should begin with the CSESSC and add members as necessary from these groups to ensure that key constituencies have representation. We should also be sure to engage families (perhaps through the PTA or through community schools), students (perhaps through community schools), other community members, and the Baltimore Teachers Union. As with the Summer Steering Committee and Providers Group, we may want to use a segmented organizational approach to avoid making the leadership team and their meetings unwieldy.

*Some guiding principles*

While avoiding being overly prescriptive, we want to provide a meaningful framework of principles to drive development of community schools as sources of year-round learning resources. An important resource is the National Summer Learning Association's "Community Indicators of Effective Summer Learning Systems," which is "based on the theory that effective summer learning systems can provide more summer learning opportunities for youth, improve program quality, and improve outcomes for youth through coordinated and collaborative action at the community level."<sup>15</sup> This means addressing issues in six domains: Shared Vision and City-Wide Coordination; Engaged Leadership; Data Management System; Continuous Quality Improvement; Sustainable Resources; and Marketing and Communications.<sup>16</sup> Note that these significantly overlap the best practices in ELO implementation by community schools outlined by the Institute for Educational Leadership and Coalition for Community Schools.

More specifically, guiding principles for developing year-round learning in Baltimore should include:

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<sup>15</sup> Family League of Baltimore and National Summer Learning Association, *Investments and Opportunities in Summer Learning: A Community Assessment of Baltimore, Maryland.* 2013. Pp. 6-7.

[http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/resmgr/Publications/Baltimore\\_CI\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/resmgr/Publications/Baltimore_CI_Report_2014.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

1. Engage as many constituencies as meaningfully as practical. This includes students, families, teachers, and other school staff as well as others. Community schools can play an important role in initiating and sustaining engagement.
2. Maximize students' access to learning resources throughout the year, whether that means full-time programming or not. The Enoch Pratt Free Library, Y of Central Maryland, and Boys and Girls Clubs among others may be key players in addressing this.
3. Appreciate that without adequate safe places, health resources, nutrition, and physical exercise, students' ability to learn is compromised. Through schools and their community partners, including notably the City's Departments of Health and Recreation and Parks, providing resources addressing these needs year-round must be a top priority.
4. Understand that developing new resources for year-round learning should not undermine support for other important initiatives enhancing community well-being. While new costs are inevitable, they should be minimized by building on existing physical and organizational infrastructure, particularly Baltimore's community schools initiative.
5. Know that building public support and engagement is as important as developing physical and organizational infrastructure.
6. Understand that promoting year-round learning does not mean simply extending the school year. That would undermine the opportunity for educators to innovate using a special summer culture to engage students in learning in new ways.
7. Recognize that planning for year-round learning and student supports is not just about summer; it means addressing other gaps throughout the year in nutrition, safety, and other resources for young people.

*Learning from others' experience...*

The **Rochester, NY** school district added 300 hours to the school year at ten schools. This involved summer programming as well as extending the school day. A recent article by the school superintendent and recently retired president and CEO of the Rochester Business Alliance points to three key strategies that have made the initiative successful:

- *Taking time to get allies on board.* This includes unions and parents.
- *Tapping community organizations to fill the gaps—and holding them accountable.* The Rochester experience points to the value of building on community schools' infrastructure and relationships.
- *Making the longer school days [and summer programming] voluntary, with a rigorous school-selection process.* Significant innovation requires buy-in of all key parties. Start with schools where all strategic constituencies are on board.

(Bolgen Vargas and Sandra A. Parker. "Lessons from a Longer School Day (and Year)." *Education Week*, July 7, 2015.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/07/08/lessons-from-a-longer-school-day-and.html>)

Baltimore's experience with community schools addresses all three strategies.

8. Appreciate that year-round programming need not and should not be mandatory for all students. Students whose families have the resources to “fill the gaps” need not enroll in the proposed year-round beyond-school activities.
9. Understand that programming may look very different at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, with focus respectively on literacy, social and emotional development, and career preparation.
10. Use research-based and evidence-based methods to develop and implement a year-round learning system. Build program and system evaluation into all budgets.
11. Build on existing resources, including not only community schools, but programs like the BCPS CTE Pathways.

*Next steps*

Based on these principles, the Family League should seek a planning grant to convene an appropriately representative body to:

1. Identify long-term goals and short- and medium-term objectives;
2. Develop programmatic and budget options for a pilot project;
3. Develop a marketing plan for the pilot project;
4. Identify a funder or funders to support the pilot project; and
5. Identify a small number of community schools suitable for piloting a year-round learning initiative, perhaps one each at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels.

We should follow the lead of young people who want to build a positive future for themselves and their community. The community schools movement in Baltimore can support those young people in many ways. Making year-round learning a part of our community’s culture is one of them.

## Appendix—Older Youth

As noted above, older youth need decent-paying summer jobs in programs that promote postsecondary education, career exploration, and civic engagement as well as support for academic advancement. That seems to put a huge burden on summer, but a growing body of evidence-based practice acknowledges that and sees successful summer programming as an integral component of year-round, multi-year initiatives rather than a stand-alone effort. According to a 2015 report from the Pathways to Prosperity Network, an initiative of Jobs for the Future and the Harvard Graduate School of Education:

The most effective work-based learning takes the form of a continuum of activities. Students begin with **career awareness and exploration** through activities such as guest speakers and field trips. They then transition to **career preparation** activities, such as working with industry mentors and completing internships. Finally, the **career training** phase of the continuum prepares students for work in specific occupations. Students should be engaged in this continuum beginning no later than in the middle grades and should continue with work-based learning through high school and into postsecondary education.<sup>17</sup>

Learning-rich summer jobs as integral to such a continuum should include appropriate training, constructive ongoing feedback on student performance, and facilitated reflection, especially among peers.

In the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) Career and Technology Education (CTE) Pathways program, “students take rigorous academic courses *and* participate in work-based learning opportunities, including job shadowing, mentoring with industry professionals or internships. After successful completion of a CTE program, students can graduate from high school with industry certification or college credit — and have a ‘leg up’ toward an in-demand, well paid career.”<sup>18</sup> The CTE Pathways program includes Pathways in:

- Arts, Media and Communication
- Business, Management and Finance
- Career Research and Development (a career exploration program)
- Construction and Development
- Consumer Services, Hospitality and Tourism
- Environmental, Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Gateway to Technology (a middle school program focused on science, technology, engineering and math)

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<sup>17</sup> Charlotte Cahill and Sheila Jackson. *Not as Hard as You Think: Engaging High School Students in Work-Based Learning*. Boston: Jobs for the Future, May 2015. P. 7.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cte>.

- Health and Biosciences
- Human Resource Services
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology
- Transportation Technologies

The Pathways program partners with Baltimore City’s YouthWorks summer jobs initiative to match CTE students with jobs relevant to their Pathway. Examples include summer research positions at the University of Maryland and an engineering “boot camp” at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. All in all, about 10,000 BCPS students are engaged in CTE. But far fewer have CTE summer opportunities. According to Michael Thomas, BCPS’s Director, Learning to Work, community schools could play an important role in facilitating partnerships with employers convenient to their schools. Such partnerships might not only provide summer jobs and internships, but could advise the schools on the latest technology and other developments in their respective industries to support cutting edge curriculum development. Expanding summer opportunities is a priority for Baltimore’s CTE programs, budget permitting. Community schools could at a minimum facilitate important partnerships cost-effectively. Currently at least seventeen Baltimore community schools provide CTE programs for middle and high school students.<sup>19</sup>

As Baltimore continues to expand summer job opportunities for youth, we would do well to consider expanding the integration of that work with learning during the summer and year-round. Community schools provide an excellent platform for negotiating relationships with diverse employers to provide students access to a variety of work-based learning opportunities.

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<sup>19</sup> This paragraph is based on an interview with Michael Thomas, Director, Learning to Work, Baltimore City Public Schools, October 13, 2015.