



**Comprehensive Plan for  
Supporting Excellence and Equity in Education  
through High Quality Teaching and Learning  
and System-wide Accountability  
in Baltimore City Public Schools**

*March 23, 2016*

**“I believe that the mayor should own, be accountable and responsible for our city schools’ performance. The Commissioners are appointed by the mayor, and there is where the current disconnect lies. It’s not even a matter of hierarchy, it’s a matter of working together, leading as a mayor with known expectations of what the school system needs to accomplish.” – Carl Stokes**

## **Top Objectives for HIGH QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Transform Baltimore’s public schools into effective institutions focused on teaching and learning to produce college- and career-ready students

- ✓ Ensure that each school has a highly qualified, visionary leader with adequate resources to create and maintain a world-class school
- ✓ Implement an engaging, innovative, rigorous curriculum that incorporates real-world and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills
- ✓ 89% fourth grade proficiency by 2020
- ✓ Provide college- and career-readiness academic pathways for all students, beginning in middle school
- ✓ Utilize creative strategies for teacher and administrator recruitment, offering incentives for those who live in Baltimore City
- ✓ Offer relevant, high quality, ongoing professional growth opportunities for teachers and administrators
- ✓ Strengthen partnerships among all stakeholders to support school success
- ✓ Learning environment that encourages and stimulates
- ✓ Provide wrap-around resources for students and families
- ✓ Mandatory extended day for 4-8 grades
- ✓ Structuring Out of School Time programming to achieve academic excellence

## **Top Objectives for SYSTEM-WIDE ACCOUNTABILITY**

Optimize accountability for student achievement, responsible stewardship of resources, positive school climate, effective operations, and parent and community involvement

- ✓ Audit each administrative office and department to ensure the use of resources aligns with specific goals and objectives leading to improved student achievement
- ✓ Implement a streamlined and efficient administration that eliminates bureaucratic obstacles to school success
- ✓ Support the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Buildings Plan to ensure students and communities have access to modern, technology-equipped learning spaces
- ✓ Establish and enforce system-wide standards for discipline and classroom conduct to reduce disruptive behavior
- ✓ Streamline system-wide student accountability and assessment programs
- ✓ Partially elected and representative School Board of Commissioners

# Comprehensive Plan for Supporting Excellence and Equity in Education through High Quality Teaching and Learning and System-wide Accountability

## OVERVIEW

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is an assessment administered to students across the country every other year. According to the 2015 NAEP results, **89 percent of fourth grade students and 87 percent of the eighth grade students in Baltimore City Public Schools failed to meet the Reading standards. In Mathematics, 88 percent of both fourth and eighth grade students failed to meet the standards.** Educating our children must be the number one priority in Baltimore City.

The Stokes Administration will transform Baltimore City Public Schools into a system of world-class schools where students graduate and are trained for a career or prepared to attend college. This vision supports the *Excellence & Equity 2020: Baltimore City Public Schools' Five-Year Strategic Plan*.

To accomplish this vision, the Stokes Administration will collaborate with the City Schools' administration and the Board of School Commissioners to aggressively pursue two goals:

1. Transform Baltimore's public schools into effective institutions focused on teaching and learning to produce college and career ready students.
2. Optimize accountability for student achievement, responsible stewardship of resources, positive school climate, effective operations, and parent and community involvement.

## THE STRATEGY

The strategy builds on over 40 years of research that identifies the teacher as the most significant factor in student achievement. Ongoing teacher training and support will focus on a fundamental change in teacher practice that results in increased student learning.

Both educational and organizational research describe the positive impact of increased accountability on student achievement, continuous improvement and organizational development. Increased accountability will include setting meaningful, ambitious, achievable goals and monitoring results to measure progress.

These two principles are the cornerstone of the Stokes education strategy.

### ***Teaching and Learning***

- ***Highly qualified, visionary and resourceful leadership*** – School principals must have the knowledge, skills and abilities to successfully lead teaching and learning, and to appropriately allocate resources to support improved student achievement. The Stokes Administration will

provide comprehensive support for school leaders, focused on instructional and transformational leadership. The goal is to grow dynamic leaders who establish an ambitious vision for their schools; promote and maintain a school climate conducive to teaching and learning; effectively monitor teaching and learning; motivate and celebrate student achievements; and collaborate with parents and community partners to promote continuous school improvement.

- ***Engaging, rigorous and accessible curriculum*** – All students require instruction that is relevant, challenging, differentiated and aligned with Maryland’s college and career readiness standards. With a goal of 89 percent of fourth grade students performing at or above grade level in reading by year 2020, the Stokes Administration will expand programs for quality early learning opportunities and increased grade level reading and math skills for all students. Investing in innovative strategies and the use of high-impact strategies and programs to improve literacy skills, will help close the gap among achieving and non-achieving students. This will include additional teachers in reading and math classrooms, tutoring programs and regular monitoring of student progress.
- ***89% fourth grade proficiency by 2020*** – Eighty-nine percent of fourth grade students and 87 percent of the eighth grade students in Baltimore City Public Schools failed to meet the reading standards. In mathematics, 88 percent of both fourth and eighth grade students failed to meet the standards. And these numbers are worse for poor black children. We cannot pick and choose who we educate. If the problem is home then we must address those problems; if the problem is school leadership or teachers we will address those problems; if the problem is resources, these problems will be addressed.
- ***College and career readiness academic pathways*** – Beginning in middle school, students need ongoing exposure to and preparation for postsecondary and career opportunities. While Maryland continues to lead the nation in the percentage of students passing Advanced Placement (AP) exams, there is still significant disparity in participation and performance of low income students. The Stokes Administration will promote the early identification of academically talented students for honors and Advanced Placement programs.

Based on industry forecasts, the number of Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs to prepare middle and high school students for high-skill, high demand careers will be expanded as will local partnerships that provide dual enrollment, internship, apprenticeship and job shadowing opportunities.

- ***Creative recruitment strategies for educators*** – Baltimore City must be an attractive place to live, work and play to support economic development and neighborhood revitalization. This includes successful neighborhood schools. The Stokes Administration will collaborate with community and state partners to offer incentives to highly qualified educators who live and work in Baltimore City, including a tax break for homeownership within the City; ideas such as student loan relief for

graduates of Baltimore City Public Schools who attend local colleges and sign teaching contracts with City schools and discounts and other benefits to City attractions.

- ***Ongoing, relevant training for teachers and administrators*** – Educators need high quality professional learning opportunities to enhance their effectiveness and improve student achievement including high quality professional development for educators focused on identified areas of need, as well as cultural competency, literacy and leadership. Teacher training will focus on using high impact strategies, monitoring student progress regularly, and differentiating instruction so that all students are learning.
- ***Strong partnerships to support school success*** – Successful schools are a critical component of economic development and neighborhood revitalization in Baltimore City. Under the Stokes Administration, collaboration with community, state and national partners to garner support for increased school success will increase. This may equate to financial or human resources with the latter being most important. In order to expand curriculum and out of school time programming, the city will need volunteers from engineers employed by the many Department of Defense contractors to the arts community and to the many institutes of higher learning where role models and smart young adults abound.
- ***Learning environment that encourages and stimulates success*** - The schools have wrapped drinking water fountains in plastic so the children don't use them, yet the water in the bathroom sinks are still contaminated with lead. Children will go into the bathrooms and cup water in their hands to drink. Turning off drinking fountains is not the solution; replacing old pipes is the solution. The Stokes Administration will partner with the Governor, General Assembly and CEOs to provide additional funding for improved infrastructure including cleaning or replacing old plumbing to eliminate the lead in school water; environmentally friendly schools and grounds including solar; advanced technology; and wrap-around services like nurses, mental health workers and counselors to name a few ideas.
- ***Resources for students and families*** – Eighty-four percent of our children are on free and reduced lunch. That can mean that these children are not receiving proper nourishment at home and rely on the schools to feed them. This is just one area of child/family support all schools must provide. When students come to school in need of mental health services, or a family requires assistance from social services, those services and programs will be available at the school.
- ***Mandatory extended day for 4-8 grades*** – Extended day does not mean a longer math class or more social studies. Extended day will incorporate additional activities to engage the students in cognitive learning techniques not often learned in the classroom. Student will learn math and problem solving in robotics; reading and comprehension in learning an instrument, and teamwork, research and writing in debate. Extended day would also include dinner.

- ***Structuring Out of School Time programming to achieve academic excellence*** – Not only should out of school time locations be safe, they must be fun and engaging in order to keep and maintain participation. Out of school time activities might be conducted at the school, a recreation center or church. They might be run by the school system, recreation staff or nonprofits. And all out of school time programming should continue into early evening and include dinner.

### ***Accountability***

- ***Alignment of allocation and use of resources to support initiatives leading to improved student achievement*** – The city only invests \$200 million in the education of our children and the police have a \$500 million budget. If we invest in our children, then crime will drop. The Stokes Administration will increase the percentage of the City budget allocated to Baltimore City Public Schools to 30 percent in the first four years; collaborate with State leaders to lobby for restoration of funding for education programs in Baltimore City; and develop a system of checks and balances to ensure use of human capital and fiscal resources are focused on increasing student achievement.
- ***Streamlined administrative offices for efficient and effective operations focused on student achievement*** – The Stokes Administration will encourage and support the elimination of bureaucratic obstacles to school success including excess staffing and ineffective processes. Just as the city government must conduct audits, it is clear that City Schools must do the same on a regular, not as-requested, basis.
- ***Creation of 21<sup>st</sup> century school facilities to support increased student achievement*** – The 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Buildings Plan will create modernized, technology-equipped learning environments that support excellence in teaching and learning. A top priority for the Stokes Administration is the monitoring and support needed to implement the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Buildings Plan to ensure that new and renovated schools help transform student learning opportunities, increase student achievement, offer resources for families and communities, and revitalize neighborhoods.
- ***System-wide standards for discipline and classroom conduct*** – Data shows overuse of exclusionary discipline practices and disproportionate rates of discipline for students of color and students with disabilities in Baltimore City. The city will collaborate with City schools’ administration and Board of Commissioners to encourage and support positive school cultures, focused on positive adult-student relationships, strong student and staff attendance, cleanliness, safety and a climate of mutual respect. For those students who are chronically disruptive will be removed from the classroom and placed in an alternative learning setting within the school and provided the necessary resources and counseling the student might need.

- ***Effective and efficient student accountability and assessment program*** –The Stokes Administration will promote and support a streamlined, system-wide student accountability program to encourage decreased frequency in district-wide testing, yet more comprehensive assessment instruments that yield the information needed to drive instruction, enrichment and intervention.
- ***Partially elected and representative School Board of Commissioners*** – The Stokes Administration will advocate for no less than two members be representative of the school population. Eighty-five percent of the Baltimore city public school population is poor and black yet there is not one member on the Board who is both poor and black. As our immigrant population grows and students with disabilities continue to be an integral part of our school system, the board must include experts who understand these populations in order to advise the board as a whole on related issues. The board should be partially elected by the parents of students.