



The Baltimore Curriculum Project (BCP) manages four neighborhood charter schools in East Baltimore. Our mission is to develop, implement, and advocate for an innovative, sustainable, and replicable education model that improves student outcomes. In so doing, the Baltimore Curriculum Project will help to raise educational standards and opportunities for disadvantaged youth and Baltimore City schools.

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CLASS NOTES

FALL 2011
www.baltimorecp.org



Around the World in Four Newsletters...

Over the next four issues educators from around the world will share their thoughts on public education.



Andrew Biemiller
 Professor Emeritus
 Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of
 Child Study
 University of Toronto
 Canada

What is the purpose of public education?

I believe that public education should prepare students for both employment (or further

education) and citizenship. By citizenship, I mean an understanding of how our various elected governments function (as realistically as possible), a general understanding of what governments do for citizens and how this is paid for, and an understanding of how the legal and police work. In my opinion, in Canada (and the U.S.), there is little attention to citizenship in the current world as an organizer of school learning.

I also believe that successful education leads to both academic skills and knowledge (broadly speaking, literacy and numeracy as well as measurement) and applications. To be literate, students must acquire a broad understanding of their language including vocabulary. In addition, students must be able to apply their academic skills in realistic contexts. This is true of reading (and demonstrating understanding), writing, and various applications of mathematics. Finally, as discussed at length in *Nurturing Independent Learners* (Meichenbaum & Biemiller, 1998), I believe that students need to spend some of their time in school collaborating with others and becoming able to apply academic skills and knowledge independently—without teacher direction.

Because I believe that students come with some substantial differences in natural academic talents and

Continued on page 2

acquired differences



Ali Wannas Lafi Al-Rikabi
 Head of Translation Department
 University of Basrah
 Basra, Iraq

What is the purpose of public education?

The purpose of public education is to qualify people to play a part in serving the local community and the global interest of the majority of the human race.

How do you measure school success and hold schools accountable?

I believe that close observation and direct as well as indirect observation can help the people responsible for pushing the wheel of learning going on. One procedure is not enough and observation at one level is certainly incomplete.

How do you address the impact of poverty on education in your country?

As individuals I think it is not enough to utter a long speech of sympathy. The decision of facing poverty needs authoritative decision. Poverty and hunger are great obstacles in the way of educating people, though we have some examples of poor men and women who could succeed in their life. Such examples should be focused on.

How do we educate children to become members of a global community and not merely competitors in a global economy?

It is our job, as educators, not to be too local. We ought to prepare our students to become of benefit to the whole world because I believe that in the coming twenty years or so, there will be no limitations or even

Continued on page 2

borders among countries. Bilingualism should

in academic potentials due to family and community resources and values, schools should do their best to “equalize” potentials, but still accept the existence of differences. Treating every child “the same” effectively provides very different educational opportunities. At best, education must make some adjustments in both the rate of students’ progress, and the ultimate achievement that individual students reach. It is one thing to “expect” that each student will progress. It is another to expect that all will achieve as much or more than median students do now.

How does your country measure school success and hold schools accountable for educating students effectively?

In Canada, educational systems are doing reasonably well by OECD standards. Social mobility is greater than in the U.S. measured by student achievement and shifts from lower to middle income groups. A few nations are reported to do better (e.g., Finland, Singapore), but I believe no other large and diverse countries are doing better. Within Canada, educational achievement in Ontario is strong.

Assessment is conducted by the provinces. In Ontario, province-wide exams are given in the 3rd, 6th, and 12th grades. These tests include essay components which are scored individually by teams of teachers (not the student’s own teacher). There are some multiple-choice components, but not the majority of the assessment.

Nonetheless, there is much room for improvement. First Nation (aboriginal) peoples do not do well. Students from poor families,, especially multi-generational poor families, also achieve at low rates.

How do the schools in your country address the impact of poverty on education?

Education systems, while having local school boards, fund schools provincially. Local education taxes are

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pooled and supplemented by general provincial funds, so that levels of funding are similar across each province. Some supplementary funding is directed to schools in low SES (social-economic status). In general, common curricula apply province-wide (with versions in French and English in some provinces).

I have not seen an analysis of the relationship between income levels and achievement at age 15 (OECD) for the current survey. In earlier ones, in Canada, achievement by income group was less strongly impacted than in the U.S. and Great Britain but more impacted than in Sweden and the Czech Republic. (OECD, 1996)

How do we educate children to become citizens of a global community instead of merely competitors in a global economy?

I do not know how to do this. It is hard enough to foster an appreciation of equal opportunities and support for citizens of one’s own country (including here French-speaking citizens, English-speaking citizens, English Learners, French Learners, rural citizens, urban citizens, First Nation citizens (ab-origines), economically poor citizens, etc.). In Ontario, at times we have emphasized environmental problems in school and recognize that these issues go beyond our borders.

Ali Wannas Lafi Al-Rikabi (continued from page 1)

dominate and it is not a shame to choose English or Chinese to be the second language.

We would like to thank the World Trade Center Institute (WTCI) and Janine Downey, WTCI’s Assistant Manager for International Visitors and Client Services, for making this interview possible. In September 2011 BCP hosted a delegation of educators from Iraq, which included Mr. Al-Rikabi. The visit was organized by WTCI.

About the World Trade Center Institute:

Established in Baltimore in 1989 to help connect Maryland to the globe, today the World Trade Center Institute (WTCI) is the region’s largest international business network. WTCI strives to drive the growth of Maryland’s global business community through global connections, events, international business services and international visitors programs (IVP). WTCI’s IVP department designs and delivers exchange programs for foreign professionals from all around the world. Financed jointly by area businesses, the State of Maryland and the Federal Government, WTCI operates as a non-profit membership organization.



WOLFE STREET ACADEMY

Family League Awards BCP \$100K for Wolfe Street After-Schol Program



The Family League of Baltimore City has awarded the Baltimore Curriculum Project a \$100,000 BOOST grant to run the Wolfe Street After-School Program.

Kathy Stroup, Director of Extended Student Services, has managed the program for three years.

This year the program began on September 26, 2011. Currently, 82 students are enrolled and 35 students are on at the wait list. The program runs five days a week from 2:40 p.m. – 5:40 p.m.

We would like to thank the Family League for their support.

Supper Program

Every student in the after-school program receives an after-school snack and a hot, nutritious supper provided by the At-Risk Afterschool Supper Program.

This program is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and administered by the Maryland State Department of Education’s School and Community Nutrition Programs Branch.

The Family League has participated as a sponsor in the At-Risk, After-School Snack Program for more than six years.

Rigorous Program

Each student receives three hours of tutoring a week conducted by Wolfe Street Academy teachers.

St. John’s Church recently awarded Wolfe their fifth annual gift of \$10,000 to support the tutoring program.

Students spend the remaining twelve hours a week in a variety of enriching resource classes.

Art

Nancy Jagelka brings a variety of art resources to the After-School Program. She focuses on teaching students to take discarded everyday items and turn them into interesting art.

One such project involved students creating handmade cards, which were sent to a soldiers in Afghanistan.

STEM/Robotics

Our returning science teacher, Ms. Rice, is teaching Robotics to fifth graders. During each class students work

on building and programming their robots.

In January they will compete in a citywide Robotics competition. After Robotics ends in January, Ms. Rice will be teaching a Virtues and Life Skills class.

Kindergarten

Ms. Haskins, who works with Pre-K during the day, teaches our kindergarten students.

Students can choose to explore a number of resource centers including art, reading, dramatic play, writing, blocks, puzzles and music.

Playworks

Our Playworks Coach, Alison McCay, runs team sports and recreational activities.

Playworks is a national nonprofit organization that supports learning by providing safe, healthy and inclusive play and physical activity to schools at recess and throughout the entire school day.

Patterson Park Soccer League

This fall 24 Wolfe students in grades two through five participated in the Patterson Park Elementary Soccer League.

The league, which serves 165 students, is supported by grants from the David L. Holder Education Foundation and the Baltimore Ravens All Community Team Foundation.

GBYO Bridges Program

Currently in its sixth year, the GBYO’s Bridges program provides high-quality string education to students at Wolfe Street and six other City Schools at no cost to students.

The Goldseker Foundation and Downtown Baltimore Family Alliance recently awarded Wolfe a \$5,500 matching grant to support the Bridges program.

TWIGS

Several Wolfe students participate in the Baltimore School for the Arts’ TWIGS program, which offers free Saturday arts instruction to Baltimore City students who qualify by audition.



Wolfe Street's Soccer Team; part of the Patterson Park Elementary Soccer League - one of many exciting after-school activities.

Chess Club

The Chess Club, run by Wolfe instructor Mr. Kaufmann, won the elementary unrated team division at The Maryland Chess Association (MCA) tournament on Saturday, October 29th. They competed with over 175 players and teams from as far away as Virginia and Delaware.

Garden Club

On Fridays a small group of students meets to take care of Wolfe’s Community Garden and school garden, which was funded in part by an Urban Youth Garden Grant from the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation.

Last But Definitely Not Least...

On Fridays Wolfe employee Ms. Payne runs a Board Game Club. She also serves as a group leader and project assistant.

Ms. Rice runs a Dance Group and provides large group dance instruction on Fridays.

Ms. Gisela Martinez is a social work intern at the school and serves as the Project Assistant for the program. She is a social work intern at the school.

Mr. Clark Valery serves a substitute group leader and mans the front desk. He is always ready for those last minute “I need your help” phone calls.

To end on an exciting note!

Ms. Scroggins recently joined our team. With a background in acting, music and drama, Ms. Scroggins will be leading musical drama classes.

HAMPSTEAD HILL ACADEMY

Articles by Geri Swann, Director of Community Outreach, Hampstead Hill Academy
Read more Hampstead Hill Academy News at www.hha47.org



Hampstead Hill Visits White House



On October 12, 2011 more than 100 Hampstead Hill Academy students and staff participated in a physical education event at the White House.

First Lady Michelle Obama hosted hundreds of area students in an attempt to break the Guinness Book of World Records record for the most people doing jumping jacks for one minute in a 24-hour period.

This was the U.S. kick-off for a worldwide attempt to break the record held by more than 24,000 people jumping jacks. The event highlighted the First Lady's "Let's Move" healthy living initiative.



WJZ-TV press coverage of the event can be viewed at: <http://cbsloc.al/>

HHA Recess in the News

You may have seen a recent Baltimore Sun article on the importance of recess. HHA middle school students were featured in a large, front page picture.

The article highlighted the importance of having recess in the school day. It also pointed out the challenges that come with staffing and supervising recess, especially middle school recess.

Due to the small size of our middle school, it is easier to manage middle school recess. The less structured, social, outdoor time students have during recess helps them focus on their learning in class. You can read the article at: http://bit.ly/hha_recess2011

Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program

Again this year, HHA has been selected to receive about \$50,000 worth of fresh fruits and vegetables from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Good nutrition and healthy eating are part of what make for a good day at school.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture initiative, the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program (FFVP), administered by MSDE's School and Community Nutrition Programs Branch is working to increase children's consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The program delivers hundreds of pounds of fruit and vegetables to HHA each week. Staff wash and sort the food into bins that are distributed to each classroom several times a week.

Students love the program and gobble up the carrots, celery sticks, plums and bananas.



Stability Balls at HHA

Air-filled stability balls have been shown to help students focus on their studies and relieve discomfort caused by long periods of sitting on hard chairs.

HHA was recently selected to receive a grant to study the use of stability balls to replace classroom chairs. Our fourth graders will participate in the study.

Many thanks to the Abell Foundation for covering the materials and training costs associated with the program.

If the stability balls have a positive impact, we will look to expand to other grades and classrooms.



False Dichotomies

By Jon McGill, BCP Chief Academic Officer

The educational world has its own version of the "nature versus nurture" conundrum. It is most often clothed in the guise of debates about whether good teaching can make up for the circumstances in which children live. Can high quality teaching provide the conditions in which children overcome poverty, racism, and difficult home circumstances? Are parental failings, poor home situations, poverty and race really destiny or can "equal opportunity" and excellent teaching, along with excellent schools, bridge the gaps?

These are the wrong questions. They suggest that we should either focus on the issues of poverty and situation or on creating good schools and it is this false dichotomy that steers us into sterile political discussions, either-or thinking and the continuation of bad social policy. In reality, the United States trails its "industrialized competitors" because it lacks a convincing anti-poverty program, wedded, as are so many in other places (Finland, South Korea, Sweden, Singapore, Canada) to a practical vision of what an education program could be. Too much of our education system, for too long, has been reliant on charity, private sector donors of goodwill and piecemeal reform. Too frequently we are offered scapegoats: teachers, unions, parents, (especially those in high poverty communities) and the children themselves all come in for criticism. We need to get beyond blame, beyond union bashing and beyond blaming the victims. We need an education policy.

In the real world of schools and educators, no one insists upon ignoring schools while we fight poverty; no one insists that we focus only on good teaching while we ignore the home lives and economic circumstances of our children. Educators can walk and chew gum at the same time: policy-makers, ideologues, authors (see Steven Brill's *Class Warfare*, for one example) and a few others still insist upon polarization: it sells books, documentaries and magazines but it is a poor nutrient for the creation of a better education system.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's latest "Kids Count" report tells us that child poverty has increased 18% between 2000 and 2009; that 30% or more of our students come to school with untreated asthma, vision deficits, hearing impairments and dental

issues. A host of other reports, some of which were cited in Charles Blow's New York Times piece on August 27th, 2011, reiterate the abysmal condition of many of our poorest children long before they ever reach the schoolhouse door.

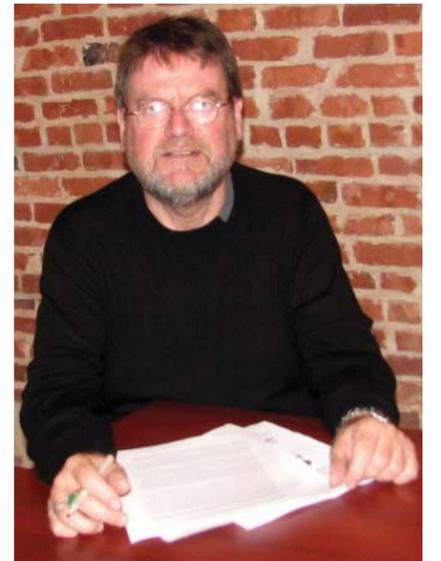
Cornel West, in a searing op-ed piece in the New York Times of 8/25/11 suggests that we have migrated from the war on poverty of the sixties to a current "war on the poor", fed by erratic policies that ignore the dire situations of our children and of the schools many of them attend.

Easy bromides about the quality of teachers, the backwardness of teacher unions and the savior status of wealthy billionaires (See *Waiting for Superman*, for one example) don't even begin to address the heart of the educational matter: we need better funding formulae, a wholesale blitz on new school building, nation-wide repair of outmoded, falling-down buildings and more rigorous, functional, research-based professional training for our teachers.

In addition to this school-focused recipe, we also need an anti-poverty program that provides the kind of funding that is endlessly available to the defense industry, to the "intelligence community" and to banks that fail to meet good management criteria.

Such a program would provide health centers at school sites; it would provide cost-free medical care for every child under the age of 18; it would provide a healthy lunch service, vision care and dental care. Our pre-Kindergarten programs and early childhood programs would double and triple in size and numbers.

We would extend the thesis of *Teach For America* (that the "best and brightest" should be lured into teaching) to the national educational philosophy. Rather than suggest such folks teach for two years



BCP Chief Academic Officer Jon McGill

THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON EDUCATION

LEADING MINDS

Challenging Conversations in Public Education

Hosted by:



On September 22, 2011 over 450 teachers, community members, and nonprofit and business leaders attended BCP's fifth Leading Minds forum on *The Impact of Poverty on Education*. Co-hosted by Loyola University Maryland's School of Education and Urbanite Magazine, the forum explored why poverty has such a detrimental impact on academic achievement and what we, as a community, can do about it.

Panelists included **Peter C. Murrell, Jr., Ph.D.**, Professor of Urban Education at Loyola's School of Education; **Jane Quinn**, Vice President and Director of the National Center for Community Schools at the Children's Aid Society; and **Heather B. Weiss, Ph.D.**, Founder and Director of the Harvard Family Research Project and Senior Research Associate and Lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Marc Steiner, host of "The Marc Steiner Show" on Baltimore's WEEA 88.9 FM, moderated the discussion.

This was the fifth forum in BCP's Leading Minds series, which engages national experts and local stakeholders in discussions about cutting-edge

educational issues that relate directly to improving public education.

An Organization Showcase before the forum featured local nonprofits and public agencies working to address the barriers to learning associated with poverty.

Presentations were followed by an in-depth Q&A and breakout discussion groups lead by the panelists and nonprofit leaders. The forum wrapped up with report backs from each of the eight breakout groups.

View videos of this and past forums at bit.ly/leadingminds

Thank You

We would like to thank Peter Murrell, Jane Quinn, Heather Weiss, and Marc Steiner for enriching our exploration of the topic with their expertise.

Thank you to Dr. Mickey Fenzel, (Interim Dean, School of Education and Affiliate Professor, Psychology Department, Loyola University Maryland) for hosting the forum and welcoming the attendees.

Thank you to Candra Healy (Executive Assistant to the Dean, Loyola University Maryland Schools of Education) for making miracles happen in the planning and execution of the event.

Thank you to Patrick Durkin (Assistant Director, Loyola Event Services), John Kline (Event Production Technician, Loyola Event Services) and the rest of their outstanding event services team.

Thank you to our sponsors:



BCP Receives US Tennis Association Organization of the Year Award

The Baltimore Curriculum Project has received the US Tennis Association/Maryland Chapter's Organization of the Year Award.

Last summer BCP launched a new Pre-K through eight school tennis initiative incorporating *10 and Under Tennis*. BCP has committed to bring tennis this year to nearly 1,500 students in all four of its schools -- City Springs School, Collington Square School, Hampstead Hill Academy, and Wolfe Street Academy -- through physical education, after school clubs, and an intramural tennis league planned for 2012.

BCP and USTA kicked off the initiative last June with a fun tennis outing in Patterson Park for over 400 students, followed this fall by an in-service training for BCP and other Baltimore City physical educators.

We would like to thank USTA/Maryland for this honor and for helping to bring tennis to our schools. Special thanks to USTA Maryland President Marc Kantrowitz, USTA Mid-Atlantic Tennis Service Representative Lynn Gertzog, and USTA Maryland 2nd Vice President Tim Almaguer for their support.

USTA Maryland's mission is to promote the growth and development of tennis in Maryland as a healthy lifetime sport available to all regardless of age and ability. USTA Maryland fosters an inclusive tennis environment and greater diversity throughout the sport.

For more information visit: www.maryland.usta.com/



COLLINGTON SQUARE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Arts Every Day at Collington



In an era where art and music are frequently sacrificed on the altar of high-stakes testing, the arts are alive and well at Collington Square School of the Arts.

Collington Square is one of 44 City schools participating in

Arts Every Day, a program that facilitates connections between the arts and learning for every student, every day.

Collington students in grades K-8 receive visual arts instruction as part of the core curriculum. Ms. Laura Bevacqua, a certified art teacher, teaches PreK - 5th graders once a week.

Grades 6-8 receive 90 minutes of visual arts instruction everyday for a six week quarter

Students learn art history and two dimensional and three dimensional techniques. They also learn principals and elements of art through creative art making.

Ms. Bevacqua develops sessions to merge the visual arts and core curriculum classes to help with students understanding of overall grade appropriate materials.

Collington Square students

grow in their ability to describe, interpret, evaluate, and respond to work in the Visual Arts.

Through examination of their own work and that of other people, students learn to communicate their understanding of the world around them.

Arts Every Day provides access to resources on arts integration, professional development opportunities, and a minimum of \$5 per student to be used towards arts-integrated programming.

For more detailed information about the Arts Every Day Schools Program, please contact Schools Program Manager, Tammy Oppel at tammy@artseveryday.org.



Elev8 Baltimore Arts Offerings at Collington

The Collington arts experience doesn't stop at the end of the school day. Students participate in visual arts and dance programs, courtesy of Elev8 Baltimore.



In addition to after-school programming, **Art with a Heart** brings its visual art programs to abused, neglected and abandoned children; homeless people; battered women and their children; pregnant adolescents; mentally and physically

disabled adults; low-income senior citizens; elementary, middle, and high school students; and children receiving long-term health care.



The Creative Alliance is working with students on creating a mural in the auditorium, which will debut

in December. The nonprofit organization builds communities by bringing together artists and audiences from diverse backgrounds to experience spectacular arts programs and engage in the creative

process.



Dance N' Motion is a community art organization whose aim is to provide support within the

community to develop a recreational and creative sense of expression, through positive messages of dance.



see kids out of school. I'd stop and ask them why they weren't in school. I started talking with kids. If they get somebody who can take the time out of his schedule to help them they can change for the greater good. This gave me the drive to see what else I could do to help kids.

Last year I met with Mr. and Mrs. Doherty and said I wanted to mentor kids. I met with City Springs Social Worker Krista Wible and started mentoring at City Springs School. After mentoring for some time I called Mr. Doherty and said I needed to get into the school. The kids needed me.

Mr. Doherty introduced me to Jon McGill and I interviewed with City Springs Principal Rhonda. I was hired as a para educator.

How do you like teaching?

The kids are inquisitive about where I come from. In class, when I see they are getting it, I want more, and when I see they are not getting it, I want more.



False Dichotomies (continued from page 3)

then become power brokers of one kind or another, we could encourage such people to devote a career to children and to education. Paying them and training them properly would help.

Americans, perhaps more than any other nationality, profess their regard for children, their desire to have their kids experience better lives than their parents, and their anxiety about good education.

Somehow, however, we have failed to translate these honest, heartfelt aspirations into federal and state policy and practice. Instead, we have politicians with little or no background in education theory and practice working alongside bean counters who probably have not been inside a city school since Sputnik circled the skies.

There are myriad threats to our national well-being and every generation thinks its challenges are the most vexing and complex. Someone remarked, back in the early 1980's, in *A Nation At Risk*, that if external enemies really wanted to destroy the United States, they could do no better than to create the education

system we had at that time.

In the three decades since, things have deteriorated further. The greatest threat to our economic success, to our social fabric, to our national future, is our failure to adequately address both poverty and the impact it has on our ability to educate our children.

Yes, of course great teaching and dedicated teachers are fundamentally important but those who suggest that is all we need to make up for poverty should read Basil Bernstein's seminal essay of the 1970's "Why Education Cannot Compensate for Society".

They should also actually ask great teachers, of whom Baltimore has many, why they are stressed, exhausted and frustrated, despite their love of children and devotion to educating them. In many ways it is because they are constantly asked to substitute their herculean efforts for the basic necessities of life denied to so many of the urban and rural poor.

Steven Brill, in his book, *Class Warfare*, talks only to the novices in Teach for America, none of whom have enough experience to be experts in education, or to system administrators such as Joel Klein, he of the Rupert Murdoch empire now.

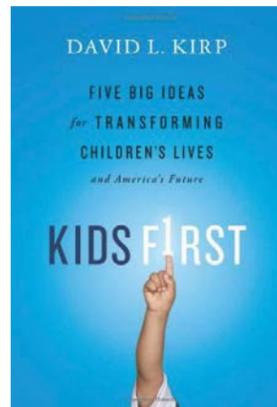
Klein is able to berate teacher unionism, sigh at Mayor Bloomberg's efforts to compromise with the UFT and, in the end, fail to conjure up even one significant education reform in all his years as Chancellor in New York City.

What all these "reformers" failed to do is espouse a radical anti-poverty program, hand-in-glove with great teaching, good curricular content and appropriate authentic assessment.

It is never too late to change course, however: let's close the polar gap by bringing national resources to bear on a critical issue that is just as vital for the nation as national security and national economic progress.

(Instead of reading Brill, or watching *Waiting for Superman*, we could have been reading David Kirp's far more insightful treatise, *Kids First: Transforming Children's Lives and America's Future*).

Indeed, we are neither secure nor progressive unless we create a modern early childhood to higher education system that would, for the first time, justify our sense of "exceptionalism".



Kids First, by David Kirp, considers the impact of poverty on education and clarifies the importance of investing wisely in children.

CITY SPRINGS SCHOOL NEWS

From Baraka to BCP: An Interview with Antoine Lewis

Antoine Lewis' journey from the Baraka School to City Springs School began over 15 years ago.

The ties between the Baraka School and the Baltimore Curriculum Project (BCP) run deep. The Baraka School was an experimental school funded by The Abell Foundation, the organization that, under the leadership of Abell President Bob Embry, co-founded the BCP with BCP President Muriel Berkeley.

Chris Doherty, the Baraka School's first Director, formerly served as BCP's Executive Director. Laura Doherty, a National Institute for Direct Instruction consultant working with all BCP schools, once oversaw curriculum at the Baraka School.

Chris and Laura Doherty were instrumental in connecting you with BCP and City Springs School. How did you get to know them?

Mr. and Mrs. Doherty have been a blessing in my life. I met them when I was 12 and have maintained a relationship with them ever since. They are just awesome. I lost touch with them in high school. In 2001 I heard the Baraka School was shutting its doors. That was a huge disappointment. I reached out to them to reconnect.

The Baraka School was one of the most influential experiences in my life. I don't think the Baraka School or the Abell Foundation know how much it changed my life. I went from seeing the world through a small magnifying glass to taking off a roof.

I maintained a relationship with Mr. Doherty throughout College. I had six tickets to my college graduation. After my Mom, the next two tickets went to Mr. and Mrs. Doherty. When I walked across the stage the second and third faces I saw were Mr. and Mrs. Doherty. That was a great feeling and I didn't want that feeling to leave.

Mr. Doherty is one of the main influential father figures in my life. He taught me how to tie a tie. He taught me to play chess and how to use chess as a catalyst in life. You always have to be thinking ahead two or three moves and plan ahead. He taught me great life lessons.

When I met Mr. and Mrs. Doherty's children, Mr. Doherty said "this is your brother." The older kids understood, but the younger kids were totally confused. They said "this is my brother, but he looks nothing like me."

Now my wife and I visit them at least once a month. He gives me fatherly guidance and advice. Mr. and Mrs. Doherty attended my wedding. They have been a blessing in my life that no one can understand but me and them. I am grateful that God let them cross my path.

How did the Baraka School change your life?

Baraka took me out of an environment that could have swallowed me up. It gave me the correct tools to rise above all the negative influences that plagued me.

I want to be a family guy that is faithful and committed to the idea of marriage. That's huge for me



Antoine Lewis and his wife, Danielle Lewis, who serves as a Para-Educator at Collington Square School

because that was a void for me I'm trying to fill. Fortunately, I had my mother and Mr. and Mrs. Doherty in my life. My mother was willing to take a risk. She said "my son says Baraka is something he needs" and she took a gamble that when I came back I'd be somebody.

I see so many lost faces. It's not that they don't have dreams. It's that they don't have anybody to believe in the dreams that they have. Someone to say I'm going to love you; I'm going to believe in you. Someone like Mr. Doherty who says I still believe in your dreams and shows up for my graduation after 10 years. He made a commitment to me when I was 12 and said I believe in your dreams.

That's what I want to give to City Springs School and my daughter and everyone I come

into contact with. I believe someone's watching and somebody's sees what our family represents as a whole.

What did you do after the Baraka School?

I started focusing on what type of life I wanted for myself and my family. In High School I wanted to have a club called Aces. After college I called a friend from high school and we put together a business plan to open the club. None of the banks would give us a loan. They said it was a risky business. We started saving money and selling the ideas to people with space for a club. Finally, someone said yes.

Another blessing poured on me. The club opened in 2009 and stayed open for 20 months. During that time I learned how to build a business from scratch. All of those tools are in my toolbox.

What inspired you to want to work in a public school?

Having a family is very dear to my heart and that was a void for me. I have a good mother, but being a man I needed to have a male influence in my life to understand what it is to transition from boy to young man. God had my path cross with so many influential people and programs.

There's somebody with a void who is looking to us as a blueprint. I want to be part of BCP because I have a young lady. If I turn my back on these young men; if I don't help make great men and great leaders; my daughter will have no one to marry. I want to create young men that can court my daughter and treat my daughter like a queen.

Sometimes we lived in the dark because we couldn't pay the electric bill. My mom worked two or three jobs. My sister would babysit and say "sit down. You're gonna learn." This is what family is about.

Growing up in East Baltimore; having a single parent mother; and being able to overcome has been one of my life's greatest accomplishments. Seeing that strong woman raise 3 kids into productive adults – I thank my mother every day. She didn't have to. It was love.

To raise two sons with in a community plagued by drugs, negativity and jail. I'm very humble with the fact that wasn't my story. I'm thankful for everything I've received; for Ms. Muriel for giving me the opportunity

to have a voice about it. Some people are ashamed to talk about it. You don't know how many lives you can change by telling your story.

I want to be that Mr. Doherty who goes to the college graduation of a kid he taught in 6th grade. That is priceless. I believe in these kids in Baltimore. I want to be able to say that in years to come. I believe in BCP and what they stand for and that these people are fighting to help kids. For some it's a job; for others it's about finding the next best curriculum to change the world. For the sake of these kids.

I love the fact that I'm both book smart and street smart. That I can relate to kids in the projects but I can also be articulate and put on a suit and go into any board room in America. I am a man who loves his family, loves to help people, and loves to be a change in somebody's life through example.

How did you first get involved with the Baraka School?

In 1996 The Abell

Foundation sent representatives out to City Schools plagued with violence and found "bad kids." I didn't think I was a bad kid. All the sixth grade boys at Booker T. Washington had a meeting. Misha Brooks talked about a 2-year program in Kenya. I went home and told my mother I was going to Africa, but she didn't believe me.

There was another mandatory meeting at the end of the week. Misha and Chris and Laura Doherty talked about the Baraka School. They said that kids aren't blooming in an environment with drugs and crime. They wanted to give us stability for two years.

I said to my mother that I really thought this would change my life. I couldn't say that I would be a productive person without it. My mom realized that she couldn't give me everything I needed and allowed me to join the program.

They thought they could help 48 boys. They had 6 hours a day of summer orientation including breakfast and lunch. They picked 21 out of the 48 boys. At the end of the summer they let you know who was selected. We had a month to prepare for the trip. We got on the plane and a day and a half later we landed in Nairobi, Kenya. It was challenging initially. I was homesick and wanted to leave, but then I started to enjoy the experience.

"I see so many lost faces. It's not that they don't have dreams. It's that they don't have anybody to believe in the dreams that they have."

What was the school like?

The Baraka School gave me someone outside of my Mom who believed in me as a person. It was a great thing having all of these people from all walks of life – not just black and white. They placed all of these different people inside a bubble and said make it work.

Mr. and Mrs. Doherty were house parents. It was like going to school with your mother and father. This gave you structure at home and school. The daily schedule began with breakfast. We had handcrafted desks and chairs to sit and learn in and a clay chalkboard.

We learned using Direct Instruction. I still remember "Get ready..." It became so routine that you never forget that. I think Direct Instruction is a great learning tool to teach kids.

Why did the Baraka School have such a positive effect on your life?

It was the structure. That was huge. It was also that someone believed in your dreams outside of your mother. Having a male figure was important. I had never listened to any male figure in my life. I was forced to listen to a male figure who taught me life lessons.

We played a lot of sports and started eating right. When you're exercising and eating right your body starts feeling good and soon you're running five miles. We didn't have any TV Monday through Friday. All of that is clouded vision. We were allowed one movie on Saturday.

We had a structured day and study hall with a teacher. You had no choice but to be successful because everybody was at your disposal. You knew your routine like clockwork. If you earned all of your points, on the weekend you could go to town and experience Kenyan life. You could also call your mother and people you miss.

What lessons can be applied from the Baraka School to improve City Schools?

BCP and BCPS need a mentoring program that has a curriculum, a consistent agenda, and a full-time mentoring position. Volunteer mentors leave and then you have to start all over again. We need to hire individuals who are highly-qualified to be mentors. There is training for people to become the best teacher, but there is no training for people to become the best mentor.

We need a curriculum to build these kids. A kid

in first grade doesn't need the same things as a kid in fifth grade, such as how to handle peer pressure and gangs. That's what Barak was - the Direct Instruction Curriculum and a structured behavior curriculum through a mentoring capacity.

It's like the NFL's Play 60 program. You get kids to do things that are fun and they don't know they are working out. I believe mentoring is as important as book work. These are life lessons. You can teach 1+1=2 all day, but if you don't give these kids a structured plan, they're winging it.

How do you expect a kid to overcome all of the obstacles they face without a plan. It's like putting a zebra in front of a lion. You can't put a first grader in a fifth grade class and say learn this geometry. They have to be taught. Nobody is teaching these kids life lessons like how to handle peer pressure.

When I was in school I didn't have health and sex education. Now there is an epidemic of teen pregnancy and now schools have health education. How can you expect a 10 year old to make adult choices if it isn't taught and an adult isn't standing there?

We need to implement a full-fledged mentoring program and see how it affects the classroom. Kids will gravitate toward things in school that are similar to their environment. If their environment is negative and kids only see their mentor two times a month, they will gravitate toward negative people. Kids don't even know what success looks like.

If you see your mentor every day, it's as if he is your father and is responsible for your well-being. You will see success in him every day and will see success wherever you go. You will want to be successful. If you see negativity all the time, you will see negativity wherever you go.

That is how the Baraka School works. I hope you can bring that here and develop a curriculum.

How did you get from college to where you are today?

Playing football helped me tremendously with life lessons and got me to college. When I graduated I started coaching youth football. I loved it.

When driving around the neighborhood I would