



Education Advocate

New Money for City School Construction!

Thank City Legislative Leaders for Their Work in Annapolis!

With your help, the Transform Baltimore campaign has made school construction a top priority for Baltimore. During the special session on gaming this past month, city Delegates and Senators pushed hard to make sure city school construction would benefit if gaming was expanded. Thanks to their efforts, if voters approve the gaming ballot initiative in November, Baltimore City Schools will receive an estimated additional \$2.5 million in school construction funding each year. This line of new revenue would allow \$37 million to be borrowed to build new/renovate schools - one more piece toward the total rebuilding of Baltimore schools.

As we send our children back to school this week, we are reminded of how important it is that all children have the opportunity to learn in a healthy, safe, and modern building capable of supporting the instructional needs of a 21st century curriculum.

Please take 30 seconds to thank our leaders NOW for making school construction a top priority and encourage them to keep up the good work in the upcoming regular session for the "block grant" bill!

[CLICK HERE to send a thank you message to key city delegates and senators!](#)

Leith Walk Elementary Students Get A New School Building!

State "Block Grant" Bill Needed to Ensure Excellent School Buildings for All Baltimore Students



After years of planning and waiting for funding, Leith Walk Elementary students finally get to start the school year in a brand new building. Yesterday, Governor O'Malley, Mayor Rawlings-Blake, Dr. Alonso, and other city and state officials addressed the Leith Walk school community and members of [Transform Baltimore](#) and the [Baltimore Education Coalition](#) on their efforts to renovate and modernize city schools.

Leith Walk Elementary was built in 1951 and has not received significant upgrades until now. This state-of-the-art building features a new library, computer lab, spacious cafeteria, full working kitchen to provide nutritious hot lunches, and an art studio. Additionally the building has seen a technological and systems overhaul, which includes wifi, air-conditioning, internet phones, and projectors in the classrooms. One of the most striking improvements to the building are the large windows that allows ample natural light into the classrooms, changing the once dark and dismal space into a vibrant learning environment that matches the enthusiasm of the students and the staff of Leith Walk. The old Leith Walk building will be renovated during the school year to complete the \$28 million project.

"The dream is that this happens over the next few years for every single building in this school system," said Dr. Alonso when speaking to the large crowd of excited students and supportive parents at the Ribbon Cutting ceremony.

The ACLU's Education Reform Project has been at the forefront of the effort to rebuild all city school buildings over the past five years. "The students and teachers are very excited about starting the school year in this magnificent building," said Bebe Verdery, director of the ACLU's Education Reform Project. "But under the current funding system, only a few schools can receive this kind of needed attention in a decade."

To fully overhaul all city school buildings, the ACLU and Transform Baltimore campaign are advocating for a bold and innovative approach, like the one developed by Greenville, South Carolina. Recognizing that its crumbling school buildings was a detriment to students and communities, Greenville officials implemented a plan to renovate and rebuild all 80 of its school building in six years. In order for Baltimore's school system to implement a similar plan, city and state leaders must pass enabling

legislation to allow existing revenue for city school construction to be leveraged for greater borrowing.

"We've identified existing city and state revenue that can be leveraged in an innovative financing plan," said Verdery. "Combined with the bottle tax, the city school system can use this revenue to start a \$1 billion school construction program."

[Visit Transform Baltimore on Facebook to see more pictures of Leith Walk and to see upcoming actions of the campaign to renovate and rebuild all city school buildings!](#)

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