



The First of Many New Schools for Baltimore Students Scroll Down for Photos!

Baltimore's 21st Century Schools program opened two new schools last week - the newly constructed Fort Worthington Elementary/Middle and the fully renovated Frederick Elementary School. Last Wednesday, the ACLU of Maryland's Education Reform Project gathered with partners from the Baltimore Education Coalition, community members, and government officials at the Fort Worthington Elementary/Middle School ribbon cutting ceremony. The school community and neighborhood leaders praised the opening of their new school after 2 years of participating in the planning and design process.



Rashawn Stanley, 7th grader at Fort Worthington, poses with her parents Odania Spriggs and Sean Stanley at the school's entrance.

"My 7th and 8th grade school years will take place right here at the fabulous Fort Worthington Elementary/Middle School," said RaShawn Stanley, who opened the ceremony with the story of how this school was built. "My friends and I are very excited! And, part of being excited is remembering how we got here!"



Staff and parents from the ACLU of MD, BUILD, Strong City Baltimore, Child First Authority, Elev8 Baltimore, City Neighbors Foundation, and Baltimore Curriculum Project at the ceremony for the opening of the new Fort Worthington Elementary/Middle School.

It has been six years since the Baltimore Education Coalition (BEC) launched the *Transform Baltimore: Build Schools, Build Neighborhoods* campaign, rallied school communities and elected officials, and won the \$1 billion school construction bill in Annapolis - funding Phase I of the 21st Century Schools program. This victory is the result of years of work and

collective action on the part of education and youth advocates, the staff and board of City Schools, the Mayor and City Council, Baltimore delegates and senators, and other key state legislators.

Before passing this bill, Baltimore City saw only a few full renovations and one new school built over the past few decades. The inadequate and flawed funding system by which schools are renovated and rebuilt have left most city school buildings in very poor condition - faulty boilers, leaky roofs, no air-conditioning, and outdated fire alarm systems. To move beyond the status quo, the ACLU

introduced a new financing approach - proven successful in places such as Greenville, SC and Buffalo, NY - to build high quality 21st century school facilities quickly. BEC groups, including BUILD, Child First Authority, Strong City Baltimore, City Neighbors Foundation and many more mobilized thousands of parents, students, and teachers to ensure that rebuilding city schools became a reality. By the end of 2020, thousands of Baltimore students will attend 23-28 newly built and renovated schools throughout the city under the 21st Century Schools program.

"This is the first of two dozen schools that will be newly rebuilt or fully renovated over the next 3 years," said Frank Patinella, BEC co-chair and Senior Education Advocate for the ACLU of Maryland. "Amazing things can happen when elected officials and the grassroots work together to solve big problems."

Designed for the 21st Century: A Quick Tour of Fort Worthington

At the first design meetings in communities across the city, students, teachers, and parents harped on the basics - are we going to get new bathrooms? New heating system? Air conditioning? Water fountains that we can drink from? Given the deplorable conditions of city school buildings, many people could not believe that they were going to get so much more.



A collaborative learning space at the new Fort Worthington Elementary/Middle School.

The 21st Century Schools program is aligned with City Schools' initiative to overhaul teaching and learning. In today's innovation-driven economy, workers will need the right set of skills to be successful and competitive. In addition to being proficient in reading and math, competencies such as collaboration, research, creativity, and problem solving are critical. A core component of the 21st Century Schools Program is about designing space that supports this type of teaching and learning.



The new Fort Worthington Elementary/Middle features bright classrooms (*above left*), wired with the latest technology, that connect to a large common space (*above right*), which can be used for collaborative teaching and learning, small group projects, and presentations.




In addition to having art and music rooms the school has a new library and media center, with technology to stream lessons and connect with other classrooms beyond the walls of their school. The new media center also features a studio where students can learn about video production.



And no more old lead pipes that leak and waste pipes that overflow. City students, teachers, and school staff at this new school can also drink from the water fountains!

American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland | Education Reform Project

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