Dear City Neighbors,

Congratulations on the 10 Year Anniversary for City Neighbors! The Decade Report illustrates City Neighbors School’s history with a selection of stories and documents, photos and memories that chronicle our journey of opening, our work these past ten years and who we are today. We began 10 years ago with this question: If you could have The Best School You Can Imagine, what would it be?

City Neighbors began when 17 families started a grassroots effort to take on the school system—and won the battle, against all odds. We fought for the right to open, we lifted a proposed cap on charters and we fought to get a funding formula for charter schools. During the founding years we stayed focused on the mission of City Neighbors, and we learned to recognize what was on the path of City Neighbors and what was not. We learned what it takes to change policy, build relationships and do the difficult and joyful work of imagining City Neighbors—together.

Our stand for teaching and learning in the past 10 years, here in Baltimore, is worth celebrating. We have not just taken a stand; we have thrived! Our approach to teaching, learning and governance is founded strongly on seeing children as powerful, capable, creative, compassionate and with an inherent human need to be known, loved, and inspired. Our school is dedicated to Project Based Learning, Arts Integration, a Reggio Emilia inspiration and our unique governance model based on a theory of distributed leadership and family engagement. Our stand for teachers is to make sure they are at the center of curriculum development and remain co-creators of our schools.

In 2015, we turn 10. Where are we ten years later? We have proven what can be done to create a thriving public school. Our results are strong and there is so much evidence of our success. We serve over 800 students and have over 1,000 students waiting to get into our school each year. We have recruited and retained strong faculties. Our families dedicate over 10,000 hours a year to our schools. We are building a Foundation that is impacting public education through partnerships, events, and as a model. And we are becoming nationally known for the stand we have taken and work of our students and teachers. All of this (and so much more) in just ten years!

Many people have worked together to create "The Best School We Can Imagine." We are humbled by the educators, students, parents and community folks who have come together to create. Their talents, skills, dreams and ideals are more than we could have ever created or imagined ourselves. Together, we will use this amazingly strong foundation to launch into the next decade and beyond as we continue to imagine, create and thrive.

We hope you will enjoy this publication and the stories, the captured moments and the voices in it. We thank you for being a part of the first decade of City Neighbors. Let’s keep going together!

Bobbi and Mike, July 2015
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On the day Maryland passed the Charter School Law, Baltimore City Schools faced a $52 million deficit, declining enrollment, a strong culture of standardized testing, and racially and economically isolated schools. Unhappy with the state of the public schools, and faced with the injustice of the public school system delivering an education that was not designed to enlighten or empower children and teachers, our founders were inspired to start a school based on the ideals of progressive education. And so, the story of City Neighbors really begins when a group of neighbors got together in this city. There were six people at that first meeting. All of these neighbors had young children, and that night they created a list of what they wanted to see in the school of their dreams. Some of these qualities were:

- High academic standards
- We want kids to love school and be curious
- Exceptional
- Parent involvement
- Creativity
- Special needs
- Safe environment
- Nontraditional classroom

From that night forward they continued meeting every month and found there were many people who wanted to gather and create an ideal public school. And the folks who came every month went from being a room full of people to being the founders of City Neighbors.

The Founders faced some daunting challenges and came to rely on certain phrases to keep them inspired—“Creating the Best School We Can Imagine.” “Let’s create a school that will be here 100 years from now,” and, from the Reggio Emilia schools of Italy, “Nothing Without Joy.” As they began to figure out what work needed to be done, committees were formed to tackle that work. First, they needed to put their vision in writing and submit the Charter School Application.

They formed a Governance Committee that created bylaws and designed a board structure for distributed leadership. Each Governance Committee meeting began by reading the mission statement aloud.

The Marketing Committee created the name of the school and selected the school colors of blue and orange. They also created the school slogan, Inspired to Create, as well as the school logo—a graceful path (The Way) leading to a tree (Learning and Life) against the city skyline (Our Community).

The Hiring Committee placed ads with online education career boards, drawing applications for faculty positions from all over the country and Europe.

There were late nights of email correspondence—sharing ideas, thoughts and wonderings. On the last Thursday of every month, the Founders met to report, work, think and share good food. At these meetings—and the many meetings in-between—there would often be 7-10 children under the age of ten present, sitting on laps, asking for snacks and rolling in and out of the house and yard. Sometime, one family would babysit while the rest of the Founders met elsewhere.

THE FOUNDING YEARS 2003-2005

Unwavering in Their Efforts

THE FIGHT FOR CITY NEIGHBORS: HOW 17 FAMILIES FOUNDED “THE BEST SCHOOL WE CAN IMAGINE”
The Facilities Committee launched the work of finding a suitable facility to serve the small school model. They conducted assessments at three sites and created a chart of comparisons. At a key meeting in the office of Bob Embry, President of the Abell Foundation, they reviewed the choices together. Bob asked Aisha Isackson, Chair of the Facilities Committee, “Which one do you think is best?” Aisha looked down at the paper thoughtfully and replied, “Epiphany Lutheran Church is in a residential neighborhood, and they will be good partners with us for many years. They are the best choice.”

The Founders approached Epiphany Lutheran Church with a formal presentation to the Church Council, where they were met, understandably, with some surprise, skepticism and resistance to change. It was suggested that there be a series of meetings allowing parishioners to learn about the idea of City Neighbors, and what having a school in their facility could mean for the church, the community and certainly for the students.

It was at this crucial time that a handful of influential supporters emerged. Champions, including Pastor Keith Hardy, and church board members such as Carl and Edna Rau, Kent and Linda Gruz, Mr. Charlie and others, understood the need to shake up the thinking about the use of the space. Over time, the congregation opened their hearts and hallways to City Neighbors. In a congregational vote in February 2003, Epiphany Lutheran Church agreed to enter into partnership with City Neighbors, and the Abell Foundation donated the very first $800 to help fund an environmental assessment of the building and the church matched that gift. The congregation generously donated $50,000 to City Neighbors from the Colehower Fund. It was the first major gift to City Neighbors.

The process for getting the facility ready for opening day began. This included clearing out rooms, like the candle making room, the woodshop, the room called Snug Harbor and the old print shop in the basement, where calendars hung dating back to 1939. Church members and Founders worked together—cleaning, sorting and remembering the great history of the church. In the midst of this clearing and cleaning process, the church recovered a lost stein that they then sold at a Sotheby’s Auction for $42,000. We began to create a new future for the building and our communities together. The Church made a commitment to the children of City Neighbors by signing a 15-year lease for $1.00 per year. Each year, the President of Student Council pays the annual rent to the pastor. City Neighbors remains deeply grateful for their partnership with Epiphany Lutheran Church.

Bernadette Naquin and Bobbi Macdonald dropping off the original charter at the school board on Founders Day, March 15, 2004

Sadie Macdonald handing out daisies to the Baltimore City School Board on the occasion of our approval

TAKING ON THE DISTRICT

The Founders shared their vision for the school with the school board.

On March 15, 2004, now known at our schools as Founders Day, the Founders walked down the halls of the Baltimore City public school district headquarters, known locally as “North Avenue.” They handed over the city’s first charter school application. And the wait began.

Though the Charter School Law required that City Schools respond to charter applications within 120 days, the deadline came and went. The Founders wrote, called and stopped by the district many times. Several Founders presented to the City School Board, State School Board and City Council, but could not get anyone to acknowledge that the application was being read or considered.

Charter schools were new in Maryland, and Baltimore City Schools was in the midst of turmoil with a $52 million deficit, as well as a rapid turnover of CEOs. They were not ready for City Neighbors. The Founders even wrote a charter school folk song to the CEO of the school system, asking to be approved. The song aired on National Public Radio, but their cries fell on deaf ears.

There came a night when the Founders had to reluctantly admit defeat for the goal of opening in 2004. A few families left the effort when they had to find other schools for their children. Despite the setback, those who remained never wavered in their belief that they could do it.

In response to the delay, the Advocacy Committee created a strategy to introduce the members of the school board to the idea of City Neighbors. Members of the Baltimore City School Board were invited to the site where City Neighbors hoped to open its doors. The Founders shared their vision for the school with the school board and they made a direct appeal to them to review the application.

Now the Founders set their sights on opening September 6, 2005.
The Cap

Working pro bono with the local law firm of DLA Piper, the Founders engaged attorney, Will DuBois, who appealed to the Maryland State Board of Education for the City Neighbors application to be considered and to fight the District proposed cap that limited the number of charters to only three schools over three years. The State Board lifted the cap in 2003 and ruled that City Schools must respond to the City Neighbors application. On November 9, 2004, the District granted “conditional” approval of City Neighbors to open in September 2005. The Board of City Neighbors chose to ignore the conditional part of the approval and went forward with their plans to open the school.

Fundraising

The City Neighbors community held its first annual silent auction. The committee planned a beautiful night that transformed Hightman Hall, the gathering space in the church, into a city park with a reflecting pool, park benches and charming streetlights. Because the school was not yet open, there weren’t any parents to attend or student artwork to display, which would be hallmarks of the event in subsequent years. The silent auction was run with donated items contributed by the community, Founders and church members. It was a night when, once again, the City Neighbors community proved to itself that they could reach their goals together.

The Battle for Fair Funding

During the early years, the District could not determine the funding model for charters. Independently run public schools were new in Maryland. As the funding dispute with the District could not be solved, City Neighbors—along with Patterson Park Public Charter School, Southwest Baltimore Charter School, Inner Harbor East Public Charter School and Northwest Appold Charter School—sought a Declaratory Ruling from the Maryland State Board of Education. Once again, they engaged Mr. Will DuBois who put in hundreds of pro bono hours on behalf of City Neighbors that helped pave the way for a Statewide Funding model. On July 3, 2007, the Court of Appeals affirmed the State Board’s decision, and Will became the youngest winner of the Maryland Pro Bono Resource Center Pro Bono Service Award for his work on the case.

The Coalition

In 2004, City Neighbors called the first meeting of the Coalition of Charter Schools at Café Hon, bringing together folks from across the city who believe in public education. The Coalition became a strong voice for protecting the autonomy of charter schools, and today serves as the main liaison with the District as well as a statewide advocacy organization.

A Broadening Mission

Through the struggle for getting approval, lifting the cap and establishing a funding model, the charter community became galvanized. The grassroots nature of City Neighbors created a unique stance and, as a result, they became known as change agents, dedicated to their students, to the ideals of public education and to joyful participation in the city of Baltimore. While the Founders negotiated the charter contract with the District, the Hiring Committee interviewed faculty and selected those who shared their vision of the child. The Founders designed a plan for registration and enrollment and ran the school’s first citywide enrollment lottery.

A Vision for a Progressive Urban Public School

City Neighbors Charter School was founded on the ideals of progressive education—seeing children as capable, creative, loving and deserving of the deepest respect. The Founders worked together to make the school building and classroom reflect these beliefs. As construction continued, the physical space of City Neighbors evolved into a prominent and distinctive feature. The learning space was designed to communicate a deep care for students and teachers. Together, the Founders cleaned, painted, bought furniture and rugs—all the things they could think of to make a comfortable, beautiful and loving space for students and teachers.

Advocacy

The Cap

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Building Toward Opening Day

From June 2004 to August 2005, the Founders were in a constant state of activity. The Fundraising Committee created the school’s first budget for the charter application. In addition to the $50,000 from Epiphany Lutheran Church, City Neighbors received $20,000 from the Loblatt Vaughan Foundation, a $450,000 construction loan with a guarantee from the Abell Foundation and a federal startup grant of $450,000.

Founding Faculty

The founding faculty was composed of a school leader, Roberta Mantione from Colorado, and ten teachers and staff: Shané Bennett, Susan Brightman, Carolyn Butlin, Peter French, Adam Groode, Farje Jackson, Monica O’Gara, Eric Rasmussen and Amanda Shorter, with April Crosby as Office Coordinator.
THE FOUNDING YEARS 2003-2005

A dedicated group of parents, gathered together to answer the question, “If we could have the Best School You Could Imagine, what would it be?” The founders of City Neighbors Charter School worked tirelessly over the course of two years to develop, plan, and open our school. Faced with challenges that included developing an educational model, finding and renovating a physical space and filling that space with teachers, students and families—all while challenging a school district that did not want to entertain the idea of a charter school—these founders were unwavering in their efforts. The seventeen founding families of City Neighbors Charter School were pioneers, not only for our schools, but for charter schools throughout Baltimore.

Founders: Jennifer and Tony Bedon • Nick and Tracey Bonomo • LaTisha Bournely • Sue and Leo Fothergill • Emily and Charlie Gatewood • Kate Gehr and Fred Edwards • Aisha and Dan Isackson • Shellie Jones • Robyne Lyles • Rob and Bobbi Macdonald Bernadette and Jack Naquin • Rob Noble • Kim and Rodney Poindexter • Mark and Ava Schweikert • Cindy Grim and Barb Stratton • Dorothy Valakos and Scott Larson • Jessica Whitfield

CITY NEIGHBORS LOGO DEVELOPMENT

Idea 1: Who is this gigantic boy and why is he stuck in a tree?
Idea 2: This “sun people” logo might work better for a skateboarding shop.
Idea 3: If you need help finding us, we’re in Northeast Baltimore... but what are we all about?
Idea 4: Suggests that we’re arts integrated... close...so close...

FINAL: Now we’re talking! The path, tree and skyline say it all!

BERNADETTE NAGUIN, Founding Parent
City Neighbors Charter School

When the work for creating City Neighbors Charter School was in its infancy, the group that eventually would become “the Founders” would meet at Bobbi and Rob Macdonald’s house monthly. Each meeting grew larger as interest grew in the community.

At one of the meetings, we were discussing the need to establish 501(c)3 status to become a non-profit organization, at the cost of about $500. Every month we would pass around the hat, and folks would give what they could. We had a long way to go, this group of parents. Sometimes we felt a little discouraged.

At the January meeting, one of the parents, Cheryl Radke, brought with her an empty Kleenex box with cut-out kittens glued to each side. “Now we really need everyone to put some money in the kitty!” We had maybe $200 in the kitty at that time.

That was the night that Ava and Mark Schweikert said that it had been a good Christmas for them. Their parents had given them “a box of money” and they wanted to donate it all toward the cost of applying for the non-profit status. Our goal was met.

The paperwork was filed shortly thereafter and City Neighbors Charter School became official, laying the foundation for next ten years—and beyond!
On September 6, 2005 after a two-year battle with the District to get the charter accepted, achieve a fair funding model and overcome other obstacles, City Neighbors opened its doors to 120 students from Kindergarten to 5th Grade. What a celebration it was! Standing outside of the school, surrounded by balloons, the music teacher played Dixieland tunes on the trumpet. And, beginning a tradition that has been reenacted every opening day since, each child was handed a wildflower as they entered the school building.

All of the families came in for an opening ceremony, that included a welcome from the Board President, speeches by students and comments by City Schools CEO, Bonnie Copeland and City Council Delegate Keiffer Mitchell. State Delegate Cheryl Glenn, School Board Member David Stone, Maryland State Department of Education Representative Pat Crain and Maryland Charter School Network President Joni Berman were among the friends and officials present.

Pastor Hardy from Epiphany Lutheran Church was on hand to ceremoniously receive the school’s annual rent payment of $1. A large red ribbon was cut and the students entered the building. And as they made their way to classrooms, they passed through a canopy of handwritten wishes and hopes fluttering from silky ribbons, created by parents, teachers and community members.

Opening Day on September 6, 2005 is where the founding story comes to an end and the story of City Neighbors Charter School begins.
City Neighbors Charter School, the founding City Neighbors school, opened with 120 students in grades K-5 in the Fall of 2005 and is now celebrating its 10th Anniversary. City Neighbors Charter School now serves 216 students in grades K-8, and has graduated six classes of eighth graders. With two full contract renewals, test scores that far surpass the city and often the state averages, a well-established project-based, arts-integrated, workshop model of teaching and learning and a parent body that has contributed over 60,000 hours to the school in its first ten years, City Neighbors Charter School enters its second decade as one of the premier K-8 schools in Baltimore.

**2014 CNCS MSA Scores**

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Key:
- CNCS Scores
- City Schools Scores
- NA*

* Students piloted PARCC test

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**MONICA O’GARA, Teacher**

City Neighbors Charter School

To be in charge of a first-grade class is to be a daily witness to a small community, a fragile family of six- and seven-year-olds. When some adults look into my classroom, they may see distinctions: who is African-American, who is Caucasian, who is both, whose parents went to college, whose parents went right to work.

Six-year-olds make distinctions, too, but they are of another kind. They know who loves to be first in line and who loves to be at the end. They know who can add and subtract—without fingers. They know who loves reading the Biscuit series and who loves Henry and Mudge. They know who has already turned seven and who will be turning seven in fifteen days. They don’t seem to think too much about race and class.

Then January comes and it is time for us to learn about Dr. Martin Luther King. I am mindful that soon we will be part of the All School celebrating his life and work, so I use a storybook about Dr. King’s life that first tells about his growing-up years, his family and schooling.

Then we come to the part about segregation. How to explain to young children that, in the not-too-distant past, laws did not always protect but were sometimes hurtful and wrong, so good people had to work to change them? Every year, when we come to the drawing of separate drinking fountains, there is a collective gasp of shock. And, every year, when I read about how children of different races were not allowed to go to school together, they spontaneously reach out for each other and sit holding hands through the rest of the story. It happens every year.

This little family of six- and seven-year-olds is a bit unsettled for a few days, sometimes a few weeks. But then they seem to realize that is not their experience. And they return to thinking about those other distinctions: who knows the tooth fairy is not real and who knows the tooth fairy definitely is real, who can help you tie your shoelaces and who will get stuck on the loopy part. And, most importantly of all, who will help when you spill your lunchbox—and not even ask for a bite of cookie in payment. You know, the important things.
Opening its doors in the Fall of 2009, with grades Kindergarten through 3rd grade, City Neighbors Hamilton has now grown to a full K-8 school and will graduate its first class in June 2015. Nestled in the heart of Hamilton and sharing a campus with City Neighbors High School, City Neighbors Hamilton has a waitlist nearing 500 students and serves as a model site for its progressive education practices, parent-school governance and physical environment.

JASON LEE, Parent and Board Member
City Neighbors Hamilton

With a four-year-old soon entering Kindergarten, our choices were the underperforming neighborhood public schools or the expensive private or parochial schools. But we discovered another option. In Baltimore, we have some great charter schools, and from what I was hearing, City Neighbors Charter School was one of the best. Much like what was detailed in the film, Waiting for Superman, we entered the lottery for both City Neighbors Charter School and the new City Neighbors Hamilton, which was opening that school year. We did not “win” in the initial lottery drawing, but after the first week of school, our number on the waitlist was called. My son acclimated easily, as he had some friends in his class, and the format for the Kindergarten was such that the kids easily learned and followed “The City Neighbors Way.”

After the first parent meetings and school events, I felt like there was something different and exciting about to happen at CNH. The light really changed when I was asked by the Board to participate in a hiring search and had the opportunity to spend time with Executive Director, Bobbi Macdonald and some of the CNH faculty. I began to see that City Neighbors was about the holistic development of children and not just creating test-taking machines. I began to attend the Friday All Schools and met more parents who were also excited about the school and that’s where the strength of City Neighbors really began to show itself to me. I saw a school not only energized by the kids, but by the parents and community, as well. This energy has developed over the years and has spread to other schools and communities. As a parent, and now as Board member, I am proud to be part of the City Neighbors family.

2014 CNH MSA READING Scores

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Key:
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Opening in 2010 with just 9th grade, City Neighbors High School graduated its first class of seniors in the Spring of 2014. Designed based on this question, “What would it take for every student to be Known, Loved, and Inspired?”, City Neighbors High School has become a model of high school education for its unique pod structure, its physical environment and its stand for student and teacher empowerment. City Neighbors High School serves almost 400 students, with hundreds of students on the waitlist each year.

SEAN MARTIN, Teacher
City Neighbors High School

In the early blush of May, a few award-winning authors agreed to come in and meet with us. Students chose an author they thought they’d like to meet. Then, for a few days before the authors arrived, we split into groups to read and talk about their books. Jaida, an inquisitive 11th grader, chose Geoffrey Becker’s short story collection Black Elvis. It was the most advanced work of the lot, a stretch for many students because it isn’t about kids at all. It’s about adults, and fumbling ones, catching us at our most confused and discomposed.

On reading days, Jaida would sit up straight, a copy of Becker’s book open surreptitiously in her lap. One day I noticed a furtive smile begin to curl the corners of her lips. Her eyes sparkled. She called me to her, then she said, deadly serious, “I used to think adults were older. They knew everything. Now I realize they’re just like us. Like teenagers.” We shared a knowing laugh. She looked from me to the book to me as if she were really seeing me, the adult that I am, for the very first time.

Graduation day... was more like the first day than the last. Forced to remember such meetings of the past. Like when I first saw the mystery faces that belonged to the first class’ names. From community meeting to our One Voice. We opened to the different choice better than living out “the Wire.” We offered them a different choice better than living out “the Wire.”

I remember day one discussing the graduation date I remember willing my most deliberate speech, hoping they’d relate. I remember young ones holding wild flowers looking at me with hope. Holding on to my every word because every word defined their journey.

My first speech left the bright-eyed pupils quiet. Contemplating what would be. From day one I realized I had a beautiful burden. With 90 kids following me, 97% attended school and they don’t go away. 94% graduated on that Saturn day in May. The principal who graduated in ’95 knew there would be that day. He hit the stage and took his seat. All I could see was a sea of white gowns. Streaming down with touches of blue. Heads held high with Pomp and Circumstance. And then it hit me... this was my last chance. My last words, my last time. The circle... now made whole.

Comparison to the District
Teachers are the heart of City Neighbors. Our schools are designed to be places where teachers are not only respected, but they are honored as experts in their crafts as curriculum developers, relationship builders, assessors of student progress and policymakers for our classrooms and schools. Within our mission and vision, teachers are encouraged to develop great pedagogical practice, but they also serve on the Board of Directors, participate in the hiring of all new teachers, work together to develop policies and structures, design their evaluation tools and so much more. At City Neighbors, we strive to be a place where talented, strong teachers feel nurtured and valued.

The Heart of City Neighbors

Average teacher retention: 93%

Our Teachers: 2014-2015 Stats

Over 100 teachers and staff across all three schools

KATE SEIDLE, Teacher
City Neighbors Charter School

Nine years ago, I left the Midwest and came to Baltimore to continue to pursue what I had sought throughout my career: sustainable quality progressive education within the public school system. Coming to City Neighbors was like crossing a bridge and entering home territory at the same time. The home territory I found upon arrival at City Neighbors included passionate teachers and curious students. A foundational base, it turned out, because the teachers cared so deeply about creating a school that looked like all of their dreams. And the families and children chimed in with their own dreams.

The swirl of dreamers and workers—and, believe me, it took a lot of work—took shape. So, together, we tried to figure out how to create the best possible school. That meant looking to each other, and to others in the field, and trying and experimenting, day by day, week by week, year by year. Ten years have passed quickly, all of us still striving, finding success and satisfaction. But not the kind of satisfaction where we sit back and feel the work is complete. Instead, the ideals we hold as a community and the visible progress we are making toward them—toward sustainable quality progressive education—push us to refine, tweak, connect and all those other verbs, that mean we are, simultaneously, crossing new bridges and homesteading.

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City Neighbors approaches teacher professional development growth in a three-pronged way.

Staff-wide Professional Development: Teachers determine areas for collective growth.

Collaborative Embedded Professional Development: Through protocols, cohorts and team structures, teachers learn from each other and help to push each other's thinking and practice.

Individual Professional Development: Teachers are supported to pursue learning that is specific to their needs and individual learning journeys.

**Professional Development Approach**

**Professional Development Activities Include:**

- Book Love: Developing Depth, Stamina, and Passion in Adolescent Readers, Penny Kittle, Philadelphia Bank Street, New York City
- Maryland Arts/Teacher Institute, College Park
- National Association of Art Educators, Baltimore
- Project Zero, Harvard University, Cambridge
- National Teachers of Mathematics Conference, Baltimore and Richmond
- National Science Teachers Conference, Philadelphia
- Open Earth Society, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore
- Towson University, Baltimore
- Reading/Writing Project, Teachers College, New York City
- NAEYC Conference, Chicago and Orlando
- National Charter Schools Conference, Chicago
- National Charter School Conferences, New Orleans
- High Tech High, San Diego
- Summer Literacy Institute, Lesley University, Boston
- Coalition of Essential Schools Conference, Providence
- AERO Conference, Portland, Oregon
- Visionary Arts Museum, Baltimore
- National English Teachers Conference, Washington, D.C.
- Expeditionary Learning Conference, Baltimore
- STEM Conferences, Howard University, Washington, D.C.
- Cyert Center Visitation, Pittsburgh
- Project Zero Perspectives and SASIE, Memphis
- Council for Exceptional Children Conference, San Diego
PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Compelling Questions Guiding the Work

Project-Based Learning anchors our approach to teaching and learning at our City Neighbors schools. With compelling questions guiding our work, weeks and months of in-depth research in and out of the classroom, and authentic ways to show our learning and make a difference in the world, Project-Based Learning drives us to think and work more critically, more informatively, more globally, more creatively, and more powerfully.

What is a Hero?
• Should We Close Read’s Drugstore?
• How Do You Deal with Difference?
• What is an Ideal School?
• Why Can’t We Swim in the Inner Harbor?
• Are Aliens Real?
• Can We Create Enough Electricity to Charge a Cell Phone?
• Can We Save Smith Island?
• How Can We Design Our Classroom?
• Can a Zoo Be a Good Place for an Animal?
• Why Didn’t Our Garden Grow?
• What Does Biology Sound Like?
• Are Zombies Real?
• What Can a Teenager Do?
• Can Teenagers Fall in Love?
• What’s the Matter with Our Food?
• What Does Gender Mean in Our Society?
• What Does it Mean to be Civil?
• Does History Matter?
• Will the Chesapeake be Swimmable and Fishable by 2020?
• Who are the Grown-Ups at School?
• What Can Live in our Classroom Tank?
• What Does it Do?
• What Makes News News?
• Do Kids Have Rights?
• What Makes US Human?
• Can MY Story Change History?
• Is Peace Possible?

Speak Up or Stay Silent?

Am I An American?

What is Our Legacy?

What makes News News?

Do Kids Have Rights?

What Makes US Human?

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WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?
At City Neighbors schools, the arts are an essential component to teaching and learning. Through poetry, music, movement, visual arts, puppetry, drama and almost any other imaginable art form, our students gain a deeper, more complex and nuanced understanding of reading, social studies, science and math while having multiple ways to express their learning. The deep integration and infusion of the arts in our school not only strengthens academic understanding and performance but nurtures the creativity, expression, hearts and minds of the students in our schools.

ALISHA MARCHEWKA, Atelierista
City Neighbors High School

The first arts-integrated project that made the magic happen at CNHS was a project about immigration that I developed along with U.S. History teacher, Kris Seloff. We created a wall-sized Basquiat-inspired collaborative mural of the United States, each piece representing a different cultural group of immigrants. Through this piece, I saw all of my roles come together. My time with students as their art teacher was apparent in the quality of the work they created, the connection between the arts and social studies was strong, co-teaching was invigorating and my relationship with my Pod students gave me insight on to how to work with them academically.

But something I didn’t expect also happened. I became the student. I saw the children as my teachers, each with something different to teach about learning. I learned to let go of some of my preconceived expectations, and allow students to direct their own work. The innovations in painting that occurred when students felt empowered to experiment was inspiring. Since that project in 2010, I have spent my time every year trying to create that same magic with arts integration. We are all teachers and students at CNHS, and the arts help us to see that every day.
Reggio Emilia is the name given to an approach to education that evolved in the Northern Italian municipality of Reggio Emilia. Our City Neighbors schools are inspired by the vision of Reggio Emilia, its view of the child, and its practice. We are inspired in the following ways: the belief that children are strong, intellectually rich, and have countless ways to learn and express themselves (described as “The Hundred Languages of Children”); a commitment to deep, in-depth studies; a commitment to the close observation of the child and thoughtful documentation of their work; careful attention to the physical environment and its contribution to the child and his/her learning; the infusion of learning opportunities directed by student interests; and a structure that supports children being educated in a strong community environment. Our Reggio inspiration can be seen everywhere from Kindergarten through 12th grade.

“The Hundred Languages of Children”

We are inspired in... the belief that children are strong, intellectually rich, and have countless ways to learn and express themselves...
As an anchor piece to having our students be “Known, Loved, and Inspired,” beginning in 9th grade, each student belongs to a pod through their four years at CNHS.

A pod is a group of fifteen or sixteen students who meet and work daily for an extended period of time. These pods, led by a teacher (a pod leader), are provided with their own space that includes a studio/workspace for each member and a common meeting space.

During workshop time, students in pods are asked to work on their independent projects, complete coursework or participate in small support or enrichment activities. Pod helps students build family, plan and support each other with work, learn how to prioritize and focus during independent work, and serves as an in-depth advisory model.

On graduation day, after four years together, each student is presented their diploma by their pod leader and graduate together as one interconnected group.

“During every Pod time and One Voice, I have reflected on how unique this experience is and cherished the time I have had to think and learn for myself...Pod has also been a positive growth factor in our high school experience; the members of each have become a family on their own time through good and bad experiences. The time in that one room each day has provided great support for keeping up with what we have to do in a comfortable way. Having a caring guide to help us stay connected has also been very helpful...”

— Devon Snyder, CNHS graduate

THE POD MODEL

Becoming a Family
Field work is real life learning. As students and teachers seek experiences to broaden their visions and understandings of our world, they set out—off campus—to learn. City Neighbors students have traveled to Philadelphia, Maryland’s Eastern Shore and Gettysburg. They participated in the 50th Anniversary March in Washington, D.C., traveled the American South on a Civil Rights trip, stood on the docks of Ellis Island, investigated the impact of water for a week in New Orleans and flew across the Atlantic Ocean for a yearly student exchange in Leipzig, Germany, to name only a few. This out-of-the-classroom learning is not a benefit or a perk—it is integral to growing our understanding and self-awareness of being an important, connected part of our world.

According to David FitzSimons—the only German speaking individual on that first eighth-grade trip to Germany six years ago—the travel time on the train from Berlin to Leipzig was forty-eight minutes. Given our anxiety, forty-eight hours would have been preferable.

Once all of us chaperones ensured that all the kids found their seats, I settled into mine and pulled my journal and pen out of my backpack. I stared out the window at the panorama of streets, buildings and bridges that weren’t that different from American cities. I wrote that the differences were in the details: the people, their language and food, and above all else, their history.

We’d just completed three days in Berlin, the beginning of an eight-day adventure. Much of our time was spent simply wandering, testing our limited language skills and experimenting with local food. On the second day, we caught a train and traveled north to Orianienburg. We walked twenty minutes from the station to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. What I saw and experienced there, in the company of these children, will remain in the marrow of my bones for the rest of my life.

This train proceeded on to Leipzig where we’d made arrangements to stay with the families of students from a local middle school. That was our hope. I was about to put the fate of these twelve- and thirteen-year-olds in the hands of strangers. From the beginning, I’d been faking a calm demeanor; but I wasn’t sure I could sustain it. With my journal in my lap, I attempted to use my pen as a therapeutic instrument to cope with my nervous tension.

The kids were unusually quiet as the train approached the station. That was one slow walk down the train platform. Our contact, Isa, said she’d meet us. What if she wasn’t here? The crowd of passengers eventually thinned and there, at the end of the platform, was a throng of grinning parents and children, holding a huge banner whose words immediately calmed all our hearts. It read, “Welcome Friends from Baltimore.”
With the support of foundations, banks and individuals, City Neighbors began with one school in the educational building of Epiphany Lutheran Church on Raspe Avenue serving 216 students. Working with our partners we invested to bring the building up to code and make it a beautiful space for learning. In 2009, we grew into a two campus organization with the expansion to the nearby Hamilton Campus on Sefton Avenue, home of our second and third schools serving over 600 students. Rooted in the strong belief that the environment is the third teacher, the physical design and maintenance of the physical environment serves as a key design element of City Neighbors schools. With hallways designed to reframe hallway culture, classrooms that include both working and comfortable spaces, walls that reflect student work, an infusion of glass to support ideas of transparency and connectedness and furniture that communicates individuality, sturdiness and care, the physical environment helps to redefine the ideas of school, teaching, learning and community.

**Facility Design**

**Comfort and Inspiration**

City Neighbors Charter School 3rd Floor: Before

City Neighbors Charter School 3rd Floor: After

**Welcoming Community Spaces**

City Neighbors Hamilton Entrance: Before

City Neighbors Hamilton Entrance: After

**Transparency and Trust**

City Neighbors High School Hallway: Before

City Neighbors High School Hallway: After

**Beauty and Joy**

City Neighbors Hamilton Entrance: Before

City Neighbors High School Cafeteria: Before

City Neighbors High School Cafeteria: After
Our students benefit from diversity in all forms: a healthy representation of race, religion, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status. Values all people of any ability, age, family structure, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Diversity is essential to who we are!

Diversity is Essential to Who We Are!

This development of her confidence and newly found time her class was called upon to present. By the end of the year, Amara was before school began. Through the arts at school, we have watched Amara's there may be limitations for Amara but low expectations will only hinder her when she is there. She loves school and enjoys being included in activities.

When Amara was a baby, we were advised to write a vision statement for her, to help us always stay focused on what we want for her and guide to her success. Like all parents, we want our child to live a happy and productive life where she can take care of herself and live as she chooses. Because Amara happens to have a disability, adults like to tell us frequently all the things that Amara can’t do, won’t do, will never do. We understand that there may be limitations for Amara but low expectations will only hinder her abilities. At past schools, we have had to fight for Amara to be included with her peers. We explained our dreams and hopes to blank faces and puzzled looks. At City Neighbors, we feel welcomed to share our hopes and feel that our vision for including Amara is valued.

We love the City Neighbors community. We forged great friendships even before school began. Through the arts at school, we have watched Amara’s confidence grow. Amara was too shy to participate in “All School” the first time her class was called upon to present. By the end of the year, Amara was able to participate and dance with her classmates on stage.

This development of her confidence and newly found interest in dramatic arts helped Amara to recently participate in a public service announcement commercial for the office of Special Education. And who knows? Maybe one day an acting career!
The City Neighbors model is built on the belief that when parents and teachers are in strong partnership around the child and around the life of the school, the impact on student learning is powerful and long-lasting. We strive for a parent-school cooperative model that asks parents to be co-creators of the school and to take on essential work of the school in partnership with staff and the principal. At all K-8 schools, this partnership takes three forms:

- We expect every family to dedicate forty hours a year to the school in some capacity.
- We ask every parent and staff member to work with each other in a collaborative way that assumes the best intentions of each other.
- We ask our parents to serve on committees and share the responsibility of governing City Neighbors as Board members.

Volunteer Hours

87,643 Volunteer hours given by City Neighbors families over the past 10 years

KARL MCKINNEY, Parent & Board Member
City Neighbors Charter School

In 2002, my wife Kellie and I moved our family to Baltimore City from Chicago. We home-schooled our children but were exhausted and could not replicate the home-schooling experience we had known with friends in Chicago. We made new friends in Baltimore, including Rodney and Kim Poindexter and their three children. In 2004, when we were looking around for other educational alternatives, Kim told Kellie about a new charter school being planned in our neighborhood. As soon as enrollment opened, we submitted applications for three of our children: Gabriel, Mollie, and James.

Kellie and I took turns volunteering at the school. We enjoyed making friends, working on the building, planning and participating in meetings, ferrying our children and the children of other parents to and from our homes and field trips. I was honored to work on the Diversity and Inclusion Committees, as well as serve on the Board. “Neighbors” is an intentional noun in our school’s name. I have a deep appreciation for the neighborliness that City Neighbors Charter School has built among children, parents and faculty.

SHELLAE JONES, Founding Parent & Board Member
City Neighbors Charter School

One of my fondest memories at City Neighbors was our very first International Potluck dinner. The idea began with a discussion at a Community Relations Committee meeting, when one parent started talking about all of the different ethnicities represented in the CNCS family. We wanted to come up with an event that celebrated each individual and allowed them to share their unique culture with the rest of the school family. And so the planning began. Once we put out the call, families enthusiastically signed up to bring food, desserts and even provide entertainment. We had no idea that this event would be as big as it was—with over 200 participants. It was such a success that it became an annual event. Nothing brings family together like food, music, games and fun.
Each City Neighbors school is managed by a Board of Directors. The unique and powerful governance model of each City Neighbors school creates a collaborative governance model where each member of the Board has a working and productive role, and are working together with the community to create our school.

The Keystone Arch is the visual image of our governance model. The parents, staff, students and community are the foundation for the Board. Every Board position is designed to support the Principal, who then supports the teachers, who are in direct contact with our children every day.

Always, with every decision, we ask, “What is best for the students of City Neighbors?”
At each City Neighbors school, students select representatives to a Student Council. The Student Council works with a faculty advisor to consider the needs, hopes and wants of the student body and to take action. At all three schools, the Student Council is represented with full voting rights on each school’s Board of Directors. The students of City Neighbors help to co-create our schools.

KORI BURSTON, Class of 2015 City Neighbors High School

As a youth, adults have the tendency to overlook your ideas and your abilities. But, at City Neighbors High School, everyone’s voice matters. As Student Council President, I serve on the CNHS Board, which is made up of four students, four teachers and four parents. There was one moment when I felt that my position was particularly well heard.

During the time that our school was under review, the Board had to meet with a few representatives from Baltimore City. In this meeting, each person got the chance to speak a little about what the Board does and how we felt about the school. When it was my chance to talk, I explained how City Neighbors is like a second home for me and for many students. Our school opens so many doors to new opportunities. Everyone had tears in their eyes and the room got silent. I was just saying what was true for me. It was a very proud moment for me—the time when I knew everyone was listening.

SOOZ LAUGEN, Internship Coordinator City Neighbors High School

It is 4:30 a.m. on the first day of school when my alarm goes off. I have to be ready for Bobbi Macdonald to pick me up in just thirty minutes. It is still dark when she pulls up and I leave my house, coffee in hand. “It reminds me of when I was a kid and used to go fishing with my dad,” Bobbi says. “It was just me and him, and it was still dark out, it was so early.” This is the fifth year I have taken this trip. This is the tenth trip for Bobbi.

Around 5:15 a.m., we enter a huge wholesale floral warehouse and head for the walk-in refrigerators. We choose an assortment of flowers and pile them onto rolling carts—sunflowers, daisies, mums, irises—too many varieties to list. The tradition began ten years ago at City Neighbors Charter School. Each student is given a single wildflower on the morning of the first day of school. They then take that flower to their classroom where they place it into a vase along with every other student’s flower, creating a beautiful bouquet, symbolizing the beauty of each individual student and the collective beauty they create as a group. We started with 120 flowers that first year; now, with three City Neighbors schools, we need more than 800.

This yearly trip has become special to me. It reminds me, every year, of what makes City Neighbors unique.
Alumni

Our first 8th grade class at City Neighbors Charter School graduated in June of 2008. Our first 12th grade class at City Neighbors High School graduated in May of 2014. And, this year, our first 8th grade class will graduate from City Neighbors Hamilton. Our 8th grade graduates leave us and join the best high schools in Baltimore—public and private. And our first 8th grade graduates are now sophomores in college.

At CNHS, 100% of our graduating seniors left with either a college acceptance or post-educational plan. To date, we have over 200 graduates from the City Neighbors community. Aligned with our mission, our students “leave enlivened, with deep awareness of themselves, their families and the outside community, and with the capacity to be good citizens.”

“Leave Enlivened . . . with the Capacity to Be Good Citizens”
Brian N. Matthew, Class of 2014  City Neighbors High School

Our 8th grade graduates leave us and join the best high schools in Baltimore—public and private.

8th Grade High School Graduation Choices

| High School                                      | Graduates
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------
| City Neighbors Charter School (CNCS)            | 30%
| Baltimore School for the Arts                   | 7%
| Baltimore City College                          | 14%
| Baltimore Polytechnic Institute                 | 19%
| Western High School                             | 6%
| Other High Schools                              | 12%
| Home School                                     | 1%

One Founder Reflects After Her Youngest Child Graduates
Emily Gatewood

One of my most memorable experiences at City Neighbors High School took place during my 9th grade year. The school year was quickly coming to a close and the City Neighbors family and I had a dilemma. The problem that occurred was that my mom wanted to transfer me out of City Neighbors to another school. What’s so significant about this experience is that the members of my City Neighbors family stood up for me and believed in me. On May 31, 2014, I graduated from City Neighbors High School with some pretty honorable credentials. I had been my class president for three years, I sat on the City Neighbors High School Board with my peers, and numerous other things. One of the most important lessons I learned while attending City Neighbors was to never give up on yourself. There are plenty of kids throughout Baltimore City whose parents gave up on them. I believe that every student should be able to attend a school like City Neighbors, where even if you give up on yourself, the staff of City Neighbors High School WON’T give up on you.

Bob Cullen, Parent City Neighbors Charter School and City Neighbors High School

I was speaking to some other founders of City Neighbors Charter School the other day and what came to mind most when thinking of the school was the CNCS tree behind that girl in this picture. It was picked out by a landscape friend of mine and planted by co-founder Tracey Bonne. The tree grew as the school grew and as the kids grew. I looked at it for the last time as a CNCS parent yesterday and couldn’t believe its size, strength and beauty. It holds its own now, is independent and provides a symbol of strength and also cooling shade. Goodbye CNCS tree, may you grow stronger and bigger, and provide strength and shade for many children to come. The tree is truly a symbol of this great community. Goodbye CNCS! We will miss you!

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I was speaking to some other founders of City Neighbors Charter School the other day and what came to mind most when thinking of the school was the CNCS tree behind that girl in this picture. It was picked out by a landscape friend of mine and planted by co-founder Tracey Bonne. The tree grew as the school grew and as the kids grew. I looked at it for the last time as a CNCS parent yesterday and couldn’t believe its size, strength and beauty. It holds its own now, is independent and provides a symbol of strength and also cooling shade. Goodbye CNCS tree, may you grow stronger and bigger, and provide strength and shade for many children to come. The tree is truly a symbol of this great community. Goodbye CNCS! We will miss you!

One Founder Reflects After Her Youngest Child Graduates
Emily Gatewood

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City Neighbors has benefitted from many strong partnerships in our growth and evolution. We consider our partners to be any people or organizations who have directly supported us, who have partnered with us in a common endeavor, or who strive for a like-minded vision of what schools can be. We are grateful to the over fifteen Baltimore foundations who have invested in us, the eight institutions of higher learning who have partnered with us, the over twenty organizations who have lent their services to support our growth, programs and development, and the community organizations and individuals who have contributed in innumerable ways.

SHYLA RAO, Co-Director and Instructor, Master of Arts in Teaching Program, Maryland Institute College of Art

For many years, City Neighbors Charter School has been the most coveted internship placement for the graduate students in my MA in Teaching class at Maryland Institute College of Art. Every fall, MICA sends a group of interns to City Neighbors to collaborate on creating an arts-integrated unit for their students. And every year, our students end the internship asking the same question, “Do you think they will have an opening for an art teacher next year?” After experiencing City Neighbors, they cannot imagine teaching anywhere else.

A few years ago, I asked Mike Chalupa, the Principal of CNCS, to talk with my Curriculum Design students about progressive education and the design of City Neighbors Charter School. Instead of merely talking about the school, he asked questions, engaged students with a small group activity and opened the floor for discussion. Mike described ways of being that are fostered in the school, how curriculum was emergent and responsive to student needs and interests, and why he believed that progressive approaches to learning develop deep engagement with learning.

I had always observed the students at CN from the sidelines, until I was approached by their Atelierista, Susan Brightman. Her students were interested in India, and she asked if I knew someone who could show her students the process of mehndi (henna tattoos). I had recently gotten married and had followed my Indian traditions of full mehndi designs on my hands for the ceremony. It was a perfect match! The day I arrived with henna, lemon juice and sugar was the day I personally experienced a part of the magic of City Neighbors. The students were curious, engaged, enthusiastic and openly made connections with previous projects and content they were learning. They embodied the ideals Mike had described to my class just a few weeks prior. Having visited countless schools in Baltimore City over the past 20 years, I have seen a wide variety of schools. What sets City Neighbors apart is a learning environment that empowers students to seek their own learning.

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— SHYLA RAO
We are grateful for the generosity of the many people, foundations and organizations who have given to City Neighbors. Beginning with our first grant of $800 from the Abell Foundation in 2004, the foundations in Baltimore have invested in us, helped us when we needed it and encouraged us to grow and expand our work.

Over these past ten years, we have financed over $12 million with the support of great organizations like Hamilton Bank, The Reinvestment Fund and M & T Bank. And our own City Neighbors families, through the Fundraising Committee, have raised more than $250,000 to support our programs and operations. In return, we have kept strong in our stand for children, our focus on our mission, vision and ideal for public education in Baltimore.

SUCCESSFUL CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

In 2005, CNCS conducted a successful Capital Campaign to raise $300,000 to install the elevator needed for ADA compliance on the founding campus.

In the early days of City Neighbors, a great challenge we faced was making the founding school building ADA compliant. The France-Merrick Foundation gift of $200,000 as a matching grant helped us to implement a successful capital campaign that expanded our donor base and allowed us to reach our goal of raising $300,000 to install the elevator on Raspe Avenue. Thank you to Mr. Robert W. Schaefer, then Executive Director of the France-Merrick Foundation for his encouragement, support and advice.

Thank you to the Joseph and Harvey Meyerhoff Family Charitable Funds for their generous gift of $60,000 and for their unswerving investment and support of City Neighbors.

We would also like to thank all the teachers, families, corporations and neighbors for their generosity in giving to the campaign and invite them to take a ride in our beautiful elevator anytime. Going Up!

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS 2004 – 2014

$400,000 and up
Joseph and Harvey Meyerhoff Family Charitable Funds

$200,000 and up
Abell Foundation
France-Merrick Foundation

$100,000 and up
Baltimore City Council
The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
Goldsmith Family Foundation

$60,000 and up
Goldseker Foundation
Baltimore Community Foundation
Lockhart Vaughan Foundation

$40,000 and up
Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation
Aaron Straus and Lillie Straus Foundation
Epiphany Lutheran Church
Wright Family Foundation

$10,000 and up
Aber D. Unger
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Hamilton Bank
Healthy Neighborhoods
UPD Consulting
Anonymous

$5,000 and up
William G. Baker Memorial Fund
FM Harvey Foundation
Laurelene Straughan Pratt Foundation
The Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund
Neighborhood Design Center
Open Society Institute
M&T Bank

$1,000 and up
H.U. Dove and Company
The Reinvestment Fund
Harbel
T.R. Klein
Home Depot Foundation
Maryland Humanities Council
Rosedale Bank

45 THE DECADE REPORT

46 THE DECADE REPORT
Teachers Placed for Internships or Field Experiences in City Neighbors Schools

1,700 Visitors to Learn about Our Model and Approach

City Neighbors holds strong to the call to action that all students in Baltimore City deserve a rich, high-quality education. As part of this mission, we work to create great, high-demand schools to serve the over 800 students who attend our schools and to create a model of what public education might be. Another equally important part of this mission is to support individuals, schools and organizations to grow, dream, strive, consider and improve.

Our work includes partnering with many local universities in the training of future teachers, welcoming 300 current and future educators each year to our schools by hosting events like our Annual Progressive Education Summit and Education Ignite, providing direct consultation and support to other charter and traditional public schools, and so much more.

SUE FOTHERGILL, Founding Parent and Board Member
City Neighbors Charter School

On January 23, 2009, an article ran in the Baltimore Sun about a proposed state funding cut to public education of more than $74 million. There were state deficits across the country and Maryland was no exception. Of the $74 million statewide cut, $23 million of the burden or $23 million.

In the face of these harmful cuts, we took action, starting with phone calls to our partners and friends. We contacted the Governor’s office and advocate against the cut. Just a few days later we were in a room of leaders from more than forty workshops presented by local progressive educators. In the past 5 years over 1,500 organizations, all united in the belief that our children deserved better.

We organized, we rallied, we lobbied and we won. The legislature made the public education budget whole for Baltimore City Baltimore City Public Schools, a school district that had been determined to be unconstitutionally underfunded, bore 32% of the $74 million. There were state deficits across the country and Maryland was no exception. Of the $74 million statewide cut, $23 million.

We helped found the Baltimore Education Coalition, and I had the honor of serving as its founding co-chair. We organized, we rallied, we lobbied and we won. The legislature made the public education budget whole for Baltimore City Baltimore City Public Schools, a school district that had been determined to be unconstitutionally underfunded, bore 32% of the $74 million.

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The Annual Progressive Education Summit brings together educators and community members from all parts of the region for a day of professional development, networking, and inspiration. Each year, we launch our Summit with a Keynote Speaker and host over forty workshops presented by local progressive educators. In the past 5 years over 1,500 educators have participated in the Summit.
The current direction of charter schools has limited their potential to improve public education. Here are some schools that are taking a better approach.

The charter school model is full of promise. Charter schools can reach across neighborhood schools to enroll diverse groups of students. They can give teachers the room and power to innovate. They can be education laboratories that find new ways to reach students, and they can share those lessons with other public schools. This is what Albert Shanker had in mind when, in March 1988, as president of the American Federation of Teachers, he announced his vision for a new kind of public education.

Stanford University reveals that only 29 percent of charter schools outperform district schools in math for demographically similar students and that only 25 percent do so in reading (Cremata et al., 2013). More than 20 years after the first charter school opened, today’s charter sector is a far cry from Shanker’s original vision. Policymakers and charter school advocates have emphasized new management structures, but they have failed to produce the results Shanker predicted.

A small but growing number of charter schools are taking different approaches that echo themes in Shanker’s original vision a decade report

- **Empowering Teachers**
  - Decreases in teacher turnover when teachers have more input in key school decisions, teacher turnover can drop from an average of one in five to one in ten.
  - Dropout rates among students and teachers also decrease.
  - Relational trust among teachers and students seems crucial to school improvement (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010).

- **Theory and Practice at Odds**
  - In theory, charter schools are in a good position to promote teacher voice and create a strong school environment.
  - Charter schools also have the flexibility to try out new governance models and school structures by giving teachers representation on the governing board, shifting the school schedule to guarantee time for collaboration, or even forgoing a traditional class schedule.

Wiseman’s first appearance came Tuesday, when Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz presented him with a “hero pin” at a ceremony before about 50 county officials, friends and family members at the Maryland Science Center in Baltimore. "It’s the least I can do to share the incredible experience I had as a first-time flyer,” a smiling Wiseman said between his high-energy talks Wednesday. "And I love having this opportunity to spark kids’ imaginations.”

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Hamilton in Baltimore. “One’s for my school journal; one’s for me. And I’m not giving them away.”

Wednesday, Wiseman, 39, has gotten rock-star treatment.

At places like the Maryland Science Center, where he gave two presentations to school children and others welcoming.

Three months ago, as he plunged from outer space back to Earth, the Maryland-born astronaut Reid Wiseman was honored as the “hero of space.”

The bet has not paid off.

We see a marked trend in the world of education — whether it’s kindergarten or twelfth grade — that they pave the way for increased achievement. Even students with teachers who have stayed at the school were harmed by turnover among other teachers. Strong relational trust among teachers makes it more likely that those students will be successful. Researchers have found that teachers who believe they have a say in the school’s decisions are less likely to leave. This makes sense: when teachers feel they have power, they are more likely to stay and therefore more likely to help students achieve. We have misguidedly narrowed our responsibility in educating young people. "Until we deeply and wholeheartedly pursue the "un-easily-achieving schools, even students with teachers who had...[the bet has not paid off]."
2003
• First meeting held in the Macdonald’s living room

2004
• Charter submitted to City Schools
• Loan guarantee goes forward with Abell Foundation
• Lease signed with Church
• Founding teachers hired
• Approval of Charter

2005
• September 6: Opening Day!  K-5th grade: 120 students!
• Mike Chalupa hired as principal; he will serve in this role until 2014

2006
• “The City Neighbors Way” is created with students, teachers and parents
• When the student application waitlist reached 500 students, City Neighbors Board of Directors votes to launch the City Neighbors Foundation, and establish two more City Neighbors’ schools, including a high school.

2007
• Mike Chalupa hired as principal; he will serve in this role until 2014

2008
• City Neighbors High School opens: 9th grade; 88 students

2009
• First Graduation at CNCS
• Launch of the City Neighbors Foundation

2010
• Win the Court of Appeals battle for equitable funding
• Sign lease for Hamilton Campus to house two more schools
• Finance 10.5 million in renovations through private bond placement guaranteed by school system
• CNCS receives a three-year renewal

2011
• 1st Annual Symposium of all City Neighbors teachers
• CNCS receives a five-year renewal

2012
• City Neighbors High School opens: 9th grade; 88 students

2013
• First Graduation of CNHS: 94% graduation rate
• Meyerhoff Foundation: gives $225,000 investment over three years to launch the City Neighbors Foundation

2014
• Mike Chalupa becomes full time Academic Director
• CNHS receives five-year renewal
• City Neighbors Fab Lab of Inspiration opens on Hamilton Campus
• Going national: City Neighbors is featured in Washington Post, New York Times and A Smarter Charter
• CNHS first graduation

2015
• Ten Year Celebration!
• CNH first graduation

CITY NEIGHBORS: A Decade of Accomplishments
THE 2015 CITY NEIGHBORS FOUNDATION COUNCIL

City Neighbors Charter School (est. 2005)
Gwendolyn Unoko, President
Nick Brown, Principal
Peter Redgrave, Teacher
Amanda Gursky, Fundraising Chair

City Neighbors Hamilton (est. 2009)
Felicity Knox, President
Obi Okobi, Principal
Bob Dietzen, Teacher
Jason Lee, Treasurer

City Neighbors High School (est. 2010)
Zina Moore, President
Danielle Dolly, Principal
Moses Roberts, Teacher
Nichol Ryan, Parent
If you could have the “Best School You Can Imagine,” what would it be?

The City Neighbors Foundation works to impact public education in three ways: We operate a network of innovative schools, we provide professional development opportunities for teachers and we work to create an environment that allows great schools to thrive in Baltimore, in Maryland, and beyond.

Guided by the belief that children are creative, capable, powerful and worthy of the deepest respect, the City Neighbors approach is rooted in the arts, project-based learning and inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy—committed to having every student be Known, Loved, and Inspired.