Written Testimony in Support of Community Schools
Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

July 26, 2017
Abby Beytin, President
Teachers Association of Baltimore County

My name is Abby Beytin and I am the president of the Teachers Association of Baltimore County (TABCO). On behalf of the 7,900 members of TABCO and the 73,000 members of the Maryland State Education Association, I am writing to encourage the members of the Kirwan Commission to include dedicated funding for community schools into the overall funding recommendation included in the Commissions’ final report on the state’s public school funding formula.

The Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) and TABCO have been working together for more than a year to bring Community Schools to our school system. In school year 2018-19, Lansdowne High School and one of its feeder schools, Baltimore Highlands Elementary School, will become the first Community Schools in the Baltimore County Public School System. These two schools were not selected by accident. These schools serve a community of 88.9% and 95% free and reduced meals (FARM) students, respectively. The staff at both schools are anxious to begin this new work, and the community has been educated about the strategy and surveyed to discover its needs and to foster its investment.

We began our journey when our former superintendent, Dr. Dallas Dance, and I met and discussed the possibility of bringing Community Schools to Baltimore County. I had attended presentations on Community Schools and he had learned about them as well. We both saw the potential of what Community Schools could do for our students, our families and our county. We saw the power of bringing the parents and community back into comprehensive schools. If the schools become the gathering place or the “go to place” for the community, the community then becomes more invested in the school. Research shows¹ the importance of parental participation in their children’s education. Having the school serve as the hub of the community helps both families and neighbors see the school as a resource both for children and for adults.

The overwhelmingly positive feedback we heard about the community schools model cemented our interest in pursuing this strategy for BCPS. Opening our first Community Schools did not happen simply because of the county’s administrative leadership. The teacher leadership of TABCO brought in experts in the Community Schools field to deepen the knowledge base of top level BCPS officials as well as TABCO staff and leadership. We were all impressed and began to move forward. Dr. Dance appointed the Community Superintendent

over Zone 4 (the area which will house the Community Schools) and myself as co-chairs of the Community Schools Steering Committee. The committee is made up of administrators, staff, BCPS officials, and TABCO members and staff.

This was the beginning of several key steps in our process. We realized early on that we needed to take our time making this strategy a reality for Baltimore County students. We know we must get this right and planning is key to doing so. As with any new initiative, there will be details to work out, questions to answer, and a need to dedicate ourselves to high quality staff and leadership. The County is only able to bring limited resources, and we wanted to be smart with the use of those resources.

In selecting the locations for the Community Schools, we determined that the school or schools should be in the same feeder pattern for consistency of administrative leadership. The administration and staff needed to have buy-in to the strategy and concept. As a response to concentrated poverty and poor academic performance, we needed school communities that were struggling but that also demonstrated the leadership and hope that they could do better. Lansdowne High and Baltimore Highlands Elementary were identified as great places to begin the work.

The Community School approach is great for Baltimore County—as it will be for Maryland—because it is not a program set in its parameters. It is a strategy that conforms and fits to the needs of the community that it serves. In its infancy, Community Schools in Baltimore County will have one coordinator for both schools. As we learn from our experiences and develop more support for the strategy, the plan for the future is to have a single, full-time coordinator for each school. At this point we have hired one of our own social workers who has worked in the Lansdowne Community to be our first Community Schools Coordinator. Her knowledge of the community has already proven invaluable.

We spent all of school year 2016-17 planning and communicating with our stakeholders to make sure we were starting out on firm footing. An effective Community School strategy is founded upon this type of communication. The full-time local Community Schools Coordinator allows for the adjustment necessary to meet the community’s changing needs. Since the coordinator was not brought on board until April 2017, we will need to continue to plan for full implementation during this current school year. The job of coordinating the needs of the community and school takes intense planning. We are willing to wait to bring in those partners and organizations to help us be successful.

This process is not one that can be undertaken expeditiously. Deliberate planning is required in order to assure success. As with any new initiative, there will be kinks to work out. The beauty of the Community Schools model is the flexibility built into the program. We also know our schools need to be sustainable. The very uncertainty of funds being available has slowed down our process and prevented us from moving forward as we would like. By including a dedicated funding stream for community schools into the state’s funding formula, this Commission could
ensure that much-needed programs like the one in Baltimore County can proceed with better speed and outcomes to address the needs of our students and our community.

The Steering Committee has designed needs assessments and surveys in English and Spanish, the two prevalent languages in the area. We have conducted surveys of our staff and parents as well as community members as to what they feel is important in their Community School. Our Community School Coordinator has taken the survey to the streets with some of our volunteers from the schools, including parents and other community members, and is attending community meetings and visiting local businesses in order to educate and be educated by the community as a whole around the needs of the entire community. This process of assessing and addressing community strengths and needs will be a constant process undertaken in our Community Schools in Baltimore County.

As we grow our two Community Schools, more private and public partners will hear about the programs and more people will become engaged. Our coordinator will continue to meet with local clergy and non-profit organizations to help spread the word and find the available resources. At the start of the 2017-18 school year, our students will fill out surveys to let us know the types of activities and services they would be interested in their school providing as well as what concerns they have based upon their needs for the school, their families, and themselves. This data will provide the direction and shape of what our Community Schools will become.

Baltimore County has chosen to be the agent that coordinates the programs for our Community Schools. When we have these two schools operational, our idea is to hire a District Community Schools Coordinator to oversee our overall program, as well as having a Community Schools Coordinator at each school site. The District Coordinator’s job would entail finding system-wide partners for the Community Schools as well as coordinating efforts to streamline some of the work. Other systems use an outside entity for this position. This serves as another example of the flexibility (and thus strength) of the Community School movement.

This is what is possible when the leadership of a dedicated county administration, the involvement of the teachers’ association, and an engaged local community come together. But without action by the Commission, our success cannot be built upon either within Baltimore County or throughout the state. Our state will continue to see concentrated pockets of poverty struggle without an intervention such as the community schools model. As such, we respectfully ask the Commission to include a recommendation for dedicated funding for the creation of Community Schools into their final funding formula recommendation.

Dedicated funding will provide for many of the program’s required resources, such as a dedicated site coordinator. While grants and help from non-profit organizations are invaluable, they are merely supplemental. To provide sustainable Community Schools, dedicated funding must be available year after year. This allows for a source of support districts, schools and families can rely upon, and from which children can benefit. It is so critical that Community Schools are included in the funding formula. Baltimore County as a whole is approaching the 50% (45.1% actual) mark for FARM students. However, many of our schools are similar in their
FARMS numbers to the much higher numbers found in the Lansdowne area. Our plan is to continually increase Community Schools throughout the county to not only address the neediest students but help every community thrive, and to provide the tools to assist our students throughout their lives.

After reading numerous studies about Community Schools and their success in numerous locations across the country over a number of years, I am excited to see this solution serve Baltimore County’s students. I am excited for Lansdowne families to see changes in their lives because of the strategies put in place today. These strategies might include access to training offered at the school that would equip Lansdowne parents with the skills needed to find better paying jobs, thus making strides toward breaking the persistent cycles of poverty. These strategies will improve school attendance as families and neighbors see the school investing in the future of the community. The strategies will include after-school services that will allow parents to work without worrying about their children’s care. The children thrive because instead of being latch-key kids after school they will be engaged in learning activities that go above and beyond their school day activities. The students will be actively engaged in their schools, leading them to having greater care and ownership of their school and increasing their desire to attend school. And students, families, and communities that have the hope of quality education, the spirit of something being done that makes their neighborhood more vibrant, and the insight to see beyond cycles of concentrated poverty will be rewarded with care, advocacy, and support that can help heal many of the rifts and challenges that these communities face.

This vision is not pie-in-the-sky. It is already happening in many schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Austin, Texas; and Baltimore City – including Wolfe Street Academy. It is imperative that the state’s funding formula include dedicated funding for Community Schools. This is clearly the best way forward for our struggling students and communities – and for our state.

Respectfully,

Abby Beytin

President
Teachers Association of Baltimore County
1. Readiness

2. Planning

3. Implementation

- School Selection and Commitment
- Community School Staffing
- Steering Committee Formation
- Data Review
- Needs Assessment
- Community Forums
- Vision and Program Planning
- Implementation of Programs and Activities
- Reflect, Assess, Adjust
Lansdowne High School
Staff Survey
Spring, 2017

Completing this form is optional, but will allow Lansdowne High Community School Staff to use the information to develop programs and services to meet the needs of our students and families. Please think about our students and rate the subcategories in order of need 1st = MOST, Last = LEAST.

Cognitive Development (Rank 1-2)
___ Academic Enrichment
___ Academic Support/Remediation

Physical Development (Rank 1-6)
___ Health Services
___ Dental Services
___ Nutrition Education & Practice
___ Organized Sports
___ Recreational Programs/Activities
___ Opportunities for Regular Exercise

Social Emotional Development (Rank 1-10)
___ Communication Skills/Conflict Resolution Skills
___ Relationships with Peers
___ Relationships with Adults
___ Family Unity/Home Environment
___ Working in a Group
___ Leadership Skills
___ Bullying/Bullying Education
___ Counseling/Therapy
___ Substance Use
___ Parenting Classes (for students or parents/guardians)

Life Skills (Rank 1-4)
___ Study Skills
___ College Prep
___ Job Readiness
___ Financial Literacy

Resiliency Characteristics (Rank 1-6)
___ Problem Solving Skills
___ Critical Thinking Skills
___ Strong Sense of Self
___ Positive Relationship with a Caring Adult
___ High Expectations for Success
___ Hopes & Dreams for the Future
Of the 4 general categories, which do you believe is most important for the success of our school community? (Circle One)

____ Cognitive Development
____ Physical Development
____ Social Emotional Development
____ Resiliency Characteristics

Teacher Relationships with Parents and Other Caregivers:

1. How often do you have contact with your students' parents/guardians?
   ____ Daily  ____ Weekly  ____ 2x/week  ____ 2x/month  ____ Every quarter

2. What method of contact do you use most of the time?
   ____ Written  ____ Phone  ____ E-mail  ____ Home Visit  ____ Meeting at School

3. List 3 priorities we should focus on to support student success?
   (1) ____________________________
   (2) ____________________________
   (3) ____________________________

Thank you for completing this assessment! We will share the composite results with you once completed.
Baltimore Highlands Elementary School

Staff Survey
Spring, 2017

Completing this form is optional, but will allow Baltimore Highlands Community School Staff to use the information to develop programs and services to meet the needs of our students and families. Please think about our students and rate the subcategories in order of need 1st = MOST, Last = LEAST.

Cognitive Development (Rank 1-2)
____ Academic Enrichment
____ Academic Support/Remediation

Physical Development (Rank 1-6)
____ Health Services
____ Dental Services
____ Nutrition Education & Practice
____ Organized Sports
____ Recreational Programs/Activities
____ Opportunities for Regular Exercise

Social Emotional Development (Rank 1-10)
____ Communication Skills
____ Relationships with Peers
____ Relationships with Adults
____ Family Unity/Home Environment
____ Working in a Group
____ Leadership Skills
____ Bullying/Bullying Education
____ Self Care Skills
____ Counseling-Therapy
____ Parenting Classes (for Parents/Guardians)

Resiliency Characteristics (Rank 1-6)
____ Problem Solving Skills
____ Critical Thinking Skills
____ Strong Sense of Self
____ Positive Relationship with a Caring Adult
____ High Expectations for Success
____ Hopes & Dreams for the Future

Of the 4 general categories, which do you believe is most important for the success of our school community? (Check One)

____ Cognitive Development

____ Physical Development

____ Social Emotional Development

____ Resiliency Characteristics
Teacher Relationships with Parents and Other Caregivers:

1. On average, how often do you have contact with your students’ parents/guardians?
   _____ Daily  _____ Weekly  _____ 2x/week  _____ 2x/month  _____ Every quarter

2. What method of contact do you use most of the time?
   _____ Written  _____ Phone  _____ E-mail  _____ Home Visit  _____ Meeting at School

3. List 3 priorities we should focus on to support student success
   (1) __________________________________________
   (2) __________________________________________
   (3) __________________________________________

Thank you for completing this assessment! We will share the composite results with you once completed.
HELP
LANSDOWNE HIGH SCHOOL BECOME A COMMUNITY SCHOOL!!!!

What is a “Community School”?
A Community School is a school that offers more convenient access to services and programs to support the success of our students, families and community.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

- The first step is to complete the online survey to help determine how to support you. Go to this link: https://bcps.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_808PPlrxDwWInL, to share what’s important to you.
- Your children and their teachers will be completing another survey in school to share their opinions.
- Stay tuned for more opportunities over the summer and in the fall to share your ideas and areas of interest as we develop opportunities for you, your students, and your family.

QUESTIONS?
Please contact Jill Savage, Community School Coordinator, or your LHS Principal, Ken Miller
410-887-1415
¡Ayuda a la escuela secundaria Lansdowne High School (LHS) a que se convierta en una *escuela comunitaria*!

¿Qué es una "escuela comunitaria"?
Una escuela comunitaria es una escuela que ofrece acceso más conveniente a servicios y programas para apoyar el éxito de nuestros alumnos, nuestras familias y nuestra comunidad.

¡Necesitamos que nos ayudes!

- Sus hijos y las maestras completarán otra encuesta en la escuela para compartir sus opiniones.
- Preste atención a otras oportunidades durante el verano y el otoño para compartir sus ideas y áreas de interés a medida que desarrollamos oportunidades para usted, sus hijos y su familia.

¿Preguntas?
Favor de ponerse en contacto con Jill Savage, Coordinadora de Escuela Comunitaria, o con Ken Miller, el Director de la escuela secundaria LHS, 410-887-1415
HELP
Baltimore Highlands Elementary
BECOME A
COMMUNITY SCHOOL!!!!

What is a “Community School”? 
A Community School is a school that offers more convenient access to services and programs to support the success of our students, families and community.

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  Go to this link:  https://bcps.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_808PPlrxDwWJnL to share what’s important to you.
- Your children and their teachers will be completing another survey in school to share their opinions.
- Stay tuned for more opportunities over the summer and in the fall to share your ideas and areas of interest as we develop opportunities for you, your students, and your family.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact Jill Savage, Community School Coordinator, 410-887-1415
or your BHES Principal, Brian Williams, 410-887-0919
¡Ayuda a la escuela primaria Baltimore Highlands Elementary (BHES) a que se convierta en una escuela comunitaria!

¿Qué es una "escuela comunitaria"?
Una escuela comunitaria es una escuela que ofrece acceso más conveniente a servicios y programas para apoyar el éxito de nuestros alumnos, nuestras familias y nuestra comunidad.

¡Necesitamos que nos ayudes!

- El primer paso incluye completar la encuesta en línea para ayudar a determinar cómo podemos ayudarle.
- Sus hijos y las maestras completarán otra encuesta en la escuela para compartir sus opiniones.
- Preste atención a otras oportunidades durante el verano y el otoño para compartir sus ideas y áreas de interés a medida que desarrollamos oportunidades para usted, sus hijos y su familia.

¿Preguntas?
Favor de ponerse en contacto con Jill Savage, Coordinadora de Escuela Comunitaria, 410-887-1415 o con Brian Williams, el Director de la escuela primaria BHES, 410-887-0919
Release

Baltimore Highlands Elementary/Lansdowne High School
Family Survey

Help Your School Become a Community School!

What is a “Community School”?

A community school is a school that offers more convenient access to services and programs to support the success of our students, families, and community.

We Need Your Help

• The first step is to complete this online survey to help determine how to support you. Take the survey to share what’s important to you.
• Your children and their teachers will be completing another survey in school to share their opinions.
• Stay tuned for more opportunities over the summer and in the fall to share your ideas and areas of interest as we develop opportunities for you, your children, and your family

By participating in this survey, you agree to give BCPS permission to store this information in a computer database and keep it for 3 years as required by law.

☐ Yes, I agree to the statement above and wish to participate in this survey.

Household Info

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey.

The first several items are going to ask you for some basic household information.
What is the total number of people in your household?

What is the total number of children younger than 19 in your household?

Select from the list below the school or schools that your children attend:

- Baltimore Highlands Elementary
- Lansdowne High School
- I have children in both schools
- I do not have children in either school

How many of your children attend Baltimore Highlands Elementary?

Are you new to Baltimore Highlands this year?

- Yes
- No

Where did your child attend school last year?

How many of your children attend Lansdowne High School?
Are you new to Lansdowne High this year?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Where did your child attend school last year?

Health Questions

Would you like assistance with any of the following? (Please check all that apply)

☐ Employment
☐ Food
☐ SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
☐ Clothing
☐ Rent/Utilities Assistance
☐ Housing
☐ Transportation
☐ Medical Insurance
☐ Health Care
☐ Dental
☐ Counseling/Mental Health Services
☐ After School Programs
☐ Prenatal/Pregnancy Supports
☐ Tutoring for your child
☐ Mentoring for your child
☐ Applying for College
☐ Legal Assistance
☐ Immigration Services
☐ Volunteer Opportunities at School

Would you like information about any of these adult education classes? (Please check all that apply)

☐ English Classes
☐ Computer/Internet/Email
☐ Exercise/Weight Management
☐ Adult Literacy (in English)
☐ Adult Literacy (in Spanish)
☐ Healthy Cooking
☐ Leadership Training
☐ Parenting classes/teen issues
☐ Gardening
☐ GED Prep (High School General Equivalency Diploma)
☐ Neighborhood Watch Training
☐ Budget/Finances
☐ Preparing Children under 5 years for school
☐ Smoking Cessation
☐ BCPSOne (Web based program to allow parents to review students' grades, attendance, and email teachers)

Technology questions

Do you have a computer at home?  Yes  No
Do you have internet access?  O  O

Do you have a library card?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Follow Up Info

Would you like a Community School Staff person to contact you about a specific need?

Baltimore Highlands Elementary Community School Staff  O  O
Lansdowne High Community School Staff  O  O

Preferred method of contact:

☐ E-mail
☐ Phone
☐ Text
Parent/Guardian Name

First Name
Last Name

Second Parent/Guardian Name

First Name
Last Name

Please complete the address/contact information below:

Address:
Apt #:
Zipcode
Email address
Phone number

How long have you lived at current address? (Please enter a number or "0" for each field)

Years
Months

Please choose the race/ethnicity that you identify with from the choices below:

○ American Indian/Alaskan Native
○ Asian
○ Black/African American
○ Hispanic/Latino
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or more races
Baltimore Highlands Elementary/Lansdowne High School
Encuesta para Familias

¡Ayuda a tu escuela a que se convierta en una escuela comunitaria!

¿Qué es una "escuela comunitaria"?

Una escuela comunitaria es una escuela que ofrece acceso más conveniente a servicios y programas para apoyar el éxito de nuestros alumnos, nuestras familias y nuestra comunidad.

Necesitamos que nos ayudes

- El primer paso incluye completar esta encuesta en línea para ayudar a determinar cómo podemos ayudarlo. Realice la encuesta para compartir lo que le importa.
- Sus hijos y las maestras completarán otra encuesta en la escuela para compartir sus opiniones.
- Preste atención a otras oportunidades durante el verano y el otoño para compartir sus ideas y áreas de interés a medida que desarrollamos oportunidades para usted, sus hijos y su familia.

Al participar en esta encuesta, usted autoriza a las BCPS (Escuelas públicas del condado de Baltimore) a almacenar esta información en una base de datos de una computadora y guardarla por 3 años, según lo requiera la ley.

☐ Sí, acepto lo establecido anteriormente y deseo participar en esta encuesta.

Household Info

Gracias por aceptar participar en esta encuesta.

Las primeras preguntas serán acerca de información básica sobre su casa.
¿Cuántas personas en total viven en su casa?

¿Cuántos menores de 19 años en total viven en su casa?

Selezione de la lista a continuación la escuela o las escuelas a la/las que asisten sus hijos:

- Escuela primaria Baltimore Highlands Elementary
- Escuela secundaria Lansdowne High School
- Tengo hijos en ambas escuelas
- No tengo hijos en ninguna escuela

¿Cuántos de sus hijos asisten a la escuela primaria Baltimore Highlands Elementary?

¿Es nuevo en Baltimore Highlands este año?

- Sí
- No

¿A qué escuela fue su hijo el año pasado?
¿Cuántos de sus hijos asisten a la escuela secundaria Lansdowne High School?

¿Es nuevo en Lansdowne High este año?
- Si
- No

¿A qué escuela fue su hijo el año pasado?

Health Questions

¿Le gustaría recibir ayuda con respecto a los siguientes temas? (Marque todas las opciones que correspondan)

- Empleo
- Alimentos
- SNAP (Programa de asistencia nutricional suplementaria)
- Ropa
- Ayuda con la empresa de alquiler/servicios públicos
- Vivienda
- Transporte
- Seguro médico
- Atención médica
- Atención dental
- Servicios de asesoramiento/salud mental
- Programas extraescolares
- Ayudas prenatales/durante el embarazo
- Clases de apoyo para su hijo
- Clases de orientación para su hijo
- Solicitud de ingreso a la universidad
- Asistencia legal
- Servicios de inmigración
- Oportunidades como voluntarios en la escuela

¿Le gustaría recibir información acerca de alguna de estas clases de educación para adultos? (Marque todas las opciones que correspondan)
Clases de inglés
Comunicación/Internet/Correo electrónico
Ejercicios/Control del peso
Capacitación sobre liderazgo
Clases sobre la crianza de los hijos/asuntos relacionados con la adolescencia
Jardinería
GED Prep (Diploma de equivalencia general de la escuela secundaria)
Capacitación para vigilancia vecinal

Alfabetización para adultos (en inglés)
Alfabetización para adultos (en español)
Cocina saludable
Presupuesto/Finanzas
Preparación de niños menores de 5 años para la escuela
Programa para dejar de fumar
BCPSOne (Programa basado en la web que permite a los padres revisar las calificaciones y las asistencia de los alumnos, y enviar correos electrónicos a los docentes)

Preguntas sobre tecnología
¿Cuenta con una computadora en su casa?  Si  No
¿Tiene acceso a Internet?  

¿Cuenta con una tarjeta de lector/biblioteca?
○ Si
○ No

Follow Up Info
¿Le gustaría que alguien del personal de la escuela comunitaria se comunique con usted por una necesidad específica?

Personal de la escuela comunitaria Baltimore Highlands Elementary
Personal de la escuela comunitaria Lansdowne High

Si  No
Método preferido de contacto:

- Correo electrónico
- Teléfono
- Mensaje de texto

Nombre del padre/tutor

Nombre
Apellido

Nombre de otro padre/tutor

Nombre
Apellido

Complete la dirección/información de contacto a continuación:

Dirección:
N.º de dpto.:
Código postal
Dirección de correo electrónico
Número de teléfono

¿Durante cuánto tiempo vivió en su dirección actual? (Ingrese un número o "0" para cada campo)

Años
Meses
Elija la raza/el origen étnico con la/el que se identifica de las opciones a continuación:

- [ ] Amerindio/Nativo de Alaska
- [ ] Asiático
- [ ] Negro/Afroamericano
- [ ] Hispano/Latino
- [ ] Hawaiano nativo/Isleño del Pacífico
- [ ] Blanco
- [ ] Dos o más razas