



Executive Summary

Report on the Baltimore Library Project: Years 1-3

Established in 2011, the Baltimore Elementary and Middle School Library Project (Library Project) is a public-private partnership of The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Baltimore City Public Schools, and nearly 40 nonprofit and corporate partners. The Library Project's goal is "to transform inner-city school libraries into inspirational spaces in order to impact educational achievement."¹ The Weinberg Foundation has allocated a total of \$10 million to build up to 24 libraries.

Baltimore City Public Schools is a large urban school district that currently serves nearly 84,000 students from Pre-K through 12th grade in 179 schools. Eighty-four percent of students come from low-income households and 87 percent are African-American. To date, the Library Project is serving more than 6,000 children and their families within 11 renovated spaces, with two more being completed in January 2017. In total, the Weinberg Foundation has provided more than \$5 million in funds towards the initiative and leveraged more than \$1.5 million in partner support.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the first three years of this Project and to explore if the Library Project's short-term goals were accomplished, if learning has improved, and if there are ways to strengthen the Library Project to ensure long-term sustainability of the libraries after the Foundation concludes its four-year commitment to each newly-renovated library. The report provides a comprehensive look at the Project from its inception in 2011 through 2014, when new libraries had opened in the first nine schools:

- Arlington Elementary/Middle School
- Elmer A. Henderson: A Johns Hopkins Partnership School
- Harford Heights Elementary School
- The Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School
- Moravia Park Elementary School
- Morrell Park Elementary/Middle School
- Southwest Baltimore Charter School
- Thomas Johnson Elementary/Middle School
- Windsor Hills Elementary/Middle School

At the time of publication of this report, libraries had also been opened in The Commodore John Rodgers School and Westport Academy and were under construction at George Washington Elementary School and Hampden Elementary/Middle School.

The Library Project set out to create 21st-century libraries, with multi-use spaces, robust book collections, an array of modern technology, and full-time, certified librarians and support staff. Over time, these libraries will help to improve learning outcomes for the students they serve.

1. Library Project website: www.baltimorelibraryproject.org.

The report finds that the Baltimore Library Project has proven to be a strong example of the power of public-private partnerships to leverage resources to benefit children in low-income communities. Further, there are promising indications that the Library Project can play a role in improving reading achievement among Baltimore's public school students. Early data on changes in behavior and learning outcomes supports these findings:

- An analysis of book checkouts in Baltimore City Public Schools that are using a tracking system called DESTINY shows that six of the ten highest checkout rates were at Library Project schools. In a four-year period, book checkouts in Library Project schools increased **400 percent**.
- Reading fluency scores among third grade students in two of the first three library schools showed dramatic improvement with scores in reading fluency (DIBELS) increasing from **33 percent** of students at benchmark to **64 percent** at benchmark.²
- Library Project students in the third grade were almost **three times** as likely to meet reading fluency proficiency standards as students in comparison schools.
- The first three Library Project schools **outperformed** more than 120 Baltimore City Public Schools on PARCC tests in reading proficiency.

Positive improvements have been found at each school that has a renovated Library Project space. These early successes appear to have stemmed from the strength of the partnerships involved, efficient decision-making, and effective leveraging of public and private funds. While these early results are promising, the report recommends that the Project continue to be evaluated over the longer term to determine the sustainability of these improvements.

The report also offers a number of specific findings and recommendations to strengthen the Library Project and help ensure long-term sustainability. The following is a list of recommendations:

- Develop and implement a long-term sustainability plan
- Consolidate and increase resources to support the new roles and responsibilities of the librarians, especially relating to technology
- Strengthen partner involvement by facilitating and supporting appropriate matches of partner resources and school needs
- Devise strategies for outreach to and engagement of parents to make fuller use of the as yet underutilized Pratt Parent Places
- Review research and evaluation priorities, data collection, and analytic needs by focusing on a limited number of outcomes that can be reliably measured

Prepared by

Nanette Falkenberg
David Gould
Marcy Davis
Steve Sheldon

With support from

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
Baltimore City Public Schools
MDRC

To view the full report, please visit www.baltimorelibraryproject.org.

2. The third school in that year did not participate in this reading assessment.