

# THE BALTIMORE LIBRARY PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

SCHOOL LIBRARY  
IMPLEMENTATION  
AND IMPACT



The Harry and Jeanette  
Weinberg Foundation

BALTIMORE CITY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

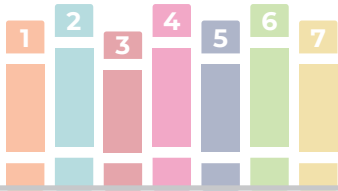
SharpInsight

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The Baltimore Library Project is a multi-year collaborative effort of the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Baltimore City Public Schools, and more than 30 partners to build or transform Baltimore City Public School libraries. This report was developed by Sharp Insight, LLC as one component of an evaluation of the Baltimore Library Project.

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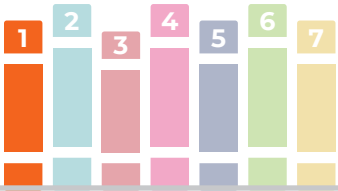
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>11</b>
	BALTIMORE LIBRARY PROJECT HISTORY	11
	WHY SCHOOL LIBRARIES?	13
	EVALUATION BACKGROUND	18
<b>3</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>19</b>
	EVALUATION DESIGN AND OBJECTIVES	19
	A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO EVALUATION	19
	STUDY 1: IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARY BEST PRACTICES	22
	STUDY 2: SCHOOL LIBRARY INFRASTRUCTURE AND FINANCING	26
	METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS	27
<b>4</b>	<b>FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>28</b>
	UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIBRARY PROJECT LIBRARIES	28
	LIBRARY PROJECT IMPACT	40
	LIBRARY PROJECT STRENGTHS	51
	CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS	58
	COVID-19 IMPACTS AND VIRTUAL/HYBRID EDUCATION	70
	INTERVIEWEE LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT	75
	SUSTAINABILITY	82
	OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALING AND REPLICATION	89
<b>5</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>92</b>
	CONTINUE DIALOGUE REGARDING LONG-TERM STRATEGIES	93
	INSTITUTIONALIZE LIBRARY PROJECT PROCESSES	93
	CONTINUE TO ELEVATE THE CRITICAL ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN LIBRARY SUCCESS	94
	REVISIT THE STANDARD COMPONENTS OF RENOVATED LIBRARIES	94
<b>6</b>	<b>FUTURE DIRECTIONS</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>96</b>
	APPENDIX A. SCHOOL PARTICIPATION	97
	APPENDIX B. PARENT-CHILD INTERVIEW GUIDE	98
	APPENDIX C. ADMINISTRATOR AND LIBRARY STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE	103
	APPENDIX D. SITE VISIT IMPLEMENTATION RUBRIC	109
	APPENDIX E. SECONDARY DATA VARIABLES AND DATA SOURCES	116
	APPENDIX F. PARTNER INTERVIEW GUIDE	117

NOTE: ALL OF THE BOOK ICONS AT THE TOP OF THE PAGES ARE CLICKABLE TO ASSIST WITH NAVIGATION THROUGH THE DOCUMENT.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**The Baltimore Library Project (Library Project) is a public-philanthropic partnership of The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation (Weinberg Foundation), Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools), and more than 30 community and government partners.** The Library Project works “to build or transform Baltimore City Public School libraries in neighborhoods where many students face academic and economic challenges.”<sup>1</sup> Since its inception in 2011, the Library Project has renovated 17 elementary and middle school libraries with two more schools currently in the planning phase. The Weinberg Foundation has committed \$15 million to this initiative. By 2024, the Library Project anticipates serving 9,000 students, as well as their families, through 19 new libraries and will have leveraged more than \$30 million in additional federal, state, and local funds.<sup>2</sup>

The Library Project is grounded in empirically supported school library best practices, including the staffing of libraries with full-time, certified library media specialists; thoughtful and attractive design; and technology that reflects the needs of 21st century students. Each of these foci have been empirically linked to bolstered student achievement and/or school climate.<sup>3</sup> This evaluation study examined to what extent best practices were implemented in Library Project schools and what can be learned from the funding and partnership model used in the Baltimore Library Project.

<sup>1</sup> The Baltimore Library Project website. <https://baltimorelibraryproject.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Sharp Insight, LLC. (2022). *School Library Best Practices: Implementation and Funding Mechanisms Literature Review for the 2021-2022 Baltimore Library Project Evaluation*. Baltimore Library Project.

## METHODS

**This evaluation project began with a comprehensive literature review of 1) school library best practices and 2) school library infrastructure and financing models to assess whether the project continues to operate in alignment with extant literature.** The data-focused aspect of the evaluation included two separate but related studies, each with its own primary areas of focus: Study 1 used Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) data, key informant interviews, and library site visits to assess the implementation of school library best practices. Using key informant interviews, Study 2 explored the unique funding and partnership mechanisms used to support the Library Project. These studies were guided by evaluation objectives that sought to determine the Library Project's:

- *Unique characteristics*
- *Impact on students and capital improvements*
- *Strengths*
- *Challenges and limitations*
- *COVID-19 and virtual/hybrid education*
- *Lessons learned and recommendations*
- *Sustainability*
- *Opportunities for scaling and replication*

It should be noted that, although a matching process was used in the sampling procedures, there were likely baseline differences between schools with Library Project libraries and reference schools (e.g., differences in principal engagement, age of overall building facilities) that may have contributed to the statistical differences outlined in the results presented below. Additionally, correlational statistical methods were employed. Thus, we identified some significant associations, but cause-and-effect conclusions cannot be made using these methods.

## SYNTHESIZED KEY FINDINGS

The sections that follow summarize seven key findings across all data sources used for this evaluation.

1. The Baltimore Library Project is a successful public-philanthropic partnership.
2. The Baltimore Library Project is making a positive contribution to schools.
3. Public schools could always use additional financial and personnel resources.
4. Staffing school libraries is critical, yet complex.
5. Library access is influenced by scheduling and staffing.
6. COVID-19 exposed or exacerbated challenges with library-based community and family engagement challenges.
7. Even with actively committed Baltimore Library Project partners, sustainability remains a challenge.

### THE BALTIMORE LIBRARY PROJECT IS A SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC-PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERSHIP.

**#1** Baltimore Library Project partners highlighted the productive, long-term nature of the partnership, in which partners have been deeply committed to a strategic focus on improving literacy through beautiful and multi-component libraries. Partners highlighted the active engagement of the Weinberg Foundation in all aspects of the project as well as the strong working relationship that partners have developed with each other. Factors attributed to success included the vision and leadership guiding the partnership as well as the ongoing commitment and collaboration between partners.



## THE BALTIMORE LIBRARY PROJECT IS MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOLS.

**#2** Library Project libraries serve as the hub of the school. In addition to being used for library class for students, these school libraries are used for staff meetings, student clubs, parent-teacher organization (PTO) meetings, open houses, and more. The library spaces are adaptable with multi-functional areas and modular furnishings that allow for flexibility to meet the needs of all users. The design of the spaces is also appealing, with bright colors and visually interesting décor. Families get excited about the space, and for some, the library space is a deciding factor in enrolling their child at Library Project schools. Administrators in particular noted how having a renovated library is connected to increases in enrollment at their schools.

Based on both quantitative analysis and semi-structured interviews, Library Project libraries are associated with positive school climate. Librarians, administrators, and others noted how excited students get about the space and what it means for students to feel invested in. Although causation cannot be inferred from the statistical analyses conducted, it is notable that compared to students in reference schools, students in Library Project schools rated all four aspects of school climate (i.e., school community, school environment, school relationships, and school safety) significantly higher. Community partners contribute to school climate by providing enrichment and literacy programs as well as access to needed resources, such as food, coats, and shoes.

Library Project libraries may also be making a difference in student academic performance. Study 1 interviewees noted that Library Project libraries help get students excited about books and reading. The quality and depth of the collections were often noted as strengths of Library Project libraries. Additionally, although causation cannot be inferred from the statistical analyses conducted, compared to students in reference schools, Library Project schools showed significantly higher average school performance level in English language arts (ELA) and had a significantly higher percentage of students proficient in ELA, based on 2018-2019 Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) data.

Positive impacts were also noted among Library Project partners. They identified personal benefits, such as the positive feelings that arose from making a positive contribution to their city, as well as professional benefits, such as enhanced credibility from being associated with the project and connecting with new partners, which has resulted in new funding and activities.

**PUBLIC SCHOOLS COULD ALWAYS USE ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL AND PERSONNEL RESOURCES.**

**#3** There was broad agreement from participants that support from the Weinberg Foundation is generous. During site visits and interviews, many school staff noted gratitude for the libraries as well as the annual maintenance walkthroughs, which include upholstery cleaning and carpet shampooing. Even so, there was an expressed desire for more clarity on which library maintenance projects are in the Weinberg Foundation’s purview as opposed to maintenance requests that schools must submit a ticket for with the district. In many instances, the process of getting things repaired, cleaned, or replaced is less efficient or not fiscally feasible when coordinated by City Schools.

Participants also expressed deep gratitude for the Weinberg Foundation’s support in maintaining collections. Receiving physical books and/or funds from the Foundation helps librarians “weed” their collections (i.e., remove dated or inaccurate non-fiction materials; repair or replace especially worn books, etc.). However, some noted that this support from the Foundation seems uncertain, specifically with respect to timing and amount of available funds. This, paired with the fact that many libraries are going without the expected yearly funds from their school and/or the school district, left many librarians in Library Project schools wishing that they had more funding for collections maintenance.

**STAFFING SCHOOL LIBRARIES IS CRITICAL, YET COMPLEX.**

**#4** Library Project schools having a full-time, certified librarian and support staff aligns with best practices from the extant literature<sup>4</sup> on school libraries. However, the practicalities of this arrangement are complex. First, certified librarians are not always effective schoolteachers; the best school librarians have a combination of enthusiasm about the library, professional credentials, and classroom management skills. Given the limited hiring pool of certified librarians from which to choose, finding someone who meets all three of those criteria is quite difficult. Additionally, certified librarians are expensive, especially for smaller schools. Staffing a full-time certified librarian, even with support from the Weinberg Foundation, can come at the cost of another resource (e.g., art, music, gym). For these reasons, some participants noted that simply having a full-time librarian may be more important than whether that person is certified.

<sup>4</sup> Sharp Insight, LLC. (2022). *School Library Best Practices: Implementation and Funding Mechanisms Literature Review for the 2021-2022 Baltimore Library Project Evaluation*. Baltimore Library Project.



## LIBRARY ACCESS IS INFLUENCED BY SCHEDULING AND STAFFING.

**#5** Student access to the library appears to be primarily impacted by two factors. First, the way library class is scheduled affects access. Based on interviewee accounts, in some schools, the library schedule is fixed with little flexibility for going to the library outside of library class. Fixed scheduling also limits if and how library staff can engage in instructional collaboration with classroom teachers. Analysis of MSDE data showed that librarians in Library Project schools spent significantly more time engaged in instructional support to classroom teachers than their counterparts in reference schools and were significantly more likely to have flexibly scheduled classes.

How often students are scheduled for library class is also related to access. For example, in some schools, students go to library class multiple times a week for one quarter of the year. In other schools, students attend library class once a week for the full academic year. There are benefits and drawbacks to each of these arrangements; the downsides can be mitigated by attending to the second access factor: staffing. Students' ability to check out books seems to be related not just to when library class is scheduled, but also whether before and after school hours are offered. In interviews with Library Project school librarians and administrators, offering before and/or after school hours is only feasible if the librarian volunteers to be in the library off the clock or, in schools that have a library assistant, staggering the schedules of the librarian and assistant such that one can be in the building before and/or after school.

## COVID-19 EXPOSED OR EXACERBATED COMMUNITY AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES.

**#6** One of the benefits of having a Library Project library is the partnerships that the Weinberg Foundation brings to the schools. These partnerships often supplement library instructional time, but they are also an important part of how libraries engage with families and the larger community. Unfortunately, once school buildings closed due to COVID, many of these partnerships faded away. Many school personnel reported an interest in re-engaging with these partners but were unclear how to get them back.

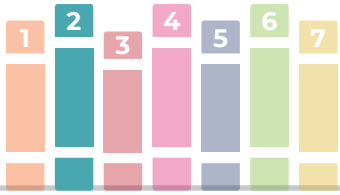
Another universal aspect of Library Project schools is the presence of a Parent Corner. For all but one of the Library Project schools involved in this evaluation project, the Parent Corner is not utilized. Many school personnel noted this is partly due to parents not being allowed in the building during COVID, but for many of these schools, the Parent Corner was rarely utilized prior to the start of the pandemic. There seems to be a mismatch between the Parent Corner as a resource and community need for that resource. In the one Library Project school that did see their Parent Corner well-utilized pre-COVID, there was a clear need among the parents for access to computers, printers, and the internet. For the other schools, this need among parents was not present.

## SUSTAINABILITY IS A CHALLENGE.

**#7** Interviewees identified limited availability of funds for construction, operations, and maintenance as key factors in the sustainability of the project. Librarians in particular noted the need for consistent and predictable funding streams to maintain quality collections. The maintenance of the physical space will also require ongoing support from the Foundation. Although there is district-managed infrastructure for school maintenance, City Schools cannot always afford to maintain or replace the furnishings and décor in renovated libraries. Funding for staffing was also mentioned in discussions about sustainability; interviewees saw the benefits of having a library assistant, but administrators can rarely afford to maintain that position without Foundation dollars. There was also wide agreement that libraries must be staffed with full-time librarians to promote full use of the libraries. Lastly, interviewees recognized the importance of high-level leadership commitment and the successful collaborative model that has developed as a key factor in sustainability of the project.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ **Continue Dialogue Regarding Long-Term Strategies:** Multiple partners identified a need to reconvene all those involved in the Library Project – Weinberg Foundation, City Schools, and community and governmental partners – together for general status updates as well as discussions about what is working well, what could be improved, and sustainability of the project.
- ▶ **Institutionalize Library Project Processes:** Ensuring continuity through personnel changes and increased transparency around processes, including school selection criteria, are important parts of ensuring the continued success of the Library Project.
- ▶ **Continue to Elevate the Critical Role of Librarians in Library Success:** Baltimore Library Project Partners have an opportunity to collaboratively address the shortage of certified school librarians in Baltimore City.
- ▶ **Revisit the Standard Components of Renovated Libraries:** There are opportunities to examine the features of renovated libraries on a school-by-school basis to ensure that they meet the needs of each school community.



# INTRODUCTION

## BALTIMORE LIBRARY PROJECT HISTORY



**The Baltimore Library Project (Library Project) is a public-philanthropic partnership of The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation (Weinberg Foundation), Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools), and more than 30 community and government partners.** The Library Project works “to build or transform Baltimore City Public School libraries in neighborhoods where many students face academic and economic challenges.”<sup>5</sup> Since its inception in 2011, the Library Project has renovated 17 elementary and middle school libraries. The Weinberg Foundation has committed \$15 million to this initiative. By 2024, the Library Project anticipates serving 9,000 students, as well as their families, through 19 new libraries and will have leveraged more than \$30 million in additional federal, state, and local funds.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The Baltimore Library Project website. <https://baltimorelibraryproject.org/>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

## A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP

The Library Project began with a shared vision between the Weinberg Foundation and City Schools. This vision was informed by conversations with educational leaders in Baltimore City, studying library renovation initiatives in other parts of the country, reviewing empirical research about the relationship between strong school libraries and student achievement, and a fundamental belief that all children deserve well-equipped, well-resourced, and well-staffed libraries.

The Weinberg Foundation supports up to 30% of the total costs of each new library. Initially, City Schools was able to leverage federal funding through the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZAB) funding to cover their contribution. However, QZAB funding was eliminated in 2018 as part of the 2017 Federal Tax Reform Bill. Currently, the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), a state allocation system, is the main source of funding used by City Schools for Library Project costs. The CIP funds are typically used for systems, like HVAC, windows, and roofs, and are not typically used to support academic programming. Although many factors are involved in the selection of schools that receive a Baltimore Library Project renovation, a major factor has become whether the school is already receiving CIP funding for multi-systems projects.

In the Baltimore Library Project, City Schools has the responsibility of identifying which schools could potentially become Baltimore Library Project schools. Neighborhood needs, as well as funding streams, have had a substantial influence on school selection. Initially, receiving QZAB funding was an important consideration. Schools that received QZAB funds had to meet specific requirements, including being located in an empowerment zone or enterprise community and having at least 35% of students qualify for free and reduced meals (FARMS). In addition, the Weinberg Foundation's operating rules limited consideration of schools to those with a FARMS rate of at least 50%. As mentioned above, due to the loss of QZAB funding, the school district currently looks at schools with capital improvement project funding that can be counted toward the library renovation. Other factors that were important to school selection included whether the school had:

- *A principal who was active, engaged, and supportive of library activities*
- *A librarian on staff or a willingness to hire a librarian*
- *An engaged school community that will use the library*
- *Sufficient enrollment to absorb the added library staffing costs*
- *Any enrollment projections that might indicate that the school might be closed in the near future*
- *Any plans for a full-school renovation that could impact a renovated library*

These selection criteria are a crucial component of the partnership between City Schools and The Weinberg Foundation.

## WHY SCHOOL LIBRARIES?

**At the inception of the Library Project, The Weinberg Foundation and City Schools recognized the importance of school libraries in bolstering student achievement and cultivating a positive school climate.** Additionally, similar projects have been successful in other cities. New York City started a library renovation project in 2002 with the Robin Hood Foundation<sup>7</sup> and in Washington DC, eight libraries were supported in 2005 with funding from the Capitol Hill Community Foundation.<sup>8</sup>

This evaluation project began with a comprehensive literature review of 1) school library best practices and 2) school library infrastructure and financing models to assess whether the project continues to operate in alignment with extant literature.



<sup>7</sup> New York City School Library System <https://nycdoe.libguides.com/RH/home>

<sup>8</sup> Capitol Hill Community Foundation <https://www.capitolhillcommunityfoundation.com/school-libraries-project>

## SCHOOL LIBRARY BEST PRACTICES

The literature review of school library best practices largely covered three domains: school library staffing, school library design, and hybrid school libraries.

### SCHOOL LIBRARY STAFFING

Well-staffed school libraries are consistently associated with improved student achievement; multiple studies have found that simply having a full-time librarian in the library is associated with student academic gains (e.g., proficiency in math, science, history/government, writing, and reading; increases in National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP] fourth grade reading scores<sup>9,10</sup>). This association between having a full-time librarian and student achievement holds for students from low-income backgrounds, Black and Hispanic students, and English learners. Similarly, the presence of library assistants and other support staff has been connected to increases in library services and higher standardized test scores.<sup>11</sup> Importantly, these associations are only found when there is also a full-time librarian; support staff alone do not seem to have an impact on student outcomes. One explanation for the impact of library staff is their support of certified librarians with the day-to-day operations of managing the library, which frees librarians to focus more on instructional collaboration with classroom teachers.<sup>12</sup>



<sup>9</sup> Dow, M. J., & Lakin, J. M. (2012). School Librarian Staffing Levels and Student Achievement as Represented in 2006–2009 Kansas Annual Yearly Progress Data. *School Library Research*, 15. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ994364.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Lance, K. C., & Hofshire, L. (2011). Something to Shout About: New Research Shows that more Librarians Means Higher Reading Scores. *School Library Journal*, 28–33.

<sup>11</sup> Achterman, D. L. (2008). *Haves, Halves, and Have-Nots: School Libraries and Student Achievement in California* [University of North Texas]. [https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc9800/m2/1/high\\_res\\_d/dissertation.pdf](https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc9800/m2/1/high_res_d/dissertation.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Farmer, L. S. J. (2006). Library media program implementation and student achievement. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 38(1), 21–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000606060957>

## SCHOOL LIBRARY DESIGN

Successful modern school libraries meet the varied instructional needs and learning styles of instructors and students. The learning spaces are designed to provide different areas and grouping arrangements, and the furnishings therein support modification and customization that reflects users' interests and needs.<sup>13</sup> In reference to the aesthetics of school libraries, research on classroom design may be useful in understanding the elements of school libraries that support student achievement. For example, inadequate lighting, noise, low air quality, and deficient heating in classrooms are significantly related to worse student achievement. Further, the thoughtful layout of the space (e.g., arrangement of seating areas) and the objects and décor (e.g., plants, posters of important historical figures) can positively impact student achievement.<sup>14</sup>

Library design is also connected to student engagement. In instances where old libraries have been replaced with more open, flexible, and adaptable shared educational spaces, students were more likely to work with other schoolmates there, and the new library supported increased use of library resources and active learning.<sup>15</sup> Lastly, the more students can access libraries, as measured by the library's operating hours or the weekly number of hours that the library is staffed, the higher their test scores. School libraries that have flexible scheduling are generally associated with higher reading and writing test scores.<sup>16</sup> This may be because open timetables allow for deeper collaborations with classroom teachers.

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<sup>13</sup> Farmer, L. S. J. (2017). Managing Facilities. In *Managing the Successful School Library: Strategic Planning and Reflective Practice* (pp. 111–134). ALA Neal-Schuman.

<sup>14</sup> Cheryan, S., Ziegler, S. A., Plaut, V. C., & Meltzoff, A. N. (2014). Designing Classrooms to Maximize Student Achievement. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1(1), 4–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732214548677>

<sup>15</sup> Maxwell, L. E., & French, R. (2016). Elementary School Library Design: Student Perceptions of a Learning Commons. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 26(2), 61–82. <https://doi.org/10.7721/chilyoutenvi.26.2.0061>

<sup>16</sup> Baumbach, D. (2003). Making the grade: The status of school library media centers in the sunshine state and how they contribute to student achievement. Hi Willow Research and Pub

## HYBRID SCHOOL LIBRARIES

As youth in the U.S. grow increasingly comfortable with personal technology, school libraries are working to provide them with access to computers and digital media. Libraries are being called upon to assist students in developing skills related to navigation and analysis of diverse sources as more information moves to the digital format.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, since digital technologies are so appealing to today's youth, small-sample and pilot research seems to support the value of e-readers as a factor in motivating young readers to read more.<sup>18,19</sup> Increasingly, K-12 schools (City Schools included) are implementing one-to-one laptop programs, in which all students in a given class, grade level, school, or district are provided laptops. In some schools, these laptops are intended for use throughout the school day; in other instances, students are permitted to bring the devices home with them. School libraries and librarians can support the development and implementation of such programs.<sup>20</sup> In many instances, the library serves as the hub for these programs with library staff providing technical assistance and building access to online content and resources for student and teachers alike.

Additionally, although digitized collections, resources, and learning object repositories exist, their integration with information fluency skill instruction (e.g., teaching students to find, assess, and use information to solve problems) is just beginning. In the services that they offer, libraries are moving “from content to facilitation” of individual learning. Lastly, successful modern libraries and librarians have a virtual presence, meeting students where they are and providing assistance through things like tutorials and real-time personal assistance.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Baumbach, D. (2003). Making the grade: The status of school library media centers in the sunshine state and how they contribute to student achievement. Hi Willow Research and Pub

<sup>17</sup> Hanover Research. (2013). Best Practices in Library Services. <https://www.apsva.us/wpcontent/uploads/2018/10/Best-Practices-inLibrary-Services-Arlington-Public-Schools.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Maynard, S. (2010). The Impact of e-Books on Young Children's Reading Habits. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 26(4), 236–248. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-010-9180-5>

<sup>19</sup> Strout, K. (2010). Average, below average and above average first grade students' beliefs about using e-books to activate interest and motivation in reading. [Thesis, Bowling Green University]. [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws\\_etd/send\\_file/send?accession=bgsu1269280187&disposition=inline](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_etd/send_file/send?accession=bgsu1269280187&disposition=inline)

<sup>20</sup> Kuzo, J. (2015). School Librarians: Key to Technology Integration. *Knowledge Quest*, 44(1). Lance, K. C., & Hofschire, L. (2012). Change in School Librarian Staffing Linked with Change in CSAP Reading Performance, 2005 to 201 (p. 17). *Library Research Service*.

<sup>21</sup> Boyer, B., & Kelly, R. (2014). K-12 Online and Blended Learning, School Libraries, and School Librarians. In R. E. Ferdig & K. Kennedy (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on K-12 Online and Blended Learning* (pp. 365–388). ETC Press. <https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.5555/2811036.2811058>



## SCHOOL LIBRARY INFRASTRUCTURE AND FINANCING

Schools have a primary purpose of educating children and are considered a critical component of our national infrastructure. School buildings should provide safe and healthy spaces for learning; however, many school districts are challenged to keep up with construction and maintenance needs for schools.<sup>22</sup> A gap exists between what is typically spent on capital improvements and what is needed to ensure that all children can attend schools in safe and modern buildings.<sup>23</sup>

The financing of public education has traditionally been a governmental responsibility; however, the specific funding mechanisms vary across the United States and even within states.<sup>24</sup> Local contributions, usually in the form of property taxes, are a main source of capital improvement for schools.<sup>25, 26</sup> This reliance on local property taxes can lead to systemic inequities in school facilities.<sup>19-27</sup>

Public-philanthropic partnerships (PPPs) provide an alternative way to finance school infrastructure.<sup>28</sup> PPPs are defined as arrangements through which private partners provide infrastructure assets and services that are usually provided by the government. In the education sector, PPPs can vary in both partner types and activities, including school construction projects.<sup>29, 30</sup> The qualities attributed to successful PPPs include having a shared vision with realistic goals, shared decision-making and responsibility, a long-term commitment with adequate resources, effective strategies for communication, and transparency and trust between partners.<sup>31, 32</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Filardo, M. (2016). State of our Schools. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED581630>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Gordon, N. E. (2012). The Changing Federal Role in Education Finance and Governance (H. F. Ladd, E. B. Fiske, & A. Reschovsky, Eds.); pp. 2021–2028). Taylor & Francis Group

<sup>25</sup> McGuire, T. J., & Papke, L. E. (2012). Local Funding of Schools: The Property Tax and its Alternatives. In H. F. Ladd, E. B. Fiske, & A. Reschovsky (Eds.), *Handbook of Research in Education Finance and Policy*. Taylor & Francis Group.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2020). K-12 EDUCATION School Districts Frequently Identified Multiple Building Systems Needing Updates or Replacement Report to Congressional Addressees United States Government Accountability Office. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-494>

<sup>27</sup> Filardo, M., & Vincent, J. M. (2017). Adequate & Equitable U.S. PK-12 Infrastructure Priority Actions for Systemic Reform: A report from the Planning for PK-12 School Infrastructure National Initiative

<sup>28</sup> 21st Century School Facilities Commission. (2018). 21st Century School Facilities Commission Final Report. <http://dls.maryland.gov/home/>

<sup>29</sup> Gopalon, P. (2013). PPP Paradox: Promise and Perils of Public-Private Partnership in Education. Sage Publications.

<sup>30</sup> Nisbet, E. (2021). Local-level philanthropic partnerships in public education: Dilemmas for equity and public responsibility. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 43(2), 251–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2017.1421432>

<sup>31</sup> Black, R. (2009). Board to classroom: the role of the corporate and philanthropic sectors in school education. Education Policy and Research Division Office for Policy, Research and Innovation Dept. of Education and Early Childhood Development.

<sup>32</sup> Brown, D. (2001). The Public Private Partnership That Built a Traditional School: A Case Study from British Columbia. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED451693>

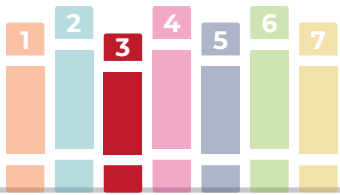
## EVALUATION BACKGROUND

In Fall 2021, the Weinberg Foundation and City Schools began a partnership with an evaluation firm, Sharp Insight, LLC (Sharp Insight), to evaluate the Library Project. A 2016 evaluation captured the Library Project's Year 1-3 impact by examining the libraries that opened in the first nine schools; this evaluation builds on that work by studying: 1) the implementation of school library best practices within; 2) the impact of; and 3) the funding and partnership mechanisms used for the 15 renovated libraries opened between 2011 and 2019:

- *Arlington Elementary/Middle School*
- *The Commodore John Rodgers School*
- *Elmer A. Henderson: A Johns Hopkins Partnership School*
- *George Washington Elementary School*
- *Francis Scott Key Elementary/Middle School*
- *Hampden Elementary/Middle School*
- *Harford Heights Elementary School*
- *The Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School*
- *James McHenry Elementary/Middle School*
- *Moravia Park Elementary School*
- *Morrell Park Elementary/Middle School*
- *Southwest Baltimore Charter School*
- *Thomas Johnson Elementary/Middle School*
- *Westport Academy Elementary School*
- *Windsor Hills Elementary/Middle School*

At the time of publication of this report, libraries had also been opened in Maryland School for the Blind and Fallstaff Elementary/Middle School. Additionally, Armistead Gardens and Park Heights Academy (formerly Edgecombe Circle Elementary School) are slated for library renovations.

This report details the design and methodology of the evaluation study; quantitative and qualitative findings about the implementation of school library best practices; quantitative findings about student outcomes and school climate; and qualitative findings about the specific funding and partnership model that underpins the Library Project.



# METHODOLOGY

## EVALUATION DESIGN AND OBJECTIVES



### A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO EVALUATION

The evaluation project was an intentional, collective effort that included voices from many sectors. A core working group convened on a biweekly basis to coordinate evaluation activities. This group was comprised of Sharp Insight team members, staff from City Schools Central Office, and Weinberg Foundation program staff. The working group collaboratively established the evaluation objectives, study design, and reporting structure.

Crucial to this project's success was the involvement of an evaluation team. In addition to the core working group, we established an evaluation team comprised of City Schools librarians, principals, Central Office staff, and parents. This group met on a quarterly basis to provide input on the evaluation plan and data collection tools, as well as logistical support during data collection. In the reporting phase of the project, the evaluation team reviewed and discussed preliminary findings and assisted with dissemination of findings.

## DUAL-STUDY DESIGN

The Baltimore Library Project evaluation included two separate but related studies, each with its own primary areas of focus: Study 1 focused on the implementation of best practices in Library Project libraries. This study utilized a mixed methods evaluation approach, including MSDE school library and student outcome data, as well as key informant interviews and site visits to examine the implementation of school library best practices in Library Project schools and reference schools (i.e., similar schools without a Library Project library). Study 2 utilized key informant interviews with people from various sectors to gain insight into the workings of the Library Project funding model and partnership processes. The working group developed evaluation objectives that would be parallel in nature across studies (see table below).

The evaluation began with a comprehensive scientific literature review about both of these foci. This allowed the evaluators at Sharp Insight to gain content knowledge about school libraries and informed the development of evaluation tools, including the site visit guide and interview guides for Study 1 and Study 2 key informant interviews. *The general evaluation design, data collection tools, and recruitment strategies were approved by the City Schools Institutional Review Board (#2021-081).*





**Evaluation Objectives**

*As a result of the Baltimore Library Project studies, researchers will be able to determine...*

A. The **unique characteristics** of:

1. Baltimore Library Project schools (e.g., design, systems/technology, program, staffing, utility)
2. The Baltimore Library Project’s capital investment and partnership models

B. The **impact** of the Baltimore Library Project on:

1. School environments, students, and staff
2. Direct capital investments, construction funding, and construction processes of school libraries

C. **Strengths** of the Baltimore Library Project with respect to:

1. Library design, systems/technology, and implementation of program and staffing models
2. Capital strategies and partnership models

D. **Challenges and/or limitations** of the Baltimore Library Project with respect to:

1. Library design, systems/technology, and implementation of program and staffing models
2. Capital strategies and partnership models

E. How the transition to **virtual/hybrid education** impacted the Baltimore Library Project’s:

1. Library design, systems/technology, and implementation of program and staffing models
2. Capital strategies and partnership models

F. **Recommendations for improvement** of the Baltimore Library Project with respect to:

1. Library design, systems/technology, and implementation of program and staffing models
2. Capital strategies and partnership models

G. **Best practices in sustainability** of:

1. Library design, systems/technology, and implementation of program and staffing models, such as those of the Baltimore Library Project
2. Infrastructure and partnerships created as a result of innovative capital strategies and partnership models, such as the Baltimore Library Project

H. Opportunities for **scaling and replication** of the Baltimore Library Project within and/or beyond City Schools with respect to:

1. Library design, systems/technology, and implementation of program and staffing models
2. Capital strategies and partnership models

## STUDY 1: IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARY BEST PRACTICES

Study 1 examined the implementation of school library best practices in City Schools. Study 1 had three main data collection strategies:

- *Key informant interviews with student-parent dyads, school administrators, and library staff*
- *Site visits to school libraries*
- *Analysis of secondary school-level data*

Generally, Study 1 sought to identify school-level differences between Library Project schools and non-Library Project schools in the implementation of school library best practices. Each of the three components listed above provided different vantage points for discerning these differences.

### SAMPLING & RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

*Note: Due to interruptions in City Schools' in-person learning and in the administration of state-based standardized data collection due to COVID-19, study design, sampling decisions, and secondary data analysis were based on 2018-2019 school year information and data. In recognition of the indelible mark that COVID-19 has had on education in the U.S., the challenges and opportunities presented by the pandemic are woven into present-day primary data collection (e.g., site visits, focus groups, interviews) where appropriate. Our goal was to balance the documentation of school library processes and implementation prior to the start of the pandemic while also capturing the reality of serving students in the COVID-19 context.*

The target sample for Study 1 included all 15 Library Project schools opened during or before the 2018-2019 school year and matched non-Library Project schools (i.e., "reference schools"). Reference schools were determined using a modified approach to City Schools' existing nearest neighbors process. The existing process generates a list of schools that 1) serve the same grade levels and 2) are statistically similar to a given school based on proportions of students with economic disadvantage, students with disabilities, and English learners. Recognizing that not every reference school we invited would agree to participate, for each Library Project school, we generated a prioritized list of reference schools based on the nearest neighbor rankings with additional consideration given to school size (i.e., total enrollment) and with priority given to schools with a 50% or 100% librarian.<sup>33</sup> This resulted in each Library Project school having at least four possible reference schools that we prioritized for the recruitment process.

<sup>33</sup> Because all Library Project schools have a librarian, prioritizing reference schools with a 50% or 100% librarian allows us to control for the effect of simply having a librarian and speak with increased confidence to the impact of all aspects of the Baltimore Library Project.

After the creation of a list of Library Project schools and reference schools to be invited for participation, Central Office staff emailed the principals of the selected schools inviting them to participate. Library Project schools were assumed to have an incentive to participate given the support they receive from the Weinberg Foundation. To incentivize participation from reference schools, we offered \$500 Scholastic gift cards from the Weinberg Foundation. Once a principal expressed an interest in participating, they were sent an electronic Letter of Agreement outlining the components of the evaluation study, recruitment processes, and incentive (if applicable). The Letter of Agreement included a place for principals to name a project coordinator (typically library staff) who would work with Sharp Insight on scheduling and additional consent processes. Once the Letter of Agreement was signed by the principal and the coordinator, Sharp Insight worked with the school to schedule and obtain consent for each of the following:

- *A virtual interview with the principal or other administrator who could speak to the daily operations of the library*
- *A virtual interview with the library staff member(s) or other staff involved in the daily operations of the library*
- *A virtual interview with students at least 10 years of age and one or more of their parent(s)/caregiver(s)*
- *An in-person site visit of the school library*

Generally, we interviewed no more than one administrator and one library staff member for each school. In instances where a school had more than one library staff or a staff member in a community relations role, we allowed additional participants per school. To maximize representation across schools in the study, parent-child dyadic interviews were capped at two per school. City Schools staff were not compensated for their participation in the study. Parents were compensated with a \$40 e-gift card for Tango.com; similarly, students received a \$20 Tango.com e-gift card (emailed to their parent).

The demands placed on schools, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, made full participation difficult for many Library Project schools and reference schools alike. In some instances, even with Sharp Insight following up three times by email and phone, schools did not respond to the initial correspondence from Central Office to principals inviting them to participate. In other instances, principals opted their school into the study by signing the principal Letter of Agreement, but follow-up attempts by email and by phone from Sharp Insight yielded no participation in data collection activities. In instances where this lack of response came from reference schools, recruitment moved to the next “nearest neighbor” on the list. Additionally, few participating schools, Library Project or reference, were able to complete all components of data collection. Appendix A provides a table outlining each Library Project school and reference school’s involvement in the various components of the project.

## DATA COLLECTION

## ▶ STUDY 1 INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted from May-October 2022 with individuals representing four distinct roles: students, parents/caregivers, school administrators, and library staff.<sup>34</sup>

Parent-child dyadic interviews (n=3) were conducted via Zoom and lasted an average of 32 minutes. Together, students and their parents were asked about their school library's strengths, the impact of the library, challenges with their school's library, technology and virtual access, recommendations to improve the library, and aspects of the library that they think are sustainable and/or replicable. For most of these lines of inquiry, students and their parent(s) were asked to consider specific aspects of the library, including the design and physical space, the library's collections, systems and technology, library programming (in-person and virtual), and staffing (see Appendix B for parent-child interview guide).

Interviews with school administrators (n=5) and library staff (n=7) were also conducted via Zoom and lasted an average of 38 and 53 minutes, respectively. The interviews covered the same topics and probes as the parent-child interviews, with an added line of inquiry about adapting library operations since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Appendix C for administrator and librarian interview guide).

## ▶ SITE VISITS

Eight schools (six Library Project schools and two reference schools) participated in site visits of their school's library. This site visit involved a 90-minute "walk and talk" style interview between Sharp Insight staff and library staff where data were collected about the library's implementation of school library best practices. A rubric was created to rate the extent to which best practices were being implemented with space for explanation and supporting evidence (see Appendix D).

## ▶ SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data were used to conduct comparative analysis of quantitative (numeric) school library data in three domains: library characteristics, student literacy performance, and school climate. The variables included in each domain, as well as the source for each variable, are outlined in Appendix E. Data about school library characteristics were compiled from 2018-2019 MSDE School Library Data provided by City Schools. This data is collected annually from schools and includes details about each school library's staffing, services, collections, and more. Data about student literacy and school climate were compiled from publicly available 2018-2019 MSDE report cards.

<sup>34</sup> The evaluation study design originally included 10 virtual focus groups. A group was to be conducted for each role (students, parent/caregivers, school administrators, library staff, and community partners) with one group for representatives from Library Project schools and a second group for those connected to reference schools. Due to difficulties scheduling focus groups with individuals from multiple school communities, the working group decided to shift data collection to semi-structured individual interviews. To avoid interviewing minors alone, the group opted to interview parent-child dyads. Unfortunately, no community partners were successfully recruited into Study 1 data collection. However, some of their perspectives were captured in Study 2 interviews.



## ANALYTIC APPROACH

## ▶ INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using Zoom. Each interview was recorded and sent to a third party for transcription. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the transcripts and identify convergence and divergence in the ways administrators, library staff, student, and parents discussed various aspects of their schools' libraries, as well as qualitative differences between Library Project schools and reference schools.

## ▶ SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

Secondary data from the 2018-2019 school year were compiled for Library Project schools (n=12) and matched reference schools (n=9)<sup>35</sup> and analyzed using descriptive analyses and matched pairs inferential analyses (e.g., matched pairs t-tests). To manage data availability issues, the following steps were taken to determine the sample for secondary data analysis:

- *Any Library Project schools (and their matches) that did not have 2018-2019 MDSE library data were eliminated (n=3; James McHenry, Westport, Henderson/Hopkins).*
- *Where the preferred reference school for a Library Project school did not have MSDE data (n=5; Cecil, Henson, Hamilton, Mount Washington, Hazelwood), those schools were replaced with the next preferable reference school that did have MSDE data.*
- *If a Library Project school did not have an appropriate reference school with MSDE data, that school was dropped.*

Secondary data analyses allowed us to identify quantitative differences between Library Project and reference schools in three domains 1) school library characteristics; 2) student literacy performance; and 3) school climate.

<sup>35</sup> In the comparative quantitative analysis, some reference schools were statistically matched with more than one Library Project school. Thus, the number of reference schools included in these analyses is lower than the number of Library Project schools.

## STUDY 2: SCHOOL LIBRARY INFRASTRUCTURE AND FINANCING

Study 2 examined school library partnership infrastructure and financing mechanisms. Study 2 utilized key informant interviews with Weinberg Foundation staff, community and governmental partners, designers and architects, and City Schools Central Office staff to understand the unique aspects of the Baltimore Library Project's financing.

### SAMPLING & RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

The Weinberg Foundation provided a list of potential interviewees for Study 2, which were reviewed and agreed upon by the evaluation working group as representing a diverse group of partners. The Weinberg Foundation sent out initial emails that provided potential participants with information about the study and Sharp Insight followed up to determine interest and to complete scheduling of the interviews.

### DATA COLLECTION

A total of 15 Library Project partners were interviewed. Five of the interviewees were employed by City Schools and three currently worked for the Weinberg Foundation. The remaining interviewees were employed by the state (n=1), other non-profit organizations (n=4), or were architects or designers (n=2). One interviewee is currently employed by a non-profit partner, but formerly worked for the Weinberg Foundation. This interviewee provided interview data from both perspectives.<sup>36</sup>

Interviewees were asked to share their perspectives on the Library Project's unique aspects, impacts, strengths and challenges, areas for improvement, and sustainability, with a focus on both the partnership aspects and the financial model used to fund the libraries (see Appendix F).

Study 2 interviews were conducted via Zoom during Fall 2021/Winter 2022. Interviews lasted an average of 52 minutes. Interviewees who were not employees of the Weinberg Foundation or City School received a \$30 Tango gift card for their participation.

<sup>36</sup> Quotes from this interviewee are identified based on the role discussed. If quoted from the perspective of their time at the Weinberg Foundation, this interviewee is identified as a Weinberg Foundation employee. If quoted from the perspective as a community partner, they are identified as such.

## ANALYTIC APPROACH

Interviews were conducted using Zoom. Each interview was recorded and sent to a third party for transcription. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the transcripts and identify convergence and divergence in the ways City Schools employees, Weinberg Foundation employees, designers and architects, as well as state-level and community organizational partners discussed various aspects of schools' library renovations and partnership processes overall.

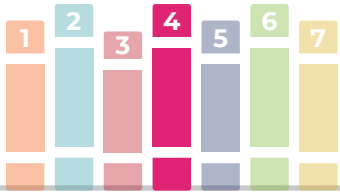
## METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

The methods outlined above were selected in order to optimize the rigor and validity of conclusions. Still, there are methodological limitations to note. As mentioned above, the COVID-19 pandemic has had lasting impacts on students and educational systems. As such, this evaluation sought to develop quantitative conclusions that removed COVID-19 as a variable (e.g., by using 2018-2019 MCAP data) while leaving space for qualitative data that captures the reality of K-8 education in the COVID context.

Second, this evaluation is limited by a small sample size. Even if all Library Project schools and their matches participated in all data collection methods, there would have been a statistically small sample of approximately 30 schools to analyze. Given COVID challenges, limited responsiveness from Library Project schools and reference schools alike, and schools participating in some (but not all) data collection methods, the findings from this evaluation are drawn from a small sample of schools. The matched-pairs (i.e., nearest neighbors) design and multiple-methods approach of analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data enabled the research team to control for some school-level differences and glean information from multiple vantage points, attenuating some of the consequences of a small sample size.

It should also be noted that the quantitative data used in the secondary analysis is cross-sectional (i.e., from one academic year). Thus, inferences cannot be made about school-level change over time. Even analyses using multi-year school-level student outcome data would have been limited by the ever-changing nature of school populations – there is a flow of students into and out of schools year to year that complicate analyses of school-level data. Further, due to recruitment difficulties and quantitative data availability, some schools are represented in the quantitative analyses but not the qualitative data, and vice versa.

Lastly, despite the use of a matched-pairs design, there are likely some inherent differences between Library Project schools and reference schools that are not directly related to their libraries (e.g., differences in overall principal engagement in the school). These differences, especially those that are explicitly part of the selection criteria for library renovation, may confound the relationships identified in this evaluation between schools with and without a Library Project library and student/school outcomes.



## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

The sections that follow outline the key findings<sup>37</sup> from Study 1 and Study 2, organized by evaluation objective. Generally, quotes are included from individuals affiliated with Library Project schools; where quotes appear from individuals affiliated with reference schools, they are distinguished as such. Additionally, only statistically significant quantitative findings are visualized and p-values are included; non-significant findings are explained in narrative text only.



## UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF LIBRARY PROJECT LIBRARIES

Participants noted unique characteristics in Library Project school libraries, including:

- *How aesthetically inviting the library spaces are*
- *The ability to use the library modularly for different purposes*
- *Having a full-time, certified librarian*
- *Robust collections*
- *The systems and technology available, and*
- *Parent Corners.*

<sup>37</sup> Due to the low number of participating reference schools (n=4), findings generally focus on information from interviewees affiliated with Library Project schools. Information from interviews and site visits with reference schools is included when pertinent.

## BEAUTIFUL AND INVITING LIBRARIES

During site visits, library staff unanimously gave the physical appearance of the library the highest rating, noting that “people are impressed when they come in.” Many Study 1 interviewees in Library Project schools noted the physical space and/or design elements as a strength of their library.

*“Definitely the space itself. Since it is a Weinberg library it is newer, it is inviting. The students really do like the space. Especially when we have new students to the school who see the library for the first time, they’re definitely excited for it, which is really nice because I think that’s a big aspect to making reading fun for kids, is if the space is inviting.” – Librarian*

*“It’s probably the newest part of the school. It feels modern and clean. I like that there are windows in there which sounds simple, but just getting that natural light and being able to see the weather is great.” – Parent*

*“I guess in appearance, it’s a more welcoming space because it’s remodeled, and it’s very friendly and very inviting space. We all, the kids, visitors, et cetera, are always commenting on how welcoming it is. It’s bright, it’s lots of windows. That is one great aspect of the library here. The layout is nice. Things are spread out.” – Librarian*

Many Study 2 interviewees talked about the “wow factor” of the Library Project libraries. The libraries were described as “extraordinary,” “unique,” “amazing,” “exciting,” “vibrant,” “energetic,” “creative,” “beautiful,” “colorful,” and “inviting.” They mentioned specific design features including the color palettes, the furnishings, murals on the ceilings, decorative shades featuring sea creatures, a wall with the word “welcome” in many different languages, and specific areas for different library activities. One interviewee stated:

*“Weinberg Libraries are truly special places where I just am blown away by the architectural design, the interior design, the intentionality of what kids are going to do with... that space... It’s a lovely space for kids.” – City Schools Employee*

Some Study 2 interviewees highlighted the experience of being at opening events where students saw the libraries for the first time. They described a universal experience of seeing the wonder and awe on students’ faces as they entered the libraries, with students asking if this space was really for them.

## ADAPTABLE SPACE

In site visits, all Library Project school staff gave their library the highest possible rating for how well the library functions for collaborative learning and, separately, for independent learning, reflecting the libraries' ability to adapt to meet student needs. When asked directly "How easy is it to adapt your library space to meet different student and teacher/staff needs?" five out of six Library Project schools noted that "the entire space is adjustable or modular," and one Library Project school stated that there are "some places that are adjustable or modular." Additionally, when asked "How well does the overall space of the library function to meet the needs of students?" all Library Project schools gave their library the highest possible rating, stating that the space meets or exceeds all student needs.

## 6 OUT OF 6

Library Project school representatives stated that the overall space functions in a way that **meets or exceeds student needs.**

In Study 1 interviews, library staff and students noted that different areas of the library were used for different purposes, allowing for flexible use of the space. The division of the physical space into different areas and the modular furnishings were a highlight for many interviewees.

*"There are just a bunch of cozy nooks. There's this round circle with two ways to get in and out, where there's like a little cushion in one area and on the ground, it's tiles in the shape of the world map, like North America, South America, all those continents. Then another cozy nook is where [library staff member] hangs out, and it's like that, except no cushion just like seats, and there's a big table and a TV screen. Then the area where you check out books, a bunch of tables in front of that, and all the way in the back of the library, there are a bunch of cozy chairs with little tables that go like this [swinging motion]." – 5<sup>th</sup> grade student*

*"I love this section. It has bench seats. We have these beautiful shades. We also have just our neighborhood. The blinds are lifted that kids can see outside. The seating is definitely flexible and comfortable. There's these different sections and compartments. Also, we have this other area that is mostly for group work. I think it lends the opportunity to do so many different things in the one space." – Librarian*

*"You've got the books, there's this little stage area where kids can sit and read. You don't have to sit at a desk and then just the visuals in there, the different seats. Sometimes the kids get real comfortable. They're laid out with their feet up, but it doesn't bother me as long as they read." – Administrator*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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Additionally, administrators, library staff, students, and parents noted that the library is used for things beyond library class and book checkouts, including PTA meetings, staff meetings and birthday celebrations, and open houses.

*“It’s a space where I host visitors. We have all of our staff gatherings, birthday parties, faculty meetings. It’s where we hold interviews, our school family council meeting. It’s a show-off piece. It’s one of my favorite things to talk about at the school.” – Principal*

*“I think as we move into being able to have more parents in the building, the ability to vision different events, community events in that space it’s welcoming space... All of that, I think, is really a great spacious space to have partner meetings, to have family and community engagement events. Sometimes when we’ve had to conference with parents about various issues, we will do that in the library. I feel like, in that sense, it’s great.” – Community School Coordinator*

*“Before COVID, we used to have our PTO meetings [in the library]. Monthly, any parent who could make it would meet there, and I also help with recruitment and the welcome committee. Open houses always start and finish there unless there’s a real conflict. It just feels like a nice convening space.” – 5th grade parent*



## FULL-TIME, CERTIFIED LIBRARIAN

In secondary analysis of MSDE data, the same proportion of Library Project schools and reference schools reported having a certified library staff member (83%). In Library Project schools, 83% reported having full-time library staff; 58% of reference schools reported having full-time library staff. This difference was not statistically significant. Reference schools (25%) were marginally more likely than Library Project schools (0%) to report having part-time library staff ( $p=0.08$ ).

Librarians were most commonly named as the school library's champion ( $n=4$  Library Project schools) in Study 1 interviews, but most Library Project schools named more than one champion, often citing a whole school community that champions the library, from administration and leadership to classroom teachers and students.

*"Well, my librarian is an excellent librarian...she's an incredible librarian, so for sure her. I would just say all the teachers in general. I think that we're a school that really supports reading and supportive of reading." – Principal*

*"That's a good question. I don't know. I would say everyone supports the library. I don't think anyone doesn't. The person who is my library assistant, she is now a classroom teacher, and so she's always saying how great the library is, but I would say that everyone supports it. There's not anyone that hasn't been supportive." – Librarian*

*"Well, of course, the teacher, the Library Media Specialist. She's in there, she keeps it very well organized, she allows kids access to books, so she definitely is the champion in there because she runs the library. I know my younger kids, like my third and fourth graders, they tend to be more champions in there because, at this age, it's still fun where they can go get a book. Of course, the teacher is the champion, my third and fourth graders. My third and fourth-grade teachers, they utilize the library I think very well." – Principal*

In site visits, participants were asked "How do you think having a full-time librarian benefits the school and the larger community?" Staff agreed that having a full-time librarian makes books, and the library itself, more accessible to students. Staff also noted that having a full-time librarian in the school helps "build the love of reading" and when "students are intrinsically motivated to read, they take that as a skill back to their classes." Lastly, library staff noted their role in family and community engagement with one librarian stating that "One of the greatest things about this position is the relationship I can build with families."



## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE



An administrator from one reference school remarked on the impact of having a full-time librarian after having a part-time librarian for a while.

*“A part-time librarian, obviously, they don’t get to see as many students, they cannot, they don’t have time to shelve books. It’s just very limited in the ability to use the library effectively. It becomes more of a read-aloud space once a week for the most part. Now, going back to a full-time librarian, I am hopeful that we can do a little more, like I said, of shelving the books, getting some materials together for staff to use during their units of instruction, and not just during their literacy block, but during science, during social studies as well.”*

– Principal (reference school)

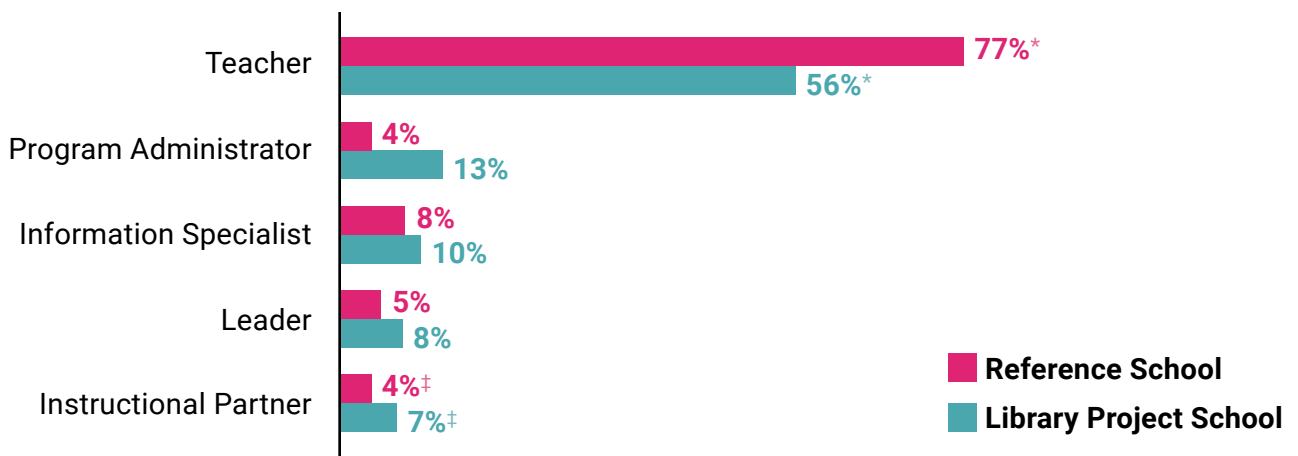
Librarians have multiple responsibilities in Library Project schools. Based on interviews and site visits, their main duty is teaching library class, with some librarians who are also responsible for instruction in computer science. In MSDE data, librarians were asked to report on their teaching activities and the literacy skills they incorporated in their work, as outlined in the table on this page. Although not statistically significant, on average, librarians in Library Project schools reported engaging in more teaching activities and fewer literacy skills than librarians in reference schools. On average, librarians in Library Project schools reported frequently engaging in 2.42 of the six teaching activities assessed. Librarians in reference schools reported frequently engaging in 1.67 of these on average. On average, librarians in Library Project schools reported frequently engaging in 4.00 of the eight information literacy skills assessed. Librarians in reference schools reported frequently engaging in 4.67 of these on average.

Often, even if they are not responsible for teaching computer science or digital literacy skills, the librarian may still be the de facto information technology (IT) person in the building, assisting students and staff alike with technology troubleshooting, lending power cords, etc. In addition, librarians manage collections, checkouts, and circulation of books to students and, sometimes, materials for classroom teachers.

FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

In MSDE data, librarians were asked to report the percentage of their working time that they spend in each of the following roles: teacher, program administrator, information specialist, leader, and instructional partner. On average, librarians in Library Project schools reported spending more time in roles other than teacher. Statistically, librarians in Library Project schools spent less time, on average, in the role of teacher ( $p=0.03$ ) and marginally more time in the role of instructional partner ( $p=0.07$ ) as compared to librarians in reference schools.

**On average, Library Project librarians spend less time than reference school librarians teaching library class and more time as instructional partners**



Because these are averages, percentages may not total 100%

\* Indicates significant differences between Library Project schools and reference schools ( $p<0.05$ )

‡ Indicates significant differences between Library Project schools and reference schools ( $p<0.10$ )

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE



Similarly, there was general consensus among administrators and librarians that having a full-time librarian creates more opportunities for instructional support and collaboration with classroom teachers as opposed to when the school has a part-time librarian. The ability for librarians to collaborate with classroom teachers is further bolstered when they have a library assistant.

*“For the students, if they have collaborative plans, there's a few teachers that we work together to do things where I support lessons they're doing, like math. I knew that some of the kids in third grade and fourth grade were struggling with fractions. I did make comics with the kids about what a fraction was to help strengthen their understanding of numerator and denominator.” – Librarian*

*“My old principal actually made it where I only taught a couple classes a day so that I could go in and work with the teachers. I think it was a great benefit. That's the whole collaboration thing. Having that assistant to man the library while I was in a teacher's classroom doing a collaborative lesson with them, there was someone manning the room if somebody else came to the library to get a book, to do this. I had a time where the pre-K teachers would sign up when I didn't have a class, to come do book checkout. The assistant could easily do that if I was somewhere else in the building.” – Librarian*

*“Well, there's definitely more possibility for [collaboration]. I would say that's still an area of improvement at my school. I think that idea of librarians collaborating with teachers to carry out curriculum-related activities, also the same thing with an art teacher doing that with grade level teachers, it's still a little bit, it's not as practical as it seems. Having a nice library, having a 1.0 librarian, definitely, it lends itself to [instructional collaboration].” – Principal*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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### ROBUST COLLECTIONS

On average, Library Project schools had approximately 11,000 books in circulation; reference schools reported an average of approximately 8,800 books. The average percentage of science books in Library Project libraries that were recently published (2008 or later) was 32.25%, significantly higher than the 8.5% of recently published science books in reference school libraries ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**32%**

Library Project schools

Science books in Library Project school libraries were more likely to be recently published than science books in reference school libraries

$p < 0.01$

**9%**

Reference schools

Comparisons of additional materials were not statistically significant. Library Project schools had an average of 32 video materials and 27 audio materials; reference schools had an average of 75 video materials and 17 audio materials. The average equipment count in Library Project schools was 126 items whereas the average equipment count in reference schools was five items. On average, Library Project schools reported having 62 e-books and audiobooks as well as 16 online database titles; reference schools reported having less than one and 13, respectively.

Based on raw data, the average number of book checkouts in Library Project schools (2,799) was not statistically different from those in reference schools (1,516). To account for the fact that larger schools (i.e., schools with more students) may have more checkouts by raw count, libraries were also analyzed based on number of book checkouts per student. In this analysis, the average number of book checkouts per student in Library Project schools (5.60) was statistically higher than the average in reference schools (1.43;  $p < 0.01$ ).

**5.60**

Library Project schools

Library Project schools had a higher average number of book checkouts per student than reference schools

$p < 0.01$

**1.43**

Reference schools

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE



Of the six Library Project school site visits, four Library Project library staff rated their collections as “very supportive to student learning and interests,” one rated their collections as “somewhat supportive,” and one librarian asked to “split the difference” between those two options.

**How supportive is your collection to student learning and interests?**



Very supportive

Somewhat supportive

All but one of the Library Project schools stated that the library’s physical collections span the topics that their students are interested in “quite a bit;” the sixth school said, “I don’t know.”

**To what extent does your collection span topics of interest to students?**



Quite a bit

Don't know

Three Library Project schools rated the condition of the books in their library’s collections as “great – most books are new and/or in great condition,” two schools rated the condition of their collections as “good – some books should probably be repaired or replaced,” and one school asked to split the difference between these two options.

**How would you describe the condition of the books?**



Great condition

Good condition

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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In Study 1 interviews, administrators, librarians, and students remarked on the books available in Library Project libraries. The number of books was a common source of excitement with one librarian noting that “When you walk into my library, I think there's close to 10,000 books.” Study 1 interviewees from Library Project schools also noted the breadth of topics that are available in their collections and the general good condition of the books.

*“I think that we're very lucky and we're just very privileged to have that many books that we do because I don't really read a lot. Sometimes I do, but I know that whenever I go in there, there's always going to be something that I want to read and most of all of them are in great condition.” – 5<sup>th</sup> grade student*

*“I think we have a great collection of books that the kids are interested in. I feel like I'm always finding new books to introduce to the kids.” – Librarian*

*“I mean, if you walk in and there's hundreds of books and they're organized and they're structured, that by itself makes a difference. I've walked into libraries across the district that have maybe a few books or they're all over the place, and I think there's a feeling you get when you walk in there that like, “Yes, I want to check out a book or I want to check out this aisle.” – Principal*

## SYSTEMS & TECHNOLOGY

With City Schools moving to a one-to-one Chromebook program as a result of COVID, there is little need for libraries to house banks of desktop computers and other individual-use devices as in years past. Some Library Project schools reported having e-readers (e.g., Nooks) in the library but that they were too old to be of use. Many librarians noted satisfaction with the systems and technology they use, especially those used for collections and circulation (e.g., Destiny, barcode scanners). Library staff in interviews and site visits also mentioned with excitement and gratitude that the Weinberg Foundation recently provided them with Promethean Boards.

*“I like that there's a big screen to project, and I just have to plug in my computer, and they can listen to or read-aloud because, again, that's what we had to do a lot this year. Instead of me reading the book to them, I would find it, and they would watch it on a big screen instead of up close to me with a little book. I like that it's pretty technologically advanced compared to other schools I've been to.” – Librarian*

*“We've gotten a lot of technology this year. It's also like, I don't want to keep pushing, hey, we also need this because yes, we got two new printers, desktop computers, the whole laptop cart, I was talking about a brand-new screen, so we have gotten a lot of technology stuff through Weinberg.” – Librarian*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE



On average, libraries in Library Project schools had 50 internet accessible devices compared to an average of 11 devices in reference school libraries ( $p < 0.01$ ). To account for the fact that larger schools (i.e., schools with more students) may have more devices by raw count, libraries were also analyzed based on number of internet accessible devices per student. In this analysis, Library Project schools had a higher average number of internet accessible devices per student (0.14) relative to reference schools (0.02;  $p = 0.01$ ).

**0.14**

Library Project schools

Library Project schools had a higher average number of internet accessible devices per student than reference schools

$p = 0.01$

**0.02**

Reference schools

## PARENT CORNERS

Every renovated library has a Parent Corner, a dedicated space with signage that provides a computer for adult use and, sometimes, books for parents to peruse or checkout. Although this is a unique characteristic of Library Project libraries (i.e., similar spaces were not present in the reference school libraries), all but one Library Project school noted that this feature of the library is not often utilized. Additional information about Parent Corners is provided in the challenges section below.



## LIBRARY PROJECT IMPACT

**Study 1 and Study 2 interviewees were asked to reflect on the impact of the Library Project.** Although there was wide acknowledgement that making cause-and-effect inferences was inappropriate, interviewees did note that Library Project libraries may:

- *Bolster student literacy performance*
- *Contribute to enthusiasm about books*
- *Make a positive contribution to overall school climate*
- *Bring with them meaningful community partnerships, and*
- *Attract new families.*

Interviewees also noted impacts on the speed and cost of construction, impact on partners, and other positive impacts.



## STUDENT LITERACY PERFORMANCE

Three Study 2 interviewees talked about improvements in student literacy based on what they had learned from the previous Library Project evaluation studies. Two mentioned that the project had an impact on literacy levels and the other indicated that the students were reading more.

Student literacy performance was analyzed for Library Project schools and reference schools. These data focused on English Language Arts (ELA) performance from the 2018-2019 MCAP, as well as the percent of English learners reported to have made progress during that academic year. Of the four analyses run, two were found to have statistically significant differences between Library Project schools and reference schools. Notably, statistical differences between Library Project schools and reference schools cannot be attributed to having a renovated library alone.

**Schools with Library Project libraries opened  
between 2011-2019 reached...**

7,111

**Students**  
(2018-2019 enrollment)

61%

**Students with  
economic  
disadvantage**

16%

**Students with  
disabilities**

6%

**English learners**

**MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (MCAP)  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY**

The MCAP English Language Arts and Literacy assessments focus on the content outlined in the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards for each grade level. Students read literary and informational passages and engage in multi-media such as video or audio pieces. Students demonstrate their reading comprehension and literacy skills through responding to text-based questions and writing prompts. At the early grades, students also demonstrate their literacy skills through a variety of oral response methods.

Retrieved from: Maryland State Department of Education – About the Test  
<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DAAIT/Assessment/MCAP/ELAL.aspx>

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

Based on MSDE data, students in Library Project schools generally showed higher ELA performance. Statistically significant differences are visualized below with p-values. On average, Library Project schools demonstrated a statistically higher average school performance level in ELA (2.42) than reference schools (2.15;  $p < 0.01$ ). Library Project schools (46th percentile) and reference schools (43rd percentile) reported statistically similar school-level student growth percentiles in ELA. The average percentage of students proficient in ELA in Library Project schools (24%) was statistically higher than the average for reference schools (19%;  $p = 0.01$ ). Lastly, the percentage of English learners making progress towards learning English was statistically similar in Library Project schools (54%) and reference schools (49%).

24%

19%

Percent of students in the school proficient in ELA

$p = 0.01$

Students in **Library Project schools** showed higher ELA performance than students in **reference schools**

2.42

2.15

Average school performance level in ELA (out of 5)

$p < 0.01$

## ENTHUSIASM ABOUT BOOKS

There was wide agreement among Study 1 interviewees that Library Project libraries help get students excited about books and reading.

*"Some middle schoolers might come there to study, but it encourages kids to read. If they don't have access to books, they can just get a book from a resource in the school, check it out, bring it back. It also makes sure you're responsible enough to bring back the book. It strengthens your responsibility." – 5<sup>th</sup> grade student*

*"Overall having a beautiful library is very appealing to students. Students feel proud to go in the library and they get excited for the books...I definitely believe that when children go into an attractive library like that with interesting books, with many interesting books, it does get them interested in reading. I would have to say it's a contributing factor to the success we've had with student achievement." – Principal*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE



Many Study 2 interviewees commented about the library space in general, which they felt drew children in because the spaces were so inviting and exciting. One felt that the space helps support the delivery of curriculum, particularly the large pillars focused on literacy and wholeness. Another interviewee observed:

*"I think that they've done a beautiful job in using the aesthetic to get kids feeling like this is their space." – City Schools Employee*

In addition, some shared their personal observations and experiences. Study 2 interviewees commented about the grand opening events held at Library Project libraries and all described the excitement on the students' faces as they entered the first time. One commented:

*"It was pretty thrilling to be at the openings of the libraries...There was so much joy and hope that it was palpable." – Community Partner*

Another interviewee talked about a student speech given by a 5th grader at one of the library openings. The interviewee became emotional while sharing the student's story:

*"She talked about how she would sit in a library before and she couldn't get inspired. She could not take herself away from the world that she lived in. I mean, I'm paraphrasing basically, but she couldn't leave that environment that she was in and that she was now in a space in which she could dream, and dream past the life that she knew." – Architect/Designer*

Some Study 2 interviewees described how the Library Project space gives students what they deserve and can help students believe that they deserve more. Their comments included:

*"I think it's a mind shift. When you go into a school every day that has leaks and has other things going on that we're trying to repair and whatever, then you go to the library...It's calm. It's interesting. It feeds the mind and the eyes together. I think that that speaks volumes for what we're investing in our schools and how we're investing in our children to make sure that they always have what they need." – City Schools Employee*

*"I'm just going to say that the fact that these children that I know deserve really amazing spaces are getting at least some portion of a really amazing space...and that's what I think is one of the best benefits of it." – City Schools Employee*

*"There is a lot of unfairness, let's say, from books to lunches to everything and...when I was walking in these schools and seeing these libraries that it was bringing some fairness back...I feel that these schools that have this amazing space are creating a future for these young people that they didn't even know existed" – Community Partner*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE



Two interviewees reported delivering programming in the libraries or observing the libraries in use. One City Schools employee talked about working with students in three kinds of libraries: typical school libraries, recently renovated but not Library Project libraries, and Library Project libraries. The feeling was that students enjoyed going to the library no matter which library, but that there was a “higher level of excitement and enthusiasm” in the Library Project libraries. The other observed that children were interacting more in the Library Project libraries and also felt that the library provided opportunities not otherwise available to them:

*“The alignment between the library and teaching kids to read and then going to actually enjoy reading and having the extended learning opportunities, the personal exploration into literacy beyond what they’re learning in the classroom has really, I think, made a difference for our kids because some of our kids don’t have a neighborhood library. Some of our kids don’t have somebody who’s going to take them to a neighborhood library, but [at school] they have a librarian, a librarian assistant, and they can actually come in and really check out books and bring books home and have that available to them, which...should be a right that every kid has and that’s not the case in a lot of places. I think that’s a huge impact.” – City Schools Employee*

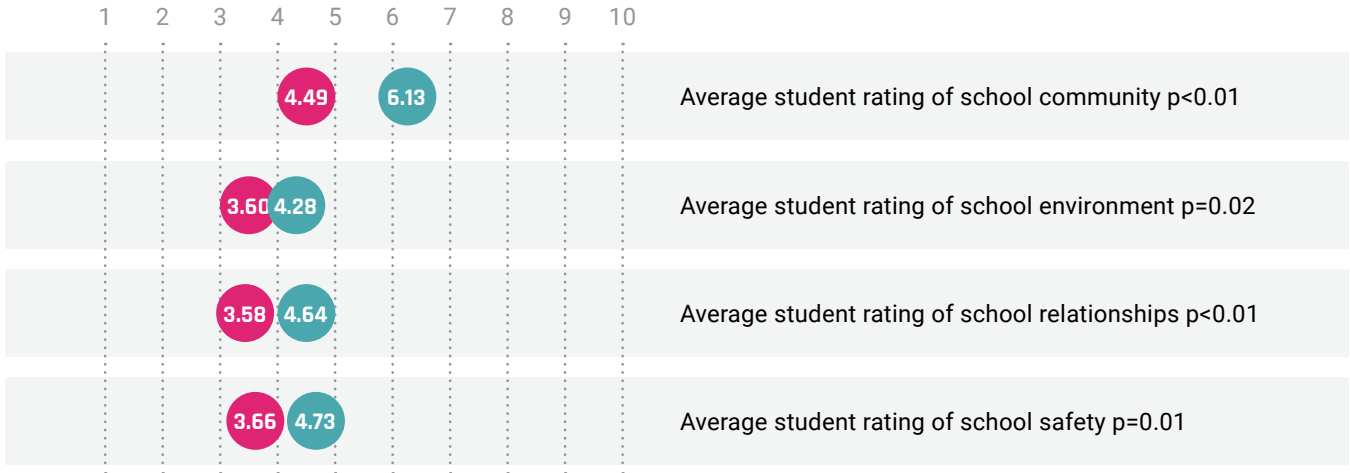
## SCHOOL CLIMATE

MSDE collects several data points to assess school climate, including chronic absenteeism data as well as student and educator survey ratings of school community, environment, relationships, and safety. Although Library Project schools were statistically similar to reference schools in the average percentage of students not chronically absent (64% and 68%, respectively), there were some significant differences in student and educator ratings related to school climate.

Average student ratings on all four measures of school climate in Library Project schools were statistically higher than in reference schools. Ratings related to school community were the highest of the four school climate measures. Out of a possible highest rating of 10, students in Library Project schools (6.13) rated their school community higher than students in reference schools (4.49;  $p < 0.01$ ). The average rating for school environment among students in Library Project schools (4.28) was higher than that of students in reference schools (3.60;  $p = 0.02$ ); the average rating for school relationships among students in Library Project schools (4.64) was higher than that of students in reference schools (3.58;  $p < 0.01$ ). Lastly, students in Library Project schools (4.73) rated their school safety higher than students in reference schools (3.66;  $p = 0.01$ ).

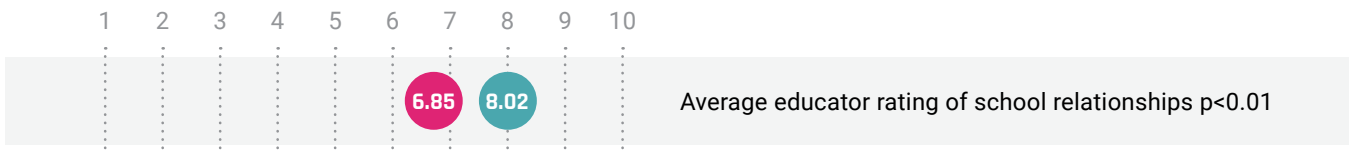
FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

Students in **Library Project schools** perceive their school climate to be better than students in **reference schools**



Educators in Library Project schools also reported higher average ratings on all four measures of school climate than students in schools without Library Project schools, however a statistically significant difference was only observed for educator ratings of school relationships; out of a possible highest rating of 10, educators in Library Project schools (8.02) rated their school relationships higher than educators in reference schools (6.85; p<0.01). The average rating for school community among educators in Library Project schools (7.76) was higher than that of educators in reference schools (6.78); the average rating for school environment among educators in Library Project schools (8.17) was higher than that of educators in reference schools (6.39). Lastly, educators in Library Project schools (6.78) rated their school safety higher than educators in reference schools (5.89).

Educators in **Library Project schools** perceive their school climate to be better than educators in **reference schools**



## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

Some Study 1 interviewees noted that having a renovated library adds something intangible to the “feel” of the school.

*“You walk in, you can see it. It says, ‘You know what, kids, you’re really special, and so this is a beautiful place for you.’ It’s helped with the climate.” – Librarian*

*“The school I worked in previously was a very old school, and there were roaches, and there were mice, and that’s not just in the library, it’s everywhere, and it just seemed downtrodden, and I think the kids and their parents felt that way too. When I moved to [a Library Project school], the library was redone, and then the school was shelled, and it was completely redone. I felt like within the first week, I noticed that there was like a ‘Wow, these kids really care about not leaving stuff in the hallway, and taking care of the library, taking care of the books, taking care of the chairs.’ I didn’t know if it was just the way their family raised them, but I started to think that maybe it’s because it’s a newer school than what I had seen before.” – Librarian*

*“It makes me feel welcome. I get to go there and I get to feel equal with everyone. It’s a really nice space. It makes a lot of people feel good too.” – 8<sup>th</sup> grade student*

Others discussed using the library as a space to support the socioemotional well-being of some of their students.

*“Sometimes I’ve taken students who are upset in there to find a book and calm down. I had a student who hates coming to school and every morning, he’d be a mess, but he loves sharks. It’s like, okay, every day, we can read more about sharks, and then you can go to class. Those kinds of things, the social-emotional growth of kids, we can use books for that.” – School Community Coordinator*

*“A lot of times when kids are having maybe some issue or need a break or something like that. Sometimes they ask, can I go down to the library? I know it is a space where they feel that just changes the mood for them.” – Librarian*

*“I have a few students that when they are starting to really see themselves getting to a point where they’re going to have a problem in class, they just say to their teacher, “I need a break.” They come in, they shelf. I have tons of shelved books. They put the books away, they take a seat for a second, take a breath, and then they head back to class. It helps with the social-emotional and helps with outbursts within the regular classroom that they know they can come here and have a safe place just to breathe for a minute.” – Librarian*

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

In site visits, four Library Project schools reported that they were “very satisfied” with their community partnerships and programs and one stated that they were “somewhat satisfied.” This item was not assessed for the sixth school due to time constraints. The reported effectiveness of these partnerships in engaging families varied widely. In some schools, efforts to provide programming for families have been poorly attended, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In other schools, they described their family engagement as “somewhat effective;” the only school that rated their family engagement as “very effective” included the caveat that their assessment was based on pre-COVID engagement. In site visits, five of the six Library Project schools said they have a Parent Corner and all five said the Parent Corner is accessible either “during the school day, including lunch” or “anytime the school is open, including before or after school.”

Some Study 2 interviewees highlighted benefits to students because of the services provided by community partners. One interviewee stated:

*“They’re continuing to bring new and different programming into these schools that [they] would never have access to...otherwise.” – Community Partner*

Community partner interviewees shared impactful stories related to the Library Project. One described a program in which students read to dogs with the goals of developing empathy and improving literacy. This partner shared that the program helped students become more comfortable reading aloud and positively providing assistance to each other in a group with dogs present. This partner also shared a story about meeting a student’s grandmother at an event where the program was described. The grandmother, who was unaware of the program, shared that her grandchild had been reading aloud to her dog whenever he was at her house and now she knew why.

Another partner whose organization provided coats and shoes to students commented:

*“When you see these kids so excited about being able to pick out a new piece of clothing that is theirs, it’s really impactful. It’s joyous.” – Community Partner*

When discussing community partnerships, most individuals from Library Project schools attributed their library-specific partnerships (distinct from schoolwide partnerships) to the Weinberg Foundation. Operation Warm and Summer Reads came up most often. Schools also mentioned partnerships with Enoch Pratt and Port Discovery Children’s Museum. Many schools also hold Scholastic Book Fairs annually. The Parent Corner and community partnerships are varied in their effectiveness because the schools and their respective communities vary in their need. For example, Operation Warm may drop off coats at Library Project schools where few, if any, of the students are in need of winter coats. Conversely, one Library Project school with a sizeable refugee population gets substantial use out of their Parent Corner.

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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### ATTRACTING NEW FAMILIES

Schools use renovated libraries to attract prospective families and parents mention having a Library Project library as one of the factors in choosing to send their child to a given school.

*"I know our principal uses the library to host prospective families to come in and speak with them. I think it just shows that when we want prospective families, we're using the library because this is the space that's the nicest space and everyone loves." – Librarian*

*"One of the things, honestly, I mean, it wasn't the main thing, but it was one of several things that was in [our school's] favor was that they were about to get this Weinberg Library. It just felt like a sign of life, a sign of like moving forward, expanding, growing, modernizing...[Our school] had a number of things going for it, and I specifically remember writing out a list and the Weinberg Library was one of the pros for [our school]." – 5<sup>th</sup> grade parent*

*"My school is in a region where the demographic of my parents is higher socioeconomic than most schools in the community. A lot of my parents are considering public schools like [our school] or private schools. When they see the library and they go through the tour, that's the main stop. That's where we have our meetings, and then we go for a tour of the school, and then we finish back at the library then. Yes, that's really positive." – Principal*



## IMPACT ON SPEED OF CONSTRUCTION OR CONSTRUCTION COSTS

One of the potential benefits of public-philanthropic partnerships is their impact on the speed or cost of construction. Some Study 2 interviewees suggested that without the partnership, the libraries would not have been renovated at all, so in that sense, the Library Project sped up the ability to do these renovations. However, other interviewees noted that the speed has been influenced by the funding models. For example, under the QZAB funding, the project was able to complete three libraries a year; however, when the project became reliant on working with CIP funds, the process was lengthier.

The Study 2 interviewees were not sure about the impact on the speed of the actual construction once funds were approved. Most felt that the construction took place in a timely way but faced some constraints simply because of doing construction in schools. One interviewee described that initially the project limited construction to summertime to reduce disruption in the schools; however, it was difficult to find contractors who could complete the work in just ten weeks.

In terms of cost, two City Schools employees felt that while their costs did not change, the final product was much better than what they would do on their own. One interviewee stated:

*“They [the libraries] cost us about the same as they would otherwise, but it was a nicer library. Our two-thirds that we were putting into those libraries was about what we would spend on a library otherwise...It wasn't that it was we were saving money. It was just making the library nicer, dramatically nicer. That's important. That's what it was doing. It wasn't saving us money per se.”* – City Schools Employee

A large, unanticipated influence on speed and cost of construction has been the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to increased construction costs (see section below for more on COVID impacts). According to one interviewee, this has led to a slow-down in the project, with only one planned renovation this year and the hope that the market will rebound back to affordable prices.

Study 2 interviewees were not sure about the project's ability to help leverage additional funds. However, one interviewee described that bringing partners together helped link available funds to schools, giving an example of a school mentioning the need for asphalt removal during an Advisory Board meeting. This meeting was attended by someone from the Governor's office who reported that there were funds available for that. Two interviewees noted that other corporations later invested in Baltimore Library Project schools. One felt that the schools' participation in the Baltimore Library Project indicated to these investors that the school would be a good partner.

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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### IMPACT ON PARTNERS

Community partners indicated that their relationship to the project led to positive personal and professional impacts. One partner talked about the personal impact of being involved in a project that was making a positive contribution to their city. This partner and others talked about the benefits of meeting and connecting with others through the project, which led to new partnership activities. Several talked about how their work on the project, and with the Weinberg Foundation, gave them enhanced credibility and a stronger ability to leverage funding for other projects and/or new work. Some comments included:

*“Just being able to say that we’re supported by Harry and Jeanette Weinberg goes a long way in Baltimore.” – Community Partner*

*“I would say that this is probably the best thing that ever happened to [our organization] in terms of immediate respect and enthusiasm from other partners.” – Architect/Designer*

### OTHER POSITIVE IMPACTS

A few other impacts were mentioned by one or two Study 2 interviewees. Two interviewees talked generally about the impact on families and communities by providing a location where people could meet and discuss topics of school and community interest. One interviewee felt that the Library Project brings awareness to the benefits of libraries and provides data on why libraries are important. The research could potentially help convince the district that every school should have a librarian. A City Schools employee highlighted the benefits of the professional development funds for the librarians, which provide educational opportunities as well as the ability to network with the broader library community.

### UNSURE OF THE IMPACT

Two Study 2 interviewees were not sure of the impact. One expressed this in general terms of “all projects need evaluation;” the other interviewee had more specific thoughts. This interviewee questioned whether having an attractive space can really impact literacy. While this interviewee commented on how nice the libraries are, they also expressed concerns about the school system’s ability to maintain the libraries as they are over the long-term. If the Weinberg Foundation does not continue to provide maintenance support, this interviewee felt that the benefits might be limited in the long run.



## LIBRARY PROJECT STRENGTHS

When asked about strengths of the Library Project, many Study 1 and Study 2 interviewees cited the unique characteristics listed in the section above. Themes specifically related to the partnership process included:

- *Generally regarding the Library Project as a successful public-philanthropic partnership*
- *The multicomponent nature of the Library Project*
- *Appreciation for including staff input in the planning and design process*
- *Recognition of the Foundation's responsiveness*
- *The partnership's strong vision and leadership, and*
- *Partner commitment and collaboration.*

## A SUCCESSFUL, LONG-TERM PUBLIC-PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERSHIP WITH A UNIQUE FOCUS ON LITERACY

Most Study 2 interviewees highlighted the successful, long-term nature of the Foundation's partnership with the school system, with a deep commitment by all partners to improving literacy among Baltimore City students. Some interviewees also indicated that there were similar aspects to other partner relationships, such as the technical aspects like setting up Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), or general similarities with other school improvement projects, such as the 21st Century School Buildings program that was funded to build new schools or Under Armour's funding of athletic facilities in the schools. However, they spent more time talking about the uniqueness of the Baltimore Library Project partners' deep commitment to, and strategic focus on, literacy. Interviewees stated:

*"I think one thing that's unique about it is that it has such a point of view and value about what [we are] investing in and why. It's tied to the research about reading and about how the presence of a ...stocked library and librarian are associated with higher reading rates for students. It's a very intentional strategy...It's not just [that] you're making a space more attractive, you're making a space more attractive for a specific strategic and academic reason. I think that's something that is quite unique about it."* – City Schools Employee

*"I think that...what makes this a very unique project is...the goal, which is really simple: increase literacy by age, you know by third grade, and that I think there's plenty of data that supports... Teach kids how to read and that involves having books and having a staff and having all of the other partners in this project who go in and create programs...[W]hat's unique about it is they [Weinberg Foundation] understood that it's not the space itself, though that's important, that that's not what changes literacy rates."* – Architect/Designer

Some City Schools employees talked about partners in other projects who say they want to help students in Baltimore City schools, but whose underlying goal is really around building name recognition or other agenda. They stated:

*"Some partnerships, it's really obvious who they're looking out for. In this one [the Baltimore Library Project], it's the kids, and you can tell that."* – City Schools Employee

*"Unfortunately, there are a lot of people who would like to do things for inner-city kids, inner-city students, with the underlying tone of getting some name recognition, and obviously, unfortunately, some additional funds in their pocket. I think we try to stay away from those types of organizations."* – City Schools Employee

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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They continued to describe other partners who provide funds for specific projects but noted that they do not have the same long-term commitment and are not involved in ensuring that the spaces are maintained. In comparison, interviewees talked about the uniqueness of not only the Weinberg Foundation's long-term financial commitment, but their true partnership with the schools and their commitment to the community:

*"The Weinberg Foundation, and the other partners that are involved in the library transformations, really want to be partners in the truest sense of the word. They don't necessarily come in saying, 'This is what we're going to do, and this is what you have to accept. It's either this or nothing.' They really do come in and look for us to tell them direction and need. They want to be aligned with the direction that the district is going. That's not always true of every partner." – City Schools Employee*

Others community partners also described the active involvement of the Weinberg Foundation as a unique aspect of the partnership as well as the strong working relationship the partners had with them:

*"We work with all kinds of foundation partners and I would put Harry and Jeanette Weinberg at the top of the list. From an overall standpoint, they have been very supportive...and flexible in working with us." – Community Partner*

Interviewees from City Schools appreciated that the Weinberg Foundation has an understanding of the challenges that City Schools faces as a large, urban school district, such as finding and hiring certified librarians, as well as the challenges brought on by the pandemic. They are seen as a partner who is willing to listen and problem-solve. Interviewee comments included:

*"Weinberg is not like [other partners]. Weinberg is involved in every little aspect of it all the way through design, through construction, and then maintenance afterwards." – City Schools Employee*

*"Weinberg cares about City Schools in its entirety...Weinberg walks through side by side with us...With the libraries, yes, they're funding a third, but they're managing the entire design process. They're managing the architects, the interior designers, and they have a cadre of folks that they already work with that...makes the burden on City Schools less because they're leading the charge...Weinberg invests the staff necessary to carry the project forward, which is really lovely." – City Schools Employee*

At the same time, interviewees from the Weinberg Foundation shared a mutual respect for their school system partners:

*"We had a really great relationship with City Schools, but at the end of the day, we were reliant on City Schools. We were reliant on them to flag the project, manage the project, to do their portion of the construction, to agree to maintain the librarian for five years, all of those details we put into place, and we couldn't have done it without them." – Weinberg Foundation Staff*

*"I think that a strength of it is just having the school system as a partner...I think that partnership, in the end, is worth it because schools are where children are in the city. If we want to have an impact on creating good, healthy, beautiful educational communities and spaces for children, partnering with the school system is imperative." – Weinberg Foundation Staff*



One Study 2 interviewee noted that because they have been working with the Weinberg Foundation for so long, the processes have become smooth, and partners know what to expect from each other. The interviewee commented:

*"I also feel like we're fairly in tune at this point also as to what Weinberg is looking for in their media centers. Because it's a continuing partnership and not just a one-off kind of thing...We're not having to reinvent the wheel every time." – City Schools Employee*

Another talked about the ease that comes with a singular focus on one type of space over time as compared to a large school renovation, which includes more voices and interests. This interviewee commented about this exclusive focus on library spaces:

*"I think it was probably a little bit more agile, a little faster, a little easier, and especially as steam picked up with that standard approach, I think there was a lot of economy on scales and efficiency and ease." – State Partner*

## MULTICOMPONENT PROJECT

All but one Study 2 interviewee talked about the multicomponent nature of the Library Project, with one Weinberg Foundation employee highlighting the importance of “a well-equipped, well-staffed, well-resourced library.” They shared an awareness that these libraries not only have design aesthetics, but also a range of resources and services, including a full-time librarian, new books, technology, a space for parents, professional development funding for the librarian, and a part-time clerk. The Library Project also addresses other student needs by connecting with community partners to provide food banks, winter coats, shoes, and enrichment activities. In reflecting on this complex web of resource and supports, interviewees shared:

*“All these different little missions, they all align in a way to create a better experience for kids and if that’s things like needing food, needing to eat, or if it’s needing place to sit and read, or if it’s finding a book or if it’s getting a coat because they’re cold, all those things. School success is probably like 1,200 micro variables...and you want to try to provide as many as you can...to create a positive environment that might not otherwise exist.” – Weinberg Foundation staff*

*“I think the other thing that is very unique to the Weinberg Project is all of the other benefits they bring to the school as part of the project, like the Operation Warm [that provides] winter coats for kids, the ongoing Food Bank activities, the professional development money for the librarians, and for equipment and all of these things. They bring so many other support resources to the entire school community, that it makes it a really unique project, one that I have not seen done in the same way across any other project in the district.” – City Schools Employee*

A few interviewees compared the Library Project libraries to other library renovations in the district. They readily acknowledged that other libraries lack the aesthetic details found in Library Project libraries and, in some cases, commented that these other libraries also lacked books and librarians, as well as the range of community partnerships.

## SCHOOL STAFF INPUT IN RENOVATION PROCESSES

One of the features of the Library Project planning process is the involvement of school staff in the decision-making before and during construction. Although few Study 1 interviewees from Library Project schools were present in their current school when the library renovation took place, those who could speak to the process were grateful to have had input.

*“I felt like the Weinberg Foundation was really easy to work with and that they involved me as the principal in the process. I thought that was really great. I actually really appreciated that – the Weinberg Foundation’s approach to including the principal as one of the planning partners with this.” – Principal*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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### THE WEINBERG FOUNDATION IS RESPONSIVE

The Weinberg Foundation was widely regarded by Study 1 interviewees as generous and responsive to school needs.

*“Weinberg Foundation is so good. Unfortunately, in Baltimore City, because we don’t have very good facilities even a principal with high expectations gets used to having middle-level facilities. I remember someone from the Weinberg Foundation came in and said ‘Those [stools] don’t look very good anymore. We’re going to get you some new ones,’ and I was thinking, ‘Wow, you can get me some new ones, but I’ve got about five teachers who will take those in their classrooms’ because they still looked good enough, better than what people have in their classrooms. I think that Weinberg Foundation does a great job making sure that everything’s in good shape.” – Principal*

*“I also like that the Weinberg Foundation continues to replenish our books periodically [including] new books that keeps our high-level, not high-level readers, but our kids who are really interested in reading that keep them motivated, keep coming back to the library.” – Principal*

### VISION AND LEADERSHIP

In terms of the partnership, many Study 2 interviewees identified the strong vision and leadership provided by the Weinberg Foundation, and supported by City Schools, as a strength and attributed the success and longevity of the project to it. This view was shared by employees at the Weinberg Foundation, City Schools staff, as well as other partners. One commented:

*“I think that the Weinberg Foundation has...had a really clear vision...They believe strongly in it and have not wavered on that. They have remained committed to this as something that all schools should have...I think that that has been what has made the program last so long and been so effective.” – City Schools Employee*

*“I think the vision and the leadership have been consistent. There’s an incredible consistency in the leadership of the program and that’s, I think, why it survived...I think the consistent messaging and the consistency that it’s worth doing.” – Architect/Designer*



## COMMITMENT AND COLLABORATION

Many Study 2 interviewees highlighted the commitment and collaborative relationship between the partners as strengths. Partners feel that they are valued members of a team. Interviewees commented:

*“In my humble opinion, I think both parties have been very keen to make sure that we are doing what’s best for children ultimately.” – City Schools Employee*

*“Strengths are, I think, an honest commitment from both parties to getting this job, to getting the work done. That is clear on both ends. Both sides are willing to work together. They’re doing something that is not typically easy, which is to make organizations, one public and one philanthropic working together regularly on actual construction projects. I mean, there’s just a lot of moving parts there to get that stuff done, with a joint vested interest.”*

*– Weinberg Foundation staff*

Several also talked about communication within the partnership as a strength. Interviewees described the communication with the Weinberg Foundation as “open” and “authentic,” including through staffing changes. In addition to regular meetings as spaces were being planned and work was being conducted, partners felt that if an issue came up, everyone was always willing to participate in a call, send an email and problem-solve to come up with a solution. One interviewee commented:

*“With the folks from the Weinberg Foundation and the other partners involved..., they get it. They understand that we are in this unique position this year, that we have a lot of things that could potentially keep us from meeting a timeline. They understand the realities of being a large, urban, low-income school district, and they want to impact students, not just for their own philanthropic bottom line, but because they care about what happens with kids... and that is different from some partnerships.” – City Schools Employee*



## CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Interviewees were asked what was challenging about their schools' libraries. Responses included:

- *Various funding limitations*
- *The complexities of staffing and, relatedly, library access*
- *Struggles in maintaining collections*
- *Considerations for the physical space*
- *Difficulties with community partnerships and family engagement*
- *Changing personnel, and*
- *Communication.*

## FUNDING FOR BUILDING THE LIBRARIES

Many Study 2 interviewees recognized the ongoing limitations of funding for school construction and operations within an urban school district and highlighted the challenges related to costs. A few focused on the challenging financial allocation decisions faced by City Schools. One interviewee stated:

*“We don’t have enough money to do all the things that need to be done in our schools for facilities. From roof repair to elevators to air conditioning, there’s other things that also sometimes have to take precedent over the beautification or creation of a library, which is really sad that we have to make those kinds of choices for kids. We should never have to make those choices. If we have a functional roof or a [student with] disabilities, you should have an elevator...but you should also have a library.” – City Schools Employee*

According to one interviewee, library programs in general are underfunded by the district and many libraries do not receive the annual funding that they request. The interviewee commented:

*“It’s not even for me just sustainability of Weinberg, but it’s sustainability of a library program in this district because it’s really, really underfunded in a magnitude that is, I think, in crisis mode.” – City Schools Employee*

Interviewees also described the specific funding challenges related to the Library Project itself. As interviewees noted, the Weinberg Foundation can support up to 30% of a capital project and City Schools must provide funds for the rest. Two interviewees described how City Schools has had to “scramble” to find their share of Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding that could be allotted to the Library Project after QZAB funding was eliminated. According to interviewees, many factors are involved in the actual selection of schools that receive a Library Project library, but a major factor has become whether the school is receiving CIP funding for multi-systemic projects. For the school system’s match, they calculate the percentage of CIP funds that go specifically into the library, for example, the square footage of the roof that is over the library. One interviewee shared:

*“If I’m doing work already at a building and submitting it, that major work, because that’s going to affect the media center, like making the roof watertight and the windows watertight, and the HVAC system working, it’s actually going to support the media center. Then using the Weinberg side to then actually improve the media center, with the rest of the building improvements being our side.” – City Schools Employee*

## FUNDING MANAGEMENT AND DISTRIBUTION PROCESSES

Some Study 2 interviewees talked about the challenges related to the processes of managing and distributing funds, which become complicated when there are different sources for construction and operating costs, with different procurement rules based on the type of funding. One interviewee stated a key challenge with this, as follows:

*“That the pots of money are all from different sources and you’ve got to bring pots of money. It’s difficult from a contracting basis... There’s all kinds of procurement rules when you’re using federal dollars, state dollars... So the challenge was figuring out how to make that work from a procurement level but also just how do you get money from pot A into pot B. How do you then get, because it’s complicated because you have operating, the furniture is part of this, the technology, so there’s different pots of money within the district that go toward putting this together and when there’s... a turnover... you have to explain, ‘This is how we’ve been doing it.’ It seems the last couple of years it’s been pretty stable with the people staying in place who understand the process, but it’s complicated.” – Architect/Designer*

A few interviewees talked about the complexity of preparing to bid for work on the project. If work is being done in two phases, then the overall project bid needs to be split into separate bids for each phase. Contractors also might have to bill multiple people to get paid for their work on the project. One interviewee commented:

*“I will say that that has sometimes made certain contractors not bid on the projects. We have heard when we’ve gotten to bid that there are certain contractors that will not bid because of the complication of how to get paid.” – City Schools Employee*

One community partner identified that the process for getting paid by City Schools was very slow and noted that partner organizations need to be able to fund their work until they get paid, which can be months later.

## STAFFING COMPLEXITIES

Many Study 1 interviewees noted complexities related to staffing school libraries. Full-time certified librarians are expensive, especially compared to other resource teachers or classroom teachers, with one principal noting that, “in our budget, [librarians cost] \$10,000 - \$15,000 more than a teacher position.” The requirement that Library Project schools hire a full-time librarian may be fiscally difficult, especially for schools with lower enrollment.

*“The Weinberg Foundation mandates that you have to have a 1.0 librarian. It was such a hard push for me back when my enrollment at my school was smaller. As my enrollment increased, there was no problem. I was glad that it worked out. I would just caution the Weinberg Foundation that a 1.0 librarian might not be practical for a school with an enrollment of 300 or less. I had to cut other things...some years I didn't have art, some years I didn't have music. It's really a principal then in Baltimore City [who] has to decide what's most important and it can be tough.” – Principal*

A few Study 2 interviewees raised the challenge of funds for the librarian’s salary. This was especially difficult during times of budget cuts. One commented:

*“We had really hard conversations with some principals, especially during all the staffing cuts... and they were still required to keep their librarian. I had some hard moments. I had some creative principals, too, but I had some hard moments in those discussions.” – Weinberg Foundation staff*

There were also differing views on the importance of the librarian being certified. On the one hand, there was a recognition that working as a school librarian requires specific skills and training.

*“I'm good with what it costs because they're not librarians anymore. They're library media [specialists], and that's a special niche. That's a special skill set. I'm okay with what it costs. Some people are okay with putting long-term substitutes in classrooms for a full year. I'm not one of those people. I think children should have certified people who were trained and do curriculum content with them.” – Principal*

However, other Study 1 interviewees noted that simply being a certified librarian may not be sufficient. The ability to teach children and demonstrate classroom management skills are also important for librarians to be successful and effective.

*“We were having this conversation around people that do fine arts, okay? They might be fantastic visual artists, musicians, vocal, instrumental, [but] classroom management, not there. When you find that person that has the perfect balance of both, you found a gem.” – Principal*

*“Not all librarians can teach. They are very good about organizing and maintaining the library, but they are not necessarily teachers. It's very different. It's like a breath of fresh air having a real teacher in the library that can teach and knows how to do classroom management.” – Librarian*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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Lastly, some Study 1 interviewees lamented the limited pool of certified librarians from which they can fill positions.

*“Let’s say that our current librarian comes in here tomorrow and says, ‘I got another job offer to be assistant principal down the road.’ ‘Okay, congrats. I’m happy. Sad to see you go. I’m happy for you.’ Now, what do I do? I then go into this portal where it has all the positions and I go to media specialists and I figure out who’s there. But if there’s nobody there, now what do I do? I literally don’t know what I would do if [my librarian] left. I would have to scramble to figure somebody to fill the position and it probably wouldn’t be a full-time librarian. People leaving a profession, less people coming out of college with a degree. The pool of applicants for any position is starting to slowly shrink, and even worse so, in a city like Baltimore where we’ve always struggled to keep and maintain the workforce. This is dire.” – Principal*

## FACTORS IN LIBRARY ACCESS

The staffing and scheduling of the library and access go hand-in-hand. Library staff can only be available to students for so many hours in the day. Having a clerk or assistant in addition to a full-time librarian can allow for staggered schedules that provide coverage before and/or after school. However, many of the Library Project schools we spoke with no longer have library assistants. Access is also impacted by the way library class is scheduled. In some schools, to accommodate COVID precautions and keep groups of kids together, students have library class often, sometimes every day, for one quarter of the school year. This configuration does allow for some continuity for the library staff who get to see students frequently over a short period of time. However, this setup also limits students’ ability to check out books during the other three quarters of the academic year when they are not scheduled for library class.

*“When I arrived here, they had initially the A and B schedule. One week could be week A. It’s extremely confusing, but the [principal] wanted the kids to come to the library throughout the year, not only during the trimester that they are assigned to the library, but with COVID and everything, they had to change to this quarterly system, and there is good and bad things about it. The good thing is that they are here for a good amount of time and we have continuity. On the other hand, some kids came in the first trimester and they don’t come back.” – Librarian*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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2

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*“The scheduling can be tricky. I think there are pros to the schedule. I think there are cons, like I said, a student from quarter one hasn’t been in here since November and it’s unfortunate... What we’ve actually done is we have taken our own time, our own planning period, our own lunch time to invite classes who haven’t been here since quarter one just because we feel bad, little kids, it’s not their fault. I think that’s definitely one of the biggest challenges, is the scheduling of how do we get kids in here and get books in their hands and throughout the whole entire year. I think that’s probably number one in my mind.” – Librarian*

*“We need to go there more often. It can’t just be a resource because everyone would probably need to check out a book. Let’s say it’s the first quarter and like me, you have art, and let’s say your family doesn’t have access to resources like books. You need to get some good information besides just school. Also, you want to read Train your Brain and you want to know how to make something from origami or you want to learn more facts about your cat. You should be able to go to the library more often.” – 5<sup>th</sup> grade student*

There are pros and cons to other scheduling configurations as well.

*“We have like less than an hour in there once every two weeks. Time’s limited that you can utilize the space. Last year it used to be two times a week and now it’s like way less, but I will say I am more of a busy bee that needs to be doing something active. I appreciate being able to run around like going to gym more often for music. I feel like as much as we don’t get to go there, we get to experience everything else that our school gets to offer.” – 8<sup>th</sup> grade student*

Different scheduling configurations also impact the daily experiences of librarians. Librarians varied in the number of classes they are asked to teach in a given day, the number of planning periods they have per day, and the range of grade levels that they must tailor their lessons and activities to.

*“[The library] is a single-teacher resource for pre-K through eighth grade, times two classes per grade. [The librarian] is probably overwhelmed with time and time management.” – Parent*

*“I’m on a completely fixed schedule. If I was on a fixed-flex schedule, I would be working with the research projects and working with a 3rd-grade team when they’re doing their space unit or their undersea unit. I would be able to be open during lunch, so when my children who are fasting early for Ramadan now don’t have to be in a lunchroom and see other people eating, so that I could have some of the time to be putting books back on the shelf because the kids get a book or two every week.” – Librarian*

*“It’s like I don’t think schools think about this, and then we get a full class load. My old principal actually made it where I only taught a couple classes a day so that I could go in and work with the teachers. I think it was a great benefit. I only saw one to two classes a day on a rotating basis, kind of like nine-week schedule.” – Librarian*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE



Based on MSDE data, schools with Library Project libraries were marginally more likely to report scheduling at least some classes flexibly (58%) compared to reference schools (17%;  $p=0.10$ ). Library Project schools (4 hours) and reference schools (3 hours) were statistically similar in their extended hours for student use.

Half of Library Project schools reported student usage over 51% which is statistically similar to reference schools (58%). Additionally, 8% of Library Project schools reported that staff use of resources was over 51%; none of the reference schools staff use of resources was at this level. Staff use of space over 51% was identical for schools with Library Project libraries and those without (17%). Although Library Project schools (42%) were more likely than reference schools (17%) to have a space for creating and innovating, this difference was not statistically significant.

## MAINTAINING COLLECTIONS

For Library Project and reference libraries alike, weeding collections and keeping books up-to-date is a challenge. Books, especially those that are library-bound (and, thus, more durable), are expensive. However, Study 1 interview and site visit participants were unaware of a predictable source of funding for library collections in schools.

*“One thing I don't think people realize is how expensive it is. \$1,000 will only get you like 30 new books. Ideally, you want them to be library bound. If they're not, they can only really last like five, six checkouts before you're taping it back together.” – Librarian*

*“We've probably purchased over a thousand dollars' worth of books this year from our proceeds, from running the Scholastic book fair. We've been, on our end, doing our best to get new books or replace old beaten books and stuff like that. We don't really get a budget, the school budget for library, so it's on us to figure out and how to get more books.” – Librarian*

*“Part of the wording for the city policies that we are given, principals are suggested to give however many funds, but they don't have to. From the school, the only funding I would get is from Scholastic dollars, so from book fairs. This year I didn't actually use that much of it because I don't think there was that much available to maybe use. Other years I've had like 3,000 in Scholastic dollars, but then you're limited in those books, but just this year the PTO decided to donate consistently for the library. I have three grand for this year and then each following year I get \$1,000 to update the collection because it's very hard to-- when a new book comes out in a series, students obviously want it, I want to get it for them, but if I don't have funding to do that, that makes it challenging. Having a consistent fund would be great because the science books are so dated.” – Librarian*



## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE



Even with support from volunteer donations, resources like the Maryland Book Bank, funds from Scholastic Book Fairs, or the Weinberg Foundation (when applicable), libraries struggle to both 1) keep shelves stocked with materials that interest their students and aren't too worn from use and 2) keep non-fiction materials shelved that don't contain dated or incorrect information.

*"The books, because they're a few years old, I guess, a lot of them are a few years old, they're bleached by sunlight or some of them they have little pearls tufted-up hardboard on them. Some of them are kind of torn." – 5<sup>th</sup> grade student*

*"Fiction-wise, I think what we have in fiction is good. I don't think, of course, there's a new Diary of a Wimpy Kid. We used to update our Diary of a Wimpy Kid series, things like that. Collecting the next book for the series. As far as interest level, I think we definitely have more than enough to keep our students interested regarding fiction and non-fiction too. When I think about research projects and things like that and I want our students to have multiple sources, I can't always find all the nonfiction sources that I want to use. Most of the time I'm borrowing from the public library." – Librarian*

*"I started weeding some books and through the years you find books every now and then where you're like, "That cannot be on the shelf. How was that there?" Then two, it's just like, "Well, I don't have any books on this topic, so I might as well just keep this one book." One student went to check out this book on Germany and I was like, "Hold on." I was like, "Okay, the Berlin Wall fell." I'm like, "Okay, that's good, you can take it." I was like, "I'm not sure if this is up-to-date." So that is a big issue." – Librarian*

*"I'm just thinking about my biographies, learning about people who are making change now. It's not really a good representation of that. There are some areas I think mostly in my non-fiction that are lacking that I want to make sure that we have for just the different interests that the kids have. My shelves are filled but if I really went through and removed a lot of the things that I know there's a more updated version of, that would be a lot of books gone." – Librarian*



There is also a sense that library staff would like to have books that reflect the diversity of their student body (e.g., history books on Black historical figures, books in languages other than English) but that this is difficult to do given limited financial resources and other competing priorities related to collections.

*“I would probably like to see more graphic novels. I have one shelf of them, and they're a little dated, and on top of that, our population is, I would say, 80% African American, 20% Hispanic, and there's one white kid in our school. Maybe if the graphic novels represented my kids a little more, that would be nice.” – Librarian*

Lastly, although donations of books are generally welcomed by librarians, being able to replenish their collections with books of their choosing is preferable.

*“Getting the books there, replenishing the books [is a challenge]. [I prefer] the ability to choose my own books when they do replenish because they had a grant last year and I'm thankful for it. The Weinberg Foundation paid some organization to order a whole bunch of books that my kids don't want to read. I go through 5th grade, and they sent a ton of fiction books, which was great for my older kids. I'm not saying I'm not thankful for them, but I have specialized programs [for specific groups of students in my school].” – Librarian*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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### PHYSICAL SPACE SHORTCOMINGS

Although interviewees and site visit participants from Library Project schools were resoundingly excited about the design of their libraries, some mentioned ways that their library space could function better for their needs. For example, during site visits, four of the six Library Project schools stated that the placement of their circulation desk is ideal for their space. The remaining two schools noted that the placement of the circulation desk “is good but could be better,” with one librarian stating that, “the little kid books are shelved in a way that makes it hard to see the younger students sometimes.” Another librarian noted:

*“I think most of the [Library Project] libraries have this circle, but my shelving goes through the ceiling, so if I’m checking out books or at the desk, I can’t see through that. Then students go in the corner sometimes behind the [shelves]. Most of times they’re just sitting and reading, but I can’t see what they’re doing. I don’t have full sight lines then of the space.” – Librarian*

Additionally, although those affiliated with Library Project schools reported loving that the library is full of so many bookshelves and attractive décor, it leaves them with limited space to display student work or hang other items that aid them as instructors.

*“I don’t have a lot of hanging space... to display student work and things like that... I don’t have a lot of wall space together. I have one bulletin board that is centralized that students can see things on and then I have these columns where I did post some work this year, but I don’t have a lot of space to display student work and then just like anchor charts and posters for students to refer back to.” – Librarian*

### FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Despite schools having Parent Corners that are accessible, they are not always used. During site visits, one school noted that “before COVID, it wasn’t uncommon to have more than one parent using the Parent Corner at a time” due to an external community partner referring parents to the Parent Corner as a resource. However, in other schools, we heard things like, “I tried to offer a weekly Parent University to provide high school application resources, financial literacy, etc., but nobody attended” and “The Parent Corner is not utilized. Parents don’t know about it and I’m not going to spend money on that when I could be buying books for students.” Some Study 1 interviewees noted that parents may be less inclined to utilize the computer in the Parent Corner because they do not have district log-in credentials.

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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### CHANGING PERSONNEL

Some Study 2 interviewees referenced the importance of supportive leadership to the sustainability of such a long-term project based in a large school district with a large philanthropic partner. At one point, City Schools appointed a superintendent who was perceived as being less supportive of the Baltimore Library Project libraries, causing a slow-down in the project's momentum. One interviewee referred to this as the "dark period" of the project. Ultimately, this superintendent was only in place for a short period. The current superintendent was seen by interviewees as highly supportive. On the Weinberg Foundation side, several interviewees spoke about the strong dedication of their CEO to the project, and they wondered what would happen if the CEO were to leave the organization.

Interviewees also recognized the impact of personnel changes at lower levels (n=3). Two partners talked about how challenging it can be to identify the new contact person after someone leaves. One stated:

*"Just the fact that the school district is like a huge office that is a huge bureaucracy. Sometimes it's challenging to find the right person to work with and sometimes that right person to work with doesn't always stay. They leave and then you have to figure out, 'Okay, who's next? Who else do I need to talk to there?'... I think that's really the big challenge."*

– Weinberg Foundation staff

Similarly, one interviewee noted that if a principal at a Library Project school changes, the new principal is expected to honor the commitment to having a full-time librarian. This must be clearly communicated to them as they become part of the school.

### COMMUNICATION

While communication between partners was generally identified as a strength, some Study 2 interviewees identified communication challenges. Three partners perceived that others were not listening to specific needs that they were communicating and/or were not responding fast enough to communications. One indicated that they knew they could approach the Weinberg Foundation for help in resolving the issue, if needed. Another jokingly noted that anytime you had forty people coming together, as in the Advisory Board, you can have challenges.

Others noted that there has currently been less communication among partners since the pandemic. Two reported that they had enjoyed receiving regular project updates. One of these partners, who is currently not actively involved in the project, reported that receiving regular updates would still be welcome. One community partner reported not having any recent communication around whether or when their programs would return to the schools since their in-person programming had been halted due to COVID-19.

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE



### OTHER CHALLENGES

A few other challenges were mentioned by one or two Study 2 interviewees. Two identified the challenge of proving effectiveness of a project like this. One noted that investments are made in education, but it is not clear how well they work. The other talked about anecdotal evidence in support of libraries but pointed out that this was not sufficient if you have an unsupportive superintendent.

Ensuring that technology works as intended is a challenge identified by one interviewee from City Schools. This interviewee described a system where students could work collaboratively on computers and share screens to see individual student's work; however, this required "a couple of extra steps" to get this feature to work as it was supposed to.

One interviewee talked about the challenge of limited resources. This interviewee would like "every school and every student" to have a wonderful library like the Baltimore Library Project libraries.



## COVID-19 IMPACTS AND VIRTUAL/HYBRID EDUCATION

Throughout data collection, participants discussed the impact of COVID-19 and the shift to virtual learning, including:

- *Virtual library instruction*
- *Library online presence*
- *Virtual school libraries and digital access*
- *Impact on community partnerships, and*
- *Impact on construction and other project processes.*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE



### VIRTUAL LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

Most Library Project schools adapted library class to a virtual format while students were learning remotely during COVID. For many, especially those teaching younger students, this involved simple read-alouds through the computer. Other librarians, mainly those teaching older students, utilized things like Google Classrooms to keep students involved with library class. Even still, students noted that “virtual library class” was not nearly as engaging or meaningful as in-person library class.

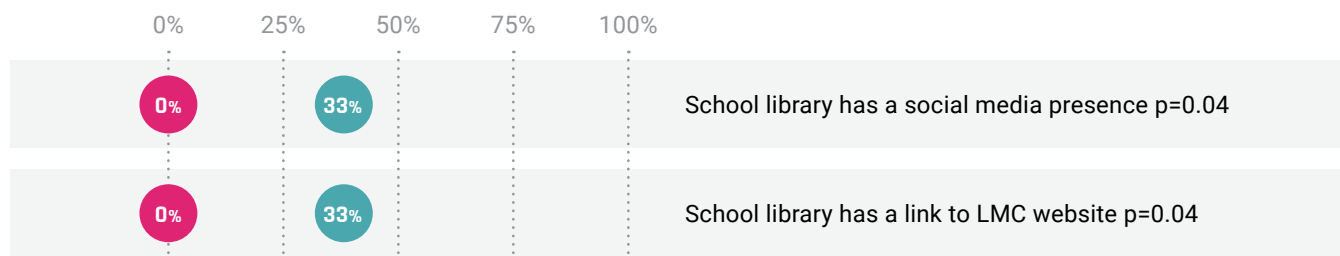
*“It was probably the worst class I’ve ever taken. It was terrible. It was really bad... [Y]ou just sat at home, you didn’t even have a book, but we would just be learning about stuff. You didn’t have to be there because it’s library so it doesn’t technically like, it’s not a big grade. I feel like for a lot of kids there was nothing that made them want to go anymore. There was no fun space to go to or projector that you get look at, or things you get to interact with. I feel like without the library space itself, the library is nothing.” – 8<sup>th</sup> grade student*

*“[The librarian] did a Google meet, and we just read books, did projects. We didn’t talk about the library. We just read books and did projects. It was kind of boring. I couldn’t check out a book.” – 5<sup>th</sup> grade student*

### LIBRARY ONLINE PRESENCE

Based on MSDE data, one-third of Library Project schools reported having a social media presence or a link to the library media center website. Reference schools were statistically less likely to report having a social media presence ( $p=0.04$ ) or a link to the library media center website ( $p=0.04$ ). Additionally, one-third of Library Project schools reported having a virtual presence (i.e., website, blog, or wiki), compared to 17% of reference schools reported having a virtual presence; this difference was not statistically significant.

#### Library Project schools are more likely than reference schools to have any online presence



## VIRTUAL SCHOOL LIBRARIES

When asked to contemplate virtual school libraries in the future, most Study 1 interviewees agreed on the importance of having access to physical books and the space itself given its role as the hub of the school and a safe space for students. One librarian noted, “Libraries are the living room; you can’t have a virtual living room.”

*“I don’t think that it would be as valuable. I think that there’s a ton of resources online and there’s a ton of e-books you get for free from the library. There’s children’s programming that’s already for free through the Pratt Library and other organizations and even publishers have things that it doesn’t cost a whole ton to be a part of. The physical experience of being away from a screen and curled up with a book...the experience of getting cozy with physical books, I don’t feel like it could be replicated online.” – School Community Coordinator*

*“No, that wouldn’t work for me because I still buy hard copies and paperback myself. I still have to feel text. I have to turn pages. That wouldn’t work for me. I think that children need to engage with text and print and pages, so I like the hybrid having a little of both. The beauty of a library or being a reader or gaining a love for reading is the page-turning. I’m sorry. It just is.” – Principal*

Some Study 1 interviewees did note that access to digital media (e.g., e-books, audiobooks) via a school- or district-supported platform like epic! as a supplement to having a physical library might work well though others had reservations.

*“Having an online book might be helpful. I could imagine that. I feel like it’d also be nice because if there was a person that could read it, an audio feature, that would be really nice. I feel like I can’t learn without that because I have ADHD so it makes it pretty hard to focus on reading without someone reading it to me but I feel like that would be super helpful especially like for class time in general if they had online books, that would be very, very helpful.”*  
– 8<sup>th</sup> grade student

*“I think a virtual library is a nice additional resource, but shouldn’t be the main resource because of what I said before, I think it still holds true more and more in the future. Kids are on screen so much, we don’t need more screen stuff and there’s just something tactile about a book. Kids need to engage their senses.” – 5<sup>th</sup> grade parent*

*“If it were completely virtual, I think I would have everybody the last 15 minutes, I’d have to open an EPIC account where they can, again, just peruse books, because I feel like they don’t have time in the classroom to do it. To me, the most important part of library is not the teacher saying, ‘Listen to this book, and then let’s talk about it.’ It’s like, ‘Here’s a million books, go read what you want to read.’” – Librarian*



## COVID-19 AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Lastly, community partnerships – either those initiated by the Weinberg Foundation or those that the schools have established on their own – have almost completely waned since COVID started. Some schools are thinking about ways to bring them back but the ability to do this is limited by librarian bandwidth.

*“My library media specialist had a great community family thing going pre-pandemic. I would like to rebuild that. She built it and came. It was an incentivized thing. She met her goal each time, but it is hard work. It’s a lot of work. It is, but that’s the business we’re in.” – Principal*

*“Well, we had [a partnership] here with the Science Museum. I think it’s Discovery. Yes. They pick a class and they had [it] once a week class with this third grade and was a very positive experience. I think with our current schedule, I don’t even know how we could reach out to them because I don’t think there is much extra time for that. I think it’s a great idea to expose the kids to different things. The big thing with COVID [was that it] limited who was allowed in the schools. I’m curious to see if, come next year, COVID numbers are down, would we start partnering with more people through the library? ... [T]his year, we don’t have any partnerships.” – Librarian*

*“As of right now, [our library doesn’t have any partnerships], but we used to work with the Digital Harbor Foundation. They would do maker space projects and they helped me start the maker space that we have in the library. I received two 3D printers from them and how to use them. They were a really great partnership. They gave me a grant to buy supplies, and there was family maker night, so one school year, every month, we had a family maker night where you could bring your kids and build and create things. When the pandemic hit everything changed. I would say COVID was the biggest factor... It would be nice to have more partnerships again, more programming for students.” – Librarian*

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PROJECT PROCESSES

Study 2 Interviewees were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on the Library Project. Some noted that the buildings and the libraries were not open during the pandemic, with one calling the lack of library use “a real shame...and pretty sad.” Three community partners noted that even though school is back in person, partner programming is not happening to the same degree that it was before the pandemic and some partners have not returned to in-person programming at all. Two interviewees from City Schools noted that the library opening events for libraries completed during the pandemic did not take place or were scaled back in scope.

As mentioned above, some interviewees noted increased costs of construction materials, increased time for completion of library construction, and a slowing of the supply chain as a result of the pandemic. One of the Architecture/Design interviewees felt that the speed of construction had slowed during the pandemic, but since school was not in-person, this was not a problem. A City Schools employee noted that plans for a project had slowed down during the height of the pandemic because fewer people were coming out to bid because they did not want to work in person. An interviewee from the Weinberg Foundation shared that increased construction costs had slowed the project this year because City Schools could only generate matching funds for one school, instead of two.

Additionally, two partners mentioned that communication between partners has decreased during the pandemic. One commented that they were not sure how many partners were currently actively involved.



## INTERVIEWEE LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

**In Study 2 interviews, partners shared lessons learned about their experience with the Library Project.** These covered a variety of areas including:

- *The importance of having consistent partners in critical roles*
- *Early planning for evaluation and sustainability*
- *The value of including end-users in design processes*
- *Having an understanding that funding can change*
- *The need for clear expectations between partners*
- *Improvements in communication*
- *School selection equity and transparency*
- *Library staffing, and*
- *Predictable funding for collections.*

## IMPORTANCE OF INVOLVED AND CONSISTENT PARTNERS

A few Study 2 interviewees recognized the importance of having consistent people in critical roles in the partnership. Initially, on the school district side, different construction project managers were assigned to different schools. The district recognized that it was better to have a consistent project manager, who possessed both technical and people skills, overseeing all of the Library Project schools.

On the Weinberg side, a detail-oriented project manager was seen as critical to ensuring that the project stayed on task. Another Weinberg staff member talked about the importance of developing relationships with people on the school side, including managers and the librarians, as well as with the contractors. This interviewee stated:

*“Just the lesson learned of being present makes a huge difference...I will always take that with me in any job I have... just the power of relationships. I learned that from...the Library Project.”*

—Weinberg Foundation staff

## EARLY EVALUATION PLANNING IS NEEDED TO IDENTIFY INTENDED IMPACTS AND MECHANISMS OF ACTION

Two interviewees from the Weinberg Foundation felt that it would have been helpful to develop a theory of change at the start of the project, which would have spelled out the project resources, project goals and intended outcomes, and ideas for how to measure progress toward the goals over time. One noted that it is hard to prove the project’s effect on literacy scores “because we didn’t put any of that study in place at the beginning.”

## PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND REALISTIC LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

Three interviewees talked about sustainability. While a sustainability plan was in place, the recognition of ongoing maintenance and operational needs has kept the Weinberg Foundation in place longer than originally anticipated at Library Project schools. An important lesson learned is to deeply think through what the realistic, long-term involvement and commitment of the partners will be and what the consequences of “graduating” schools from the project would be. One interviewee reported having much greater awareness of the maintenance considerations now as compared to the start of the project.

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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### INCLUDING THE END-USER IN THE DESIGN PROCESS

Consulting the end-users as part of the design process is an effective way to ensure that you are creating a usable space and needed resources. Two interviewees commented:

*“Before this renovation, I’d seen some renovations and how they went completely left field because they didn’t talk to a librarian. Yet the librarian is the person who knows how to use it. It doesn’t make sense to try to build a space for a position if you don’t have any...idea of what the position entails.” – City Schools Employee*

*“It’s just being flexible to the needs of the school and making sure we’re always hearing their voice...It’s not cookie-cutter, which books go into the spaces. It’s really listening to the needs of the school, what they already have, what they want.” – Weinberg Foundation staff*

Another partner felt that the process of talking with community members helped ensure an understanding of what the community’s needs and desires were. This partner recognized that some of the priorities were not necessarily the same as their own, stating:

*“These things that were not part of my life became something very important and big to these people, and therefore, to me.” – Architect/Designer*

Because people have very strong personal preferences around color, a successful strategy was to create a limited set of color choices from which to choose. This ensured that people still had input into design decisions while maintaining alignment with the Baltimore Library Project branding. Additionally, ensuring that designers and architects understand the regulations around school spaces (e.g., floor temperature for children sitting on the floor, heights of furniture) is important for a successful design.

### RECOGNIZING THAT FUNDING STRATEGIES CAN CHANGE

An important lesson learned is that funding streams can change in unpredictable ways, which can have an impact on the project. According to one Study 2 interviewee, there was no expectation that the QZAB funds would get cut because that rarely happened with federal programs. Once they were cut, time and creativity were needed to figure out how the district could manage their required matching funds.

## ESTABLISHING CLEAR EXPECTATIONS BETWEEN PARTNERS

Interviewees in Study 1 and Study 2 were asked about recommendations for improving the Baltimore Library Project. Many had no recommendations, except for putting libraries in all of the city schools and in locations around the country. They felt that the project was working well as-is. One commented:

“How can you improve on something that’s really good? I don’t know.” – City Schools Employee

Still, when pressed, interviewees shared recommendations primarily around communication as well as a few other topics.

Establishing clear expectations between partners was seen as important to the success of the partnership. This has been done through an MOU process that establishes the roles and responsibilities of the partners. Initially, on the school district side, there were separate MOUs with each library project school. There was an expectation that even after the MOU, the school would fund the librarian; however, the principals did not always understand this and in the case of a change in principal, the incoming principals needed to understand that they were still accountable to the MOU. Institutionalizing that process is important for the smooth continuity of the program.

## COMMUNICATION

Some recommendations for improvement around communication were offered. Some Study 2 interviewees felt that it was time to have a check-in among all partners to discuss satisfaction with the project, feedback about how well (or not) the project elements are working, a review of processes with an eye toward streamlining, and realistic planning for long-term maintenance and sustainability. Interviewees would also like upcoming construction timelines to allow planning for staffing needs. One interviewee commented:

“I guess the question I have is around long-term sustainability, and I don’t think that Weinberg and City Schools have sat down and addressed that frankly, in terms of, how long are we going to keep building libraries? How long are we going to keep supporting said libraries? What is our role in responsibility in the upkeep of those spaces? In some ways, I know that we’ve danced around some of those questions...I think we would benefit from an honest conversation together about the future of the project.” – Weinberg Foundation staff

## EQUITY AND SCHOOL SELECTION TRANSPARENCY

Some Study 1 interviewees mentioned that they were not clear about how schools are selected for renovation. Some of those affiliated with schools that are better-resourced than many other City Schools wondered why their school was selected when other, poorer-resourced schools might have benefitted more.

*"If you happen to do all over again, [our school] probably didn't need. When you're talking about needs assessment, every school deserves a great library and a great space. But there are a lot of other schools that have really bad spaces in really impoverished areas that more programming, I think, could bring an uplift at school in a student population. [Our school] may not have been the best fit. Glad it's here, but it isn't as needed here." – Principal*

*"Unfortunately, some of these schools are in neighborhoods where they're struggling just to stay open to keep kids engaged. Then parents are working, parents in those communities, and single parents and it has the ripple effect and they don't get [new libraries]. That's a shame because even if they had half of what was at [our school] and all the other schools that got these wonderful libraries, it would be a huge improvement for them." – 8<sup>th</sup> grade parent*

One Study 2 interviewee thought it would be important to provide clarity around project processes and funding streams, such as how schools are selected to be Baltimore Library Project schools and to clarify processes when libraries are funded in different ways (e.g., a typical Baltimore Library Project school or a Library Project library that is part of a 21st Century renovation or the School for the Blind).

## OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

A few additional recommendations were offered by one or two Study 2 interviewees. Two interviewees gave recommendations around exploring options for sustainability, such as diversifying the funding partners and exploring whether less costly options are available for the design elements.

One community partner recommended that more guidance and training should be provided to community partners who provide programming within the schools. Training could include information about chain of command in the schools; who are their school contacts; school policies and procedures, including behavioral programs; which restrooms partners can use; who to talk to about scheduling; expectations (e.g., Does the teacher stay with the class?); and how and which school personnel would support behavior management issues if they arose.

A final recommendation was to keep the libraries fresh and exciting. This includes both updated collections and creative programming. A related recommendation was to help schools come up with a strategy for best practices around maintaining and refreshing collections, such as what percentage of a library's collection would get refreshed and how best to keep collections current.

## STAFFING

Two recommendations emerged across both studies related to staffing. First, although there is broad agreement about the value of having a 1.0 librarian, based on Study 1 interviews, the Foundation might consider loosening the credentialing requirement and/or supporting the professional development of people already in the building.

*"It would be great to have our library clerk be able to, I don't know, I don't think she's full-time. It would be fantastic to have her full-time, to have more training for her. If there was a line from library clerk to librarian professional development, I think that would be fantastic or librarian to a teacher or whatever. Just professional development to build those roles out."*

– School Community Coordinator

A Study 2 interviewee also thought it would be important to create an educational pipeline to help ensure the availability of certified librarians. Additionally, Study 1 interviewees noted that the library assistant is an immensely helpful role, but that schools cannot afford to fund these positions without Foundation support. The Foundation may consider ways to provide ongoing support for this position.

*"[I would love] a full-time library aide that if for nothing else, their full-time job is to re-shelf inventory, check out, check in, and assist with ordering library materials. A full-time. Even somebody that's a three-quarters position like-- No, that's not enough. Full-time. A full-time library assistant that is trained. I love parent volunteers, but I want somebody laser-focused, somebody whose bookshelves look like ours. They love books and reading. They are so excited with introducing the world of Harry Potter to the children. That would be top of my wish list."*

– Principal

*"I loved it when the Weinberg Foundation paid for out of a grant, the library assistant, but they don't do that anymore...Maybe they do it for the schools in the initial years still, but I'm not sure about that, but that was really a nice perk to have. That was a great perk to have, but of course, we don't have it at [this school] anymore."*

– Principal



## ADDITIONAL AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING FOR COLLECTIONS

Schools and staff were grateful for the Weinberg Foundation providing ongoing funding for collections and donations of physical books to libraries. However, library staff in Study 1 wish that they had more money for collections – from City Schools, the Foundation, or both – or simply more predictable funding streams for new books.

*“We don’t have a clear idea how much budget we have because when we had the Summer Reads [program], we knew we had \$1,000 for the next school year to use, to replace something in the library or buy books or whatever. Nowadays, I don’t know. I have no idea because we don’t have Summer Reads anymore. I know from our school, the school gives us zero money for the library budget...I forgot who I was talking to but someone said, ‘Oh, you have these funds.’ I was like, ‘What fund? Oh, my principal won’t pay for that.’ They’re like, ‘No, these special funds, I forgot what the name of it was.’ I was just like, ‘We have funds? I didn’t even know we have this.’ I think being more transparent exactly about finances with the librarians and who’s in charge in the library so we know what we have and what we could use and what we can’t.” – Librarian*



## SUSTAINABILITY

Study 1 and Study 2 interviewees were asked about sustainability of the Library Project. Interviewees discussed supports and barriers to sustainability in a handful of ways, including:

- *Project funding in general*
- *Library maintenance*
- *High-level leadership commitment and the partnership model*
- *The role of librarians*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE

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### PROJECT FUNDING

Two Study 2 interviewees shared a broad vision of sustainability that recognized the depth of the project. One interviewee from the Weinberg Foundation stated, “Sustainability is more than the buildings.” Another commented:

*“To me, getting the construction done and having this beautiful space is great. Sustainability to me is being able to follow through on what this space means, what it’s supposed to do.”*

– Community Partner

The availability of funding for the initial construction as well as for ongoing operations and maintenance of the libraries is a critical factor that can support or hinder sustainability. A community partner identified that the key to sustainability is “never-ending funding.” One City Schools employee felt that the project could be ongoing as long as the schools have the Capital Improvement Project funds (CIP) to put toward the required matching funds for future work. The switch from QZAB funds to CIP funds was challenging, but the school district partners appreciated that the Weinberg Foundation was willing to work with them through the transition. An interviewee from the school district talked about the importance of clear planning for the number of libraries to be completed each year so that they could appropriately budget for the initial investment as well as the longer-term commitment to hiring librarians.

One Study 2 interviewee highlighted incoming state funding allotted through the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future legislation, which passed in 2021. This legislation could make it easier for the schools to fund librarians in all schools. Another shared that some of this funding requires the involvement of private partners, which could be helpful for this partnership.

## LIBRARY MAINTENANCE

Maintenance of the physical space may be a barrier to sustainability. A handful of Study 2 interviewees raised the challenge of maintaining the library spaces. In yearly walk-throughs of the libraries with the Weinberg Foundation and City Schools, it became clear that City Schools could not afford to maintain the finishes. One interviewee stated:

*“We are probably by industry-standard should be getting about \$350 million a year to maintain our buildings and do systemics, and we’re getting about \$80 million a year. That’s a huge difference... Our dollars are going to touch the tippy-tippy tip of the iceberg of the problems that are in our schools. We’re working on repairing HVAC systems, roofs, windows, major systems, and usually not replacing them because we can’t afford to usually repairing a way outdated way past this lifetime system. That’s the kind of resources that we have. We don’t do beautification.” – City Schools Employee*

Another City Schools employee noted that if the blinds in a Library Project library break, City Schools would only be able to afford to replace them with standard blinds.

From the perspective of one Study 2 interviewee, the libraries are relatively small, focused projects that are not as expensive to maintain as a \$9 million HVAC system with very complex maintenance requirements. However, other interviewees pointed out that the Library Project libraries were more expensive to maintain than other school libraries.

Additionally, based on Study 1 interviews, sometimes it isn’t clear to school administrators or library staff who they should ask to repair things (Weinberg or the district). Many school staff characterize the district’s maintenance processes as unresponsive and/or inadequate. This lack of maintenance infrastructure at the district level may hinder the sustainability of the physical space.

*“I would add to it the challenge with having Baltimore City public schools repair some stuff that we need in the library. For example, [in the past year], there is a chair that is broken and has been all this time. Or a corner of the desk has fallen off or a shelf has collapsed and we put in these tickets [with the district] and it just – they just don’t come. Then we have one last chair and so on. That’s a challenge.” – Librarian*

*“Everything has been maintained really well. I think it probably looks it did when at first was remodeled...If it wasn’t for Weinberg it would fall to the wayside because if Weinberg calls and says, “Hey, this needs to be done,” then the city will come in. Otherwise, they won’t come in. The city’s really bad about things. I don’t know, it’s just the way school systems work in that sense. If Weinberg was to be breathing down their neck they would do something.” – Librarian*

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*“The air conditioning is down right now. I have a repair ticket in [with the district] for that, and we have this incessant leak in the ceiling that is revisited at least three, four times a year. Other than that, it’s a solid design. The furniture’s in good shape. It’s just like things just happen because they’re in a building that’s almost a 100-years old. I can’t keep which aspects of library maintenance fall to Weinberg and which parts fall to the district straight. We keep getting different maintenance supervisors, so I can keep it straight.” – Principal*

*“I’m in a space where I don’t feel like-- I don’t know who does what and who I should contact for what. I know I get an email from [Weinberg] telling me about the upholstery that’s going to be cleaned. I know that is always regularly done. I don’t ever worry about that, but I do have spaces where our chairs have hit the wall over the years and I have a whole wall that needs to be, well, the only wall space that I have, that needs to be painted and maybe what do you call it? Adding the stuff on it because it’s like little neat things like that. I think that’s the major thing.” – Librarian*

One Study 2 interviewee from City Schools highlighted the district’s Chief of Operations and their use of a specific software tool to schedule and stay on top of maintenance issues as a support to sustainability. This tool allows a more systematic and timely approach to facilities improvement and repair.

Lastly, several Study 2 interviewees, including those at the Weinberg Foundation, wondered how long this project could be sustainable, considering that although the original commitment to schools was for up to six years, the Foundation has continued to support all Library Project schools. One called the Library Project a potential “forever project” because of the significant investment already made and knowing what would happen without ongoing funding of maintenance and operating support of the libraries, which currently includes upkeep of the design and furnishings, funding for programming partners, as well as updates for technology, such as the laptops, and the library collections. According to Study 2 interviewees, the Weinberg Foundation set up a maintenance fund to address these challenges. The maintenance fund has provided ongoing maintenance support as well as funds for updating technology. Although the support was planned for a limited duration, the Weinberg Foundation is still financially supporting the maintenance of all of the libraries. Interviewees noted that as the number of libraries increases, the ongoing maintenance, as well as technology replacement costs, will continue to increase.

## HIGH-LEVEL LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT AND THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL

A few Study 2 interviewees talked about the long-term leadership commitment of the Weinberg Foundation as critical to the development of the partnership model and the long-term nature of the partnership. At the same time, they wondered what would happen if the current leadership at the Foundation changed and if new leadership were not as committed to the project. While leadership at the Weinberg Foundation has remained stable, changes in the school system's leadership had previously impacted the project, as discussed above. Despite this, one partner noted that the project had “stayed the course” and attributed this to the commitment and trust that had developed between the partners.

Interviewees from different backgrounds highlighted the partnership model as a key factor in sustainability, again noting the successful, long-term nature of the partnership and the mission-alignment among the partners on improving the lives of children. One interviewee talked about the trust that builds over time as people work together. They know they can count on each other, especially after coming through difficult periods and that trust can even withstand changes in the people at the table. This partner commented:

*“The people in the room create the trust, but then the trust over time begins to take a little bit of life on its own... The two organizations have built up such a history together that that starts to become its own set of bonds.” – Community Partner*



## LIBRARIANS

Study 2 interviewees recognized the critical role that librarians play in the project. One interviewee talked about being in a library that hadn't had a librarian in five years:

*"It was in complete disarray; the books were everywhere. They had stuff that should have been pulled from shelves that hadn't been pulled...Furniture was broken...It just becomes a disaster area...My biggest fear is that one of these beautiful, very expensive Weinberg spaces is going to become one of those kind of abandoned-house type of libraries, and that's what I don't want to see. In order to sustain this and make this project something that we can look back on 50 years from now and say this was a success is for the district to figure out how to fund a librarian, not just in these schools, but in every school."* – City Schools Employee

A City Schools employee noted that maintaining the staffing of librarians required not only school-level commitment, but also district-level commitment to ensure continuity if principals changed. A community partner expressed concern about the ability to hire and keep certified librarians, given the challenges that teachers have faced over recent years. Among Study 1 interviewees, despite some disagreement about the importance of having a certified librarian, there was universal agreement that having the library staffed with a 1.0 position was invaluable. Similarly, interviewees from Study 1 and Study 2 noted benefits to having a library assistant, but this position appears to dissolve once support from the Weinberg Foundation phases out. Funding these positions can be difficult without ongoing Weinberg support.

*"Everything has been sustainable except-- again, I don't want to sound like a broken record -- in those initial years when I had to have a 1.0 librarian and my enrollment was low, that was the only thing that wasn't. It was sustainable though because I made it happen, but at the expense of other things in my school."* – Principal

*"The library, in general, being a library is never going to disappear unless some schools don't have a librarian, and so then it just really disappears. I guess it feels like if you always have someone, a me, I'm not saying me in general, but my position, your library will always be sustainable because they're always going to try to make it the best they can make it with what they have. You're never going to have a full sustainability except for the physical space, to be in a room and have that teacher do what they do. Without support, or without money in a budget, it's never going to be sustainable."* – Librarian

*"It's a simple fix. The recommendation is, make the librarian cost the exact same thing as a teacher position and so every time the budget comes on, I don't have to rant and rave that why do I have to pay an extra \$18,000 for the same position."* – Principal

## OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING SUSTAINABILITY

A few additional factors affecting sustainability mentioned by one or two Study 2 interviewees were identified, including the need for evaluation, ongoing school construction, and the use of durable materials. One interviewee from the Weinberg Foundation highlighted the importance of evaluation in sustainability and talked about the need to show value derived from the funds invested in the project. Learning what works, as well as what does not work, can lead to new ideas and new partnerships that can add to sustainability.

According to one City Schools employee, sustainability can also be affected by on-going school construction projects. As an example, this interviewee highlighted a school, which had received a Library Project library, that was subsequently selected for a full school renovation. This led to carefully removing and storing the existing Library Project furnishings and finishes, which will be replaced after the renovation. The interviewee noted that it was important having someone on the district-side who was watching over the libraries.

One interviewee highlighted the importance of using high-quality materials that will last, providing an example of a bench cushion covered in a Kevlar-like material, stating:

*“You can pour a soda on them. They’re hospital grade. You can just wipe it off. Blood comes out of them. Short of taking a knife and stabbing it, you’re not going to wreck that, and it’s reversible. If something weird happens, you can flip it over and it works the same.” – Weinberg Foundation staff*





## OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALING AND REPLICATION

Study 1 and Study 2 interviewees were asked about aspects of the Library Project that could be scaled to other parts of the district or replicated in other districts. They noted:

- *Features of the physical space*
- *Community partnerships*
- *Librarian instructional practices*
- *Opportunities to apply this model to other learning spaces*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE



When asked to consider aspects of their schools' libraries that might scale or replicate well to other schools, students and their parents noted aspects of the physical space and the broad selection of books available.

*"I would choose the quiet reading nook and probably the checkout desk and just like everything that's clean. There's also like an extra room for other books. I would take all the bookshelves that they don't have and put the bookshelves in their library. Wherever there's no bookshelves, there should be bookshelves." – 5<sup>th</sup> grade student*

*"Just the amount of books, have a book section for every grade or level which that's vast, right? If you're a K through eight school." – 8<sup>th</sup> grade student*

Other interviewees pointed to their community partnerships as aspects that might scale well or be replicated elsewhere. These included:

- *Cal Ripken STEM Center*
- *Scholastic Book Fair*
- *Enoch Pratt*
- *Operation Warm*
- *The Baltimore Ravens Bookmobile*
- *Maryland Food Bank*

Lastly, some suggested specific instruction practices that other teachers or library staff might consider utilizing. These included:

- *Incorporating classroom curricula into library instruction*
- *Teaching digital literacy, internet safety, typing skills, and coding basics*
- *Using library class for students to explore their own interests rather than strictly didactic time*
- *Running a chess club for students*

## FINDINGS BY OBJECTIVE



Partners from Study 2 felt that the Baltimore Library Project was scalable and replicable, with recognition of the need for consistent funding for construction, long-term maintenance and operation, and an ongoing long-term commitment to the project by leadership.

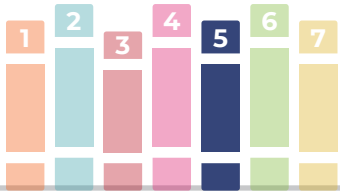
Opportunities for scaling identified by partners included bringing the project to all libraries in Baltimore City and expanding the Library Project beyond Baltimore City. Interviewees also felt that the partnership model could be brought into a variety of spaces, including STEM labs and maker spaces; computer labs and technology training spaces; art studios, dance studios, and theaters; special education facilities; outdoor classrooms; wellness rooms; pre-kindergarten and early learning spaces; supports for homeless students; mental health support and social emotional learning opportunities/spaces; as well as moving out of the educational space and into community recreation centers and assisted living facilities for older adults.

One partner felt that the Library Project model could be generalized to other spaces because of the project's strategic process for thinking through what is needed for a space to be effective, including specifying the critical factors for success, identifying what already exists, determining how to bring in what is needed, and planning for sustainability. An architecture/design partner reiterated that the Library Project has a unique focus on improving literacy and felt that it would be important to have a shared "clarity of purpose" if the project were to move into other spaces.

An interviewee from City Schools reported that the partnership with the Weinberg Foundation had already expanded into other areas, such as supporting a Baltimore Corps fellow<sup>38</sup>, who assists in coordinating partnership and volunteer activities. This partner reported that they are also exploring additional opportunities where the Weinberg Foundation could help support the school district and children in Baltimore City.

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<sup>38</sup> The Baltimore Corps program seeks to accelerate social innovation in Baltimore. The Fellows program places mission-driven professionals to work on social impact projects. <https://baltimorecorps.org/>



# RECOMMENDATIONS

**Overall, Study 1 and Study 2 interviewees and site visit participants characterized the Baltimore Library Project as a successful public-philanthropic partnership that centers student literacy.** Community and government partners, as well as school administrators and librarians regarded the Weinberg Foundation as a responsive and generous partner. The renovated libraries were widely regarded as visually appealing and highly functional for meeting student needs. Analyses of MSDE data indicate that there may be an association between having a Library Project library and student literacy, as well as a positive school climate.



**Based on the key findings presented above, the following future steps are respectfully recommended to ensure continued success of the Baltimore Library Project.**

- *Continue dialogue regarding explore long-term strategies*
- *Institutionalize library project processes*
- *Continue to elevate the critical role of librarians in library success*
- *Revisit the standard components of renovated libraries*

#1

## CONTINUE DIALOGUE REGARDING LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

Many involved in the Library Project – Weinberg Foundation and City Schools staff, as well as community and governmental partners – were interested in general status updates about the project as a whole. There was also a desire for big picture conversations about what is working well, what could be improved, and an honest conversation about the sustainability of the project. Topics of discussion may include exploring less expensive materials and/or supplies that would provide schools with attractive, well-functioning libraries, which school systems may be more able to sustain over time. Exploring these options could bolster project sustainability by lowering overall costs for future renovations and/or stretching the budget to renovate libraries in more schools. Other suggested topics of discussion included reincorporating community partnerships that faded as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and revisiting the role of technology in libraries.

#2

## INSTITUTIONALIZE LIBRARY PROJECT PROCESSES

Study 1 and Study 2 interviewees indicated opportunities to institutionalize processes related to the Library Project. This would include institutionalizing the project as a whole at the Foundation and at City Schools to ensure stability and continuity through personnel changes. Study 2 interviewees noted challenges with funding management and payment distribution processes that may be resolved by stronger institutionalization.

Part of the desired institutionalization included increased transparency. Interviewees from both studies expressed a desire for more transparency about the school selection criteria and process. Many people “behind the scenes” are aware of changes in funding sources (e.g., elimination of QZAB funds) that impact which schools are selected for renovation, but many in schools were unclear about why their school was selected. This sentiment was coupled with a concern about equity when it appeared that some better-resourced schools received renovated libraries. Lastly, library staff desire increased clarity about avenues for accessing funds to update collections or maintenance of the physical space. Librarians knew that funds were available in an abstract sense, but were unclear about when they should seek support from the Foundation or from City Schools.

#3

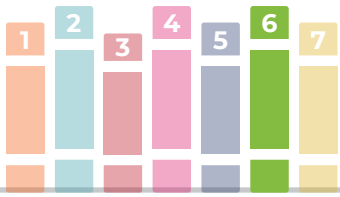
## CONTINUE TO ELEVATE THE CRITICAL ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN LIBRARY SUCCESS

By staffing renovated libraries with full-time, certified librarians, the Library Project acknowledges the critical role of librarians in ensuring that school libraries meet the needs of their students and larger school community. Although there was unanimous agreement that having a full-time librarian is important, there was some disagreement among Study 1 interviewees about the importance of that librarian being certified. This sentiment was associated with frustrations about a limited hiring pool of certified librarians. While recognizing the staffing support that schools receive from the Foundation – including library assistants and professional development funds – interviewees mentioned potential opportunities for Baltimore Library Project partners to cultivate an educational pipeline for certified librarians. This may include exploring the viability of raising awareness of the critical need for librarians, targeted professional development for library assistants, and/or City Schools, along with educational partners, creating incentives for classroom teachers to pursue library certification.

#4

## REVISIT THE STANDARD COMPONENTS OF RENOVATED LIBRARIES

There is value in having renovated libraries share a visual theme and branding; it is likely one of the reasons that many interviewees stated that “you know when you’re in a Weinberg library.” However, there was a desire from interviewees for more flexibility in how the space is designed. Some librarians noted that, although the décor and visual aspects of the space make the libraries exciting, there is limited space for displaying student work without covering up design elements. Additionally, there are opportunities to reconsider the standard approach to family and community engagement. For example, Parent Corners are a standard part of every renovated library; however, they are not widely used in the libraries included in this evaluation. It is important for future library renovations that a deliberative approach be taken to ensure that the components of the library match the needs of the school community.



# FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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Based on the findings from this evaluation, evaluators respectfully suggest that future evaluation studies might examine the following questions:

► **What are the essential factors required for school library projects to maximize understanding of its impact?**

Outcomes like student achievement and school climate are complex and multifaceted. As the Foundation and City Schools continue with the Library Project, future evaluation studies may seek to isolate the impact of specific factors (e.g., support from leadership) on these outcomes. It is possible that the criteria used to select schools for library renovation are themselves major contributors to the impact that the library makes and mask the impact of this investment.

► **What opportunities are there to reduce construction costs without sacrificing quality?**

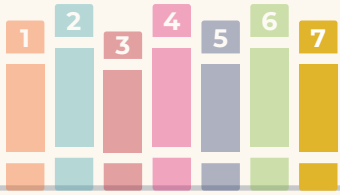
There may be opportunities to reduce overall cost per library or reallocate the use of funds for each library (e.g., shifting some of the budget for décor to provide added funding for collections maintenance). These shifts may allow the Foundation to maximize their overall investment by making the renovation of additional school libraries more fiscally feasible.

► **How might school selection processes be more transparent and equitable?**

The current school selection criteria are well-reasoned; each of the criteria listed in the Introduction are directly related to the anticipated success of the renovated library. However, it is possible that the schools with the fewest resources may not be able to meet each criterion. For example, schools with smaller enrollment (and, therefore, less funding) may not be eligible to participate in the Baltimore Library Project but arguably stand to gain the most from Foundation support.

► **How can the Baltimore Library Project be sustained given the varied needs facing public school districts?**

Schools are complex communities that attend to a wide range of student needs, educational and beyond. Given these varied needs, and limited funds, resources for libraries may not always be a priority for school districts. Through the Library Project, the Weinberg Foundation and City Schools are making direct investments in school libraries. As the project continues, it will be important to explore ways that support for school libraries can be sustained and to consider to what extent the Library Project is time-limited or will be funded by the Foundation in perpetuity.



# APPENDIX

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## APPENDIX A. SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

The table below details which schools participated in each aspect of the evaluation study. Unique identifiers are listed instead of school names to respect anonymity.

	Secondary quant data	Signed LOA	Admin interview	Library staff interview	Community partner interview	Parent-child interview	Site visit
<b>Library Project Schools</b>							
1001	X	X		X			X
1002	X						
1003		X					
1004	X	X	X	X		X (2)	X
1005	X	X	X	X			X
1006	X						
1007	X						
1008	X	X	X	X			
1009	X	X		X			X
1010	X						
1011	X						
1012	X	X	X	X		X	X
1013	X	X	X	X			X
<b>Reference Schools</b>							
2001		X	X				
2002	X	X					
2003		X					
2004		X		X			X
2005	X						
2006	X						
2007		X	X				X
2008	X						
2009	X						
2010		X					
2011		X	X	X			
2012	X	X					
2013	X						
2014	X						
2015	X						

Two Library Project schools are not included across data sources (did not have available secondary data and did not participate in any primary data collection): James McHenry Elementary/Middle School and Westport Academy.

## APPENDIX B. PARENT-CHILD INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Baltimore Library Project Interview Guide for Study 1: Implementation of Best Practices

*The following document is a semi-scripted interview guide for the Baltimore Library Project. This interview guide will be used as the basis for Study 1 interviews with school administrators, library staff, parents, and community partners.*

#### Interview Script

##### WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

##### Welcome, introductions, and logistical information

Welcome and thank you for participating in today's interview.

My name is \_\_\_\_ and I will be leading today's discussion about your school's library. The purpose of these interviews is to develop a better understanding of the library, including the physical space itself, the books and technology it houses, staffing, and programming. I work at Sharp Insight, LLC, an evaluation firm in Maryland. We were hired through a partnership between City Schools and the Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation.

If we happen to get disconnected, we can each re-try to join by Zoom. After 3 - 5 minutes, if that does not work, could I try to call you back by phone?

- *If YES: What is the best number for me to reach you, only if needed today? \_\_\_\_*
- *If NO: That's no problem! If we cannot reconnect by Zoom today, we will reach out to schedule another time soon to finish the discussion.*

##### Informed Consent

Before we dive into the discussion, I want to let you know that we have a signed copy of your Interview Consent Form on file. I'd like to go over some of the key information from the consent form.

**Timing**

This interview should run approximately 60 minutes, but you can take as much or as little time as you need.

**Voluntary / optional interview**

This is a completely voluntary discussion! During the interview, I will ask you a number of questions. If you do not understand a question, I can always reword it. If you are unfamiliar with an area or prefer not to answer, just let me know and we will move on. Of course, we can also end the interview early if you want to just stop.

**Confidentiality and protection of information**

Please be aware that the answers you provide will be combined with feedback from other interviewees for theming and reporting. We will report all findings in aggregate, which means we will say things like “Some interviewees reported...” or “Most interviewees agreed.” Sometimes we use quotations in our reports. These would be reported anonymously.

I will be recording our conversation so that we can accurately report the important information that you will be sharing. The recording will not be shared with anyone outside of Sharp Insight and will be deleted once the final report is created.

**Incentive Payout**

As a reminder, you are entitled to a \$45 electronic gift card (parent) and a \$20 electronic gift card (child). Both cards will be emailed to the email address used to complete the consent paperwork.

**What questions do you have about any of the consent information?**

*(Facilitator will answer questions if/as they arise)*

**Would you like to continue with today's interview?**

- *If YES: Sounds good! I'll start the recording now. (Facilitator continues with the interview items.)*
- *If NO: Thank you for letting me know and for giving of your time. The only notes we will keep from today's conversation is a copy of the original consent form along with an acknowledgement of a verbal decline. If you were eligible for an incentive, that will still be sent your way. If you have any further questions, you can feel free to contact me. (Facilitator concludes the interview.)*

## BACKGROUND

1. To get us started, could you please introduce yourself with your name, your school, and what grade you're in (student)?

## STRENGTHS

2. We're now going to dive in a bit deeper, starting with the "best of" your school library. What are your library's STRENGTHS? What about your library works really well?

### Extensions:

- *Design*
- *Collections*
- *Systems and technology*
- *Virtual access/programming*
- *In-person programming*
- *Staffing*
- *Something else?*

3. Who in your school is your library's champion? How do they support the library?

*If no champion: Who would you like to be your library's champion?*

## IMPACT

4. Next, I'm curious what you think about the difference the library makes. How has the library made a difference?

### Extensions for students:

- *To how you feel about reading?*
- *To how you feel about coming to school?*
- *To something else?*

### Extensions for parents:

- *To how your child feels about reading?*
- *To how your child is doing academically?*
- *To how your child feels about coming to school?*
- *To something else?*

## CHALLENGES

- 5.** We're now going to shift to talking about things that may not be going as well related to your school library. Thinking about your school library, what is CHALLENGING or difficult?

Extensions:

- *Design*
- *Collections*
- *Systems and technology*
- *Virtual access/programming*
- *In-person programming*
- *Staffing*
- *Something else?*

## VIRTUAL LIBRARIES

- 6.** Technology and virtual access have come up already but I'd like to give some space to hear any other thoughts. What are your thoughts on the technology in the library based on your role as a [role]?
- 7.** Imagine that your school had an entirely virtual library 5 years from now. What would the library be like? How can the library be as effective as it is virtually as it is in-person?

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE

- 8.** Based on everything that's been shared today, what RECOMMENDATIONS do you have to improve your library?

Extensions:

- *Design*
- *Collections*
- *Systems and technology*
- *Virtual access/programming*
- *In-person programming*
- *Staffing*
- *Something else?*

9. If you were going to write a how-to guide for creating a successful school library, what 2-3 things would be most important for others to know?

#### THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES

10. FOR PARENTS: Let's end our time together by looking to the future. What parts of your library do you think other students/parents would want to see in other libraries in Baltimore. Why do you think those things would succeed in other schools?

#### CLOSING

That's all the questions I have for you. Before we finish, is there anything else you would like us to know your experience with your school's library [OR library renovation] that I didn't ask you about?

*Thank you for your time.*

## APPENDIX C. ADMINISTRATOR AND LIBRARY STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Baltimore Library Project Interview Guide for Study 1: Implementation of Best Practices

*The following document is a semi-scripted interview guide for the Baltimore Library Project. This interview guide will be used as the basis for Study 1 interviews with school administrators, library staff, parents, and community partners.*

#### Interview Script

##### WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

##### Welcome, introductions, and logistical information

Welcome and thank you for participating in today's interview.

My name is \_\_\_\_ and I will be leading today's discussion about your school's library. The purpose of these interviews is to develop a better understanding of the library, including the physical space itself, the books and technology it houses, staffing, and programming. I work at Sharp Insight, LLC, an evaluation firm in Maryland. We were hired through a partnership between City Schools and the Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation.

If we happen to get disconnected, we can each re-try to join by Zoom. After 3 - 5 minutes, if that does not work, could I try to call you back by phone?

- *If YES: What is the best number for me to reach you, only if needed today? \_\_\_\_*
- *If NO: That's no problem! If we cannot reconnect by Zoom today, we will reach out to schedule another time soon to finish the discussion.*

##### Informed Consent

Before we dive into the discussion, I want to let you know that we have a signed copy of your Interview Consent Form on file. I'd like to go over some of the key information from the consent form.

**Timing**

This interview should run approximately 60 minutes, but you can take as much or as little time as you need.

**Voluntary / optional interview**

This is a completely voluntary discussion! During the interview, I will ask you a number of questions. If you do not understand a question, I can always reword it. If you are unfamiliar with an area or prefer not to answer, just let me know and we will move on. Of course, we can also end the interview early if you want to just stop.

**Confidentiality and protection of information**

Please be aware that the answers you provide will be combined with feedback from other interviewees for theming and reporting. We will report all findings in aggregate, which means we will say things like “Some interviewees reported...” or “Most interviewees agreed.” Sometimes we use quotations in our reports. These would be reported anonymously.

I will be recording our conversation so that we can accurately report the important information that you will be sharing. The recording will not be shared with anyone outside of Sharp Insight and will be deleted once the final report is created.

**What questions do you have about any of the consent information?**

*(Facilitator will answer questions if/as they arise)*

**Would you like to continue with today’s interview?**

- *If YES: Sounds good! I’ll start the recording now. (Facilitator continues with the interview items.)*
- *If NO: Thank you for letting me know and for giving of your time. The only notes we will keep from today’s conversation is a copy of the original consent form along with an acknowledgement of a verbal decline. If you were eligible for an incentive, that will still be sent your way. If you have any further questions, you can feel free to contact me. (Facilitator concludes the interview.)*



## BACKGROUND

1. To get us started, could you please introduce yourself with your name, title, and how your work is related to your school's library?

Extensions:

- *How long have you been at the school?*

## STRENGTHS

2. We're now going to dive in a bit deeper, starting with the "best of" your school library. What are your library's STRENGTHS? What about your library works really well?

Extensions for students:

- *Design*
- *Collections*
- *Systems and technology*
- *Virtual access/programming*
- *In-person programming*
- *Staffing*
- *Something else?*

3. Who in your school is your library's champion? How do they support the library?

*If no champion: Who would you like to be your library's champion?*

## IMPACT

4. Next, I'm curious what you think about the difference the library makes. How has the library made a difference?

Extensions:

- *To your experience at the school generally and/or as a [role]?*
- *To the overall school climate?*
- *To students academically?*
- *To something else?*

**5.** What about the impact of your library's community partnerships? To be clear, we're talking about partnerships specifically through the library and not school-wide partnerships or programs.

**6.** FOR BLP SCHOOLS: What impact has your school library's renovation had?

Extensions:

- *How has the library renovation impacted your school's climate?*
- *How has the library renovation impacted your experience as a [role]?*
- *How has the library impacted the students at your school?*
- *How has the library impacted the teachers at your school?*
- *How has the library impacted the staff at your school?*

## CHALLENGES

**7.** We're now going to shift to talking about things that may not be going as well related to your school library. Thinking about your school library, what is CHALLENGING or difficult?

Extensions:

- *Design*
- *Collections*
- *Systems and technology*
- *Virtual access/programming*
- *In-person programming*
- *Staffing*
- *Something else?*

**8.** *How has your school adapted to address these challenges?*

## VIRTUAL LIBRARIES

**9.** Technology and virtual access have come up already but I'd like to give some space to hear any other thoughts. What are your thoughts on the technology in the library based on your role as a [role]?

**10.** Imagine that your school had an entirely virtual library 5 years from now. What would the library be like? How can the library be as effective as it is virtually as it is in-person?

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE

- 11.** Based on everything that's been shared today, what RECOMMENDATIONS do you have to improve your library?

Extensions:

- *Design*
- *Collections*
- *Systems and technology*
- *Virtual access/programming*
- *In-person programming*
- *Staffing*
- *Something else?*

- 12.** If you were going to write a how-to guide for creating a successful school library, what 2-3 things would be most important for others to know?

## THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES

- 13.** FOR ADMINISTRATORS/LIBRARY STAFF/PARTNERS: Let's end our time together by looking to the future. We'll start with sustainability.

Extensions:

- *What aspects of your library and/or library improvements have been sustainable?*
- *What aspects of your library and/or library improvements have been unsustainable?*
- *What school or district level factors support or promote sustainability?*
- *What school or district level factors hinder sustainability?*
- *Are there specific programs in your library that show promise for scaling to reach more students?*
- *What makes these programs scalable?*
- *Are there specific programs in your library that show promise for replicating in other school districts?*
- *What aspects of the program might translate well to other school districts?*

- 14.** FOR PARENTS: Let's end our time together by looking to the future. What parts of your library do you think other students/parents would want to see in other libraries in Baltimore. Why do you think those things would succeed in other schools?

## CLOSING

That's all the questions I have for you. Before we finish, is there anything else you would like us to know your experience with your school's library [OR library renovation] that I didn't ask you about?

*Thank you for your time.*



# APPENDIX D. SITE VISIT IMPLEMENTATION RUBRIC

School Name:		Date:	
School Representative(s) in Attendance:			
<b>SECTION 1: PHYSICAL SPACE</b>			
How do students typically use the library? <i>Probe: sustained silent reading, library class, computer lab, maker space</i>			
How do teachers/staff typically use the library?			
How well does your library function for collaborative learning?	[2] Very well	[1] Okay	[0] Not well
How well does your library function for independent learning?	[2] Very well	[1] Okay	[0] Not well
Does your library have sustained silent reading space(s)?	[2] Yes (designated)	[1] Yes (space that can function this way)	[0] No
How easy is it to adapt your library space to meet different student and teacher/staff needs	[2] The entire space is adjustable or modular	[1] There are some places that are adjustable or modular	[0] Space in the library is fixed

APPENDIX



How well does the overall space of the library function to meet the needs of students? <i>Probe for use during library class vs. individual student use</i>	[2] The space meets or exceeds all student needs	[1] There are some spaces that could use substantial improvement	[0] The space does not meet student needs
How inviting would you say your library looks?	[2] The space is well decorated, has bright colors, etc	[1] The space is inviting but could use some work or is a little dated	[0] The space isn't very inviting or is very dated
How would you describe the physical placement of the librarian/circulation desk in the space?	[2] Ideal placement for our space	[1] Good, but could be better	[0] Not functional for our space
If you could change anything about your physical space, what improvement(s) would you recommend? Why would you suggest those changes?			
Supporting evidence/rationale:			
<b>SECTION 2: PHYSICAL COLLECTIONS</b>			
How supportive to student learning and interests are your library's books?	[2] Very supportive	[1] Somewhat supportive	[0] Not at all supportive
How supportive to teacher/staff needs are your library's books?	[2] Very supportive	[1] Somewhat supportive	[0] Not at all supportive
To what extent does your library's physical collection span the topics that your students are interested in?	[2] Quite a bit	[1] Somewhat	[0] Not at all
To what extent does your library's physical collection include materials in languages other than English?	[2] Quite a bit	[1] Somewhat	[0] Not at all

APPENDIX



How often have library staff looked for a topic in the library and not found it?	[2] Rarely or never	[1] Sometimes	[0] Often
How would you describe the condition of the books in your library's collection?	[2] Great! Most books are new and/or in great condition	[1] Good. Some books should probably be repaired or replaced.	[0] Not so good. Most books should probably be repaired or replaced.
Supporting evidence/rationale:			
<b>SECTION 3: HOURS OF OPERATION &amp; ACCESSIBILITY</b>			
When can students access the school library in-person?	[2] Anytime the school is open, including before and after school	[1] During the school day, including lunch	[0] During the school day, not including lunch
When is the library staffed throughout the week/day?			
Supporting evidence/rationale:			
<b>SECTION 4: LIBRARY STAFFING</b>			
Does your library have a designated librarian?	[2] Yes (full-time)	[1] Yes (part-time)	[0] No
Is the school librarian credentialed?	[2] Yes	[1] Some training but no formal credential	[0] No or not sure
What are the librarian's main duties?			
Does the librarian have any duties beyond the school library? If so, please describe.			



How do you think having a full-time librarian benefits the school and the larger community?					
Does the library have support staff?	[2] Yes (adequate)	[1] Yes (fewer than desired)	[0] No		
What are the support staff's main duties?					
Does the support staff have any duties beyond the school library? If so, please describe.					
<b>SECTION 5: INDIVIDUAL TECHNOLOGY</b>					
Does the library have individual technology for student use?	[2] Yes (all students)	[1] Yes (some students)	[0] No		
<p>What forms of individual technology are available for student use? Where can students use this technology? (Check all that apply)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>On-campus use only</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop computers  <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop computers (including Chromebooks)  <input type="checkbox"/> Tablets  <input type="checkbox"/> E-readers  <input type="checkbox"/> Printers  <input type="checkbox"/> Other:  <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]                 </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>At-home use permitted</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop computers  <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop computers (including Chromebooks)  <input type="checkbox"/> Tablets  <input type="checkbox"/> E-readers  <input type="checkbox"/> Printers  <input type="checkbox"/> Other:  <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]                 </td> </tr> </table>				<p><b>On-campus use only</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop computers <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop computers (including Chromebooks) <input type="checkbox"/> Tablets <input type="checkbox"/> E-readers <input type="checkbox"/> Printers <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]	<p><b>At-home use permitted</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop computers <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop computers (including Chromebooks) <input type="checkbox"/> Tablets <input type="checkbox"/> E-readers <input type="checkbox"/> Printers <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]
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Is there wifi access in the library?	[2] Yes (reliable)	[1] Yes (spotty)	[0] No		
Who is allowed to use the wifi in the library?	[2] Everyone (including students)	[1] Teachers/staff only	[0] Library staff only		
Does the library have individual technology for <u>teacher/staff</u> use?	[2] Yes (all teachers/staff)	[1] Yes (some teachers/staff)	[0] No		





<p>What forms of individual technology are available for teacher/staff use? Where can teachers/staff use this technology? (Check all that apply)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>On-campus use only</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop computers  <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop computers (including Chromebooks)  <input type="checkbox"/> Tablets  <input type="checkbox"/> E-readers  <input type="checkbox"/> Printers  <input type="checkbox"/> Projectors/doc cams  <input type="checkbox"/> Other:  <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]                 </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>At-home use permitted</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop computers  <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop computers (including Chromebooks)  <input type="checkbox"/> Tablets  <input type="checkbox"/> E-readers  <input type="checkbox"/> Printers  <input type="checkbox"/> Projectors/doc cams  <input type="checkbox"/> Other:  <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]                 </td> </tr> </table>				<p><b>On-campus use only</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop computers <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop computers (including Chromebooks) <input type="checkbox"/> Tablets <input type="checkbox"/> E-readers <input type="checkbox"/> Printers <input type="checkbox"/> Projectors/doc cams <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]	<p><b>At-home use permitted</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop computers <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop computers (including Chromebooks) <input type="checkbox"/> Tablets <input type="checkbox"/> E-readers <input type="checkbox"/> Printers <input type="checkbox"/> Projectors/doc cams <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]
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<p>How much of the available technology in your library would you describe as "high quality"? (e.g. availability of appropriate software/programs, age of devices, not broken/unusable, etc.)</p>	<p>[2] All or most</p>	<p>[1] Some</p>	<p>[0] Few or none</p>		
<p>Supporting evidence/rationale:</p>					
<p><b>SECTION 6: DIGITAL MEDIA</b></p>					
<p>Does the library provide <u>student</u> access to digital media (e.g. videos, e-books, online lessons)?</p>	<p>[2] Yes (all students)</p>	<p>[1] Yes (some students)</p>	<p>[0] No</p>		
<p>How does the library provide <u>student</u> access to digital media? (Check all that apply)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> School-managed platform/portal  <input type="checkbox"/> District-managed platform/portal  <input type="checkbox"/> On-campus individual technology (e.g. library computers, computer lab, laptops for on-campus use)  <input type="checkbox"/> Designated media center                 </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> At-home individual technology – provided by the school  <input type="checkbox"/> At-home individual technology – personal devices  <input type="checkbox"/> Other:  <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]                 </td> </tr> </table>				<input type="checkbox"/> School-managed platform/portal <input type="checkbox"/> District-managed platform/portal <input type="checkbox"/> On-campus individual technology (e.g. library computers, computer lab, laptops for on-campus use) <input type="checkbox"/> Designated media center	<input type="checkbox"/> At-home individual technology – provided by the school <input type="checkbox"/> At-home individual technology – personal devices <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]
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<p>Does the library provide <u>teacher/staff</u> access to digital media (e.g. videos, ebooks, online lessons)?</p>	<p>[2] Yes (all teachers/staff)</p>	<p>[1] Yes (some teachers/staff)</p>	<p>[0] No</p>		

APPENDIX



<p>How does the library provide <u>teacher/staff</u> access to digital media? (Check all that apply)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> School-managed platform/portal</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> At-home individual technology – provided by the school</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> District-managed platform/portal</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> At-home individual technology – personal devices</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> On-campus individual technology (e.g. library computers, computer lab, laptops for on-campus use)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Designated media center</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]</td> </tr> </table>				<input type="checkbox"/> School-managed platform/portal	<input type="checkbox"/> At-home individual technology – provided by the school	<input type="checkbox"/> District-managed platform/portal	<input type="checkbox"/> At-home individual technology – personal devices	<input type="checkbox"/> On-campus individual technology (e.g. library computers, computer lab, laptops for on-campus use)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Designated media center	<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]
<input type="checkbox"/> School-managed platform/portal	<input type="checkbox"/> At-home individual technology – provided by the school										
<input type="checkbox"/> District-managed platform/portal	<input type="checkbox"/> At-home individual technology – personal devices										
<input type="checkbox"/> On-campus individual technology (e.g. library computers, computer lab, laptops for on-campus use)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:										
<input type="checkbox"/> Designated media center	<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above [0]										
<p>How much of the available digital media in your library would you describe as “high quality”? (e.g. availability of appropriate materials, accessibility, etc.)</p>	[2] All or most	[1] Some	[0] Few or none								
Supporting evidence/rationale:											
<b>SECTION 7: VIRTUAL/HYBRID MODEL</b>											
What, if any, adjustments did your library make to adapt to the virtual/hybrid format after the start of COVID?											
<p>How well do you think your library has been able to meet <u>student</u> needs in the virtual/hybrid format?</p>	[2] Very well! Student needs are met or exceeded.	[1] Somewhat well. We’ve been able to continue meeting most student needs.	[0] Not so well. We have had a hard time meeting student needs.								
<p>How well do you think your library has been able to meet <u>teacher/staff</u> needs in the virtual/hybrid format?</p>	[2] Very well! Teacher/staff needs are met or exceeded.	[1] Somewhat well. We’ve been able to continue meeting most teacher/staff needs.	[0] Not so well. We have had a hard time meeting teacher/staff needs.								
Supporting evidence/rationale:											



<b>SECTION 8: PARTNERSHIPS &amp; FAMILY ENGAGEMENT</b>			
<p>Please describe the community partnerships and programs that your library has.  <i>Only include library-specific partnerships and exclude school-wide partnerships.</i></p>			
How satisfied are you with these partnerships and programs?	[2] Very satisfied	[1] Somewhat satisfied	[0] Unsatisfied
How effective would you say your partnerships and program are at family engagement?	[2] Very effective	[1] Somewhat effective	[0] Ineffective
Does your library have a Parent Corner?	[2] Yes	[0] No	Not sure
When can families access the Parent Corner?	[2] Anytime the school is open, including before and after school	[1] During the school day, including lunch	[0] During the school day, not including lunch
How is the Parent Corner in your library most often utilized?			
How do you think having a Parent Corner benefits the school and the larger community?			
In the future, how might your library enhance family engagement?			
<b>SECTION 9: WRAP UP</b>			
What future plans, if any, do you have for making other changes to your library?			
What else would you like to share about your school library?			

## APPENDIX E. SECONDARY DATA VARIABLES AND DATA SOURCES

DOMAIN & DATA SOURCE	VARIABLE	
<p><b>Library characteristics</b></p> <p>2018-2019 MSDE School Library Data</p>	<p><i>*Variables also assessed in the site visit implementation rubric</i></p> <p>STAFFING*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified library staff?</li> <li>• Full- or part-time?</li> <li>• Role(s) of library staff</li> </ul> <p>COLLECTIONS AND EQUIPMENT*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of books</li> <li>• Number of video materials</li> <li>• Number of audio materials</li> <li>• Equipment count</li> <li>• Percent of science books 2008 or newer</li> </ul> <p>DIGITAL MEDIA*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eBooks and eAudiobooks</li> <li>• Online database titles</li> </ul> <p>LIBRARY VIRTUAL PRESENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual presence</li> <li>• Social media presence</li> <li>• Link to LMC website</li> </ul> <p>HOURS OF OPERATION &amp; ACCESSIBILITY*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of internet accessible devices per student</li> <li>• Flexibility of class scheduling</li> <li>• Extended hours</li> </ul>	<p>ENGAGEMENT IN # TEACHING ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan with teachers</li> <li>• Teach with teachers</li> <li>• Collaborative groups</li> <li>• Digital resources</li> <li>• Student-led inquiry</li> <li>• Learning for staff</li> </ul> <p>ENGAGEMENT IN # INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• Evaluate sources</li> <li>• Use technology</li> <li>• Variety of sources</li> <li>• Ethical use</li> <li>• Discover, innovate</li> <li>• Collaborative learning</li> <li>• Varying formats</li> </ul> <p>LIBRARY USAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of book checkouts per student</li> <li>• Student use reported over 51%</li> <li>• Staff use of resources reported over 51%</li> <li>• Staff use of space reported over 51%</li> </ul> <p>PHYSICAL SPACE*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space for creating and innovating</li> </ul>
<p><b>Student literacy performance</b></p> <p>2019 MSDE Report Cards</p>	<p>Percent Proficient English Language Arts</p> <p>Average Performance Level English Language Arts</p>	<p>Student Growth Percentile English Language Arts</p> <p>English learners making progress towards learning English</p>
<p><b>School climate</b></p> <p>2019 MSDE Report Cards</p>	<p>Students not chronically absent</p> <p>Student school climate ratings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School community</li> <li>• School environment</li> <li>• School relationships</li> <li>• School safety</li> </ul>	<p>Educator school climate ratings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School community</li> <li>• School environment</li> <li>• School relationships</li> <li>• School safety</li> </ul>

# APPENDIX F.

## PARTNER INTERVIEW GUIDE



### Baltimore Library Project

#### Interview Guide for Study 2: Financing and Partnership

*The following document is a semi-scripted interview guide for the Baltimore Library Project. This interview guide will be used as the basis for all Study 2 interviews. That said, grounded in the expertise of the individuals participating in the interviews, some discussions may focus more on the project's PARTNERSHIPS (often item "a"), while others may focus more on the project's FUNDING MODEL (often listed as item "b"). As the facilitator, please use discretion in selecting the appropriate items of focus for each conversation.*

### Interview Script

---

#### Welcome and Overview

##### Welcome, introductions, and logistical information

Welcome and thank you for participating in today's interview.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I will be leading today's discussion about the Baltimore Library Project. The purpose of these interviews is to develop a better understanding of the processes behind the project, including its partnerships and funding strategy. I am joined by \_\_\_\_\_ who will be taking notes to make sure we capture the important things you share today. We both work at Sharp Insight, LLC, an evaluation firm in Maryland. We were hired by the Baltimore Library Project, which is an initiative of the Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation.

If we happen to get disconnected, we can each re-try to join by Zoom. After 3 - 5 minutes, if that does not work, could I try to call you back by phone?

- **If YES:** What is the best number for me to reach you, only if needed today? \_\_\_\_\_
- **If NO:** That's no problem! If we cannot reconnect by Zoom today, we will reach out to schedule another time soon to finish the discussion.

##### Informed Consent

Before we dive into the discussion, I want to let you know that we have a signed copy of your Interview Consent Form on file. I'd like to go over some of the key information from the consent form.

##### Timing

This interview should run approximately 75 minutes, but you can take as much or as little time as you need.

##### Voluntary / optional interview

This is a completely voluntary discussion! During the interview, I will ask you a number of questions. If you do not understand a question, I can always reword it. If you are unfamiliar with an area or prefer not to answer, just let me know and we will move on. Of course, we can also end the interview early if you want to just stop.

#### *Confidentiality and protection of information*

Please be aware that the feedback you provide will be combined with feedback from other interviewees for theming and reporting. We will report all findings in aggregate, which means we will say things like "Some interviewees reported..." or "Most interviewees agreed." Sometimes we use quotations in our reports. These would be reported anonymously.

My colleague, [name], will be taking notes and audio recording the call during the interview so that we can accurately report the important information that you will be sharing. These notes will not be shared with anyone outside of Sharp Insight, LLC; the recordings will be deleted once the final report is created.

#### **What questions do you have about any of the consent information?**

*(Facilitator will answer questions if/as they arise)*

#### **Would you like to continue with today's interview?**

- **If YES:** OK – let's begin! *(Facilitator continues with the interview items.)*
- **If NO:** Thank you for letting me know and for giving of your time. The only notes we will keep from today's conversation is a copy of the original consent form along with an acknowledgement of a verbal decline. If you were eligible for an incentive, that will still be sent your way. If you have any further questions, you can feel free to contact me. *(Facilitator concludes the interview.)*

## Background

1. **To get us started, please briefly tell me about the work you do and your connection (if any) to the Baltimore Library Project.**

Extensions:

- How did you get involved?
- What interested you about the project, specifically?

## Unique Characteristics

1. **We'd like to know what aspects of the Library Project you think are unique and what aspects are similar to other school facility improvement projects.**

Extensions:

- Is there anything unique or ordinary about things like the Weinberg Foundation's involvement, expectations of and actual involvement of school personnel, the ways community partners are involved?

2. **How would you describe the Baltimore Library Project's:**

- a. **PARTNERSHIP, as compared to typical school initiatives (e.g., with individuals, organizations, schools, the district, outside entities)?** [If needed add] By the BLP partnership, I am referring to the public-philanthropic partnership between the Weinberg Foundation and Baltimore City Public School.

Extensions:

- Who is involved in the decision-making processes? Who handles communication?
  - What role does the Weinberg Foundation play?
  - How, if at all, do you currently work with Baltimore City itself? How, if at all, has this changed over time?
- What is the process for how schools were selected to participate in the Baltimore Library Project?
  - How does the application process work?
  - To what extent were teachers, parents, and students involved in the development of the proposals?

- b. **FUNDING model, as compared to typical school construction mechanisms?**

Extensions:

- How, if at all, does the funding flows differ for BLP libraries vs non-project libraries?
- How has this changed over the course of the project?
- How does this funding model impact operations?

- c. **Are there any other ways in which the Baltimore Library Project libraries are similar or different from non-project libraries?**

## Strengths and Challenges

### 3. What would you say are the Baltimore Library Project's greatest STRENGTHS and CHALLENGES related to its:

#### a. PARTNERSHIP?

Extensions:

- For example, what are key strengths or challenges in terms of the partnership:
  - Vision?
  - Leadership?
  - Communication?
  - Selection (individuals, organizations, schools)?
  - Something else?
- To what extent did these strengths or challenges change over time?

#### b. FUNDING model?

Extensions:

- For example, what are key strengths or challenges in terms of the use of a philanthropic public sector funding?
- To what extent did these strengths or challenges change over time?

## Impact of the Baltimore Library Project

Next, I would like to ask you about the impacts of the Baltimore Library Project.

### 4. What do you see as the biggest impacts of the Baltimore Library Project?

Extensions

- What are the project's impacts in terms of the:
  - Speed of construction?
  - Cost of construction?
  - Ability to use the same personnel during design and construction e.g., architects, engineers?
  - Quality/scale of the project? (staffing, technology, books, square footage)
  - Ability of the City school system's ability to borrow municipal and state bond funds to construct capital?
  - Ability of key partners to leverage partnership relationships for other projects or networking? Any other impact on partners?



## 5. What effect has COVID-19 had on the Library Project?

### Extensions

- How has COVID-19 affected the partnership's...
  - Ability to do the work (tasks and timelines for renovation, construction costs, delays)
  - Processes for doing the work (e.g., communications or meetings; approval mechanisms)?

## Recommendations for Improvement

Next, I'd like to ask you about your recommendations for the Baltimore Library Project.

## 6. In what ways, if any, could there be IMPROVEMENT in terms of the project's:

- a. **PARTNERSHIP** (e.g. decision-making, communication, other partners that could be included)
- b. **FUNDING MODEL or the process of...**

### Extension

- Are there other funding mechanisms that could be considered?

## 7. What are lessons learned that you would share about the project? What do you know now that you wish you knew at the start of the project?

### Extensions

- Looking back, were there any parts of the partnership relationship that took a while to solidify and become functional?
- Are there any parts of the funding process that you would recommend happen differently?

## The Future of the BLP

The next set of questions will ask you to think about the future of the Library Project.

**8. In an ideal world, what would sustainability look like for the Library Project in terms of the...**

**a. PARTNERSHIP?**

- What factors influence the sustainability of the partnership?
- How can the relationships developed during the project be fostered for the future?

**b. FUNDING Model?**

- What factors influence the sustainability of a funding strategy like this, e.g., available operating funding, district vs school level factors?
  - What about long-term operational and maintenance funding?
  - How are personnel budgeted for?
  - Are there considerations related to addressing the need for modernization and budgeting for new technology?

**9. Is there a place for this partnership beyond libraries?** Could a partnership like this be used to build other types of learning environments within the schools e.g., reading labs, stem labs, CTE centers (career technology education), computer labs?

**10. If you were going to write a how-to guide for others to embark on a Library Project of their own, what do you see as the critical steps that occurred to make this happen?**

## Closing

That's all the questions I have for you. Before we finish, is there anything else you would like us to know your experience with the funding structure or the partnership aspect of the Library Project that I didn't ask you about?

*Thank you for your time.*



