



Schools, Community & Development

Erasing the Boundaries

By Tony Proscio



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Cover photography, from left: Siblings Mary and Alvin Day of West Baltimore's Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood (photo: Nathan Mandell); Darcy Thornes and her son Jacob of Portland, Ore., (photo: Nathan Mandell) and Tanisha Oliver of the Mechanicsville Community Learning Collaborative of Atlanta (photo: Mike Elliott). Center: Tayshea Tanner and Chante Willis, students in the mentoring program sponsored by the Enterprise Women's Network of Baltimore (photo: Mike Elliott).

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About the Author

A former associate editor of the *Miami Herald*, Tony Proscio is a consultant to foundations and civic organizations and a freelance writer on urban affairs. He lives in Brooklyn, N.Y.

About The Enterprise Foundation's Community Development Policy and Communications Center

The mission of The Enterprise Foundation is to see that all low-income people have the opportunity for fit and affordable housing and to move up and out of poverty into the mainstream of American life. In 2004, Enterprise established the Community Development Policy and Communications Center to explore the link between community development and related issues that pose critical implications for low-income families. Health, education and economic opportunity comprise the Center's principal areas of inquiry. Drawing from and furthering collaboration across a wide landscape of disciplines and expertise, the Center sponsors research, convenes symposia and publishes papers to share the knowledge and experience of The Enterprise Foundation and others committed to building stronger communities in which every individual can realize his or her fullest potential. Through its publications and activities, the Center bridges new alliances and encourages coordinated approaches. It provides a neutral national platform for examining the needs and challenges facing low-income communities and ultimately seeks to identify solutions and spur practices and policies that support and implement them.

Foreword

Schools, Community and Development: Erasing the Boundaries describes the remarkable results of efforts in four neighborhoods in three cities to connect community-based revitalization initiatives with school reform programs in the same neighborhoods. In some of the most challenged communities in Baltimore, St. Louis and Atlanta, low-income children, schools and neighborhoods are making real progress as a result of these coordinated approaches.

The purpose of this paper is to describe some of the successful elements of these initiatives, discuss challenges that they still face and suggest some lessons learned that help funders, policymakers, practitioners and community residents think through the connections that exist — and that must be forged — between efforts to rebuild communities and revitalize their schools. There is much more to do and to learn in this area and, we believe, great promise in the endeavor. As a recent report from Abt Associates noted:

At this time, the concept of integrating school reform and neighborhood revitalization strategies is still at an early stage of development. We know that coordinated investment in neighborhoods and school can produce better outcomes in low-income neighborhoods than investment in either schools or neighborhoods alone.¹

The Abt report emphasizes that it is too early to quantify the incremental benefits of most coordinated neighborhood and school improvement programs. And while connecting comprehensive efforts to strengthen a single school, or a few schools, to a broad-based strategy to redevelop the surrounding neighborhoods is viable in some communities, resource constraints and political hurdles, among other factors, may militate against the approach in many areas. We believe this reality underscores the urgency of making more far-reaching, systemic changes across entire school systems and throughout metropolitan housing markets to expand educational opportunity, empower families and strengthen neighborhoods.

Nonetheless, we are optimistic about the power and potential of working school-by-school and block-by-block wherever sufficient resources and strong partnerships can be built and sustained. Clearly, low-income children, schools and communities can succeed even in the absence of “macro-level” reforms. And the “micro-level” benefits they realize can extend to the larger system. The success of the education reform program in west Baltimore, for example, has encouraged 19 other schools in the city to adopt some of its elements.

We hope that this report, made possible by the generous support of Washington Mutual, will move readers to act in whatever capacity they can to consider connections between community-based revitalization and school reform initiatives. Enterprise is committed to continuing its work in this area and to sharing its experience with others.

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Executive Summary

ASK NEARLY ANYONE to describe a desirable, livable neighborhood — at least anyone with children — and the odds are overwhelming that a good school, preferably a short distance from home, will be near the top of the list. It's surprising, therefore, that decades of extraordinary progress in neighborhood revitalization have come and gone — decades of profound transformation in neighborhood housing, commercial activity and the quality of public spaces — without much effect on neighborhood schools. Even where school improvements have been significant, they have mostly taken place without any real connection to other plans for the neighborhood and its development.

It's as if the vision of quality schools and that of quality neighborhoods have existed on parallel planes, compatible but unrelated. One result is that, after more than 20 years of progress on housing and economic revitalization, many developing neighborhoods now find that they are drawing renewed interest from very young households, retirees, childless couples and single people — but not families with school-age children. Not only is that a significant missed opportunity for these neighborhoods, but it imposes real costs on the city as a whole, in the form of both lost tax revenue and social diversity.

The gulf between neighborhood development and neighborhood schools is beginning to narrow, though the change has been slow in coming. One especially encouraging example of this change has been in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood of Central West Baltimore. Since 1991, when The Enterprise Foundation launched its Neighborhood Transformation initiative there, the agenda of local redevelopment has encompassed work in housing and economic development, social services, employment and — rarest of all — thoroughgoing reform of two of the area's elementary schools, in partnership with the Baltimore City Public School System and a coalition of local organizations.

At Kelson and Pinderhughes Elementary, nearly a decade of work has brought sweeping changes in everything from the buildings' physical condition and layout to the curriculum and teaching methods used in every classroom. Among other things, the Enterprise initiative has increased the use of a pedagogic system called Direct Instruction, whose effects on reading scores have been both swift and dramatic. A new curriculum called Core Knowledge, applied to social studies, science and the humanities, has broadened and deepened the content of students' education, expanded the instructional materials available to teachers and in many cases enriched the teachers' own mastery of their subjects. The combined effects of these changes include raising

Pinderhughes to the city's second-highest-scoring school on the reading portion of the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, and leading both schools to continuous improvement in test scores over several years.

To help link these reforms more directly to the community and its revitalization, the schools have also participated in a nationwide parent-outreach program called Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, or HIPPY. By dispatching a team of specially trained residents to help parents prepare their children for school, HIPPY raises the odds that children will arrive at Kelson and Pinderhughes ready to learn, in good health and with age-appropriate skills. In-school clinics also help cement the connection between school and family by providing health, counseling and dental services that are scarce in the neighborhood but that contribute markedly to students' ability to learn.

These effects weren't achieved without resistance or setbacks, of course. As the Sandtown reforms unfolded, some elements of both the school system and the community viewed the plan with distrust, disagreed with some elements of it or otherwise withheld their support. Some teachers found instructional reforms uncomfortable or hard to adopt, and not all parents responded quickly to the opportunity for greater involvement in their children's education. It took several years for a cadre of local reformers — including two outstanding principals who served as persistent advocates of the new vision — to build a working coalition of teachers, parents and community leaders to solidify the new model. But in time, the results were credible enough to earn widening support throughout Sandtown-Winchester and the rest of the city.

The Baltimore initiative is among the older examples of collaboration between community development and schools, but is far from unique in its basic design. In St. Louis, Atlanta and Pittsburgh, among other places, developer Richard Baron has pioneered an approach to neighborhood revitalization that routinely involves schools, employment programs and other community organizations in a strategy that encompasses all of a community's strengths, not just its built environment. In these cases, and in Enterprise's newer education efforts in Atlanta, experience consistently suggests that neighborhoods benefit most, and schools improve faster, when school, community, business and residential development proceed together.

Several of these examples are described in more detail in this paper. In most cases, evidence of their effectiveness is still unfolding, and it is too soon to cite any of them as proof positive that school-community alliances can succeed everywhere, or even in most neighborhoods. They do, however, demonstrate opportunities for greater collaboration between agents of community development and school reform — opportunities that have been neglected for too long. The various models and approaches surely offer at least some answers to intertwined problems that have vexed low-income and inner-city communities for decades: high rates of transiency, social and political disfranchisement, low employment skills, and a sense of futility that breeds cynicism, anger and isolation.

The point of addressing housing and schools jointly is to create an environment where opportunity, self-determination and a high quality of life are achievable goals for every resident, including the youngest. When housing is attractive and schools are succeeding, as Richard Baron puts it, “Families can stay put, in a place they want to live; their lives are better, and a big part of that is that their children can stay in school, build relationships in the community, and learn.”

Part I: An Unnatural Separation

SOME TIME AGO, in one of America’s more famously distressed Northeastern cities, a handful of local housing and redevelopment reformers conceived a plan for an expanded neighborhood school. The idea was that the school should, as one of its organizers explained, “serve as a center, a kind of magnet, for other work — in redevelopment, human services, employment — going on in the same community.” Urged on by an activist board of education, a supportive mayor and an enterprising principal, a local nonprofit organization was eventually created to team up with school officials and create the kind of omnibus community center the original reformers had in mind. The partnership eventually encompassed education and housing, youth development, family and children’s services, primary health care, employment, planning and other basic community organizing functions for the neighborhood, with activities running at practically all hours.

The community development movement was born partly in the shadow of a New Haven, Conn., neighborhood school.

The year was 1961; the place was the Winchester Community School in the Newhallville-Dixwell neighborhood of New Haven, Conn. John F. Kennedy was in his first year as president; Ronald Reagan, just past his 50th birthday, was still a registered Democrat. A federal department called Housing and Urban Development would not exist for another four years, a U.S. Department of Education for nearly two more decades. Developer (and later community development visionary) James Rouse was a young businessman in his 40s; his creation of The

Enterprise Foundation still lay 21 years in the future.

No organization calling itself a “community development corporation,” or CDC, had yet been invented. Yet the community organization that grew up around the Winchester School, named Community Progress Inc., is now considered a prototype of the modern CDC. A case could readily be made — and a few community development pioneers have in fact made it — that the community development movement was born partly in the shadow of the neighborhood school, beginning with New Haven, Flint, Mich., and a handful of cities at the dawn of the “community schools” movement of the 1960s.

Forty years later, community development has thrived in cities and rural areas across the United States. Tax, investment, regulatory and social policies at every level of government support nonprofit revitalization projects and organizations. Universities and policy institutes have whole programs dedicated to studying and training people for this work. Yet the umbilical connection between community development and schools — among the first and most promising features of the movement at the time of its conception — has been all but severed. How did so fundamental and so potent an alliance come so completely apart?

Building and Learning Go Separate Ways

It would seem almost self-evident that the connection between the two fields of schools and community development is natural, profound and far-reaching. Few factors define “quality of life” for most families as much as the opportunities a place offers for nurturing and protecting their children. School quality therefore directly influences residents’ choice of where to live — an unsurprising fact increasingly confirmed in economics research. Seen that

way, the experiments in New Haven and elsewhere in the 1960s seem less like daring leaps of public-policy engineering and more like simple acknowledgements of a stark and obvious reality.

In a 1966 speech on cities, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy included no rallying cry for public schools — either as engines of community well-being or even as targets of physical redevelopment.

All the same, the seminal alliance of the Winchester Community School and Community Progress was relatively short-lived. The physical redevelopment agenda never really flourished in the partnership, even though the whole enterprise was conceived as an antidote to the physically and socially destructive effects of urban renewal. Various programs and projects from that alliance did last a decade or more. And in a few other places, school-community alliances of one kind or another have mirrored aspects of the New Haven vision with lasting success. But in Newhallville-Dixwell, as in most other early experiments with community schools, the fusion of school and neighborhood development didn't hold for long. In New Haven, both the school and the community were soon embroiled in the combative racial and ideological politics of the time, and the forces of redevelopment and education reform took off on separate paths, seemingly for good.²

The gulf between the two fields only widened with the mounting alarm over physical disintegration in the inner cities through the 1960s and '70s. The specter of dilapidated neighborhoods and derelict buildings drew more and more federal attention toward construction and renovation, housing assistance and financing, and urban infrastructure. Educators, meanwhile, were focusing ever more narrowly on what happened inside schools, classrooms and school systems, with little reference to

other work underway in the streets beyond. To achieve social equity, courts increasingly mandated busing of children away from their neighborhoods, further deepening the divorce between where children lived and where they learned. It was as if the future of neighborhoods had somehow become all but unrelated to the future of the children living in them.

The emerging idea of community development, which should have seemed a natural way of bridging this gap, rarely did so in practice. In a 1966 speech sometimes described as a founding manifesto of the community development movement, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy of New York gave this overwhelmingly physical description of the challenge facing American cities and their resident leaders:

The rebuilding should be consciously directed at the creation of communities: the *building of neighborhoods in which residents can take pride, neighborhoods in which they have a stake, neighborhoods in which physical surroundings help the residents to create the functioning community which must be our goal. We should ... engage in as much rehabilitation as possible, saving all of the old that is economical and sound. We should build in stores and workshops and play space.*³
[Emphasis added.]

The speech barely mentioned education and included no rallying cry for public schools, either as engines of community well-being or even as targets of physical redevelopment.

It is therefore no accident that federal programs for housing and redevelopment grew up in complete isolation from (and somewhat faster than) any federal action on schools. Section 8 and other housing subsidy programs, Urban Development Action Grants, the Community Development Block Grant and the Community Reinvestment Act all preceded the creation of a federal

Education Department, in some cases by many years. As time went on, the early achievements in physical revitalization, and a growing belief that even more rebuilding was possible, only served to concentrate attention further on construction and renovation of real estate as the first line of attack on urban distress.

By comparison, ideas about school reform — despite fervent attention from philanthropy, civic organizations and all levels of government — have so far resulted in far less of a consensus about what to do, much less optimism about doing more. Like siblings separated in infancy, the two fields of activity grew so far apart that, by the last quarter of the 20th century, they seemed barely to be speaking the same language. Apart from a few unique pockets of opportunity, the idea of linking neighborhood schools and neighborhood redevelopment was widely regarded as a topic mainly for theorists and visionaries — an appealing abstraction untethered to the real world.

Siblings Reunited

Yet at the turn of the new century, the number of theorists and visionaries who see a persuasive reality in this topic seems to be rising. On the theoretical front, more and more academic research is pointing to a direct material connection between schools and the value of surrounding neighborhoods. An especially influential article by UCLA economist Sandra E. Black in 1999 found that “parents are willing to pay 2.5 percent more [for a home] for a 5 percent increase in test scores.”⁴ Four years later, the Brookings Institution published one of several articles replicating Black’s research. The Brookings researchers not only found similar (actually, somewhat stronger) connections between school quality and neighborhood housing values, but they added an additional factor: Values also rose in proportion to the proximity of a neighborhood school that residents’ children can attend. “A six- to eight-mile difference in the distance to the local school,” the researchers found, “had a similar effect on housing values as ... moving from the highest to lowest scoring school in the district.”⁵ In short,

having a nearby neighborhood school at all is a positive influence on the housing market. Having a better school further increases the positive effect. Anyone who wants to improve a neighborhood is therefore missing a critical, fundamental element by neglecting the location and quality of the neighborhood school.

Just as with scholars, so with visionaries. Though hardly a vast movement, by the beginning of the 21st century an increasingly prominent handful of development leaders had started to look longingly at neighborhood schools as a neglected target of their revitalization plans. It’s significant, perhaps, that this insight has mainly been percolating among builders, not educators. Two of the most influential and longstanding of these school-community pioneers have been men securely rooted in the world of physical development: commercial and housing developers James W. Rouse and Richard D. Baron. In fact, in their pursuit of community/school renewal, both men’s development credentials have proven to be crucial. Unlike many visionaries, both Rouse, who died in 1996 at age 82, and Baron, CEO of the development company McCormack Baron Salazar, have had the means and the skill to turn their visions into projects. In different ways, and by different vehicles, both have created solid models of community revitalization linking schools, housing, community services and residential leadership in ways that echo — and in some respects go beyond — the most sweeping aspirations of New Haven’s brief experiment with community schools.

In 1989, seven years after launching The Enterprise Foundation, Jim Rouse called upon then-mayor of Baltimore Kurt Schmoke, asking him to designate an area of the city where Enterprise could join with other organizations and programs to work toward wholesale neighborhood transformation. The deteriorated neighborhood of Sandtown-Winchester became the designated area. The 72-block neighborhood lies about a mile and a half northwest of downtown Baltimore, a five-

minute drive from the Harborplace festival market that the Rouse Company had built 10 years earlier. In a series of conversations about Sandtown, Rouse and the mayor, in partnership with a group of churches in and around the neighborhood, agreed to try to tackle all of the neighborhood's broken systems at once — its moribund physical and economic development, inadequate health care and family supports, and substandard safety, employment and schools. In an initiative called Neighborhood Transformation, launched in 1991, The Enterprise Foundation joined forces with the city and community organizations in translating that vision into what proved an enormously complex but in many ways effective undertaking.

By the start of the 21st century, some development leaders had begun to see neighborhood schools as neglected targets of revitalization.

Six years after the launch of Neighborhood Transformation, the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) became an official partner in the Sandtown-Winchester effort, with the formation of what was then called New Compact Schools, an education-reform/community-building exercise focusing on three elementary schools: William Pinderhughes, George G. Kelson and Gilmore. Now in its ninth year, the education partnership has achieved some of the most far-reaching results in the broad spectrum of revitalization work in Sandtown-Winchester, given that its improvements in teaching and learning have come about through an unprecedented coordination with other concurrent work in community organizing and development.

For developer Richard Baron, some of the same calculations surfaced in his firm's pursuit of its normal business: planning and developing large mixed-use projects

in inner-city residential neighborhoods. McCormack Baron Salazar's distinctive approach — its competitive advantage, in a sense — is the creation of urban communities where people of many income levels deliberately choose to live, not where they end up solely for lack of affordable alternatives. As researchers have shown, one set of critical factors behind such preferences is the location, condition and quality of the schools.

“When we're invited in,” Baron says, referring to prospective development sites, “I spend as much time with the superintendent of schools and the chief of police as I do with the development agencies. What kind of business or civic organizations are involved in the community? What efforts are they trying to undertake? What's on the police department's radar? ... [To plan an effective neighborhood development], you have to be able to go in and bring everybody around who has any role to play in making this work.”

At roughly the same time that Jim Rouse and Mayor Kurt Schmoke were designing an all-encompassing neighborhood transformation in Sandtown-Winchester, Richard Baron was redeveloping three complexes of rundown housing on the near north side of St. Louis. In the process of surveying the residents and assessing the neighborhood's strengths and needs, Baron discovered a perverse but telling fact: Most of the neighborhood's children did not attend the neighborhood school. Every day, 400 neighborhood kids were bused to 60 other schools around St. Louis, while 350 children from elsewhere were bused in. Nearly all of the affected children, both outbound and inbound, were minorities. The arrangement was once meant to correct segregation, but now it merely inconvenienced hundreds of families while demolishing the links between neighborhood and school.

The school itself was a shambles. Apart from grime and physical deterioration, Baron recalls, “There wasn't a single computer in the school. There was no air conditioning and

poor ventilation. The library was locked up. It was a pretty grim place.” Recognizing how corrosive this arrangement would be to his new development — no matter how creatively his buildings were designed and built — Baron made a deal with the school board: We will raise the money (more than \$3 million, ultimately) to renovate Jefferson Elementary and develop it into a first-rate facility. In return, the school must become a neighborhood school again, with a new principal and a new curriculum and a thorough overhaul of teaching. The board agreed, and within a few years, some families in the redeveloping neighborhood were even beginning to withdraw their children from regional and magnet schools in other areas and enroll them instead at the nearby state-of-the-art neighborhood school.

The next sections will look more closely at these recent stories — of The Enterprise Foundation’s education initiative in Baltimore and McCormack Baron Salazar’s “Jefferson School Community” in St. Louis, among others — to see in more detail how school reform and community renewal work together and what they can accomplish. The point will not be to describe these efforts in all their complexity, but to zero in on the strengthening nucleus of school-community cooperation at the core of these broad efforts. A final section will then focus on lessons and principles that arise from these experiences.

Part II: The School-Community Alliance in Practice

BETWEEN 1980 AND 2000, Baltimore lost 17 percent of its population, an exodus of 136,000 people in 20 years, part of a cumulative loss of more than 300,000 since the 1950s. The corresponding drag on investment, property values and economic activity has been devastating to much of the city, but especially to poorer neighborhoods like Sandtown-Winchester. Here, the population loss has been aggravated first by racial tensions in the mid-20th century, and later by a concentration of crumbling public housing, failing schools, flagrant drug trafficking and other crime, and an aging housing stock of cramped three-story row houses with little or no yard space. In 1990, 29 percent of the homes in Sandtown were vacant. Barely one in 10 families in Sandtown owned the home they lived in — not surprising, given a median family income that year of \$11,600 in the neighborhood.

In the dozen years since Enterprise started work in Sandtown, many of these statistics have improved, some of them sharply. By 2000, the homeownership rate had more than doubled to 24 percent. Vacancies are down to 20 percent of the total stock. Best of all, what isn't vacant is now far more likely to be new or substantially renovated, and much of the new or rehabilitated homes are for sale at very low prices. An attractive new three-bedroom home for \$70,000 isn't uncommon, and others rent at very low monthly rates. Meanwhile, housing designs are sturdy and attractive — traditional urban styles with pillared porches and dormer windows — with neat landscaping and new trees along the curbstones. Even the oldest of these, dating to the very beginning of the initiative, remain in immaculate condition, with house after house obviously improved by meticulous planting, careful maintenance and fresh paint.

A new city program is designed to acquire the remaining vacancies more aggressively so that they can be renovated or demolished for new houses. Some of the worst nearby public housing, massive slab-style concrete monsters typical of the 1950s, has been demolished and replaced by attractive townhomes, low-rise apartments and detached houses. Block after block of these new homes command steadily rising sales prices and draw a small but steady influx of new residents from outside the neighborhood. (The same new three-bedroom home, on some blocks, now sells for \$120,000 or \$130,000 — still less than the cost to build, but much less of a subsidy than before.)

New Compact Schools emerged with a radical agenda to rethink the schools' core curriculum, top leadership, teaching methods — even their architecture.

Admittedly, the neighborhood's (and the city's) longstanding problems are still on obvious display. With more than 40 percent of the working-age population not even in the labor force, the streets and doorsteps remain crowded with unemployed adults (though some, according to police and residents, are fully employed in the illegal drug trade). The usual signs of neighborhood commercial life — supermarkets, dry cleaners, bakeries, coffee shops — are scarce or missing. Residential redevelopment, impressive as it is, remains a bit of a patchwork. A 10-minute walk may cross from acres of neatly manicured new houses to blocks of decrepit, abandoned row houses and empty lots, and back again to sparkling new or renovated property.

From almost any direction, that same 10-minute walk will take a visitor past at least one of the neighborhood's three elementary schools. By certain routes, 10 minutes could be enough to reach all three. Strangely, not one of these institutions fits the bleak image of a battered, neglected urban school. And there is a reason for that.

In 1994, during the third year of Jim Rouse's wide-ranging Neighborhood Transformation effort in Baltimore, The Enterprise Foundation and Baltimore's Board of Education organized these three schools into a "New Compact" with the city and the neighborhood. The aim of the compact, as an Enterprise officer later put it, was "to radically improve the quality of public education in Sandtown-Winchester by providing concentrated academic reforms and human-services support for children" in the three schools.

The New Compact Schools (later renamed the Enterprise Education Initiative) were meant not just to provide a better education — a difficult enough task, given the poor performance and physical condition of all three institutions — but to cement a relationship between community and school. The goal had as much to do with the redevelopment of the physical and economic environment as with educational reform. Given that the three schools were concentrated in the heart of the neighborhood — just blocks from one another, linked by wide swaths of housing renovation and construction in progress — the point was to make the schools more of an asset to the surrounding neighborhood, and make the neighborhood more integral in the way its children were taught.

In other words, unlike many other community-school partnerships, this was not just to be a matter of hosting a few community activities on school grounds or extending the school day for youth or family services. When Enterprise's education director in Baltimore, Tina Hike-Hubbard, described the intended effect as "radical," she

meant it literally. New Compact Schools would end up changing the schools down to their roots: their core curriculum, their top leadership, their teaching methods, even their architecture — virtually everything that constitutes the "school day."

Until this point, The Enterprise Foundation had been a community development intermediary with no deep expertise in education. Its early work on Neighborhood Transformation in Sandtown had concentrated heavily on fixing a devastated physical environment and a moribund economy. An elaborate regimen of community planning and organizing exercises, involving hundreds of residents on half a dozen major task forces, had channeled most of the initial energy toward housing, job training, security, a lack of health and child care centers — all fields in which Rouse and Enterprise had at least some experience, and in many cases deep expertise. Rouse's successor as Enterprise CEO, Bart Harvey, recalls that "in mobilizing our technical strengths, a lot of it was concentrated on the physical environment. And a lot of the money we could raise was earmarked for health care, housing, child care. So schools weren't even on the radar screen until farther along in the process." In the early rounds of planning and project development, the state of public education had seemed important but slightly imponderable. Even resident leaders had relegated schools to a later stage of work, perhaps for lack of any clear idea of what could be done about them.

But the commitment to an all-encompassing neighborhood transformation in Sandtown-Winchester — a commitment that had expressly included school reform from the beginning — meant that before long the neighborhood's ambitions and Enterprise's skill base would have to widen. The Sandtown organizers and managers would need technical expertise not only in education policy, but in the realities of carrying out difficult school reforms in a poor, cash-strapped urban school district.

Remaking the Schools

One aspect of the education challenge, the schools' structural and architectural problems, was squarely within Enterprise's expertise. The buildings were in poor shape and needed obvious, immediate repairs. Two of them had been designed according to a 1970s fad known as the "open classroom" — a configuration with few walls that depended on clusters of students moving around improvised learning spaces. In most schools, the open classroom proved to be an organizational and disciplinary nightmare that quickly faded from popularity. But its physical aftereffects lingered for decades in schools that were built or redesigned in that period. Enterprise knew that school reform in Sandtown-Winchester would involve not only repairing damage and decay and creating more modern facilities like libraries, music rooms, computer centers and a playground, but also creating a more practical array of defined classrooms, with walls and doors that would promote order and suit an improved curriculum. For that work, Enterprise turned to a longstanding partner, the Baltimore private development firm of Struever Bros. Eccles and Rouse. The company carried out years of physical renovations — most of it at steeply reduced cost and some at no cost at all — ranging from new walls and doors to flooring, ventilation, telecommunications wiring and recreation facilities.

But beyond fixing the building and its grounds, the deeper challenge would be choosing and implementing that new curriculum. Wading into the whirlpool of competing theories of pedagogy and negotiating changes with lifelong educators in the school system would take deep expertise both in teaching and educational management. For that, Enterprise turned to Sylvia Peters, an award-winning principal in Chicago who had created and led an organization of reformist school leaders in that city. Working with Muriel Berkeley of the Baltimore-based Abel Foundation, a prominent education philanthropy, Peters surveyed curriculum models from around the country, visiting centers of research and experimentation as far

away as Oregon. Peters and Berkeley were drawn particularly to two models that seemed to fit together: Direct Instruction, a highly scripted system for teaching elementary-level spelling, reading, language arts and math; and Core Knowledge, a basic curriculum in the arts and letters, humanities and sciences covering the fundamentals of what it means to be educated.

"The two systems are, in many ways, mirror opposites of each other," says Tina Hike-Hubbard, who succeeded Peters as the Enterprise education director in Baltimore. "Direct Instruction is very programmed, very methodical. Every lesson has a script that any teacher who works on that lesson follows. ... There's regular testing, and there are pacing guides that kids and teachers complete that will tell you immediately any given student's current level. You'll know at a glance that this student is at Reading Mastery 5, lesson 28. Any teacher who is trained in Direct Instruction could step in tomorrow with a group of students and not miss a beat.

In 20 years, Baltimore saw an exodus of 136,000 people, prompted by crumbling public housing, failing schools, flagrant crime and an aging housing stock.

"Core Knowledge, on the other hand, is in some ways just the opposite: It's an outline of what kids should know, rather than a method of teaching. Teachers and principals have a lot of room to develop specific lesson plans around those fundamentals. In our case, teachers and community members took that [Core Knowledge curriculum] and added some elements, especially some elements of African-American culture, and developed their own curriculum from it. So it balances out the very scripted approach [of Direct Instruction] and gives some leeway for teachers' creative involvement around basics that everyone understands have to be taught."

In the poor-performing elementary schools of Sandtown-Winchester, what appealed most to Peters and Berkeley about these methods was that they could quickly focus teachers' and administrators' attention on fundamentals that students, up to then, were not learning. The session-by-session formulas in Direct Instruction made it very clear not only what should be taught, in what sequence, to which children, but it made it instantly obvious when teachers weren't following the prescribed lessons or when children weren't learning. There was no need, for example, to wait for a year-end statewide test to find out whether students were keeping pace. In Direct Instruction, tests are given every 10 lessons, and a class doesn't progress to the next 10-lesson cycle unless all the students pass. Consultants from the New York State-based firm of J/P Associates also visited every teacher's classroom at least monthly to determine whether she or he was following the script, what problems were arising, and whether the teacher needed help, advice or support in carrying out the lessons.

In Core Knowledge, testing took place quarterly, with similar effect: With each round of tests, teachers knew promptly whether students were absorbing the prescribed subjects, and principals could see quickly whether the curriculum was being followed. In both cases, as Hike-Hubbard points out, "The result was to even out the effects of teachers with different levels of skill and ability. In Direct Instruction, a great teacher can make the program really fantastic but even a very poor teacher will at least have the script, and will know exactly what to cover each day. The kids will get common lessons among all their classrooms. And in Core Knowledge, it's similar: A weaker teacher may not even know some of the basic information in that curriculum. Left to themselves, they might never cover some of that material that is considered absolutely essential. But with the Core Knowledge curriculum to guide them, they have information to teach even if they're not well grounded in it, and then they're enriching their own knowledge along the way."

Against Long Odds

The most important goal of Enterprise's education initiative was to change the grim odds facing most of the children in Sandtown-Winchester schools. Even in a city school system that generally falls well short of state standards of satisfactory performance, the Sandtown-Winchester schools ranked in the lowest tier. For example, in 1996, before the Enterprise efforts began, nine out of every 10 fifth graders at Pinderhughes Elementary scored below satisfactory level on statewide standardized tests. To parents and prospective residents, that meant, in effect, that a student enrolling at one of these three elementary schools faced a near certainty of going through life with an inadequate education. What made a "radical" curriculum change crucial at these schools — along with building renovations, summer school, preschool parent training, after-school programs, student health programs and other crucial improvements — was not only the endangered future of every child in the community. The broader target was the ironclad barrier that these low-performing schools had erected against any future prospects for the neighborhood.

Given the dismal state of affairs at the time the project began, a new curriculum would have to be able to correct profound deficiencies quickly, starting with a strong dose of remediation. Direct Instruction, in particular, contains a remedial reading program that can bring a non-reading student up to grade-level literacy in as little as one year, or at most a year and a half. With books and exercises tailored for older students (to eliminate the stigma of working on texts obviously written for small children), Direct Instruction moves students briskly through an exacting series of catch-up lessons and corrective drills, all designed to get students back to their regular grade level as quickly as possible.

Because of the transiency of many families in poor communities like Sandtown-Winchester (one third of each year's class are new enrollees, and roughly as many will

leave their current school before year's end), the remedial effect needs to be not only quick, but flexible enough to work with many kinds and ages of students, including some with emotional problems or learning disabilities. Direct Instruction is specially designed for that challenge, and has scored impressive successes in schools with high transiency rates. Similarly, the clarity of the Core Knowledge content base offers a clear, consistent introduction to ideas and facts that all students will need if they are to have any chance of excelling later. Best of all, where there are strengths in the participating schools, both programs offer a way of making the most of them.

Admittedly, all these changes in the content of the school day took some getting used to. "In the beginning, teachers weren't crazy about" Direct Instruction, says Wanda Better-Davis, principal of Pinderhughes Elementary. The highly prescriptive program left little room for spontaneity and imagination. "Most of the time," Better-Davis explains, "when you come into education, you come in with your own motivations and aspirations, your own personality. And what sometimes happens with Direct Instruction, if you're not careful, is that teachers can lose that personality and that desire to personally engage children because lessons become so rote. . . . DI leaves room for teachers to add things to the script, to bring their own personality to it, but that takes preparation and getting used to the scripts ahead of time, so teachers can be themselves and not sound too mechanical. My message to them is: In delivering the script, don't lose your self and your soul."

It can take up to two years, Better-Davis believes, for a teacher to "become a believer" in Direct Instruction. In that time, two crucial things happen. First, teachers begin to see the effect on students: quick progress to grade level and beyond, greater confidence and willingness to learn, even among students who had previously seemed hard to teach. Second, the teacher grows more at ease with the scripts and mandates, the prescribed exercises and elaborate rules

about how to move and speak and interact with children. As these become more familiar and natural, they cease to be impositions and become tools that can amplify a teacher's personality and talents, rather than limiting them.

The regular monitoring by outside consultants also made many teachers uneasy. "They would get caught up in the process," says Better-Davis, "and they'd get so upset if they made little tiny mistakes because when the consultants came to observe the teachers would want to do it perfectly. Sometimes they'd be so tense about doing it right, they'd forget about doing it so the children understand it, and making it lively."

The cure for both the teachers' anxieties and other implementation problems came with the element that Better-Davis considers the best part of the curriculum reforms: training and professional development opportunities for teachers. "Our partnership with Enterprise has allowed us to have a lot of staff development in [Direct Instruction] reading and also in Core Knowledge. The staff development is what is really building the capacity of the teachers." By itself, the rigor of Direct Instruction and the thoroughness of Core Knowledge were effective at setting a basic minimum of what must be covered and promulgating a few essential teaching methods that have worked well. But without the ongoing staff development, Better-Davis says, "They would have done what was required, and students would have learned, but that by itself wouldn't have made the staff into much better teachers. For that, the professional development has been essential." Under two \$1 million grants from the Annenberg Foundation in 1995 and 1999, each participating school has received \$50,000 a year for staff development and related materials, as part of the wider investment in the facilities, curriculum and services to students and families.

As for spontaneity, teachers are gradually finding ways of fitting their personalities and relationships with students

into the application of Direct Instruction and even more so in other parts of the curriculum, including Core Knowledge. But even to the extent that the new programs' rigor has replaced some degree of teacher discretion, the benefits are beginning to win broad approval. "Spontaneity is great, and we welcome it," says Enterprise's Tina Hike-Hubbard. "But with or without spontaneity, we can guarantee our kids can read. Other programs can't do that. And seeing that result means a lot to teachers."

**'Spontaneity is great, and we welcome it.
But with or without spontaneity, we can
guarantee *our kids can read.*'**

Even with the continued annual upheaval of students arriving and leaving the schools by the hundreds, an independent evaluation in 2001 found that the percentage of students performing at a satisfactory level had increased on 11 of the state's 12 standard tests between 1997 and 2000. A few indicators had declined in those years, perhaps due to the still-unfolding implementation of the new curricula. But overall, evaluators at Metis Associates found that the percentage of students performing at a satisfactory level on the Grade 5 comprehensive state tests increased at a higher rate than at Baltimore City Public Schools as a whole.

Other standardized tests led to similar conclusions. Ninety-two percent of first-graders at Pinderhughes passed the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills in reading, putting the school second highest among all the city of Baltimore's public schools in performance on that test. In math, the success rate was lower (89 percent) but still impressive by citywide standards. Pinderhughes was recognized by the state for four continuous years of improvements in test scores in 2001 and Kelson was recognized for three straight years of growth. More generally, a walk down the corridors at Kelson and Pinderhughes tells a less quantitative but nonetheless striking story about

educational reform in Sandtown — one that is just as likely to resonate with parents as are test scores and official certifications. Throughout both schools, there is a pervasive atmosphere of order, discipline and calm. Moving from classroom to classroom, it is common to come upon whole classes reading a full level above their grade. Many classrooms include clusters of advanced students working on special projects beyond the normal curriculum. The consistency of teaching methods and student responses from classroom to classroom is striking.

As student improvement becomes more obvious, residents' opinion of the program, or at least of the participating schools, is rising apace. In 2001, parents told researchers from Metis that they had "noticed that their children were learning more since the adoption of" Direct Instruction. While not all parents were aware of The Enterprise Foundation, or even that these improvements were the result of a recent, deliberate initiative, they thought more highly of their schools and believed their children were benefiting.

In the years when the education initiative was being conceived and planned, school and neighborhood opinion wasn't always so positive. City and Enterprise officials, including Rouse himself, frequently met with wariness or worse from residents who had seen too many initiatives come and go without effect, and who were uneasy with the legions of mostly white professionals who they feared were trying to re-engineer their neighborhood. School employee unions, a politically potent force in Baltimore, were openly distrustful. Some community organizations of long standing — including a few that were stronger on political connections than concrete achievements — saw the emerging initiative as a direct threat to their status and influence.

Rouse and Enterprise were, even then, already accustomed to the slow work of building trust and reconciling competing local visions. As the planning and

implementation progressed, many of these barriers of skepticism and uneasiness broke down. “There was a series of small steps taken to show people that there was hope,” Bart Harvey points out. “Little by little, it became clearer that this effort was not just another series of promises.” In the early years of the Neighborhood Transformation effort, Enterprise had taken pains to clean up rubble-strewn lots and replace them with community gardens, help launch a local newspaper written and published by residents, and take action against owners of especially crime-infested or troublesome property. When the time came for confronting new political tensions over school reform, Enterprise had built up a credit balance of goodwill in the community, at City Hall and in Baltimore civic organizations that helped defuse what might otherwise have been sources of greater resistance.

By the time this is written, so popular have the curriculum improvements been at BCPSS that the city has extended Direct Instruction to 19 other schools and promoted Core Knowledge beyond Sandtown-Winchester as well. In 1998 the school system created a separate administrative district just for schools using Direct Instruction, and this district also promotes and supports Core Knowledge in other Baltimore schools.

Unfortunately, of the three public schools in Sandtown-Winchester, only two — Kelson and Pinderhughes — ended up participating fully in the education initiative. The third school, Gilmore Elementary, made a halting start at the reformed curricula in the initiative’s first two years, but hadn’t accomplished enough to stave off a threatened state takeover of the school that was already gaining momentum when Enterprise started work. The state placed the school under “state reconstitution” status in 2000, despite Gilmore’s having picked up its pace of improvement by then. (Gilmore, along with Pinderhughes, actually outperformed other Baltimore city schools on the state’s composite index in 1999-2000, but by then the state had already announced it was taking over.) From that point,

reform at Gilmore has proceeded along a separate track, under the direction of the for-profit Edison Schools corporation, and the Enterprise initiative has continued solely in Kelson and Pinderhughes.

It was inevitable, perhaps, that success at the elementary level would eventually raise a new, more difficult problem. What about middle school? Both Pinderhughes and Kelson traditionally fed into a middle school in a neighborhood adjoining Sandtown-Winchester, where problems of discipline, performance and educational quality were at least as bad as they had been in the two elementary schools before the Enterprise program began. When Enterprise’s Hike-Hubbard made a cursory survey of reading skills at the middle school in 2002, she found that the great majority of students reading at grade level were the ones who had come in from Kelson and Pinderhughes. What were the odds, she wondered, that these students would keep up their diligence and pace of learning in an atmosphere of disorder, where the prevailing standards of performance were so low?

In June 2003, Hike-Hubbard and the elementary principals persuaded the Baltimore school system to let them offer their own middle school classes at Kelson, which is by far the larger of the two elementary schools, with ample unused space. When the school board agreed, renovations began almost immediately, and within three months, 50 students became the first sixth-graders to remain at what is now called Kelson Elementary/Middle School. In 2004, a full class of 100 students from both elementary schools will make a complete sixth grade class, and seventh and eighth grades will be added, one at a time, over the next two years.

Beyond Curriculum: The School as an Organizing Force

Improving the schools, both inside and out, was a crucial part of the Enterprise transformation effort in Sandtown-Winchester, but it was only a part. Not only

would other elements of neighborhood revitalization need to proceed apace — including housing renovation, workforce development and community security — but the improvements in the school would need to be linked more directly with these projects and with residents of the community and their needs. A neighborhood organization called Community Building in Partnership, built from the ambitious community-planning and organizing process at the start of Enterprise’s Neighborhood Transformation effort, was gradually becoming the linchpin in many of the Sandtown housing, human service and economic development efforts. It would eventually need to become more engaged in the school reform work as well, but that was not a key part of the group’s initial work plan. Instead, the links between school and community development have emanated, at least for now, primarily from the school.

The need for such links was not merely to show that education reform was integral to community redevelopment. In fact, even if the project had been concerned only with schools and not the rest of the neighborhood, Enterprise and its partners in Baltimore would still have been convinced that a community organizing effort among parents would be essential for education reforms to work. Among other things, many students in Pinderhughes and Kelson came from desperately low-income families where social, medical and economic problems interfered with students’ ability to learn and with parents’ ability to participate in their children’s education. Episodic homelessness, poor nutrition, sudden interruptions in income, drug abuse, a lack of basic medical care — all exerted a harmful influence on the odds of success for even the most diligent student and attentive parent. Life in Sandtown-Winchester was a battle against a cloud of hostile forces that could not be waged in just the seven or eight hours of the school day.

But in fact, the point of organizing parents was twofold: to draw them into a more effective and rewarding partnership with the schools, and then to extend that

partnership into other aspects of community life. Therefore, three additional elements of Enterprise’s education initiative focused on forging closer bonds with parents and other neighborhood adults that went beyond the schools’ strictly defined mission. The first aimed at helping parents prepare their preschool children for the eventual demands of learning and schoolwork, equipping them to become, in effect, their children’s first teachers. For this mission, Enterprise chose a national model called Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, or HIPPY. The second element bridging community and schools centers on physical and mental health, through in-school clinics and counseling programs and through outreach to families for better health care and disease prevention. The third is a mentoring program in which adult women form one-on-one mentoring relationships with girls from the participating schools.

Sandtown’s 8-year-old HIPPY program relies on a team of “advocates” — experienced parents from the same community — who fan out through the neighborhood and establish relationships with (usually younger) parents with very young children. Advocates work with up to 20 families each, supplying them with books, educational toys and proven learning activities. HIPPY helps parents with everything from basic child rearing — communication, constructive discipline, stimulating and rewarding curiosity — to more advanced preschool teaching methods. For instance, advocates will train interested parents in administering the preschool version of Direct Instruction, based on the standard DI text, *Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons*. The goal of these relationships is not only a better-educated child, but also more confident, involved parents — ones who are not so alienated or intimidated by school that they keep a careful distance away from classrooms, parent associations and teacher conferences.

Many of the HIPPY advocates, in fact, were once recipients of these services themselves. Once their

children moved on to full-time elementary school, some parents got further training and became a resource for their neighbors, able to speak firsthand about how the program worked for them.

As the relationship between the HIPPY advocates and parents deepens, it frequently spreads well beyond matters of learning and child rearing. It's not uncommon for advocates to provide referrals for job training, debt management, addiction counseling or other social services to make parents aware of community events or local issues, and to follow up afterward to see whether needs are being addressed. "They even go beyond their job descriptions," says Enterprise education director Tina Hike-Hubbard, "accompanying people to meetings or appointments, providing transportation and devoting many more hours than they're paid for. We actually don't encourage that because we can't possibly pay for all that extra service and we don't want them to burn out. But the advocates come from the neighborhood and they see themselves in the families [they work with]."

Three elements of Enterprise's education initiative focused on forging closer bonds with parents and other neighborhood adults: a preschool prep program, dedicated "health suites" and a mentoring program.

A second outreach element for bridging schools and families is the creation of dedicated "health suites" in each participating school, where students can get physical exams, immunizations, flu shots and other preventive medicine, and blood testing. Three therapists are available for mental health counseling, both to deal with ordinary stresses of childhood in a poor community and also to be alert to signs of mental or emotional illness or abuse. Even if seen as a purely educational matter, the clinics have been a success, according to both Enterprise and school officials.

Among other things, attendance has risen to 94 percent in 2003, compared with 80 percent the year before the clinics opened, largely because children don't have to take days off of school and waste hours in emergency rooms for basic medical care. The schools also now have no children who haven't received state-mandated immunization shots — a problem that used to cause up to one-quarter of the children every year to be barred from school until they were immunized. Most of all, the clinics open a channel of communication between schools and parents that goes beyond academics, to questions of physical and mental well-being that lie at the heart of people's definition of "quality of life."

Finally, the mentoring program, created by a group of women philanthropists called the Enterprise Women's Network, is a newer effort, just concluding its third full year as this is written. So far, the program involves 37 girls a year, each of them paired with an adult female volunteer. Besides forming their individual relationships around hobbies, schoolwork, entertainment or civic activities, the students and mentors attend twice-monthly meetings as a group, go together on field trips around the city, and discuss issues girls face as they prepare for adolescence and adulthood, such as health and hygiene, safety, etiquette, self-esteem and managing money. As with the other two programs, the mentoring arrangements use school and learning as a point of departure from which to bring neighborhood adults into the school and extend the schools' services into the life of the community.

In past years, the schools' new computer laboratories were providing yet another means of linking education and community life, but that link has been temporarily curtailed for lack of funding. When computers and broadband connections were first installed at Pinderhughes and Kelson, they remained available for several hours after school. A computer instructor offered training for HIPPY advocates and the families they served, and for parents and children in after-school programs. Residents who didn't

need training could nonetheless use the computers for Internet access and personal projects. Employees of nonprofit groups in the neighborhood used the computer labs to supplement their organizations' equipment. A workforce development program sent trainees to the labs to learn computer skills. Reductions in school budgets have lately made it impossible to continue paying the computer coach, though private fundraising may be able to restore at least some of the after-school services in time for the 2004-2005 school year.

A further bridge between school and community — and in some ways the most far-reaching one — will open for business soon after this report is complete. In the summer of 2005, community resource centers will open at Pinderhughes and Kelson. Their most visible focus, as with the other school-community efforts, will be on “removing nonacademic barriers to educational success” — barriers like chronic poverty and unemployment, lack of child care, current or impending homelessness, or other problems of material scarcity, including food and clothing. The centers will be resources for teachers as well as residents, offering training for teachers and school staff in ways of boosting parental involvement, engaging hard-to-reach families and improving student attendance. For residents and parents, there will be adult literacy classes, financial and homeownership counseling and referrals for job training. The centers are, in essence, anchor institutions for community service, organizing and mobilization — “a kind of magnet,” as an organizer of the New Haven experiment put it two generations ago, for all the “redevelopment, human services and employment going on in the same community.”

Meanwhile, beyond this web of service, outreach and human-development programs, the Enterprise Neighborhood Transformation work continues all over Sandtown-Winchester. Together with the grassroots group Community Building in Partnership, Enterprise has seeded organizing, health, employment, safety, youth development

and housing programs far beyond the schools. Some 700 houses and apartments have been built or thoroughly renovated during a dozen years of Enterprise's Neighborhood Transformation project in Sandtown. The results have included a surge in homeownership, a steady decline in vacancy; a 22 percent increase in median family incomes (though they remain very low, at \$19,000 in 1999), a fall in unemployment, from 22 percent to 14.4 percent; and a rise in property values — placing Sandtown among just one-quarter of Baltimore inner-city neighborhoods to experience a rise in real estate values in the 1990s. Crime rates fell in all categories between 1997 and 2000.

Yet it's easy to overstate the achievement in Sandtown-Winchester. Baltimore's weak regional economy, its steep population losses, chronic fiscal problems and shifting leadership all have made the job of redevelopment in Sandtown much harder than in many other reviving neighborhoods. Blocks of old, narrow, poorly maintained row houses constitute an architectural anachronism that is expensive — and sometimes impossible — to adapt to present-day market tastes. And even the most successful elements of school and community transformation typically take several decades, not just one, to work. It simply is too soon to tally all the wins and losses in this experience, except to say that it is clearly bearing fruit and clearly deserves to continue.

One remarkable point about the Sandtown experience is that, unlike many other community development exercises, it does not stop at the schoolhouse door. On the contrary, it stretches its ambitions into all the elements of community life that residents consider indispensable. And of those, the quality and performance of neighborhood public schools ranks high. The incorporation of that priority into the broad redevelopment agenda in Sandtown is a genuinely radical step, one that now seems more encouraging, or at least less imponderable, than at any time since the dawn of the community development movement almost half a century ago.

Part III: The Developer as Educator

RICHARD BARON HAS BEEN PLANNING and developing affordable mixed-use communities for more than 30 years — “a New Urbanist before it was new,” as a longtime colleague put it, referring to latter-day doctrines of integrated, pedestrian-friendly urban planning. Baron’s developments are distinguished by, among other things, the variety of housing types they incorporate, the use of inviting open spaces, and the integration of elements beyond housing, especially shops, offices, parks and attractive streetscapes. “He is a developer who considers a community’s heart and not just its buildings,” wrote *Planning* magazine in early 2004.

Schools are ‘the center of virtually every residential real estate decision made in America.’

Although this style of development represents a kind of principled mission for Baron, his company is not a charity. He is quick to point out that development, like any business, depends on delivering a product that customers value. McCormack Baron Salazar specializes in a high-value product — desirable, durable communities — for a market that includes lower-income customers. The product’s appeal needs to overcome difficult market conditions and continue increasing in value long after the company has finished its work and moved on. Meeting that challenge burnishes the firm’s reputation and ensures a steady flow of business. Whether the customer is a single home buyer or a large public housing authority, Baron wants them to choose his company not just because he shares their philosophy, but because they get value for money. That value is inextricably bound up with the quality of the neighborhood school.

At the Fannie Mae Foundation’s 2003 James W. Rouse Lecture on the American City, Baron described schools as “the center of virtually every residential real estate decision made in America.” Yet he added that elected school boards, preoccupied almost exclusively with the goings-on inside school buildings and bureaucracies, “have absolutely no understanding of the impact of schools on real estate values, on property, on family decisions.” Helping school boards make those connections, he argues, has therefore become an indispensable skill for any real estate developer who sets out to create attractive, durable neighborhoods in the inner city.

Saving Jefferson Elementary

In the mid-1990s, working with the St. Louis public housing authority and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, Baron was contemplating a large redevelopment of rundown public housing in the Jefferson School neighborhood on the near north side of St. Louis. It was to be a classic McCormack Baron Salazar project: traditional urban architecture with mixed housing styles for mixed incomes, streets and open spaces that are inviting to pedestrians, plentiful landscaping, a child care center, playgrounds for kids. Unfortunately, in the midst lay Jefferson Elementary — “one of the most distressed schools in the entire city of St. Louis,” says Baron, “in terms of the physical condition, but also in terms of the lack of performance of the children.”

With little hope of building a strong, attractive community around a miserable school, Baron made this proposition to the St. Louis Board of Education: “I told them if they turned this into a neighborhood school ... I would raise the funds to renovate the school, put in fiber [optic cable for telecommunications], start some sort of a

[workforce and teacher] training program there, and begin to turn this thing into a model elementary school in the middle of the neighborhood.” All told, the cost of Baron’s proposition was more than \$3.5 million to be raised almost entirely by McCormack Baron Salazar, through a newly formed community organization and a nonprofit subsidiary the firm had created for just such projects. The school board accepted Baron’s deal and the redevelopment began in 1996.

‘The basic ingredients in better schools are the principal, good teachers and family involvement.’

It’s worth emphasizing that, whatever Baron’s personal convictions about the importance of education, the school project was integral to the company’s business plan. “If the school is at the center of what you’re trying to accomplish,” he says, “you’ve got to get it into the kind of physical condition, and up to the level of performance, that’s necessary for the community you’re trying to create. We were doing maybe \$50 or \$60 million of development in and around that school,” Baron explained later. “To go out and raise \$3 million from civic groups and foundations in St. Louis and bring that school up to a decent standard, that was well worth it.”

Nor, in the end, was the fundraising especially difficult. Civic organizations tend to feel powerless against the immovable bureaucracy of large school systems, but they are willing, even eager, to commit dollars to improve a school where leadership is accountable for results, has control over the expenditure of money and the skill to make a real difference. Part of Baron’s deal with the school board was that he and the community organization would have a say in the choice of a principal, and that principal would have control over expenditures at her school. For private donors, those assurances were golden. Federal and

state tax credits and deductions also made corporate donations to the project more attractive.

“The basic ingredients in better schools,” says Baron, “are the principal, good teachers and family involvement. Doesn’t matter whether it’s charter schools, parochial, private, public — it all comes down to those three. And it starts with the principal.” Although neither the developers nor the community organization had the right to choose a principal on their own, Baron’s \$3 million in accumulating commitments and the importance of the neighborhood redevelopment plan to the city gave him and his nonprofit allies considerable influence in the final choice.

With a new principal came a new curriculum and teaching methods. The school district’s agreement to end mass busing out of the neighborhood meant that, three years later, 80 percent of Jefferson students now walk to school. Physical upgrades like air conditioning and computer labs came with management improvements such as a full-time technician to maintain the telecommunications equipment and a \$300,000 professional development program for training teachers. At night, classrooms and computer equipment became available for adult training. In time, Baron and his nonprofit subsidiary began brokering hiring agreements with local employers who needed people with computer skills.

Creating a Virtuous Cycle

The next step in the effort surrounding Jefferson Elementary has been to ask, as Baron put it recently, “What would happen to children once they left the fifth grade?” The middle school into which Jefferson and other near-north-side elementary schools fed was at least as substandard as Jefferson had been. The construction of a new \$35 million public high school, named Vashon, provided an opportunity for Baron’s school reform initiative to be extended to the entire system of schools feeding into the new Vashon High: a total of six elementary schools, including Jefferson, and three middle schools. The

\$4 million effort (and counting) includes elements drawn straight from the Jefferson model: professional development for teachers, community involvement through a resident-led nonprofit group, recruitment of superior principals and teachers, after-school and summer programs, and building renovations throughout the schools.

“As we get better and better results at the elementary level,” says Baron, “we think there will be better results at the sixth grade and in middle school, but it will take some time before we know for sure whether that is happening. We’ve expected all along that this would be about a decade before we really turn these circumstances around.”

In many badly distressed communities, housing and the schools elicit essentially the same degree of rejection from residents, who gladly leave when they can.

As with the Enterprise experience in Baltimore, the crucial point about the Jefferson and Vashon efforts is that they are intimately connected with the housing and commercial development in the surrounding neighborhoods. The school improvements are meant both to reinforce that development and, at the same time, to draw strength from it. One example of how this works is in the reduction of transiency in both school and neighborhood. The creation of an attractive, well-built, mixed-income community — with a significant increase in homeownership along the way — has already dramatically increased the length of residence of the average household in the vicinity of Jefferson Elementary. That has led, in turn, to a reduction in transiency among the students in the school, a key cause of disruption in classes and gaps in children’s learning.

“There’s a lot of mobility among low-income families,” Baron observes. “Part of the benefit in stabilizing and

improving housing is so that families can stay in place and their children can stay in the same school, rather than having them move around in low-cost housing, from one place to the next, because the landlord is bad or the neighbors are dealing drugs or people are crammed together in units that are too small. When they stay put, in a place where they want to live, their lives are better, and a big part of that is that their children stay in school, build relationships in the community, and learn.”

Meanwhile, just as residential stability contributes to better learning, a better school likewise contributes to residential quality and therefore stability. One reason why parents “move around in low-cost housing, from one place to the next,” is that the local school provides them no rational reason to stay put. In many badly distressed communities, the housing and the schools elicit essentially the same degree of rejection from residents, who gladly leave when they can.

When neighborhood redevelopment efforts — whether by nonprofit or for-profit developers — leave schools out of the equation, neighborhoods are forced to market themselves primarily to people who aren’t concerned about schools. That strategy can work, and it has worked in many places. New residents may have access to private education or, more likely, are households without children. They may then be drawn to urban neighborhoods by other assets and amenities — historic architecture, low prices, shorter commutes, nearby recreation and entertainment — all of which can make older cities competitive as places to live.

Yet whatever the success of that approach in the short term, it carries a long-term cost. In a recent paper for The Enterprise Foundation, development consultant and Enterprise Foundation Trustee Paul C. Brophy explained the vicious cycle that results when families with children flee urban schools:

While development of housing for households that are unconcerned with the quality of schools can help populate cities, central cities cannot thrive without holding and attracting families who want good public schools for their children. Poor schools continue to lead to an exodus of middle-class families and serve as a deterrent to immigrants locating in central cities.... Poor schools weaken demand for life in central cities, and that loss of demand from middle-income parents with children further weakens school systems that need revenue and parental involvement at the school and school-system level.⁶

School-Community Alliances: A Growing Constellation

Baron's experience at Jefferson Elementary and Enterprise's work in Sandtown-Winchester are among the better-known examples of urban redevelopment projects with school reform at their core. But these are no longer isolated, extraordinary cases, or at least not as much so as they might have seemed a decade ago. Among other things, Baron himself has undertaken a handful of similar projects (Jefferson was not the first) in cities including Pittsburgh, Atlanta and other parts of St. Louis.

Enterprise, for its part, has begun replicating its Sandtown model in a low-income Atlanta neighborhood called Mechanicsville, with a \$12.5 million five-year grant from the Annenberg Foundation, a premier funder of urban school reform efforts. As in Baltimore, the target neighborhood in Atlanta was selected for its gnarl of social, economic, physical and educational problems. ("We were told to choose a really difficult neighborhood with a severely underperforming school," says Enterprise Vice President and Southeast Region Director Lawrence Anderson. "I must tell you, we were definitely successful at that.")

Mechanicsville, just south of downtown Atlanta, was different from Baltimore's Sandtown in several ways, but it

presented Enterprise with a familiar basic challenge: blocks of ramshackle buildings and decaying infrastructure, many of the homes narrow and unsuited to a modern market, acres of battered public housing, a neighborhood hemorrhaging population and capital with a school that was failing by nearly any measure. A blitz of urban renewal and highway construction in the 1950s — arranged, as in many cities, to inflict its greatest damage on African-American enclaves — had carved up the neighborhood and walled it off from surrounding pockets of strength. "It's the epitome of isolation," Anderson says, "even though you can almost walk downtown from here."

As in Sandtown, Enterprise started its Mechanicsville work in 2000 with rounds of resident planning committees, guided by a central steering committee and a dedicated urban planner. In this case, however, the neighborhood already had a reasonably workable redevelopment plan, which had been drawn up by an organization coordinating development for the 1996 Olympics, based on a series of community charettes. With that as a starting point, a newly formed group called the Mechanicsville Community Learning Collaborative set about updating the plan's physical and economic development provisions and creating programs in workforce development, safety, health, leadership, early childhood development and school reform.

Echoing the Enterprise experience in Baltimore, Anderson describes these initial organizing and planning efforts as an especially difficult phase of the reform process, "getting people together, working through all the power struggles and building trust and a common agenda." Entering the scene with the huge Annenberg grant and a reputation for ambitious neighborhood-transformation projects — two items that weren't yet on the Enterprise résumé when Jim Rouse started work in Sandtown — made Enterprise something of a threat to established interests and alliances in the neighborhood. "To some of them," one participant recalls, "we might have looked a little like Godzilla looked to the people of Tokyo."

Since that time, however, a crucial part of the Enterprise strategy has been to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars into projects of the existing community development corporation, a strong asset not available on the same scale in the early years of the Baltimore work. As the effort in Mechanicsville progresses, Enterprise has committed some \$42 million in various forms of financing and equity to the neighborhood, to be used in conformance with the residents' neighborhood redevelopment plan. By the end of the project's first three years, the size and scope of Enterprise's investment have come to seem less like an invading force and more like an indigenous asset responding to local concerns.

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As for the school reform portion of these plans, the process is still far too young to judge. Like other aspects of the redevelopment, it is guided by the Community Learning Collaborative, made up of a mix of residents, educators, community service providers and funders. Leadership and curriculum changes bear close resemblance to those in Sandtown: a strong new principal, introduction of Direct Instruction and steady improvement in teaching through professional development, training and gradual adjustments in the teaching ranks. In this case, though, physical change at Dunbar Elementary may be more dramatic than anything contemplated in Sandtown. Plans for neighborhood redevelopment in Mechanicsville call for replacing both Dunbar and its neighboring community center with new buildings. Though the full plan isn't funded yet, it would result in a greater connection between the two facilities and a better design for the park in which both buildings are located.

Thanks to the Annenberg grant, the money available for intervention at Dunbar is significantly greater, and simpler to administer, than the complex fundraising that underlay the Sandtown school-reform movement. Annenberg and Enterprise believe that the size and reliability of the Atlanta investment will make far-reaching changes in the school, its teaching and its management both easier and faster than was possible in Baltimore. If that is true, improvements in student learning and school performance may not take the 10 or more years of effort that have gone into Sandtown. But for now, that remains a hypothesis to be tested in the next few years of the Atlanta demonstration.

Other alliances between school reformers and community developers are turning up here and there, usually in more limited or tentative ways than in Baltimore, St. Louis and Atlanta. In several cases, community development organizations have begun to finance or build new facilities and organize charter schools. A national Coalition for Community Schools continues to promote many of the same principles that drove the pioneer community schools of the 1960s.

Just blocks from Enterprise's schools in Sandtown, a large faith-based community organization called New Song Ministries has created a new alternative public school organized on a 12-month calendar. Around the country, a few community groups have taken over the management of public or charter schools, though that is still rare. Many more have become active in neighborhood advisory bodies or school-system efforts to improve curricula, teaching and governance at failing schools. The results of all these various approaches have yet to be documented and analyzed on any scale.

In short, although the stories in this report offer grounds for further exploration, experimentation and even optimism, they are not yet a blueprint or set of tested methods ready for confident replication. Even so, taken as a group they suggest several lessons, or at least topics for

further reflection and discussion, that may be useful to policymakers in both education and urban development and to organizers of school-community alliances in other cities. Those reflections constitute the final section of this paper.

Lessons and Conclusions

IN THE DECADE-PLUS since Jim Rouse first envisioned a total Neighborhood Transformation in Sandtown-Winchester, the idea of orchestrating widespread simultaneous changes in inner-city neighborhoods has ceased to seem either farfetched or radical. The idea of “comprehensive community initiatives” has lately entered the orthodox mainstream of neighborhood development thinking, with multifaceted revitalization plans underway in cities all over the country. Still, for all their boldness, many of these “comprehensive” efforts touch on neighborhood public schools in only the most peripheral of ways. That may be because of a belief that school reform isn’t feasible in some public school systems, or it may simply reflect a conviction that other approaches to local education, such as magnet, charter or private schools, would yield quicker results. Sometimes, in even the most ambitious comprehensive development plan, the question of education simply never arises at all, a lingering effect, it seems, of the great divorce between school reform and community development in the last half of the 20th century.

The purpose of this report is to help narrow that gap, or at least to contribute to a more vigorous discussion about how to do so. To that end, we conclude with a dozen themes that emerge as lessons or hypotheses from the cases in this paper. The list is divided into three interlocking areas of work, rather like intersecting circles of a Venn diagram: the planning and organizing process, the physical and economic aspects of neighborhood redevelopment, and the reform effort within the school itself. These ideas are offered in the hope of further debate, and with the expectation that other experiences will help to clarify, correct or enlarge the conclusions drawn here.

Lessons in Planning and Organizing

1. Change is all but impossible without the support of the local school system, but it can start in a single neighborhood and may grow from there.

Too often, the national education debate tends to dwell almost exclusively on sweeping visions of system-wide reforms: overall changes in school governance, management, funding, labor agreements or theories of pedagogy. These are important issues, but usually beyond the reach of any given neighborhood, community group or developer, at least initially. By contrast, the stories in this report mirror the philosophy and experience of community development more than that of national educational reform. They involve a concentrated focus on a single place, a concentration that in turn marshals a degree of public determination, imagination and political influence that would be much harder to build and sustain if the focus were a whole city or region. Still, in every case reported here, the school board and the larger political superstructure were indispensable partners. Nothing would have been possible without their support and cooperation. But in these cases, the initial target of change was one or two schools, surrounded by other forms of concentrated redevelopment in the same location. In some ways, the most remarkable conclusion to be drawn from these stories is how much difference a community can make in its children’s education without simultaneously trying to reform public education as a whole. Yet once the change is instituted, it can, if powerful enough, be a light for further reform in the school system itself, just as Direct Instruction has been in the Baltimore system. Neighborhood school change might be thought of as applied research — a pilot

effort that may come to have much broader consequences.

2. The most important skill required for planning a community-based school reform effort is the art of the consensus-builder, entrepreneur and deal-maker — informed by solid, research-tested educational theories of change.

Developer Richard Baron put this point succinctly in a recent interview: “The catalytic agents [in community school reform] have to have entrepreneurial instincts and a nose for development. . . . They have to know how to do deals and bring stakeholders in from different disciplines and get them around a common vision.” The reason these agents represent such an important component, say many people interviewed for this report, is that educational theory (like community-building theory) can be a bottomless well of discussion and dissension. The disputes and conflicting visions will never all be resolved. Success depends on pushing past the theoretical skirmishes and getting things done — bringing essential actors together around concrete projects that will make a difference, even if no project reflects anyone’s ideal theory. It’s the movement toward visible change — what Enterprise CEO Bart Harvey calls “steps to show people that there is hope” — that builds common will and rallies outside support for doing more.

3. Some broad agreement about vision and values is essential, and that agreement takes time to achieve.

In hard-pressed neighborhoods that have been buffeted by many failed plans and unkept promises, it will take time to build goodwill, trust and credibility. Residents and educators alike will put up fierce resistance, quite properly, to any effort that they perceive as experimenting carelessly with their children. Consequently, all the stories in this report feature planning and consensus-building exercises aimed at achieving some common vision, breaking down barriers of resistance and distrust, forming coalitions of support and demonstrating bona fide expertise and motives in both development and education. “Out of that,” observes

Harvey, “will emerge authentic leaders, not just those who have held official positions over the years.” This likely emergence of new leaders and alliances suggests another related reason why advance organizing and planning are important.

4. Opposition from entrenched interests, both in redeveloping neighborhoods and in the schools, will be an early challenge in any community-school reform effort.

In most of the stories reported here, organizers had to confront both overt and veiled opposition from some elements of the old unreformed system. In some cases, certain principals, school officials, labor unions or teachers found change efforts disquieting and resisted them. In other cases, established community organizations — especially ones with few accomplishments — viewed the prospect of real change in the neighborhood and in the school as reflecting badly on them. (They were, in fact, sometimes right about this.) Dealing effectively with such opposition usually requires diplomacy, patience and sufficient time to air questions and grievances. In the end, however, these forces of opposition cannot be allowed to hold up the process indefinitely with serial objections. As Baron puts it, “The challenge, in the end, is implementation, not universal consensus. You will win over your opposition faster by achieving something worthwhile than by spending years on talking and arguing and planning.”

5. Negotiations among various interests are best if they establish a set of agreed principles and expectations early on.

Discovering important differences in philosophy or commitment after a reform effort is already underway can be a recipe for failure. It’s best to establish a set of common expectations for all participants before the process is far along and then, if these are not met, be prepared to abandon the effort.

6. Evaluation needs to start in the planning stage and should be a lasting feature of the whole school-community reform effort.

Evaluation is important to any public-private effort, but arguably it's even more crucial in the still-murky field of community-based school reform. The field is so poorly understood, and the examples of careful, sustained efforts are so few, that every instance deserves to be documented with careful research — showing the effects on both school performance and community development over a number of years. As with many kinds of evaluation, this research is best started early — at the planning stage when objectives are being set and strategies matched with goals. That is the best time to start gathering baseline or “before” data that can later be compared with “after” information on student achievement and community performance. Thinking about evaluation only several years later means that researchers will have to reconstruct old data retroactively, which can be expensive, methodologically difficult and sometimes even impossible.

Lessons in Housing and Economic Development

1. Neighborhoods, like schools, thrive on economic diversity and social interaction.

All of the neighborhood development efforts discussed here — whether by nonprofit or for-profit agents — aim for the creation of mixed communities where people of different income levels, household sizes and housing needs are intermingled. These mixes not only represent good urban planning, they are an important ingredient in good education as well. “We’ve got market-rate families living next door to public-housing families,” Richard Baron said in his 2003 Rouse lecture, speaking of his work on a redevelopment of public housing in Atlanta, “and they’re paying for the same apartment [in the same complex] ... And you know what? The kids are going to the same school.... The kids are playing ball together at the same Y

at night.... That kind of socialization process is why it is so critical to create these mixed-income environments, so children have an opportunity to see what’s possible and understand what it means to do well in school.” Likewise, when neighborhood children attend a neighborhood school, the likelihood of their parents’ interacting with one another and meeting with teachers, administrators and counselors increases significantly, a positive outcome for both children and adults.

2. Residential stability, including increased homeownership, contributes both to better neighborhoods and to better schools.

In Sandtown-Winchester’s two reformed elementary schools, Bart Harvey points out, “Every student who comes in is way below grade level. But there’s a big mobility factor in the neighborhood, so that means a lot of kids every year coming in, and the school has to bring those kids up to grade level before they can participate fully in school. Raising homeownership rates in the neighborhood cuts those rates of transiency down, which is good for the school and the kids, as well as for the neighborhood. Most of the children who have stayed in the school are now performing well above grade level. The continuity is crucial.” Virtually everyone involved in coordinating improvements in neighborhoods and schools points out that residential stability and school stability constitute a “virtuous cycle,” with each factor reinforcing the other: Parents tend to stay in neighborhoods with better schools, and schools perform better when children and families stick around.

3. Schools benefit from greater interaction with community organizations, including neighborhood development groups, social service and employment agencies, child care centers and health clinics — and the community groups benefit as well.

Bringing some of the community groups’ services into the school — as Enterprise has done with health clinics and

mentoring programs in Sandtown — is one way to accomplish this goal. Another way is to extend the work of the school outward into the community, as the HIPPY program does in Baltimore. Baron’s developments build in alliances between community organizations and schools from the beginning, a way of ensuring that they at least consult with one another and sometimes coordinate their services, over time.

4. There is virtually no aspect of community redevelopment that doesn’t benefit from a stronger, better school.

An earlier item already made the point that housing stability tends to improve when schools perform better. But so do practically all other aspects of community development: street safety, employment, recreation and community organizing. All are linked to the performance of schools in educating and protecting children, preparing them for future employment and further education, and occupying their time constructively while parents are at work.

Lessons for Reform Within Schools

1. Changing school practices requires leadership from a seasoned educator whom school officials, principals, teachers and other education reformers will respect and trust.

On one hand, the core leadership of a school-community effort — what Richard Baron called “the catalytic agents” — needs to be entrepreneurs with a talent for brokering complex projects. They may or may not have any particular educational expertise of their own. But the reform agents working within schools need to be people well versed in the complexities of urban school systems and how to influence them, people with both professional credentials and political savvy. All of the promising experiences in this report depended on winning a degree of autonomy for local schools, where private funders, outside experts and neighborhood leaders then worked with principals to promote far-reaching changes in curricula,

teaching methods and even architecture. The changes were reviewed and approved by top officials of the school system, of course. But the reforms were essentially designed and implemented in individual schools and neighborhoods. School boards and superintendents will not cede such authority lightly, especially to people they don’t consider sufficiently expert and proven. On behalf of Enterprise in Sandtown, Sylvia Peters had not only her own distinguished resumé to lend her credibility, but the support of a local philanthropic leader respected by educators. Grants from the nationally known Annenberg Foundation added a national vote of confidence. Peters’ successor, Tina Hike-Hubbard, is likewise a former educator and continues to enjoy the backing of national and local education experts, including Annenberg. She also built a reservoir of trust and goodwill with school officials during several years as Peters’ deputy.

2. “It all starts with the principal.”

That is Richard Baron’s succinct summation of his reform experience at Jefferson Elementary in St. Louis, among other places. He adds: “The basic ingredients [in neighborhood school reform] are a great principal, good teachers and family support. But you won’t get the last two, or you won’t get them for long, without the first.” Conversely, when reformers spoke of setbacks and disappointments in their work with neighborhood schools, the most common explanation was the involvement of a principal who was not sufficiently committed to change, adept at management or experienced in using the authority available. In Baltimore, Hike-Hubbard makes the same observation about the central importance of the principals in charge of Kelson and Pinderhughes, respectively: “Without Pam Terry and Wanda Better-Davis, very little of this would have happened, and none of it would have lasted.”

3. Successful reform efforts need to include features that gradually raise teaching quality and adjust for uneven skill levels among teachers.

Urban schools in poor neighborhoods have a hard time attracting and retaining gifted teachers. Some excellent teachers deliberately choose to work in these schools, and others may be assigned there. But teachers who have a choice about where to be assigned — whether because of seniority, honors, professional credentials or other factors — more often choose to go to schools with fewer problems. It’s significant that not one of the school systems in this report permitted a local school to make immediate, wholesale changes in its teaching staff. Reformers were, in each case, required to work with an existing faculty, including some teachers who were far from ideally suited to the new arrangement. They responded with four approaches that seem, at least so far, to have been effective:

a. Curricula designed to compensate for teachers’ shortcomings

Direct Instruction and Core Knowledge, the cornerstones of the education reforms in Sandtown-Winchester, are specifically designed to create a basic threshold of quality and content, even among teachers with less-than-average skills or experience. Both programs were instituted with extensive resources for teachers — outside consultants, designated “master teachers” within the school, and resource centers stocked with supplies and teaching materials that help teachers cover the required topics.

b. Training and professional development

Providing learning opportunities for teachers has a twofold benefit: It helps them do their jobs better, and it demonstrates that reform is not a burden but an opportunity for them. According to Hike-Hubbard, an effective professional development system for teachers will eventually make the services of consultants and other outside experts unnecessary. “After a while, the new methods become just a part of the school culture, and new teachers naturally fit into that.” At that point, the reform has taken hold.

c. Skillful, demanding supervision

Besides recruiting outstanding principals, the Enterprise school reforms in Baltimore and Atlanta paid for teams of consultants to help teachers learn the basics of Direct Instruction and Core Knowledge. Because Direct Instruction has so many specific requirements for how teachers present information, conduct drills and interact with students, consultants were especially important in making sure that program was implemented completely and correctly. For the first several years, consultants visited every classroom at least monthly, offering teachers immediate guidance or correction in following the system and alerting the principals to ongoing problems. This caused some anxiety for some teachers at first, but more importantly, it established an unyielding level of expected performance and provided all the support a teacher would need to reach that level.

d. Time to adapt

Any change is unsettling at first. A successful change, however, will eventually win support and acceptance over time. Wanda Better-Davis, principal at Baltimore’s Pinderhughes Elementary, found that it took up to two years for teachers in her school to become “believers” in Direct Instruction. They needed time to absorb the changes and feel at home with them, but they also needed to see for themselves what those changes could accomplish with students. When teachers saw students learning faster and performing better, resistance tended to fade away.

4. A school’s physical plant is an important part of educational quality.

Every case described in this report involved some degree of physical change in the school. In most cases, the improvements involved repairs, replacement of rundown infrastructure or architectural updating. Some changes, though, were more specifically related to educational content, like the installation of fiber-optic cable for

computers; the equipping of gyms, libraries and music rooms; and creation of physical space for other elements of a well-rounded curriculum. It's hard to maintain discipline and concentration in a physical environment that seems disorderly and neglected, Richard Baron points out. "It's hard to get order out of a chaotic environment."

Summing up the lessons of Enterprise's experience thus far in Baltimore, CEO Bart Harvey offers this general observation, which Baron and others echo in markedly similar terms:

The most stunning thing to me is the progress the schools have made in spite of the extraordinary obstacles they face. You can go into this neighborhood, where there was very low educational attainment, just generally a neighborhood of last resort, and what's stunning is the resiliency, the energy you can unleash if you do a few right things. Kids who are facing lots of obstacles in their lives, their families, their neighborhood, their safety, can make extraordinary progress — in spite of mobility, in spite of not being able to attract all the best and brightest teachers. Seeing the kind of steady progress we have made tells me that, as a country, we are under-appreciating the change we can make in neighborhoods like this one, and in the educational attainment of all the kids who live in them. . . . There is a powerful diminution in our country through the loss that we suffer, year after year, by doing nothing.

Endnotes

1. Jennifer Turnham and Jill Khadduri, *Integrating School Reform and Neighborhood Revitalization: Opportunities and Challenges*, Abt Associates Inc., February 18, 2004, 27.

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4. Sandra E. Black, "Do Better Schools Matter? Parental Valuation of Elementary Education," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 114:2 (May 1999), 577-599.

5. Thomas J. Kane, Douglas O. Staiger and Gavin Samms, "School Accountability Ratings and Housing Values," in William G. Gale and Janet Rothenberg Pack, eds., *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs: 2003* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 124-125.

6. Paul C. Brophy, *Making the School-Housing Connection Work: A Briefing Paper for The Enterprise Foundation's Real Estate Leadership Council* (Columbia, Md.: The Enterprise Foundation, 2004), 3.



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