

Baltimore **OPPORTUNITY SCHOOLS**

APPENDIX A

Principal Interview Responses

Best Practices at Opportunity and On-the-Cusp Schools

Use data to differentiate instruction and to provide regular intervention and enrichment for students.

Encourage teacher collaboration and peer feedback.

Establish high academic and behavioral expectations for students.

Hire and retain effective teachers.

Schools Citing Practice

EMPOWERMENT
LIBERTY
MEDFIELD HEIGHTS
TUNBRIDGE
THOMAS JOHNSON
BLSYW
CROSSROADS
KIPP
MIDTOWN
MOUNT WASHINGTON
ROLAND PARK

CECIL
EMPOWERMENT
TUNBRIDGE
THOMAS JOHNSON
BLSYW
MOUNT ROYAL

THOMAS JOHNSON
KIPP
BLSYW
MIDTOWN
TUNBRIDGE
MOUNT WASHINGTON

THOMAS JOHNSON
PATTERSON PARK
KIPP
BLSYW
MOUNT WASHINGTON

Best Practices at Opportunity and On-the-Cusp Schools (continued)

Give teachers autonomy and flexibility in the classroom.

Schools Citing Practice

EMPOWERMENT
HAMILTON
THOMAS JOHNSON
BLSYW
MOUNT WASHINGTON

Provide good professional development for teachers (one school suggested developing university partnerships for professional development).

EMPOWERMENT
THOMAS JOHNSON
GOVANS

Establish a strong and consistent school culture, including structure and routines that don't change from year to year, consistency of vision and follow-through on commitments.

LIBERTY
THOMAS JOHNSON
MIDTOWN

Focus on family engagement and cultivating strong family partnerships (e.g., hold parent workshops on academic topics, promote a strong PTO).

TUNBRIDGE
THOMAS JOHNSON
MIDTOWN

Focus on teacher retention generally (one school suggested giving teachers roles in decision-making processes to promote school cohesiveness).

THOMAS JOHNSON
GOVANS
MIDTOWN

Extend the reach of effective teachers to more students (e.g., effective teachers mentor other teachers).

CECIL
LIBERTY

Maintain a lean administrative structure and spend as little money as possible on administration.

CECIL
LIBERTY

Frequently visit rooms, observe teachers, and give teachers feedback.

CECIL
LEITH WALK

Maintain an intensive focus on reading and foundational skills that students need to master to access higher level material.

MEDFIELD HEIGHTS
CROSSROADS

Offer robust wrap-around services.

HAMILTON
LIBERTY

Best Practices at Opportunity and On-the-Cusp Schools (continued)

Schools Citing Practice

Keep class sizes small.

EMPOWERMENT
BLSYW

Use teacher “looping” in consecutive grades (teachers follow students from one grade to next to maintain consistency).

KIPP
MOUNT ROYAL

Hire teachers who fit the culture and philosophy of the school.

EMPOWERMENT
MIDTOWN

Give students challenging homework assignments and try to get parents involved in homework.

LEITH WALK
MIDTOWN

Give effective teachers more responsibility and opportunities for advancement.

CECIL

Give teachers the materials and supplies they need in their classroom.

CECIL

Always support the school’s teachers.

LEITH WALK

Develop community partnerships that allow students to receive more individualized attention (e.g., retired educator tutors and university tutors).

GOVANS

Develop evidence-based student interventions through the Student Support Team (e.g., Read Naturally, Foundations, and Build Up/Spiral Up).

MEDFIELD HEIGHTS

Hire principals who focus on teaching and learning.

CROSSROADS

Ensure administrators are responsive and accessible to teachers, students and parents.

HAMILTON

Use a co-teaching classroom model to promote full inclusion of special education students.

MEDFIELD HEIGHTS

Ensure socioeconomic diversity across classrooms.

ROLAND PARK

Best Practices at Opportunity and On-the-Cusp Schools (continued)

Raise additional funds for the school (e.g., PTO fundraising, annual fund, alumni giving).

Engage students with a “whole child” approach to education (e.g., student-centered programming, proactive management, mediation and building relationships between students and teachers).

Work to minimize student mobility.

Maximize cost-effectiveness of the school budget (e.g., hire parents to assist in classrooms and contract with high-quality third-party programs).

Use evidence-based curriculum and instructional strategies.

Implement a gifted and talented curriculum for students who need it.

Provide students many extracurricular activity options.

Teach reading and vocabulary in a consistent way.

Give students recognition for accomplishments (e.g., after each marking period, give each student a certificate for what they are best in).

Hire and develop quality support staff (e.g., IEP Chair, special educators, school psychologists, ISTs, and mentor teachers); make sure they are versed in research-based interventions, technology applications for education, and recent trends in educational research, and that they share the same vision of the instructional leader/administrator.

Schools Citing Practice

ROLAND PARK

PATTERSON PARK

PATTERSON PARK

LIBERTY

EMPOWERMENT

MOUNT ROYAL

LEITH WALK

LEITH WALK

LEITH WALK

MEDFIELD HEIGHTS

**BCPSS Policy Recommendations
from Opportunity and On-the-Cusp Schools**

**Number
of Schools
Recommending
each Policy***

Reduce spending on central administration and send more money to schools.
Support school efforts to develop local partnerships that increase the number of part-time reading interventionists in schools.

4

Give principals and teachers more autonomy if they're getting results for students.
Utilize Opportunity School principals to develop new principals and mentor current principals.
Increase the number of mental health professionals in schools.

3

Reform the Network Team model (one school suggested allowing Opportunity School principals to run the Network Teams; one school suggested eliminating Network Teams altogether).
Increase the rigor of the teacher hiring process to ensure we select the best candidates (one school suggested requiring candidates to submit a video of a sample lesson; one school suggested asking candidates more probing questions that get to their beliefs on whether all kids can achieve and what they will contribute to student achievement).

2

Promote a culture of teacher accountability that allows ineffective teachers to be dismissed.
Improve grassroots communication with parents to educate them on the importance of attendance.
Implement policies to hold parents accountable for student attendance.
Improve the rigor of the charter school authorizing process (e.g., require charter applicant to have a track record of leading schools to success).
Centralize functions like landscaping and building cleaning so principals don't have to spend time on them; principals can use the new time to mentor other principals.
Increase the student population of existing Opportunity Schools, including through the 21st Century Buildings initiative, as much as possible.

1

**BCPSS Policy Recommendations
from Opportunity and On-the-Cusp Schools
(continued)**

**Number
of Schools
Recommending
each Policy***

Provide more support for new teachers (e.g., require mentor teachers for new teachers, place an experienced teacher in new teachers' rooms for the first week of school).

Require mentors for new principals (in their first two years); mentors should be retired effective principals and should coach new principals 2–4 times per month.

Give principals opportunities to go to job fairs to recruit and select teachers.

Keep schools small (e.g., 300 students).

Don't allow teachers to know which students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (so their expectations aren't biased).

Give more resources to under-enrolled schools so they can improve and stabilize their student populations.

Provide more funding for special education students who need self-contained instruction.

Provide more funding for extra staff.

Do more to support teachers generally.

Minimize teacher turnover (e.g., require longer commitments from teachers).

Do more to cultivate school leaders from within schools.

Place surplus teachers in lowest performing schools; dismiss them after one year if their performance isn't satisfactory.

Improve the system for student data entry and analysis.

Serve more nutritious food to students.

Develop policies that allow schools to productively deal with student behavior issues (e.g., require parents to come to the school when there is a behavior problem).

Charter schools should be provided the same materials as other city schools at no additional cost (e.g., the school system does not currently provide Agile Mind to charter schools).

Set flexible enough performance parameters to allow charter schools to be successful, and financially support those that are successful.

Utilize successful charter schools to help improve other charter schools.

1

BCPSS and/or State Policy Recommendations from Opportunity and On-the-Cusp Schools

Number of Schools Recommending each Policy*

Institute a more equitable school funding formula (e.g., weighted student-based funding, money follows the child policy).

3

Provide salary incentives to encourage effective teachers to teach in hard-to-staff schools (e.g., high-poverty schools).
Expand school choice; parents in low-income communities deserve to choose where their child goes to school.
In general, institute more policies that make the teaching profession more attractive to enter and more sustainable to continue. The model teacher position in Baltimore is a good start, as are alternative pathways to teaching and residency programs like the Urban Teacher Center, but we need more.
Improve evaluations for out-of-classroom teachers and teachers working with small groups; it is difficult to fairly and effectively evaluate this important group under the current evaluation model.
Improve technology infrastructure in schools (hardware and internet), so schools can deliver 21st century instruction.

1

State Policy Recommendations from Opportunity and On-the-Cusp Schools

Number of Schools Recommending each Policy*

Require education schools to increase selectivity and rigor and close education schools that are not preparing teachers well.
Offer incentives for talented undergraduates to enter the teaching profession (e.g., loan forgiveness).

1

Recommendations to increase the number of Opportunity Middle and High Schools

Number of Schools Recommending each Policy*

Minimize student mobility; promote the stability of the student population (one school suggested accepting no new students after a cutoff date).

2

Retain effective teachers.
Hold students to high expectations.
Improve wrap-around services and increase the number of psychologists and social workers.
Increase the number of after-school programs.
Engender character and leadership in students (e.g., require character lessons and guidance classes once per week).
Reduce class sizes.
Maintain block scheduling.

1

* We cite numeric totals instead of school names because we promised leaders that their names would remain confidential, allowing them to feel comfortable speaking honestly and openly.