BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Brandon Scott, Mayor
City of Baltimore
Robert Salley, Chair
Board of School Commissioners
Dr. Jermaine Dawson
Chief Executive Officer

Dr. Dawson's Community Update from the First 60 Days

September 17, 2026

Dear Baltimore City Public Schools community,

It has been about two months since I officially began as the CEO of City Schools. I continue to be moved by how openly this community has welcomed me into its schools and classrooms. Every conversation deepens my belief that Baltimore City is an extraordinary place filled with extraordinary people, and every session adds new texture to a picture that is coming into sharper focus.

Since my last update, which included notes from Forest Park High School and Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, we have held two more community conversations as part of our 100 Days Listening Tour:

- Bay-Brook Elementary/Middle School on August 27
- Furley Elementary School on September 2

Note: This report does not include the conversations held during the in-person session held at Wildwood Elementary/Middle School on September 9 or the virtual session held on September 10 for families who were unable to attend in person.

The first four schools represent more than 600 students, families, staff, community members, and partners who joined us to share their hopes, experiences, and ideas for our schools. I am grateful for every voice, especially those who have taken the time to share difficult experiences and challenge us to do better.

As part of my promise to be transparent, I want to share an updated picture of what we are hearing. Some of the themes from our first update have held, and in several cases have grown sharper and more urgent as more of you have weighed in. Others are new, surfaced for the first time at Bay-Brook and Furley.

What You Are Telling Us Is Working

- Programs that connect students to careers and college, dual enrollment, technical education pathways, and hands-on experiences like BizTown and our architecture, construction, and engineering programs, continue to make a real difference and are programs we should continue to strengthen.
- Clubs, sports, the arts, and after-school programming give students a reason to be engaged in school and a place to belong. You have been clear that these opportunities should be protected and expanded.
- Community school coordinators, counselors, and other student support staff came up again and again, in almost every room, as trusted and valued people that students and families count on.
- Community and neighborhood partnerships, with rec centers, faith communities, local businesses, and colleges, are helping connect families to resources they would not otherwise reach.
- Recent building upgrades, technology investments, and the cell phone policy continue to be noticed and appreciated.
- You continue to speak up for the dedication of our teachers and school-based staff, including the paraprofessionals, school secretaries, and custodial and maintenance staff who quietly hold our buildings and communities together every day.
- Efforts to make families feel protected, including reassurance for families concerned about immigration enforcement, are being felt and are appreciated.

What You Are Telling Us Needs Attention

- Getting to and from school safely remains a real and growing concern, from unreliable buses and long rides to genuine confusion and unsafe conditions at arrival and dismissal.
- You continue to tell us, clearly and consistently, that choice and specialized schools and neighborhood schools are not resourced or perceived the same way. You want one shared standard of excellence, opportunity and investment across every school, rather than a hierarchy of reputations or expectations.
- Building conditions, including heating and cooling, and general upkeep, keep coming up as a barrier to students and staff feeling safe and proud in their own schools.





Photos from our Listening Tour Visit at Forest Park High School

- Communication needs to be clearer, more consistent, and more transparent from families having difficulty finding basic information about their child's school to a broader request for greater honesty about what is and is not working.
- Some of our basic operations, like paying staff on time, responding to families and schools promptly, and processing HR and certification requests, are still not working the way they should.
- Many of you describe a real trust gap between our central office and school-based staff and families, an "us versus them" feeling that we need to work deliberately to break down. Rebuilding that trust will require us to listen, communicate honestly, follow through on our commitments, and hold ourselves accountable.

Alongside this listening, we are also standing up an independent Transition Team of Baltimore City voices to test what we are hearing against data and expert judgment. That team's work will continue beyond our 100th day, into December, so that our longer-term decisions are grounded in evidence as well as your experience.

Two more community sessions remain:

- October 1 at Carver Vocational-Technical High School
- October 8 at Mergenthaler Vocational-Technical High School

I intend to keep listening with an open mind before we finalize our 100-Day Entry Plan. I invite you to join us at one of our upcoming sessions.

To register for any of the remaining sessions, please visit baltcityschools.org/100DaysListeningTour. If you are unable to attend a listening session, I still want to hear from you. Please take a few minutes to complete our community survey.

We appreciate the trust you continue to place in this process. Important work lies ahead, and some of what you have shared is difficult to hear. But I am more convinced than ever that Baltimore has what it needs to build schools this city believes in. By listening, building on our strengths, embracing needed change, and keeping students at the center, we can create greater opportunities for every child.

Thank you for being part of this journey. I look forward to seeing or hearing from you as we continue to discover what is possible together as we work to deliver on the promise that every student graduates career ready, future ready, and world ready.

With gratitude,



Dr. Jermaine Dawson
Chief Executive Officer
Baltimore City Public Schools