

# WOLFE STREET ACADEMY NEWS

## Wolfe Street Students Take Mexican Dance to the Streets and Farther

By Connie Phelps, Wolfe Street Academy Community School Coordinator

The idea was frequently mentioned in quiet conversations among parents in the cafeteria: Wouldn't it be nice for the kids to do bailables, like they do in Mexico?

There was no doubt that a traditional folkloric dance program would be popular at Wolfe Street Academy, a public elementary charter school in Upper Fells Point.

Many of our families are from Mexico, where this type of dancing is a common part of the school experience. Baile Folklorico continues a custom of regional dance and clothing that evolved from Mexico's mix of pre-Colombian, Spanish and African influences.

We weren't sure how to put the tradition into action at Wolfe Street, as none of the parents felt that they could teach the classes themselves.

In July 2008, we invited the adult dance group Ballet Folklorico Mexico Vivo to perform at our annual school festival, Wolfest. Parents and community members packed our cafeteria to watch and participate in the presentation, which included dancers in flowing red and yellow dresses, and flips and twirls in cowboy boots and hats to ranchera music.

We were hooked, and with funding from the Baltimore Ravens All Community Team Foundation, during the summer of 2009 we were able to

start a folkloric dance program in collaboration with members of Ballet Folklorico Mexico Vivo.

As dance instructor Maria Guadalupe Lopez explains, the adult group was founded six years ago "with the hope of uniting Mexican families that live in Baltimore to maintain our culture, and at the same time show our community members and others the grandeur of our roots, so that the new generations can feel pride in being Mexican or in learning about Mexico."

Teaching children to be active participants in the tradition was, members of Ballet Folklorico felt, a natural path for them to follow.

Mrs. Lopez, Jose Federico Perez, Leticia Rodriguez and Humbelinda Reyes have been dedicated to teaching Wolfe Street students (ranging in age from 3 to 11) both the technical aspects of the dances and Mexican games and songs that break up the hard work of practicing.

Our older students dance in the tradition of Veracruz, on the southeastern coast of Mexico, which is notable for its white, lacy dresses and a dance style marked by percussive heel-stomping.

The younger students follow the custom of Jalisco, a western state whose dance, the Jarabe, meaning "syrup", was a courtship ritual.

The boys wear wide-brimmed black sombreros and a Spanish charro suit with gold buttons. They dance with their hands behind their backs, while the girls, festooned in colorful dresses with bright ribbons, use their broad skirts as an



integral part of the movement, waving them to the flow of the music.

After much discussion regarding the best and most economical ways to obtain these stunning and elaborate outfits, Mrs. Lopez brought them personally from Mexico.

Parents watch the practices, adjust the dresses and fill in for the instructors when needed. Recently, in preparation for performances, the instructors held a parent meeting entirely dedicated to showing mothers how to do the girls' hair.

The students will have the chance to repay their parents for their efforts when, at our next Wolfest celebration in May 2010, they perform in honor of Mother's Day.

The response from Baltimore has been terrific. Our bailarines have performed at a number of events including a street festival at St. Michael's Catholic Church, the "Celebrate Latino Heritage" festival at the National Aquarium, a Highlandtown Elementary-Middle School PTO meeting and the Baltimore City Public Schools Hispanic Heritage Celebration at Hampstead Hill Academy.

Wolfe Street Academy and Ballet Folklorico Mexico Vivo are excited at the prospect of together growing and strengthening the program as our students learn, enjoy and become cultural ambassadors to the entire region.



# CLASS NOTES

NEWS FROM THE BALTIMORE CURRICULUM PROJECT AND BCP SCHOOLS: City Springs School  
Dr. Rayner Browne Academy - Collington Square School of the Arts - Hampstead Hill Academy - Wolfe Street Academy

WINTER 2010  
www.baltimorecp.org

## BCP/URBANITE HIGH-STAKES TESTING FORUM

On Thursday, September 17, 2009 the Baltimore Curriculum Project and Urbanite Magazine held the **Leading Minds High-Stakes Testing Forum** at the Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park.

Speakers included Harvard University Education Professor Dr. Daniel Koretz, University of Michigan Professor of Educational Policy and Economics Dr. Brian Jacob, and Michigan State University Assistant Professor of Teacher Education Dr. Rebecca Jacobsen.

The forum was part of a larger strategy to saturate the public consciousness with this issue through public discourse, print media, and radio.

**Urbanite's "Learning Issue"**  
Urbanite Magazine's September "Learning Issue" featured an article on high-stakes testing by Sara Neufeld. The article included interviews with BCP principal Rhonda Richetta, BCP principal Matt Hornbeck, BCP President Muriel Berkeley, and forum panelist Daniel Koretz. The "Learning Issue" was made possible by a generous grant from OSI-Baltimore.

**Marc Steiner Show**  
On September 23, 2009 The Marc Steiner Show on WEAA 88.9 FM featured a panel discussion on national standardized testing in public schools as part of their Urbanite radio stories. The panel included BCP principal Matt Hornbeck and author Linda Perlstein.

**Dr. Daniel Koretz**  
Dr. Koretz's presentation focused on how high-stakes tests can create incentives that sabotage effective instruction.

"We have a really pressing need



2009 Leading Minds Panelists: (l to r) Dr. Brian Jacob, Dr. Daniel Koretz, and Dr. Rebecca Jacobsen.

for better accountability systems and I don't see how we can have them without testing, but what we have now isn't working very well," said Dr. Koretz.

"It's not meeting the aims of the people who designed it. It is causing gains in scores that are simply not believable. And it's in many ways corrupting educational practice."

Tests are very small samples drawn from very large domains. Scores are only useful if one can generalize from them to mastery of the domain.

However, according to Dr. Koretz, "all that matters in our current accountability system is how kids do on that little, tiny sample of items... In many schools the requirement is very clear that the rate of improvement and performance on that little, tiny sample has to be very rapid. So what do you do? You focus on the sample."

"That has two effects: One is that it makes for horrible instruction in many cases and the second is that it creates ... grossly exaggerated gains in scores."

Not all test prep is bad. Good test prep gives students knowledge and skills that they can apply elsewhere such as in later education and

employment.

Score inflation comes about through bad test prep, which includes reallocation (shifting instructional resources around among areas within a subject and between subjects) and coaching (focusing on the details of the test and teaching testing tricks).

Dr. Koretz said that we should make other valued outcomes count and use more than scores to evaluate schools. He also recommended setting realistic targets for student achievement gains.

The current targets under No Child Left Behind create the wrong incentives for teachers because NCLB "doesn't say we want to see realistic, steady improvement from you, it says we want you to do miracles and the miracles come from coaching," said Dr. Koretz.

He advocated evaluating the accountability system itself by auditing gains and monitoring changes in educational practice.

"In most areas of public policy, say drug safety or vehicle safety, vendors are required to make data public and they are required to have their products evaluated" said Dr. Koretz.

(Continued on page 2)



“If you see signs that Vioxx is causing cardiac problems it is not the prerogative of the CEO of the drug company to say its not in my interest to have an evaluation of Vioxx.”

But in public education, there is no expectation of independent evaluation. Restrictions on access to data severely limit evaluations of educational accountability programs.

“That is exactly what States and local education agencies say all the time... evaluation is not in our interest.” Dr. Koretz pointed out that “what matters is the interest of kids.”

“Since we know score inflation is a problem we have to find ways to audit gains, where they are real and where they are not. We need to monitor what’s happening in schools and not assume things are getting better because scores are rising.”

“I think if we actually could look under the covers; if we got people to agree to monitoring; what we’d find is that there are certainly some low-achieving schools where things have gotten better as a result of accountability pressure. We would also find some schools where things have gotten considerably worse.”

“We just don’t know which is which now and that is a pretty big

problem.”

## Dr. Brian Jacob

Dr. Jacob offered a mixed assessment of No Child Left Behind’s impact on student achievement.

He explained that incentives do not equal effects. There is an incentive under NCLB to focus on students who are right on the bubble of making proficiency and neglect the very low-achieving and very high-achieving students.

However, that doesn’t always mean that bubble kid achievement is higher than achievement for other students. For example, adding an extra reading period to the school day would help all students.

In his research in Chicago Dr. Jacob found there was a propensity to exclude students from testing by placing them in special education classes, but the impact was a mix of large and small effects.

He also said that context must be considered. In some Chicago schools NCLB was a vast improvement over the prior accountability system. In others it was derailing them from the valuable work they had been doing prior to NCLB.

Dr. Jacob warned that we have to be aware of what incentives are created when we create new accountability systems.

The impact of accountability reforms in Chicago has been mixed. There have been tremendous increases in standardized test scores, but these gains have not been reflected uniformly on Chicago’s low-stakes test.

The low-stakes test showed similar gains for 8th grade, but for 3rd and 6th growth levelled off or decreased.

Dr. Jacob also highlighted some negative impacts of high-stakes testing in Chicago.

For example, special education placements for low-achieving students in low-achieving schools jumped approximately 18% after high-stakes testing was implemented.

Preemptive retention, holding students back one to years in first or second grade to improve 3rd grade test scores, also jumped considerably

Some teachers in Chicago said preemptive retention was beneficial for their students, but some research concludes it has negative effects.

Teacher cheating did increase after No Child Left Behind, but this does not account entirely for achievement gains.

According to Dr. Jacob, NCLB has generated some meaningful gains in math across the country, but not in reading. There has been no significant impact on science achievement and no effect on 4th or 8th grade reading

He recommended amending NCLB to include value-added assessment, which measures student growth, and to focus resources on the highest need schools.

He said we need additional strategies for identification and improvement of failing schools, such as inspectorates. We should also look at the potential benefits of computer-adaptive testing. Additional research that focuses on teaching and learning is critical.

## Dr. Rebecca Jacobsen

Dr. Jacobsen’s presentation focused on getting accountability right.

“If you’re going to get accountability right you have to first decide what we want to be held accountable for,” said Dr. Jacobsen.

“We have a number of goals for what we want our students to achieve, not just reading and math. We can’t rely on one sole measure. The more we rely on math and reading scores alone the more we try to game it and it ends up harming that overall list of goals that we value.”

The original National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) had a much broader conception of what schools should be doing than the current assessment system and looked at a range of educational goals including student behavior.

## Early Learning Wing Opens with Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

Over 100 staff, students, parents, community members and City dignitaries joined the Baltimore Curriculum Project (BCP) and Hampstead Hill Academy for its Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on Friday, August 28.

The students returned this fall to an exciting new facility boasting a \$1.2 million renovation completed by Turner Construction Company and designed by Ziger Snead.

The renovated space creates a nurturing learning environment for elementary and middle school students, and includes larger early learning classrooms equipped with restrooms, a new art room, library and new glass windows.

Mayor Sheila Dixon, Baltimore City Public Schools CEO Andres Alonso, and Legg Mason CEO Mark Fetting participated in the celebration.

The Mayor spoke about bike riding by the school and through the park with her children and shared that hearing the spirit of the school gave her an extra

push when she needed it to get through the week.

Seventh grader, Deboreah Ross, served as master of ceremonies, and expressed her gratitude on behalf of the school to donors and the project team.

We would like to thank Baltimore City for supporting this project with a \$100,000 Charter School Facilities Improvement grant and Legg Mason for pledging \$35,000 over five years.

We would also like to thank the following people for making this project a success: Robert Proutt (Owner, Proutt Consulting), Darragh Brady (Senior Associate, Ziger/Snead Architects), Matt Hornbeck (Principal, Hampstead Hill Academy), Alison Perkins-Cohen (Executive Director, BCP), Jay Twilley (Superintendent, Turner Construction), Coretta Bennett (Project Manager, Turner Construction), and Christine



HHA students joined Mayor Sheila Dixon, BCP Executive Director Alison Perkins-Cohen, BCP CEO Andres Alonso, BCP President Muriel Berkeley, Legg Mason CEO Mark Fetting, and Principal Matt Hornbeck in the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.

Kotchenreuther (Hampstead Hill Community Liaison).

Special thanks to Hampstead Hill staff members Melanie Wright, Fariyah Rasheed, Wiesenia Davis, Ronald Rucker, and Bryan Powers for getting the building ready for the first day of school.

## White House Chef Sam Kass Visits Organic Garden and Stays for Lunch

By Geri Swann, Hampstead Hill Academy Community Schools Coordinator

Everyone knows how important good food is to being ready for school.

Last month, Hampstead Hill Academy hosted White House Assistant Chef and Food Initiative Director Sam

Kass. Mr. Kass is Michelle Obama’s go-to person for healthy eating.

Not only does he prepare meals for the First Family, he also planted the White House organic garden and works with policymakers and schools to improve the quality of school lunches.

On September 18th, Mr. Kass and an entourage arrived to tour HHA’s organic garden and have lunch in our cafeteria.

Student ambassadors, including Aaron Vanya, Deboreah Ross and Bianca Rivera, served as tour guides.

Mr. Kass was overheard saying that his garden didn’t have the herbs, peppers and

vegetables that ours does. He was very impressed.

Next, it was on to Chrissa Carlson’s Food for Life class where Mr. Kass saw students preparing a tasty dip from our homegrown eggplant, peppers and carrots. Again, he loved talking with our students about food and tasting the fruits of their labor.

Finally, Sam and company sat down for a balanced lunch of French bread pizza, black bean and cheese nachos, homegrown salad, and a whole apple.

We were thrilled to have such a high profile guest with us. We made certain that Mr. Kass knew how much we would love to have the President and especially the First Lady over for lunch, too. Stay tuned.



White House Assistant Chef and Food Initiative Director Sam Kass (front center) has lunch at Hampstead Hill Academy.

### Class Notes

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BCP’s mission is to develop, successfully implement and spread an innovative, sustainable, and replicable model of educational reform that will improve student outcomes while effecting systemic change. In doing so, the Baltimore Curriculum Project will raise the educational standards and possibilities for disadvantaged youth, Baltimore City schools and the Baltimore City school system alike.

# DR. RAYNER BROWNE ACADEMY NEWS

## Elev8 Baltimore is Off to a Promising Start

By O'bette Jamison, Elev8 Baltimore Site-Manager

The Elev8 Baltimore initiative has begun providing a variety of new services for middle grades students at Dr. Rayner Browne Academy.

The health suite, managed by Baltimore Medical System and staffed by R.N. Vivian Freeman and medical assistant Inetha Sheppard, has done a magnificent job handling all of the children with colds, fevers, and aches.

Sheila Maynor, the Family Advocate, has embraced her role as liaison between family, school, and the many services available within the City of Baltimore.

Ms. Maynor has opened the door to give parents valuable information on obtaining bus passes, housing, and Helping Your Child Succeed workshops.

Middle grade students have visited area high schools through the work of Ms. Maynor and Cheryl Gerdes, the school guidance counselor.

An astounding 100% percent of the fifth to eighth grade student population at Rayner Browne is participating in one or more components of Elev8 Baltimore.

Students are learning the benefits and consequences of daily health decisions and how to handle conflict in productive ways.

The after-school participants are learning about Maryland Agriculture,

Fashion Design, Orchestra, Creative Arts, and Business Ownership.

Hooray to the Flag Football team for their winning record.

Students are also giving their time to service learning projects focused on vacant lot beautification.

Elev8 Baltimore showcased student's talents and work during the week of December 14-18th at all four schools in the Elev8 Baltimore network.

Elev8 Baltimore is part of a national initiative dedicated to providing middle-school age youth and their families with a coordinated array of services to support students to succeed in school and life.

Elev8 offers high-quality out-of-school time learning opportunities as well as comprehensive, age-appropriate school-based health care and health education.

Schools, local nonprofits and community partners are currently working together through Elev8 programs in Baltimore, Chicago, New Mexico, and Oakland.

We would like to thank the following partners for making Elev8 possible: The Atlantic Philanthropies,



A Rayner Browne student works hard on her project in the Creative Alliance Fashion Design class.

East Baltimore Development, Inc., The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore Community Foundation, Baltimore Medical System, East Baltimore Mental Health Partnership, JHU School of Nursing, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Central Maryland, The Creative Alliance, Higher Achievement, Dance N Motion, Art with a Heart, Diva Dolls, Charter Schools Athletic Association, Knowledge Corporation, Greater Baltimore Youth Orchestra (Bridges), Martial Arts at Collington, Maryland Agricultural Educational Foundation, Parks and People Foundation, and the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship.

Foundation, Northwest Evaluation Association, and Venable LLP for sponsoring the forum; OSI-Baltimore for supporting the Urbanite's September 2009 "Learning Issue"; Marc Steiner for hosting a show on testing; Living Classrooms Foundation for providing a wonderful event space; Brian Jacob, Rebecca Jacobsen, and Daniel Koretz for being panelists; Jonathan Bryce for moderating; Tracy Ward and David Dudley at Urbanite for their partnership, and Starbucks for providing coffee.

## High-Stakes Testing Forum (continued from page 5)

"By removing gym time we may be narrowing the gaps in academic achievement scores but we may be widening the gap in terms of the number of students that are obese in particular communities in particular places."

"Is that a trade off that we're willing to make and, if not, how do we figure out a way to balance them?"

"That's a policy conversation we

need to have. It really comes down to what do we value?"

### Watch, Read, and Listen

Watch a video of the forum at:

[www.baltimorecp.org/leadingminds](http://www.baltimorecp.org/leadingminds)

Read the Urbanite Learning Issue at:

[www.urbanitebaltimore.com](http://www.urbanitebaltimore.com)

Listen to the 9/23 Marc Steiner Show at:

[www.stainersshow.org](http://www.stainersshow.org)

### Thank you

We would like to thank The Abell

# THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING BCP

We would like to thank all of the individuals, corporations, and foundations who supported the BCP Annual Fund, the BCP Leading Minds Series, and BCP school programs in 2009. If you would like to support BCP please donate online at [www.baltimorecp.org](http://www.baltimorecp.org) or send your check to: Baltimore Curriculum Project, 2707 E. Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21224.

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Baltimore City  
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Living classrooms Foundation

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Legg Mason Charitable Foundation  
Open Society Institute - Baltimore

### \$7,500+

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## High-Stakes Testing Forum (continued from page 2)

Measures included multiple choice assessments, performance assessments, and observation of behavior in group situations.

For example, in order to assess social skills and work ethic students were given problems to solve in a group setting and then observed to see how well they worked together.

The early NAEP anticipated some of the challenges of NCLB such as preemptive retention. Students were assessed at specific ages, not grade levels.

NAEP also assessed young adults ages 26-35 to find out if they had retained the knowledge, skills, and values gained in school.

Dr. Jacobsen recommended that we expand NAEP and reincorporate some of the original pieces of the assessment so that we can collect better information about schools than we have today.

An expanded NAEP would include assessments of all academic subject areas, paper and pencil test

(Continued on page 5)

# CITY SPRINGS SCHOOL NEWS

## Johns Hopkins Supports the City Springs Mentoring Program

In May 2009 City Springs School and the Johns Hopkins Health System Community Services Office began an exciting, new partnership to provide mentors for the City Springs Mentoring Program.

City Springs school counselor Krista Wible works with Hopkins Community Relations Coordinator Christine Kavanagh to provide Hopkins mentors for children in grades 3 to 8.

“We’re like a little family,” says Hopkins mentor Cathryn Kabacoff.

Cathy, like the other mentors, meets with her mentee at the school on the third Wednesday of every month during her lunch hour, and spends time taking her mentee out on varied excursions.

Group trips have included Six Flags and the National Zoo. Mentors also have the opportunity to meet with their mentees one-on-one as often as they like. Some mentees talk with their mentors on the phone almost every day.

“I believe having a good mentor

can make all of the difference in the future of our students,” says Ms. Wible.

“So many of our students need someone who is supportive and committed to building a positive relationship with them. I want the students to have a chance to gain different perspectives on issues happening in their lives. I want them to have new experiences that they may otherwise never be exposed to.”

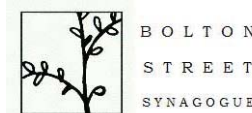
The City Springs Mentoring Program has recently added mentors from the Bolton Street Synagogue, graduate students from Loyola University and University of Baltimore, and some other professionals who were interested in making an impact in the life of a child.

They have also recently partnered with the Incentive Mentoring Program, a non-profit organization that provides intensive academic and social support to Baltimore City teenagers who are in immediate danger of dropping out of

high-school.

We would like to thank Christine Kavanagh, Krista Wible, the Johns Hopkins Health System Community Services Office, and all of the mentors for making this program a reality.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor please contact Krista Wible at [kwible@citysprings.org](mailto:kwible@citysprings.org).



## Myesha Taylor-Scott Wins 1st Place in Poetry Contest

Congratulations to sixth grader Myesha Taylor-Scott for winning 1st place in the 6th-8th grade poetry category of the CollegeBound Foundation’s “What College Means to Me” contest.

Ms. Taylor-Scott was honored along with the other winners at an awards ceremony at the National Aquarium in Baltimore on October 29th.

The winners received prizes and were treated to a 4D movie and a dolphin show.

Mayor Sheila Dixon has proclaimed November as College Awareness Month in Baltimore.

To celebrate, CollegeBound Foundation hosts an art, essay and poetry contest for BCPS students in grades K through 8.

They also host a series of college and career fairs for CollegeBound-staffed high schools.

**About CollegeBound Foundation**  
Established In 1988, the CollegeBound Foundation’s mission is to encourage and enable Baltimore City Youth to go to college.

Their college-access program places College Access Program Specialists (CAPS) in Baltimore’s public schools.

They encourage students to take the SAT, assist with college selection, help fill out financial aid forms, provide waiver fees for college access tests and applications, advise on the entire college admissions process, chaperone and fund campus visits, and award eligible students last-dollar funding. For more information visit [www.collegeboundfoundation.org](http://www.collegeboundfoundation.org)

### College

By Myesha Taylor-Scott

College gives you the knowledge  
And authority to do  
what you want to do in life.  
You can succeed  
as long as you believe.  
College can be a very difficult time in life,  
But if you listen,  
you’ll learn and achieve.  
College is preparing you for the real world.  
It is the course of your life  
that you would not want to play with.  
So I’m going to take in  
all that college has to offer me  
and fight the possibility of being uneducated.  
This will be the dress rehearsal  
to succeed in life.  
This is the time to not be hardcore,  
because in the future,  
I’m going to soar!

# COLLINGTON SQUARE SCHOOL NEWS

## Epicenter Partners with Collington Square and Dr. Rayner Browne

Epicenter, a new nonprofit serving East Baltimore, is partnering with Collington Square School and Dr. Rayner Browne Academy.

Epicenter exists to take the youth of Baltimore from the corner to a career through a safe, fun, encouraging, caring and accepting environment to build practical and empowering skills through education and performing arts.

### Volunteer Day

On August 25 Epicenter provided a year’s worth of school supplies and backpacks for 150 Collington Square students and hosted a luncheon for 80 teachers and staff members.

The Epicenter team also helped with a variety of tasks including putting up bulletin boards, distributing textbooks, and organizing supplies.

### Career Club

On November 9th Epicenter started the Career Club at Collington Square, which brings in professionals to expose students to a variety of careers.

The after-school club occurs three days a week for six weeks. Presentations by professionals are followed by a 30-40 minute hands-on

activity related to their career. The session ends with each student drawing a picture and writing about the career in a career handbook.

Students have learned from a Hip Hop Barber, Personal Trainer, Material Scientist, Geneticist, US Air Force Pilot, Musician, HVAC Specialist, Coast Guard Officer, and a Physical Therapist

At the end of the program students will present their career aspirations before the school at the club showcase.

### Chess in Faith Garden Park

On November 7th Collington Square community leaders and Epicenter hosted a community event in Faith Garden Park across from Dr. Rayner Browne Academy.

The park’s chess tables were buzzing with activity with many of our future chess champions and a few more seasoned players using clay chess pieces molded by students.

Ms. Ivy helped children plant several shrubs and create mosaics that will be hung in the park. Attendees also



Collington Square students learn about the US Coast Guard.

enjoyed classical jazz music and over 300 hot dogs and hamburgers.

### Plans for the future

Epicenter will continue to connect, nurture and grow relationships with the youth, the community, volunteers and other organizations and businesses that share our passion for taking the youth of Baltimore from the corner to the career by building community.

We would like to thank Epicenter for supporting our schools. For more information visit [epicenterbaltimore.org](http://epicenterbaltimore.org)

## High-Stakes Testing Forum (Continued from page 3)

items, survey questions, performance observations, better demographic data, age-level assessments, and in-school and out-of-school samples.

NAEP gives us a state and national picture, but we also need a way to assess schools and provide information to parents at the local level. To address this issue, Dr. Jacobsen and her colleagues have looked at what other countries are doing.

The U.K. uses highly-trained full-time inspectors to assess 15-30 schools a year and offer recommendations.

The inspectors review test data, visit every classroom, interview students, and look at student work and

writing samples. They also look at cognitive and behavioral skills.

Because the inspectors visit the school they get a much bigger picture of what’s going on than they would from test scores alone.

In the U.S. we have six regional accreditation agencies that rely on a peer review process to foster continuous improvement. Evaluators are untrained volunteers.

Schools set their own goals and reviewers assess how well they have attained these goals, but there is no way to hold schools accountable.

Dr. Jacobsen recommended that schools be reviewed by a trained team

of evaluators every three years. There should be clearly defined state goals, spontaneous visits, and consequences for failing inspections.

She said that there are existing alternatives to our current system of accountability and that a new accountability system will be expensive, but if we want to get accountability right we must make the investment.

“From my point of view we have multiple achievement gaps and I think ...we [may be] narrowing the achievement gaps in one place but only widening them in the others,” said Dr. Jacobsen.

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