

AUGUST 2026



IMPROVING ATTENDANCE, IMPROVING ACHIEVEMENT:

Transforming Attendance Initiative

Lessons From Year 1, July 2025 – June 2026

Baltimore Curriculum Project

Why Attendance Matters

Every day a student is absent is a missed opportunity to learn, connect, and grow.

Chronic absenteeism—missing 10% or more of the school year for any reason—is one of the strongest predictors of poor academic performance and disappointing long-term educational outcomes. Students who are chronically absent are more likely to struggle with reading and math, be retained in grade, and ultimately drop out of school.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, chronic absenteeism reached historic levels across the country. While attendance has improved slightly, Baltimore continues to experience some of the highest chronic absenteeism rates in Maryland, making attendance one of the most pressing challenges facing local public education today.



To address the challenge of chronic absenteeism and develop innovative, replicable solutions, the Abell Foundation and Richman Foundation partnered with the Baltimore Curriculum Project (BCP) to launch the *Transforming Attendance Initiative* across BCP's six neighborhood conversion public charter schools serving 3,067 Pre-K through 8th grade students in school year 2026 (SY26).

The *Transforming Attendance Initiative* seeks to return student attendance to pre-pandemic levels while strengthening attendance systems across all six BCP schools. The Year 1 goals aligned with Baltimore City Public Schools' (City Schools) strategy of reducing chronic absenteeism by approximately 8% per year.

Year 1 Goals:

- Reduce BCP network chronic absenteeism rate by 17.2% from the baseline SY24 (46.97%).
- Increase BCP's average daily attendance by 3.5% from the baseline SY24 (87.67%).
- Improve academic outcomes for students.
- Identify evidence-based practices that can be replicated across City Schools.

About the Baltimore Curriculum Project

Founded in 1996, BCP is a nonprofit educational organization that operates Maryland's largest network of neighborhood conversion public charter schools in partnership with City Schools. Conversion charter schools are existing public schools that are transformed into tuition-free charter schools through a partnership between the local school district and an independent nonprofit organization. Open to all students living within each school's attendance zone, these schools have greater flexibility to implement innovative instructional practices, strengthen school culture, and better meet the needs of their communities.

BCP SCHOOL	SCHOOL/COMMUNITY IMPACT ¹
City Springs Elementary/Middle School	Located in East Baltimore, serves 496 Pre-K to 8th grade students: 85.3% economically disadvantaged, 10% multi-lingual learners Principal: Dr. Rhonda Richetta
Frederick Elementary School	Located in Southwest Baltimore, serves 301 Pre-K to 5th grade students: 86% economically disadvantaged, 17.6% multi-lingual learners Principal: Tetra Jackson
Govans Elementary School	Located in North Baltimore, serves 417 Pre-K to 5th grade students: 65.5% economically disadvantaged, 5% multi-lingual learners Principal: Bernarda Kwaw
Hampstead Hill Academy	Located in Southeast Baltimore, serves 930 Pre-K to 8th grade students: 38.5% economically disadvantaged, 21.3% multi-lingual learners Principal: Matt Hornbeck
Pimlico Elementary/Middle School	Located in Northwest Baltimore, serves 675 Pre-K to 8th grade students: 79.2% economically disadvantaged, 13.9% multi-lingual learners Principal: Nneka Warren
Wolfe Street Academy	Located in Southeast Baltimore, serves 248 Pre-K to 5th grade students: 71.4% economically disadvantaged, 66.5% multi-lingual learners Principal: Mark Gaither

¹ Students served is based on the City Schools official September 30, 2025, enrollment count and includes all Pre-K through 8th grade students served across BCP's six schools. Economically disadvantage and multi-lingual learner data is from SY25 Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Report Card.

Year 1 Results:

- 16.44% decrease in BCP network chronic absenteeism from SY24 baseline
- 2.67% increase in BCP network average daily attendance from SY24 baseline

MEASURE	SY24	SY25	SY26	SY24 TO SY26 CHANGE
Chronic Absenteeism	46.97%	45.55%	39.25%	7.72 percentage points
Average Daily Attendance	87.67%	88.05%	90.01%	2.34 percentage points

Attendance and Academic Achievement

Students cannot learn if they are not in school. One of the primary goals of the *Transforming Attendance Initiative* is to improve student outcomes by increasing the number of days students spend engaged in learning.

Preliminary academic data suggest that the initiative is having a meaningful impact beyond attendance. All six BCP schools demonstrated improvements in student academic performance during SY26. While many factors contribute to student achievement, increased attendance provides students with greater access to high-quality instruction, targeted interventions, and supportive relationships that are essential for academic growth.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Percent of students missing 10% (18 days) or more in a 180-day school year.²

BCP SCHOOL	SY19	SY22	SY23	SY24	SY25	SY26
City Springs	46.7	62.5	67.1	69.2	58.4	48.3
Frederick	70	82.1	75.9	75.7	73.0	55.3
Govans	44.1	54.9	46.5	34.9	32.3	24.7
Hampstead Hill	8.2	19.1	15.1	9.2	9.7	8.7
Pimlico	38.1	74	70.2	65.8	69.2	63.8
Wolfe Street	11.9	25.1	28.6	27	30.7	34.7
Average (%)	36.5	52.95	50.57	46.97	45.55	39.25

² SY19–SY25 chronic absenteeism data is from the annual MSDE Report Card, which provides the state’s finalized annual data. SY26 data is pulled from City Schools Infinite Campus Dashboard on June 16, 2026. Final numbers from MSDE may be adjusted slightly once data is cleaned.

DAILY ATTENDANCE

The total number of days of student attendance divided by the total number of instructional days in the reporting period.³

BCP SCHOOL	SY19	SY22	SY23	SY24	SY25	SY26
City Springs	88.7	84.6	84	84	86.3	88.1
Frederick	83.5	77.2	82.7	80	81.1	87.4
Govans	89.4	86.9	90	91.2	91.1	92.6
Hampstead Hill	94.5	94.5	94.1	95	95	95.6
Pimlico	90.2	80.5	83.3	83.4	82.3	85.1
Wolfe Street	95.9	92.8	92.4	92.4	92.5	91.3
Average (%)	90.37	86.08	87.75	87.67	88.05	90.01



Wolfe Street Academy

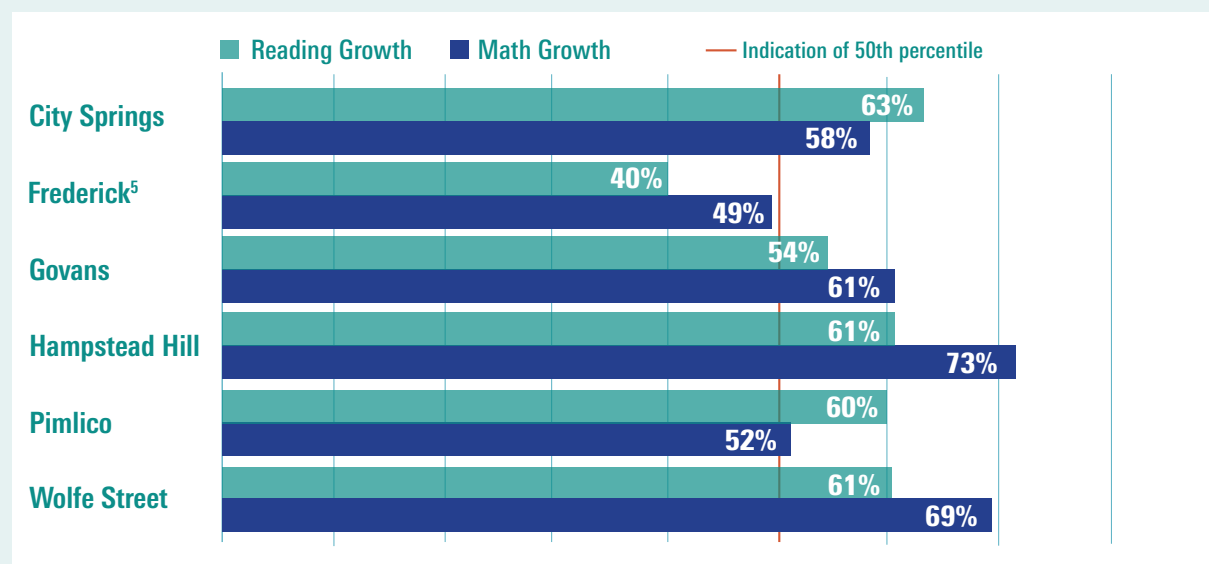
While Wolfe Street was the only school that did not show improvement in Year 1, its 34.7% chronic absenteeism rate remained below the Baltimore City average (City Schools SY24 48.7%, SY25 46.4%), and its 91.3% average daily attendance continued to exceed the district average (SY24 85%, SY25 86.2%). Serving a predominantly Latino community (66.5% multi-lingual learners), Wolfe Street faced unique challenges as heightened immigration enforcement activity and fears surrounding ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) caused some families to keep their children home.

³ SY19–SY25 daily attendance data is from the annual MSDE Report Card, which provides the state’s finalized annual data. SY26 data is pulled from City Schools Infinite Campus Dashboard on June 16, 2026. Final numbers from MSDE may be adjusted slightly once data is cleaned.

NWEA MAP Growth Assessment

In 2008, BCP began using the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth Assessment to better track students' progress in reading and math. When a student's growth is equivalent to that of the norm group (average/expected growth), the student is in the 50th percentile. "Average" growth is a positive sign, indicating the student is on track based on their previous performance. Growth is calculated based on the change between test events (e.g., fall to spring) and measures progress, allowing a student with lower overall achievement to still show high (above 50th) growth.

BCP students, on average, outperformed the national growth norm (50th percentile) in both reading and math during the SY26 *Transforming Attendance Initiative*.⁴



MCAP Performance

The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP), Maryland's annual state assessment, measures whether students are meeting the state's college- and career-ready standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. The results below compare spring 2025 and spring 2026 proficiency rates for each BCP school and provide another measure of student academic progress during the first year of the *Transforming Attendance Initiative*.

MCAP ELA and Math Proficiency Rates: SY25 and SY26⁶

BCP SCHOOL	SY25 ELA	SY26 ELA	SY25 Math	SY26 Math
City Springs	27.5	30.3	9.8	8.2
Frederick	8.3	10.3	0.3	3.5
Govans	26.2	34.7	12.9	19.0
Hampstead Hill ⁷	69.8	65.6	50.5	50.0
Pimlico	19.7	25.1	5.5	7.6
Wolfe Street	27.6	33.3	15.6	18.8

⁴ NWEA MAP Growth Assessment, fall 2025 to spring 2026 results for BCP schools.

⁵ While Frederick is not above the 50 percent benchmark, compared to previous years, the school is performing better and showing more growth.

⁶ MCAP Proficiency Rate: The percentage of students meeting or exceeding Maryland's grade-level standards on the annual MCAP assessment.

⁷ Though Hampstead Hill dropped slightly in both ELA and Math, it remains one of Baltimore's highest-performing schools, historically maintaining proficiency levels above 50 percent.

What Worked

While each of BCP's six schools faced unique attendance challenges, several strategies consistently emerged as high-impact practices that strengthened attendance systems and improved student engagement. These approaches created a more proactive, data-informed model for supporting students and families throughout the school year.

Dedicated Attendance Leadership

One of the most significant investments was hiring a full-time BCP Lead Attendance Monitor to coordinate the initiative across all six schools. Rather than each school working independently, the initiative established a coordinated, network-wide system of support. The Lead Attendance Monitor partnered with school attendance teams, analyzed attendance data, monitored progress, shared best practices across the network, and kept attendance a strategic priority through monthly principal updates.

Data-Driven Decision-Making

Building a consistent system for collecting and reviewing attendance data allowed schools to identify students at risk before they became chronically absent. Regular data reviews, school dashboards, and monthly attendance reports helped principals and attendance teams monitor progress and adjust interventions throughout the year.

Although access to district data systems posed a challenge early in the initiative, the Lead Attendance Monitor worked closely with City Schools and school-based teams to secure access to the systems and establish a consistent reporting process. This strong collaboration ensured attendance monitors had access to the tools needed for their work.

Where gaps in data access remained, the Lead Attendance Monitor provided real-time attendance analytics, enabling schools to make timely, data-informed decisions and respond quickly to emerging attendance concerns.

Building on SY25 and SY26 data, the Lead Attendance Monitor developed a database of chronically absent students to guide targeted summer 2026 outreach, using historical attendance patterns to inform and focus family engagement efforts.



Frederick Elementary (pictured above) experienced the largest reduction in chronic absenteeism:

- **24.25% decrease in chronic absenteeism rate from SY25 (73%) to SY26 (55.3%)**
- **7.77% increase in daily attendance from SY25 (81.1%) to SY26 (87.4%)**

The school's focus on positive reinforcement and celebrating small "wins" continued through the final week of school. Historically, attendance rates on the last day of school have dropped significantly low in comparison to an average school day. Frederick Elementary created a spirit week calendar to build up enthusiasm for coming to school until the very last day.

The school hosted a raffle for eligible students not identified as chronically absent and who were in attendance on the last day of school. Excitement built during the last weeks of school as the raffle's bikes, scooters, and tablets were showcased. On the last day of school, a school assembly was held to announce winners from each grade and celebrate the end of the school year.

BCP created an Attendance Report Card (top right) to send quarterly to families whose students were at risk of chronic absenteeism.

Strong Family Communication

Schools significantly expanded communication with families through quarterly Attendance Report Cards, attendance conferences, back-to-school attendance information, phone calls, home visits, and personalized outreach. These proactive efforts helped families understand the importance of regular attendance while enabling schools to identify and address barriers before students became chronically absent.

Attendance Report Cards

Originally developed using SY25 data to target and notify families when students were at risk of chronic absenteeism, the Attendance Report Card quickly evolved into a BCP network-wide initiative during Year 1. Families received a quarterly report card whenever their student was identified as chronically absent that included: their child's attendance rate; total days absent; chronic absenteeism risk; and information about why regular attendance matters. By giving families timely, easy-to-understand attendance data, schools increased awareness, encouraged earlier intervention, and strengthened partnerships with families before attendance issues became chronic.

Collaborative Attendance Teams

Formalizing multidisciplinary attendance teams improved coordination, accountability, and follow-through across every school. For example, Frederick Elementary's "A-Team" demonstrated the power of bringing together school leadership, community school staff, social workers, wellness staff, and the Lead Attendance Monitor to review student data, assign action steps, and develop coordinated interventions. This collaborative model contributed to Frederick Elementary achieving the largest reduction in chronic absenteeism across the BCP network.

Student Engagement and Positive School Culture

Attendance celebrations, incentive programs, recognition ceremonies, special events, and creative rewards helped build excitement around attending school every day. Schools were most successful when incentives reflected the interests and culture of their individual student communities rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach.

0008 City Springs Elem/Middle
100 S Caroline Street
Baltimore, MD 21231
(410)366-9165

Report generated:
11/09/2025

Student #: [REDACTED]
Grade: 07
Birthdate: 10/30/2012

Parent/Guardian of: [REDACTED]

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Our records show that [REDACTED] was identified as chronically absent during the 2024-2025 school year, and has continued to demonstrate chronic absenteeism during Quarter 1 of the 2025-2026 school year. In Baltimore City Public Schools, a student is considered chronically absent when they miss 10% or more of the school year (about 18 days).

During Quarter 1, [REDACTED] has missed: 6.5 days of school.

Regular school attendance is critical to academic success, social development, and future opportunities. Currently, your child has missed several days of school, which places them at risk of falling behind.

Why Attendance Matters

- Missing just 2 days every month adds up to approximately 120 hours of lost classroom time over the school year.
- All absences - including excused absences and vacations (which are not considered excused) - count toward a student's total days missed and can affect their attendance status.

Preventative Steps You Can Take

1. **Set a routine**
- Bedtime and morning schedules help ensure your child is rested and ready.
2. **Plan ahead**
- Schedule appointments after school hours or during breaks when possible.
3. **Communicate with us**
- Notify the school right away about illnesses, emergencies, or challenges.
4. **Stay engaged**
- Check in daily on homework and attendance.



Govans Elementary (pictured above) built and maintained a strong culture of excitement for attending school on time every day through weekly, monthly, and quarterly incentives for students and parents. These events fostered a culture of accountability for the entire family and reinforced the shared partnership required to ensure consistent attendance.

- Decreased the chronic absenteeism rate by 23.53%, from SY25 to SY26
- ELA MCAP proficiency rate improved from 26.2% in SY25 to 34.7% in SY26
- Math MCAP proficiency rate improved from 12.9% in SY25 to 19% in SY26

Key Lessons Learned, Year 1:

- Dedicated staffing is essential for the management of the attendance program.
- Real-time attendance data enables earlier, more effective interventions.
- Strong relationships with families are foundational to improving attendance.
- Flexible funding allows schools to respond to the unique needs of their communities through incentives, outreach, and engagement activities.
- No single strategy works for every school—successful attendance improvement requires adapting interventions to local community needs while maintaining strong accountability systems.

Looking Ahead

The first year of the *Transforming Attendance Initiative* established a strong foundation for long-term attendance improvement across BCP schools. While meaningful progress has been made, Year 2 will focus on strengthening systems, expanding successful practices, and continuing to reduce chronic absenteeism across BCP schools.

Year 2 Priorities:

- Continue investing in the Lead Attendance Monitor position to provide network-wide leadership and coaching.
- Strengthen school attendance teams through ongoing collaboration, accountability, and data review.
- Expand successful strategies, including Attendance Report Cards, family attendance conferences, monthly attendance reviews, and targeted student incentives.
- Improve access to real-time attendance data and reporting tools to support earlier intervention.
- Increase family outreach beginning in the summer to establish attendance expectations before the first day of school.
- Continue analyzing attendance trends to identify emerging challenges and refine interventions throughout the year.



City Springs Elementary/Middle School

Year 2 Goals:

- Schools with a chronic absenteeism rate above 40% will aim to reduce it by 5 percentage points; a school at or below 40% will aim to reduce it by 3 percentage points.
- Schools with an average daily attendance rate below 90% will aim to increase it by 3 percentage points; a school at or above 90% will aim to increase it by 2 percentage points.

BCP set differentiated Year 2 chronic absenteeism reduction goals and daily attendance goals based on each school's SY26 performance. This strategy recognizes that schools with lower attendance rates have greater opportunity for improvement, while schools already performing above 90% must work harder to achieve incremental gains. Together, these targets will help BCP continue its progress toward restoring and exceeding pre-pandemic attendance levels while ensuring more students are present, engaged, and ready to learn every day.



Pimlico Elementary/Middle School

Replicable Results:

Our experience suggests several practices can help schools improve attendance:

- Invest in dedicated attendance leadership.
- Build multidisciplinary attendance teams with clear roles and accountability.
- Use data proactively to identify students before they become chronically absent.
- Prioritize relationship-based family engagement over punitive approaches.
- Provide flexible funding for attendance incentives and family engagement activities.
- Ensure school staff have timely access to attendance data and reporting systems.

Conclusion

Improving attendance is about far more than increasing the number of students in classrooms. It is about ensuring every child has consistent access to learning, caring adults, and the opportunities that lead to long-term success.

The first year of the *Transforming Attendance Initiative* demonstrates that when schools combine dedicated leadership, real-time data, strong family partnerships, and collaborative problem-solving, meaningful progress is possible. The Baltimore Curriculum Project is committed to building on these successes and sharing what we have learned to help more Baltimore students attend school every day and achieve their full potential.



OUR BCP SCHOOLS:



OUR EDUCATIONAL
PARTNER SINCE 1996:

**BALTIMORE CITY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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