# SECTION 1: PRIORITY OUTCOME
BETTER SCHOOLS

The Priority Outcome to have Better Schools represents an investment in Baltimore's greatest asset; our youth. This priority aims to promote:
- Lifelong learning so that individuals can be prepared for careers and remain competitive in an increasingly knowledge and technology driven economy
- Community engagement and partnerships that bring individuals and organizations together in a collaborative and coordinated process
- Ensure quality and consistency, reduce duplication in services to all youth including those who are:
  - disengaged
  - at-risk
  - unstably housed or
  - otherwise vulnerable

SECTION 2: SMART GOALS

The following five goals will be used to monitor overall progress of this Priority Outcome. The goals are listed in order of priority, with the first goal, an increase student attendance serving as the driver for the additional four goals. We recognize that other goals are important to achieve the priority of Better Schools; however, proposals that impact these goals will receive priority consideration for funding.

### 1. *Increase Student Attendance*
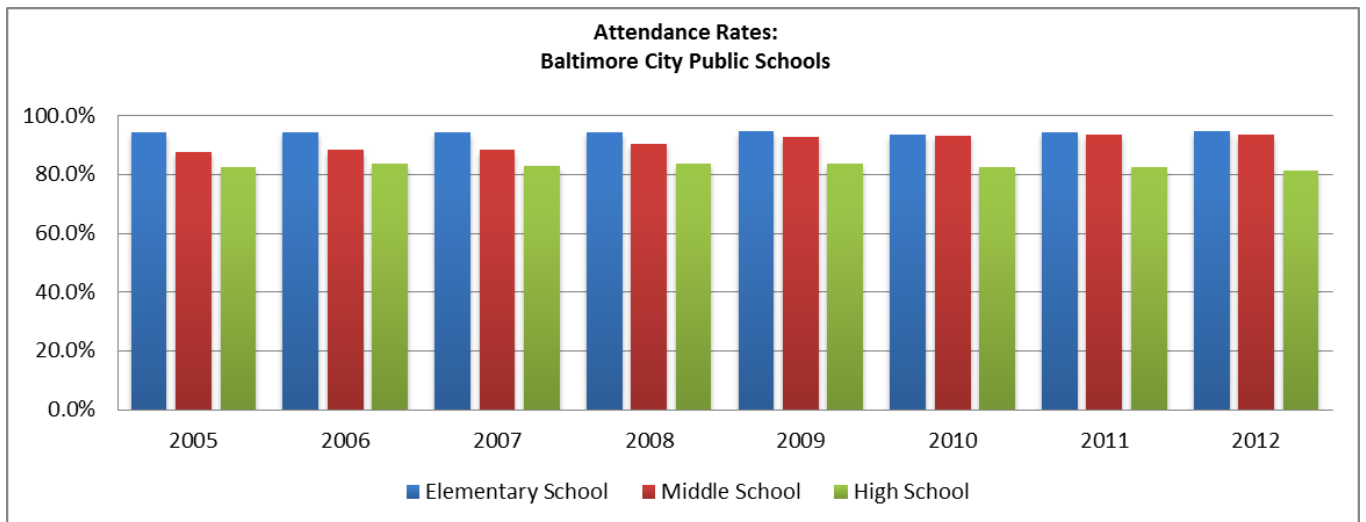
Source: 2010 Maryland State Report Card
*MD Standard is 94% Attendance

Positive school attendance has been correlated with increased student achievement in the early grades, as well as lower dropout rates and higher graduation rates in secondary grades, thereby contributing to

students graduating from high school ready for college and career. Research also indicates that successful schools begin by engaging students and making sure they come to school regularly[1].

2. Decrease the Dropout Rate

DROPOUT RATE, GRADES 9-12:
BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
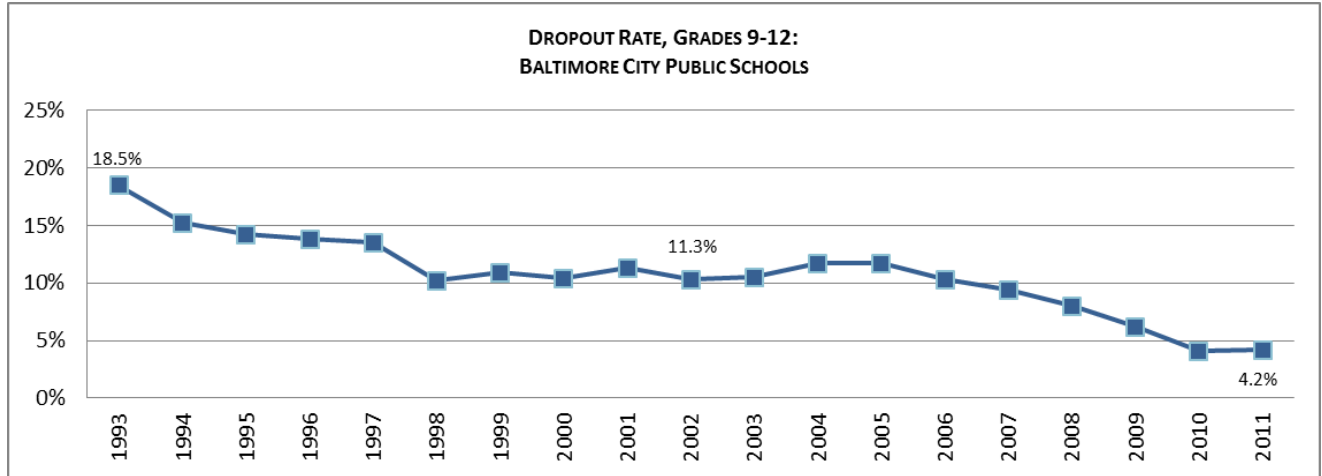
Source: 2010 Maryland Report Card

Dropping-Out of school is not a single event but the culmination of student disengagement and academic underperformance that begins as early as elementary school. In order to prevent or address the factors that contribute to students dropping-out of school, both school and community-based interventions should be utilized and coordinated using a simultaneous collaborative approach. [2]

3. Increase Percentage of Children Assessed as Ready for Kindergarten

Percent Children Assessed as Ready for Kindergarten
Baltimore and Maryland

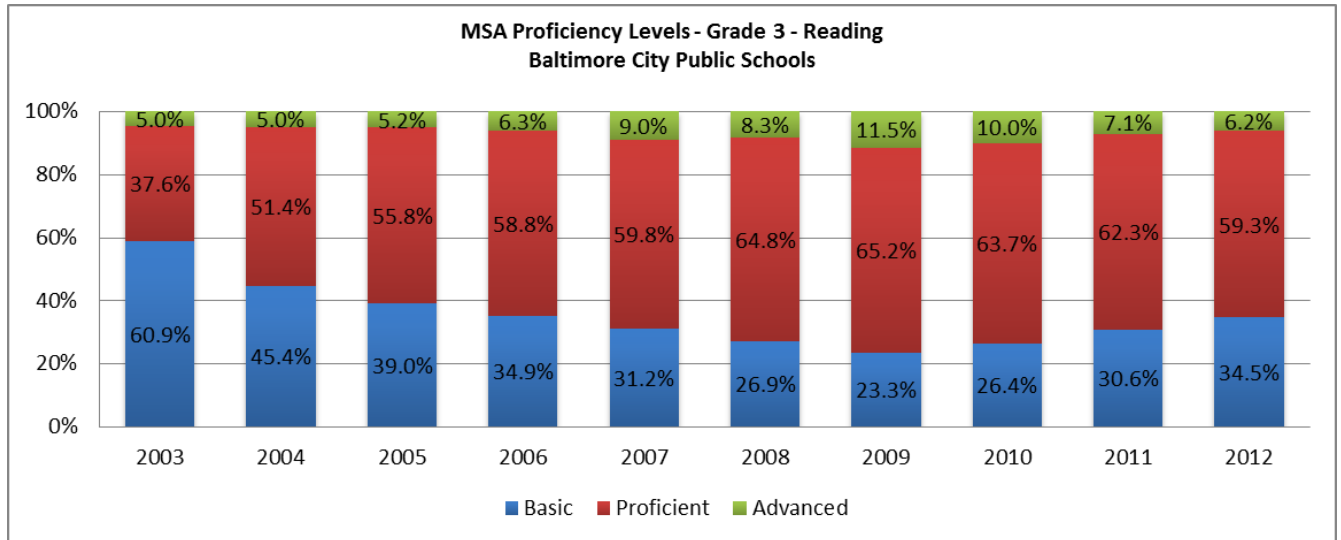■ Baltimore ■ Maryland
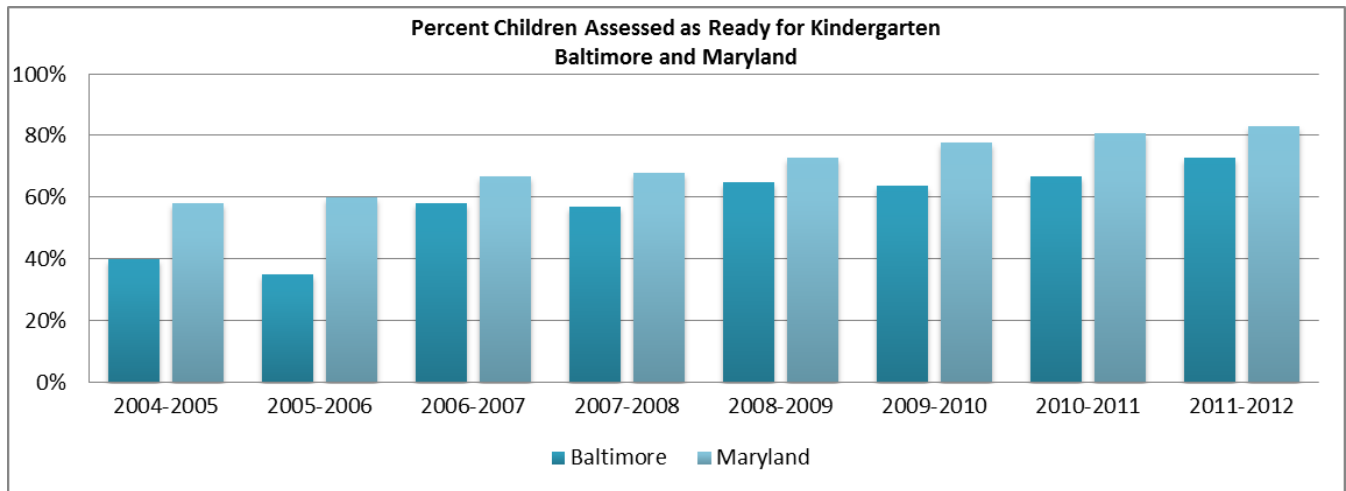
Source: Maryland State Department of Education, Working Sample System

There is compelling evidence which documents significant short and long term benefits of reading to children, especially during the pre-school years, as well as engaging them in an active learning process that is integrated into their routine environment on a consistent basis. This includes large short-term

benefits for children on intelligence quotient (IQ) and sizable long-term effects on school achievement, grade retention, placement in special education, and social adjustment.
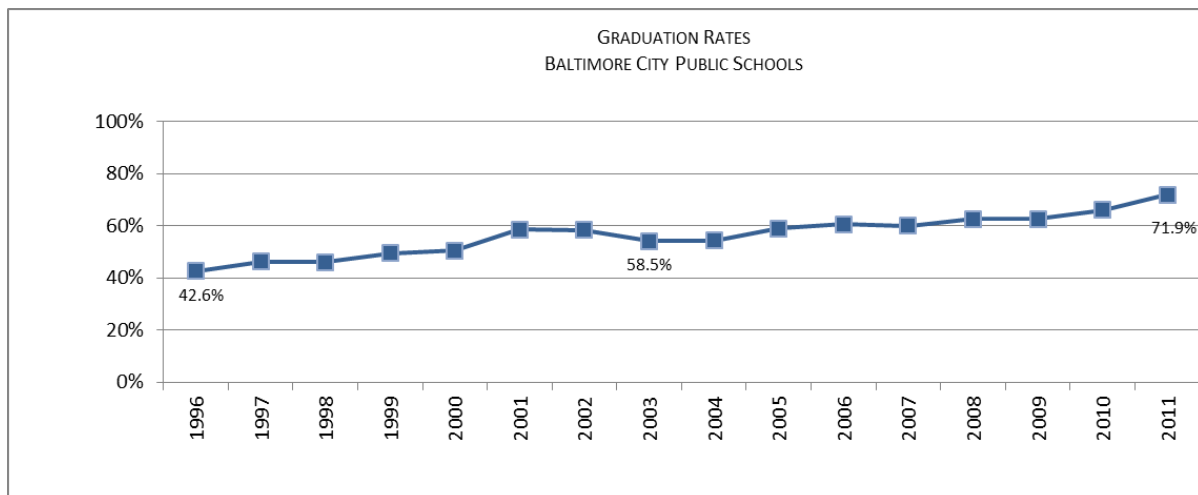
4. Increase the Percentage of 3rd Graders Reading at the proficient

MSA Proficiency Levels - Grade 3 - Reading
Baltimore City Public Schools

Year	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
2003	60.9%	37.6%	5.0%
2004	45.4%	51.4%	5.0%
2005	39.0%	55.8%	5.2%
2006	34.9%	58.8%	6.3%
2007	31.2%	59.8%	9.0%
2008	26.9%	64.8%	8.3%
2009	23.3%	65.2%	11.5%
2010	26.4%	63.7%	10.0%
2011	30.6%	62.3%	7.1%
2012	34.5%	59.3%	6.2%

Source: 2010 Maryland State Report Card

Reading proficiency at the end of the third grade is considered to be a critical benchmark in a child's development based on the understanding that most children are still *learning to read* up until the third grade. However, by fourth grade, there is the expectation that children should begin *reading to learn* and applying skills gained to further that learning. Studies have found that children who read poorly in the third grade remain poor readers in high school.[3] There is also evidence which suggests that academic success, as measured by high school graduation, can be predicted by a student's reading proficiency at the end of third grade, and that students who do not read well have a difficult time graduating from high school and being successful.
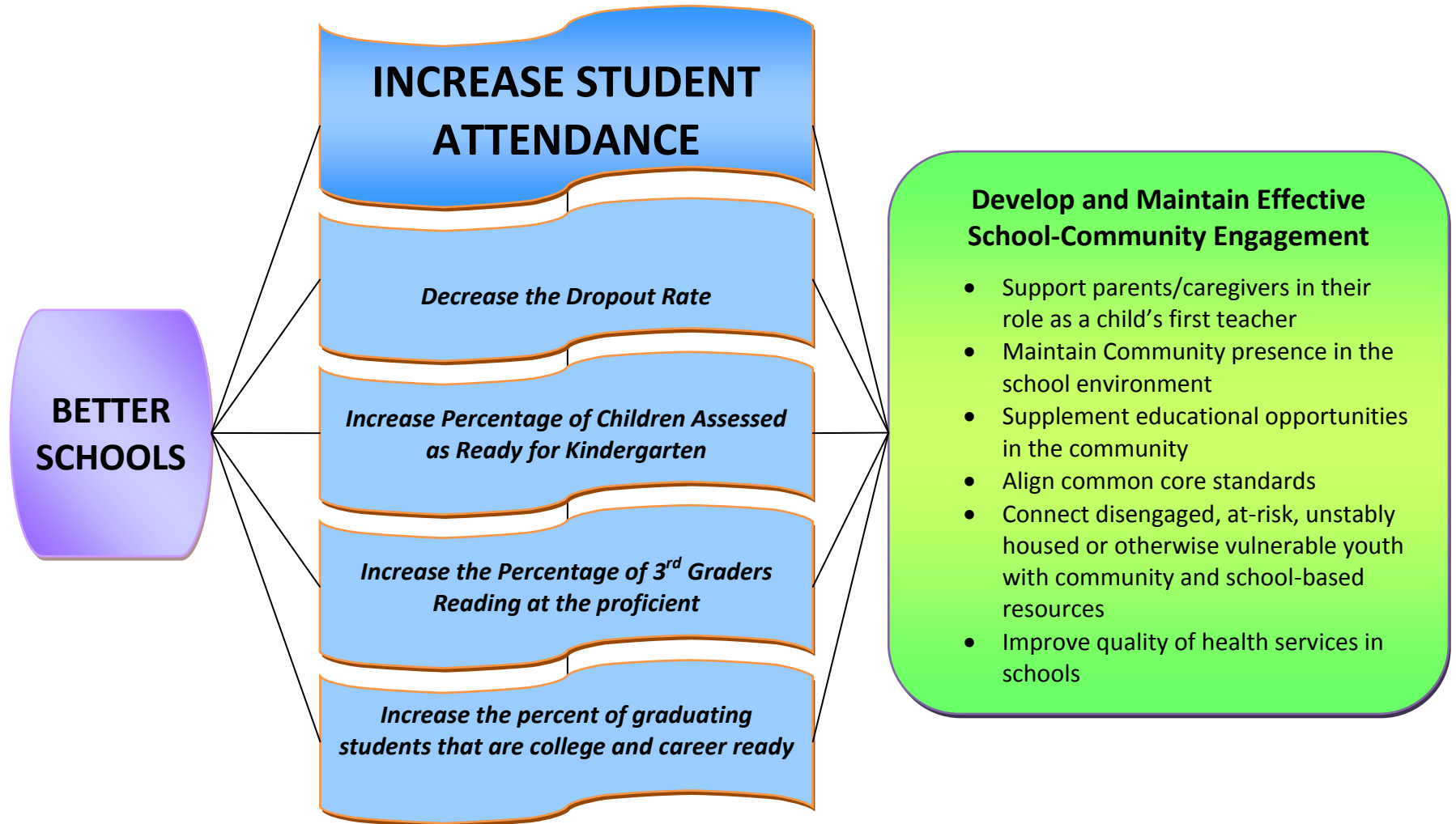
5. Increase the percent of graduating students that are college and career ready

GRADUATION RATES
BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

(Graph showing graduation rates from 1996 to 2011, rising from 42.6% in 1996, through 58.5% around 2003, to 71.9% in 2011)

Source: Baltimore City Public School System

Currently, between 30 and 40 percent of students enrolling in college require at least one remedial class that is not part of the accumulation of credits nor does it qualify for tuition aid. About half of all students who start college never finish. A recent survey involving employers who had recently hired high school graduates believed these new employees did not have the skills to advance in their jobs.

SECTION 3: CAUSE-AND-EFFECT MAP

INCREASE STUDENT ATTENDANCE

BETTER SCHOOLS

Decrease the Dropout Rate

Increase Percentage of Children Assessed as Ready for Kindergarten

Increase the Percentage of 3rd Graders Reading at the proficient

Increase the percent of graduating students that are college and career ready

Develop and Maintain Effective School-Community Engagement

- Support parents/caregivers in their role as a child's first teacher
- Maintain Community presence in the school environment
- Supplement educational opportunities in the community
- Align common core standards
- Connect disengaged, at-risk, unstably housed or otherwise vulnerable youth with community and school-based resources
- Improve quality of health services in schools

SECTION 4: SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

Our cause and effect map highlights the primary factors that lead to better schools. These factors are student attendance, successful transition from primary to secondary education, acquisition of the developmental and academic skills necessary for success in a group learning environment at school entry, achievement of reading skills at proficient and advanced level by 3rd grade, successful transition from primary to secondary educational settings and graduating with the skills necessary for success in college or career.

In addition to the focus on traditional education (K-12 and higher education), we believe it is important to emphasize the principle of life-long learning that covers the life span from early childhood, through school age, adulthood and seniors. In this age of advancing innovation from information technology and in light of the current and projected economic climate, it is critical that individuals have the opportunity to keep up with advances and continually learn.

STRATEGY: Develop and Maintain Effective School-Community Engagement

Improving academic achievement requires a holistic approach that addresses the needs of students; classroom and school related factors, as well as the community outside of school[4]. According to the National Center for Student Engagement, schools are most effective in achieving academic success when parents, school leaders, and community members work together.

There are numerous examples of school and community partnerships, each contributing to positive academic outcomes. However, the most effective school and community collaboration occurs when all members/groups within a geographic area come together to establish an educative community. The educative community is composed of a multitude of entities including:

- Individual citizens
- City government agencies
- Non-profit programs and community
- Philanthropic community
- Institutions of higher learning: colleges and universities
- Faith Based Institutions
- Unions/Labor
- Businesses
- Community associations and organizations
- Media: Radio/Television/Newspapers
- Sports and Entertainment Venues

Working together in a collaborative partnership results in the whole community being accountable for the quality of education. Achieving this goal necessitates a coordinated public awareness and marketing plan and buy-in from the entire city. Interim steps to building community consensus include:

- increasing awareness about the problems of at-risk youth;

- initiating a dialogue among leaders and community representatives;

- development of rich school-based information systems; and

- Demonstrating how to build strong relationship between public and private sectors by combining leadership and financial resources

In many communities, components of an educative community often exist, but lack the overall coordination and accountability. However, the evidence indicates that individual components have the capacity to improve student achievement. Examples of some of these are provided below.

Example 1: Support parents/caregivers in their role as a child's first teacher

Young children whose caregivers provide ample verbal and cognitive stimulation, who are sensitive and responsive, and who give them generous amounts of attention and support are more likely to be advanced in all aspects of development compared with children who fail to receive these important inputs.

Example 2: Maintain Community presence in the school environment

Volunteerism Community members can facilitate student engagement by serving as mentors for students, especially those facing the risk of chronic absenteeism. Two major national studies have reported positive results from mentoring programs. The first study reported a 37% decrease in truancy among participants in the Big Brother/Big Sister programs. The Commonwealth Fund's Survey found a 52% decrease in skipping school among participants of mentoring and programs.

This same research points to the importance of community members acting as advocates for youth. Advocacy that includes participation in change at the policy level is important in demonstrating full partnership in the collaborative process of supporting students' academic development.

Co-location of community resources in the school Research on the impact of community collaboration is ongoing. Two major programs that have been studied are full-service

community-schools and the Annie E. Casey Foundation New Futures initiative. Some of the positive results found at full-service community-schools are improved reading and math performance, better attendance rates, a decrease in suspension rates, and a decrease in the dropout rate.

Example 3: Supplement Educational Opportunities in the Community

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Increase positive OST experiences for all youth   The out-of-school hours can play a critical role in the lives of youth. With approximately 20 to 25 hours per week that children are out of school while most parents are at work, without appropriate supervision, out of school time can be used for negative behaviors. For example, 3 pm to 6 pm on school days are the peak hours for youth to commit crimes, become crime victims, smoke, drink, or use drugs or to engage in sexual activity.[5] In Maryland, 28% (270,873) of K-12 youth are responsible for taking care of themselves after school.[6]   Out-of-school time (OST) programming can be a powerful alternative. Research has shown the benefits of a quality OST program are expansive including the "fostering of positive physical, social, and civic development and the prevention or reduction in problem behaviors."[7]

Developmentally appropriate and culturally consistent out-of-school time programming can support students' growth and development. Agencies can refer to the following websites for more information on evidence based programs.
- A summary of evaluations findings from programs around the country (After School Alliance):
  http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/Research%20Factsheets%202010/2010%20Outcomes%202%20Pager.pdf
- Longitudinal findings from a study of after school programs – defining high-quality, and showing outcomes linked to participation in high-quality programs.
  http://www.policystudies.com/studies/youth/Promising%20Programs%20FINAL.pdf

In addition, the next section provides information on the specific domains that can be addressed through out-of-school programs.
- Social/Emotional Development
- Cognitive Skills
- Physical activity

Social/Emotional Development

Programs which offer opportunities for children to develop social and emotional skills are contributing to a reduction in problem behaviors, promoting positive adjustment, and enhancing academic performance.[8] Social and emotional learning is the process through which children and adults acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to, among other things, recognize and manage their emotions, set and achieve positive goals, demonstrate caring and concern for others, and

make responsible decisions. These skills enable children to calm themselves when angry, initiate friendships, make ethical and safe choices, and contribute constructively to their community. [9]

A list of model programs in this area is provided in Appendix A.

Cognitive Skills

Out of school time is also an excellent opportunity for students to enhance their academic skills at all levels. Programs serving older youth can also impact college knowledge, one of the four primary areas in determining college readiness[10]. Contextual awareness, or "college knowledge," includes the ability to interact with professors and peers and other members of an intellectual community. This dimension includes all the information—both formal and informal, stated and unstated—necessary to be eligible for admission, select an appropriate postsecondary institution, gain admission to a college, and obtain financial aid. Students with college knowledge understand college admission criteria including high school course requirements, know how to complete an application, understand that different colleges have different missions, can state approximate tuition costs and the likelihood of financial aid from various types of colleges, and know admissions-testing requirements and deadlines.

Success in college is enhanced for students who possess the knowledge and skills that enable them to interact with a diverse cross-section of academicians and peers. These include the ability to collaborate and work in a team; knowledge of the norms of the "academic" culture and how one interacts with professors, administrators, and others in that environment; the ability to be comfortable around people from different backgrounds and cultures; the ability to take advantage of academic and personal support resources available on most campuses; and the ability to demonstrate leadership skills in a variety of settings.

A list of model programs in this area is provided in Appendix B.

Physical Activity

The variation in content of OST programs provides opportunity to address multiple issues. For example, programs that emphasize physical activity such as organized sports have demonstrated a positive relationship between physical activity and grade point average, rate of learning, classroom behavior, as well as cognitive, social, and motor skill development.[11]

Developmental theorists have highlighted the character and social skills-building impacts of participating in sports, based upon a correlation between skills and habits required for success in the classroom, the athletic arena, and daily life.[12] Recent psychological and social psychological research confirms a positive relationship between sports participation and both mental health and self-esteem,[13] whereas economists have found that sports participation is often linked to higher post-school income.[14]

A list of model programs in this area is provided in Appendix C.

> **Example 4:   Align common core standards**

Recently, Maryland endorsed academic standards that are part of a movement to unify reading and math instruction across the nation, a move that would affect every public school student in the state and require new teacher training and standardized tests[15].   The potential of these standards to maximize student achievement could be increased if applied to all settings where learning occurs, such as child development centers, Head Start and out-of-school programs. Programs that are directly involved with such programs should consider the adoption of these common standards as part of the collaborative process.

Most research indicates that a common set of standards should be adopted statewide and, importantly, that these standards are aligned with the business and higher education community to ensure high school students graduate with the skill set to meet their requirements.

> **Example 5:   Connect disengaged, at-risk, unstably housed or otherwise vulnerable youth with community and school-based resources**

In this section, information on three specific subgroups will provided to assist agencies in formulating evidence based proposals to more effectively serve these youth. Proposals servicing other at-risk groups, including those involved in the Department of Social Services and the Department of Juvenile Services are encouraged.

Youth who have Disengaged/Dropped out of School

Youth are at risk for disengagement from school if they possess the following characteristics:
- academic failure
- problem behaviors , such as being disruptive or disrespectful
- a history of grade retention
- poor teacher relationships
- low attendance
- diagnosed with a disability

Conversely, students are more likely to be engaged if there is a meaningful home/school connection, opportunities for feedback and interaction with adults, structure and predictability in their environment, as well as academic and social supports.   These supportive services should be provided during both school and out-of-school time, and incorporated into the other strategies delineated in this document.

Juvenile Offenders

Another subset of the student population which requires special attention is juvenile offenders. School re-entry can be particularly challenging for these youth, requiring appropriate planning and coordination. A summary of the current best practices in school re-entry [16] [17] is provided below to assist agencies in developing proposals aimed at services to these youth:

- **Linkages among all agencies involved**—this should include the educational, justice and familial systems
- **Clearly defined roles and responsibilities**—Roles of each agency and members should be clearly stated relative to issues such as sharing of information, monitoring of youth, coordination of curriculum and development of a service plan.
- **Individualized wraparound services**—Coordination of a wraparound program that fits the youth and family's lifestyle would ensure that the youth's needs are being met.
- **Youth and family engagement**—As active members in the re-enrollment process including the development and implementation of the service plan
- **Prompt transfer of records**—Successful programs require records to be transferred from one jurisdiction to another prior to the youth's return to school
- **Pre-release training**—Youth are more likely to succeed if they participate in social skills, life skills or vocational training prior to release.
- **Appropriate and speedy placement**—all youth may not be appropriate for mainstream schools immediately following release, so that alternative or transitional schools should be available options. Irrespective of placement, it is important that youth re-enroll without delay following release to avoid re-engaging in illegal activities.
- **Availability of support services**—Juvenile offenders often face issues requiring specialized interventions including substance abuse and mental health treatment, and family/parent training, to meet their psychosocial needs. These services can be provided in school or within the community, but connecting appropriate students to these services is paramount.

In this final section, additional information concerning unstably housed youth is provided in the since the needs of these youth often go un-noticed and not addressed.

Unstably Houses and Homeless Youth

The number of unstably housed, including homeless, students has increased with the economic downturn as one contributing factor. Children experiencing homelessness face great challenges.[18] The Mayor's Office of Human Services has served 7,295 unduplicated children ages 17 years and younger through its homeless services programs since January 2010. High mobility, precarious living conditions, and poverty combine to present significant educational, health and emotional difficulties.

National research shows that within a year, 41% of homeless children will attend two different schools; 28% of homeless children will attend three or more different schools.[19] With each change in schools, a student is set back academically by an average of four to six months.[20] Many homeless children lack basic school supplies and a reasonable environment in which to do homework.   Unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness confront these and other challenges associated with homelessness without the support and guidance of a caring adult. Homeless children are truly among our City's neediest and most at risk.

Proposals are sought that promote linkages to services both inside and outside of school that facilitate stability and success for these students.[21] [22] This includes but is not limited to strategies that:

- develop partnerships between schools and agencies that serve homelessness families and a mutual referral process
- provide information about resources available for homeless students at the time of identification and/or enrollment
- provide transportation to and from school
- afford students appropriate school supplies
- ensure educators and homeless service agencies are aware of the educational rights of homeless youth

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Example 6: Improve quality of health services in schools

Childhood health problems can prevent poor children from achieving economic success as adults. Income-related disparities in childhood health are evident at birth or even before, and the disparities grow more pronounced as children grow older.

Research shows that children are less likely to be in excellent or very good health if they come from low-income families, racial ethnic minorities and/or mothers with low educational levels.[23] Low income children have a higher incidence of health problems that interfere with learning, such as chronic asthma and vision and dental problems.[24] In addition, low income children receive less and lower quality medical care than wealthier children who have the same health problems.[25] Asthma is the most common cause of school absence, yet with proper care, both emergency room visits and hospitalizations can be avoided, but many Baltimore City children lack access to asthma specialists who can provide them with an appropriate care plan.[26] These findings suggest that the increased availability of and access to health services can provide much needed access to care that children need. Using schools as such a venue can not only address health needs, but allow students to focus on learning.

Proposals are sought for strategies to support evidenced-based interventions[27] designed to address common health challenges that interfere with learning, including, but not limited to:
- detecting and correcting vision problems
- Detecting and managing hearing problems
- developing and implementing management plans for chronic health problems
- completing immunizations at the appropriate ages
- detecting lead poisoning
- promoting efforts to keep all children free from exposure to tobacco smoke
- expanding opportunities for good nutritional habits

SECTION 5: CRITERIA

In addition to the criteria specified below, we seek proposals that:
- provide specific numerical targets in any or all of the five goals
- demonstrate collaboration among agencies and external partners to ensure quality and consistency, reduce duplication in services to all youth including those who are disengaged, at-risk, unstably housed or otherwise vulnerable

Consistent with all the other Mayoral priorities, proposals will also be rated according to the following criteria:

- **Value**: Proposals that demonstrate good value tell us what we can expect to be delivered per dollar spent. Value is a measure of both efficiency and the effectiveness of a service.

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- **Strength of alignment with the Priority Outcome, Goals, and Strategies.** This refers to the extent to which the proposal is consistent with the guidelines established in the guidance document

- **Innovation:** Innovative proposals demonstrate new solutions or the degree to which the service improves or re-engineers the way a service is currently delivered. Even high-value services as they currently are delivered have areas for improvement.

- **Multiple Priority Outcomes:** We seek proposals that demonstrate the ability to address multiple Priority Outcomes concurrently.

- **Leverage**: We seek proposals that demonstrate the ability to leverage other funds or resources for service delivery, and/or collaborate with other internal or external entities.

- **Evidence-based**: We seek proposals that deliver a service that is proven effective through empirical data or professional best practices. This can be an agency's data gathered through CitiStat or some other performance measurement effort, or reliable data gathered by another organization.

- **Part of a Strategic Plan**: We seek proposals that advance an existing or emerging strategic plan. Strategic Plans outline clear goals and objectives with specific action items, funding sources, individual roles, and time lines. Examples include the City's Sustainability Plan, Comprehensive Master Plan, Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, Birth Outcomes Plan, etc.

- **Customer Service Focus:**   We seek proposals that focus on providing excellent customer service. Think of customers broadly and to include internal customers, such other City agencies or City staff members, and external customers, including citizens and users of City services.

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