



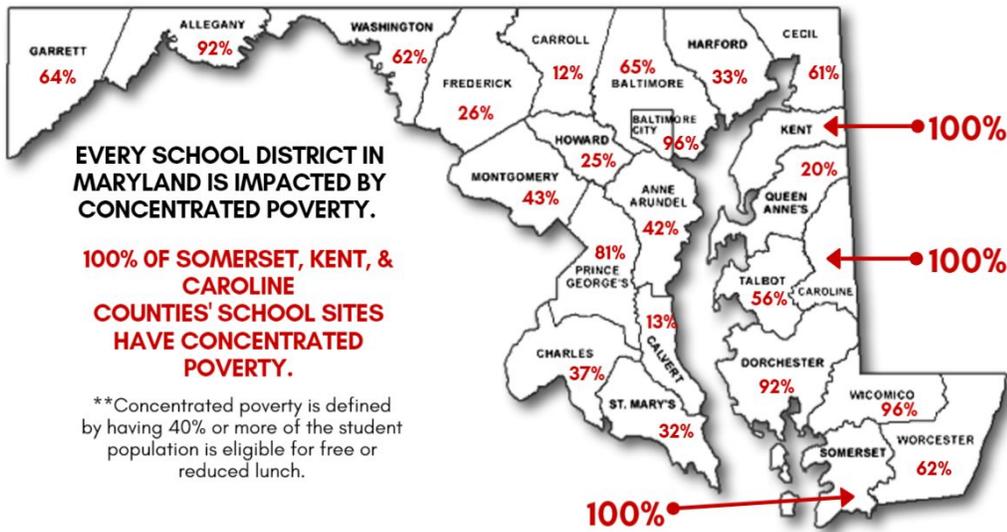
## Handout 1: Group Reading Material

Last month, your team talked about how schools in Maryland are funded. By the state's own analysis<sup>1</sup>, schools are annually underfunded by at least \$2.9 billion. Additionally, you examined different statistics indicating that not all students across Maryland are receiving a world-class education, yet. Strong Schools Maryland believes every student is capable of learning at high levels and deserves access to a world class education system. This month, teams will discuss the issue of concentrated poverty in Maryland's schools and get an overview of the document the Kirwan Commission's using as a framework for improving schools.

### The perils of concentrated poverty

The U.S. Census Bureau has defined concentrated poverty as a census tract where 40% of people live below the poverty line. For school districts, this is most often measured by the number of students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Concentrated poverty in Maryland crosses racial, urban, suburban, and rural divides: 822 of Maryland's 1412 schools (58%) serve a population of concentrated poverty. Additionally, 44% of all Maryland public schools students are considered to be living in poverty. Research<sup>2</sup> has established that students living in poverty, students with special needs, English language learners, and undocumented students require more resources in order to receive an adequate and equitable education when measured by contemporary standards.

### PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL SITES WITH CONCENTRATED POVERTY



The percentage of children eligible for free and reduced price meals has doubled since the last time education funding was studied in 2002. Concentrated poverty is therefore a primary education challenge in Maryland. It is important to note that concentrated poverty impacts every jurisdiction and spans racial lines.

The current focus of Strong Schools Maryland is to ensure the Kirwan Commission produces a strong report (due on 12/31) that lays out the path to creating a world-class education system. The Kirwan Commission is working from a document titled "9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System" (summarized on the back) produced by the National Center on Education and the Economy<sup>3</sup>. The report summarized research from the last 25 years looking at international systems that consistently outperform the United States. Each building block is broad and there are many different solutions that fit within each building block. There is no one right answer or quick fixes in the fight to create a better education system for every student in Maryland. Money matters, but so does how we spend the money. The commission is reviewing each building block and how it should be applied to Maryland. They are currently debating each policy recommendation and looking for consensus among the commission. The public can view where there is currently consensus among commission members online<sup>4</sup>. On the back are the 9 building blocks (summarized). Your team leader has a hard copy of the full report or see the link in the footnotes (it is short and readable). In addition to the 9 building blocks, we will talk more about concentrated poverty and how community schools can play a role in supporting schools in concentrated poverty. Next month, we will explore other topics to make sure we have a well rounded and world class system (early childhood supports, career pipelines, etc).

Strong Schools Maryland supports the 9 building blocks (on back) and wants to make sure the commission is adapting each building block to solutions that work in the context of Maryland. This month, we will look at part of the solution to addressing concentrated poverty in Maryland's schools. **In our letters, it will be important to let the commissioners know that we expect them to produce a report based on the "9 building blocks" that lays out a bold vision for a world class education system and explains the associated costs. We do not want the commission to produce a watered down report simply because they think it will be politically easier.** We need a strong report because that will be the ceiling of any legislation that is written.

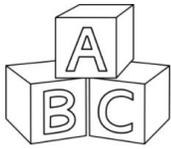
<sup>1</sup> <http://bit.ly/adequacystudy>

<sup>2</sup> Baker, B., Sciarra, D. and Farrie, D. (2010). *Is School Funding Fair? A National Report Card*. Rutgers University/Education Law Center.

<sup>3</sup> <http://bit.ly/kirwan9buildingblocks>

<sup>4</sup> <http://bit.ly/currentagreements>

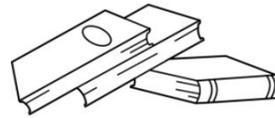
## 9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System



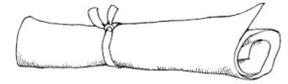
Supports for children and families before they arrive at school



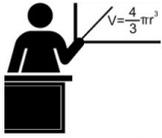
More resources for at risk students



Rigorous standards-internationally benchmarked



Be transparent about what qualifications earn a HS diploma



Abundant supply of highly qualified teachers



Professionalize teaching with incentives and support to continuously improve



Career and vocational education pipelines



Leadership development for leaders at all levels of the system



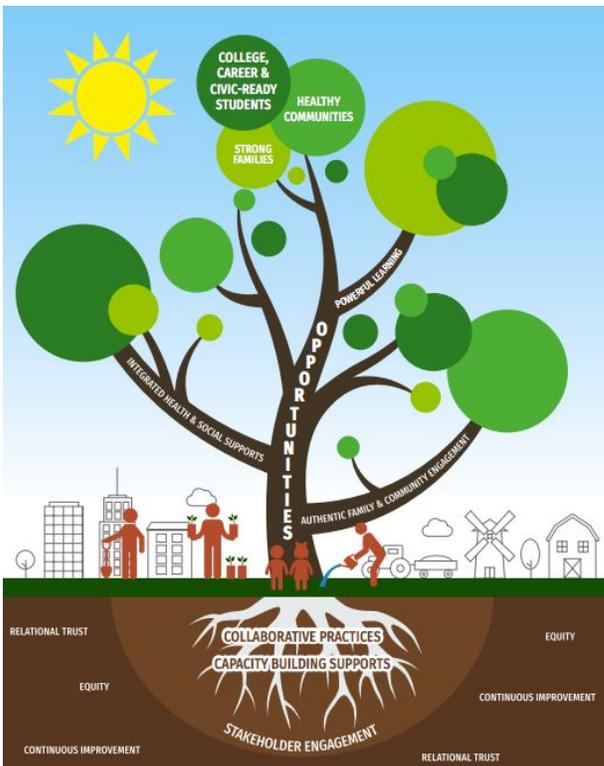
Governance structure with authority and legitimacy to create accountability

### One Part of the Solution: Community Schools

To be clear, the best way to improve all schools, including schools in concentrated poverty, is to push for reforms that include all 9 building blocks. However, *one piece* of supporting schools with concentrated poverty is the Community Schools program. While multiple factors contribute to lower academic outcomes for students who attend high-poverty schools, the results are clear: students attending less-affluent schools academically perform behind than their peers in areas of higher wealth. For example, on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), low-income fourth grade students given the chance to attend more-affluent schools are two years ahead (in math) of low-income students in high-poverty schools.

One strong reason that students in high-poverty areas do not perform as well as students in wealthier areas is that there are far more non-academic needs that are not being fully met. In addition to providing more funds for students attending schools serving a population in concentrated poverty, each school site with concentrated poverty should be designated a “Community School.” The Community Schools

program coordinates essential external services for students and families so that the needs of the whole child and family are met.



Community Schools integrate academic and health services, youth development, expanded learning opportunities, and family and community supports to boost student success.<sup>5</sup> Each Community School site has (at a minimum) a full time staff member called a Community School Coordinator. A Community School Coordinator may arrange for students to receive eye exams and eyeglasses free of charge through outside programs, such as Vision for Baltimore, a partnership between the Baltimore City Health Department and Baltimore City Public Schools. Examples of other services coordinated through the Community Schools program includes out of school time programming, health classes for middle schoolers, financial workshops for parents/guardians, and increasing academic support for students by coordinating with outside community partners.

In a study evaluating 20 community school initiatives across the country, ~75% of the programs achieved improvement in individual academic achievement<sup>6</sup>. Additional benefits included improved attendance, reduced behavioral/discipline problems, reduced suspensions/expulsions, increased access to physical and mental health services and preventive care, decrease of abuse and neglect, and increased promotions and on-time graduations.<sup>7</sup> A cost-benefit analysis of community schools nationwide found that every dollar spent returns \$11.60 of social value.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <http://familyleague.org/focus/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://bit.ly/communityschoolsmd>

<sup>7</sup> Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools. (2003). Coalition for Community Schools. <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/Page/CCSFullReport.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel, J. and Snyder, J. (2015). *Community Schools as an Effective Strategy for Reform*. Available at: <http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/community-schools-web11.pdf>.