

# Northeast Baltimore partnership strengthens city, schools

We are writing to share the story of a collaborative initiative that points in a positive direction towards the vision of strong schools for all of Baltimore's children. As participants in a unique partnership with a neighborhood association, a Catholic school, a traditional public school and a public charter school, we certainly understand the complexity of all the issues facing schools and families these days in Baltimore.

Founded in 2009, the Northeast Schools Alliance (NeSA) brings together St. Francis of Assisi (a Catholic elementary school), Hamilton Elementary Middle School (a traditional public school with a unique arts and environmental program), and City Neighbors Charter School (a grassroots charter based on a progressive model of education). With support from the Goldseker Foundation and Healthy Neighborhoods, NeSA works to help these schools share their strengths with each other, to build strong bonds with the neighborhoods they call home, and to spread the new message of great city schools far and wide.

Often, when we meet, we have to consider – together – the challenges we face, such as facilities, autonomy and public perceptions. But we have decided, in spite of the complexities, to connect, to collaborate, to celebrate who we are in spite of the issues. The reason we can do this work? We are focused on the students we serve, the city we love and the possibility of creating great schools from one end of this city to the other. We feel fortunate to be involved with such an innovative program, and we feel confident that a spirit of collaboration for the common good can only help move us all forward.

*Rebecca Malone is principal of St. Francis of Assisi School. This letter was also signed by Mike Chalupa, principal of City Neighbors Charter School, and Bill Murphy, principal of Hamilton Elementary Middle.*