

A letter from Dr. Andres Alonso
March 28, 2008

Dear Friends of Baltimore City Schools:

The last week has been an important one for Baltimore City public school students. Last Tuesday, I presented a new approach for the FY2009 budget--we call it Fair Student Funding--to the Board of School Commissioners and the public.

Fair Student Funding would fundamentally change how we fund our schools, and dramatically reduce the size of our central office. This new way of managing money for schools is the critical first step to building a system of great schools for all of our children.

At the heart of Fair Student Funding is the deep conviction that responsibility and resources must be located in our schools--where our children are. Principals and school communities must be able to allocate resources in a way that is thoughtful, strategic and directly responds to the needs of their students. Right now, it doesn't work that way. Schools receive staff, supplies and services from central office, which is too far removed to be able to know best what each school needs. Meanwhile, principals and school communities, who are with the children every day, now have discretion over only a tiny portion of their budget.

A school is not just a building. It is an act of creative imagination about how every child can grow into his or her unique potential. Principals, teachers and families imagine all the time what they could do in a different kind of system, one where they could act on their knowledge and ideas about what kids need to achieve. Fair Student Funding will not only allow, but require them to act on that imagination, because it moves money away from central office to the schools. The central office will provide clear guidance and support, but key decisions will be made where they should be made--in the schools.

I am sending you some information on Fair Student Funding, how it will work and what it means for our students. Please link below to a detailed overview of this new funding strategy, and a briefer parent guide that spells out what it means for each family's child. For more information still, please visit the Baltimore City school system website www.bcps.k12.md.us. I invite you to familiarize yourself with Fair Student Funding, ask any questions you may have, and join us as we begin the creative imagining about what we can do together for our children.

Yours truly,
Andrés Alonso