



CITY NEIGHBORS SCHOOLS

Baltimore, Maryland

I love this school. I wake up happy! —City Neighbors learner

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE FOR EVERY STUDENT TO BE KNOWN, LOVED, AND INSPIRED? This question drove the design of Baltimore’s City Neighbors. From the hallway design, to the maker mentality, to their pod model, the learner is celebrated in everything City Neighbors does.

Inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, learning at City Neighbors is deep, passion-driven, and active. Learners grapple with big questions through a myriad of long-term, intensive projects. These projects not only foster learning aligned with State Content Standards but also inspire learners to be creators, explorers, problem-solvers, and risk-takers. **Personalized** to their interests, the projects provide the time and space for learners to delve deeply into topics that compel and intrigue them. This exploration takes them down paths that are both **relevant** and **contextualized**. Learners are challenged to synthesize and demonstrate their discoveries and learnings. And with City Neighbors’ arts-infused model, these demonstrations of learning employ visual arts, music, movement, drama, puppetry, poetry, and storytelling. Operating as rotating gallery space, the walls of City Neighbors’ hallways come alive with learning.

Guided by their belief that the environment is the third teacher, City Neighbors has redefined the use of hallways, classrooms, and walls—every square foot of physical space engenders a culture of collaboration, independence, and high academic achievement. They’ve incorporated their values of trust, transparency, and joy into every nook and cranny. Glass is infused between classrooms and hallways to support passive supervision and fluidity of learning; benches and alcoves line the halls encouraging collaboration and conversation; and the cafeteria, lobby, outdoor stage, and village squares act as communal spaces for meetings and events.

Family is a word often heard at City Neighbors, and not just to mean parents and children—it characterizes the relationship of the entire school community. United behind a commitment to diversity and inclusion, no voice at City Neighbors is ignored or left unheard. Parents, educators, and leadership act as collaborators and co-creators to take on the essential work of the school. Their governance model brings all the players—learners, parents, educators, leadership—to the table as a unified Board of Directors.

Perhaps the best expression of City Neighbors’ **socially embedded** family ethos is the pod. What’s a pod? Sixteen learners, one educator, and four years together. Kids gather every day for a two-hour block of time in spaces designed like living rooms with couches and coffee tables. In addition, each learner has their own desk to use however they please. Each day, pod cohorts gather to discuss whatever is on their minds. When problems surface they are supported to work them out collaboratively and constructively. This time and space together encourages learners to develop **agency** for themselves. Pods are learning spaces, social spaces, and hanging out spaces.

At City Neighbors, relationships are at the core; kids have countless ways to learn and express themselves; and space organically creates community. Welcome home.

FACTS & FIGURES

Charter
800 learners (K-12th grade)
3 schools
Learners with disabilities: 25%
Free or reduced lunch: 70%
Graduation rates: 100%
College enrollment: 93%

CONNECT

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EDUCATION REIMAGINED

