

NEWSLETTER



Southwest Baltimore Charter School

Where academics, family and community come together.

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HOME SWEET HOME!

We have dreamed of writing this article for six long years. We are finally, finally, finally going to have our own home!

The Baltimore City School System Board of Commissioners has decided to close Diggs-Johnson, an underperforming middle school in southwest Baltimore. The Board of Commissioners has also decided that Southwest Baltimore Charter School will be moving into the Diggs-Johnson building for the 2010-2011 school year and beyond. We will be welcoming the Diggs-Johnson students to SBCS. This is exciting for so many reasons.



SBCS 5th Graders Keith and Asia

expected! Our families with middle school children are thrilled.

- The school system believes in us, and wants to use this transition as a model for how charters can partner with the system to create optimal schools of choice for children throughout Baltimore.
- The Diggs-Johnson staff and families have been gracious, welcoming, helpful. The school has made incredible strides in the last two years. We are poised to continue the progress they have made.
- The building is in southwest Baltimore, the community we were founded to serve.
- We can finally sink our teeth into one building, one project, one place to call home.
- We will be welcoming 130 7th and 8th graders from Diggs-Johnson, which means that we will be a full K – 8 school earlier than
- The school is a stone’s throw from Carroll Park, one of Baltimore’s most beautiful parks. The park is over 30 acres of green space, complete with basketball courts, baseball and football fields, a skateboard park, and a recreation center.

We will be keeping you updated on our next steps. We are pleased as punch, but know that we have a lot to do in the next few months. The building is in need of serious repairs, and we are also figuring out how to adapt our program so that we are ready to welcome our new Kindergarteners and the Diggs kids! We will most certainly be calling on all of our supporters to help us make this transition.

Stay tuned for details on our House Warming Party. You’re invited!

MISSION

To empower each student to achieve authentic academic success by harnessing the kindness, cooperation, and trust of faculty, family, and community.

VISION

SBCS is a vibrant, rigorous school of active learners at the heart of a thriving Southwest Baltimore community.

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PLAYWORKS AND THE RAVENS

With a generous grant from the Ravens All Community Team Foundation, SBCS has been delighted to welcome Playworks into our school this year. Playworks currently operates in two dozen elementary schools in Baltimore – bringing safe, inclusive, meaningful play to close to 10,000 City students before, during, and after school each and every school day. Playworks is based on the belief that play creates valuable opportunities for children to grow physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. Research shows that play is essential to a child’s development and an invaluable tool for improving school climate. When students engage in quality recess and playtime, they return to the classroom more focused and ready to learn.

Playworks places one full-time, well-trained adult “coach” at an urban school to teach and organize games and physical activities before, during, and after school. Playworks’ programs specifically work to engage kids who are not typically involved in play on the playground—those who do not feel safe, those who are intimidated or bullied, those who are overweight, and those who feel their skill level is not up to par. To the delight of the children, our coach plays too, which provides an element of fun as well as the opportunity to model appropriate behavior.



Playworks “Coach” Josh Caprio plays 4 square with 5th Graders, one of the many activities students get to choose from during recess.

At SBCS, Playworks allows kids to “play” in five different ways: Recess, Class Game Time, Junior Coaching, After School Program and Sports Leagues. Each of these parts of the Playworks curriculum builds young people’s life skills, provides them with meaningful roles and leadership opportunities, and fosters supportive relationships with peers and adults. Thank you Ravens! Thank you Playworks!

GETTING TO KNOW...

In this issue, we would like you to learn more about the SBCS Middle School Administrator, Ms. Jaime Stone.



Ms. Jaime Stone

Jaime Stone is our new Middle School Director. She holds a Masters of Science in Education Administration and Supervision of Schools from Johns Hopkins University. She has worked with both the Maryland Charter School Network and the DC Public Charter High Schools as an Educational Consultant. She was a founding staff member of Connexions Charter School here in Baltimore. And, most exciting of all, before joining SBCS, she served as a School Designer for Expeditionary Learning Schools. Her experience helping schools all across the country implement Expeditionary Learning, our school design model, is invaluable. Her incredible knowledge of Expeditionary Learning, combined with her intelligence, insight, high standards, and passion for middle school students make her a wonderful addition to our staff. The dynamic duo of Ms. Stone and Ms. Turi are sure to continue raising the bar and creating an incredible learning environment for our children. We welcome Ms. Stone. She is definitely somebody you should get to know!

ANOTHER FIVE YEARS

This February, SBCS was one of 3 schools to be given a full 5 year charter renewal by the Baltimore City Public School System Board of Commissioners. While several other schools received 2 year renewals and one school’s charter was revoked, SBCS had the best possible outcome: another 5 years. We are very proud and pleased that in all categories—academic achievement, culture and community engagement, and organizational viability—we scored well. We are excited about the next 5 years, and look forward to making our strong school even stronger.



SBCS 2nd Graders collaborating on a project.

SECOND GRADE SUPPORTS BARCS

On Thursday, January 14th, Southwest second graders had two special visitors. BARCS Animal Program Manager Debby Rahl, accompanied by her dachshund, Walter the Wonder Weiner, came and spoke with our second graders about shelter dogs and cats. After having such an incredible visit and learning that our local organization, Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter (BARCS), has over 600 cats and dogs, our second graders were moved to action!

Linking beautifully with our current investigation dealing with numbers and place value, second graders started a school wide penny drive. Students started by advertising with flyers. Second graders launched their first fundraiser at the school wide meeting on February 5th. Despite the snow break, students (and teachers!) around SBCS have been striving to fill penny jars. For a month, second graders have been practicing sorting, grouping, and counting play coins. Thanks to the efforts of Southwest, second graders have some real money to count – a lot of it, as a matter of fact! To



Ms. Debby with Walter and an SBCS second grader.

date, second graders have counted \$191.50 in pennies, nickels, dimes, and dollars. Come to the Culminating Event on March 25th to see how much our second graders present to Ms. Debby and Walter!



Artwork by an SBCS 4th Grader during the Solar System Expedition

STAR PARTY

Last November the fourth grade traveled to the Goddard Space Center for a close up look at the sky. The NASA astronomy club held their fall star party and invited us to be the special guests. Since our expedition was titled, *How Do We Make Sense of Space?*, we thought this the perfect trip. And it turned out to be just that! The night was absolutely gorgeous, and in star party terms that means not a cloud in the sky. (That also made it very COLD, but we bundled up.) With the help of our NASA friends we were able to see a waning moon, Jupiter and its four Galilean moons, Uranus, Cassiopeia, the Andromeda Galaxy, the Pleiades, a double star system, the ring nebula and a whole lot more! The astronomers treated us to a science on a sphere show, answered our questions, tested our knowledge (we passed!), and gave us full reign of the visitor center. It was a great trip that we still talk about.

YOUNG PICASSOS

Artwork created by 4th and 5th Graders of SBCS



FIRST GRADE SAVES THE MANATEE

The culmination of first grade's expedition on Manatees was pretty spectacular. They made rice krispie treats and sold them to other SBCS students during lunch time in order to raise money to adopt a Florida manatee. The first graders raised enough money to adopt two endangered manatees. Their donation went directly to the Save the Manatee Foundation, and now Dana and Rosie are part of the SBCS Family.



Dana (top) and Rosie, the two adopted manatees by the first grade.

A NEW GUITAR FOR SBCS

Recently, our music teacher, Tony Bianca placed a listing on donorschoose.org requesting an acoustic guitar to teach SBCS scholars how to play guitar during music class as well as start up an after school guitar program. After a few short weeks, everyday heroes contributed money to the cause and the dream became a reality! If you would like to see other SBCS teacher requests please go to donorschoose.org and search for Southwest Baltimore Charter School.



Tony Bianca plays the newly donated guitar for his students.