

# The Abell Report

*What we think about, and what we'd like you to think about*

Published as a community service by The Abell Foundation

## The Baltimore region is moving towards greater economic school segregation – in the face of recent data reconfirming the educational value of greater economic school integration.

### ABELL SALUTES: Maternity Center East. Clinic, counseling center, and home — “Women like to come in just to talk.”

Maternity Center East is the oldest continuously operating family planning clinic in Baltimore City. Established in 1972, the clinic provides family planning, obstetric, prenatal and primary health care to adolescent girls and women in East Baltimore. The clinic, affiliated with Johns Hopkins Health System, serves hundreds of predominantly low-income patients, many of whom have been receiving care from Maternity Center East for many years. 33% of the clinic's family planning patients are uninsured, and 47% are on medical assistance. The clinic has a sliding fee scale for patients who are uninsured, and does not turn anyone away because of inability to pay. In addition, the clinic provides free or low-cost contraceptive supplies to uninsured patients to help them avoid unintended pregnancies.

Since 1993, The Abell Foundation has provided funds to Maternity Center  
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### *A report to the community and recommendations for resolving the problem.*

**By David Rusk**

**I**n the realm of educational research, there is little dispute about the paramount role a school's socioeconomic makeup plays on the academic achievement of its students.

The first to advance this notion was sociologist James Coleman, who in 1966 released a path-breaking study concluding that the socioeconomic characteristics of a child and of the child's classmates were the factors that accounted overwhelmingly for academic success. Nothing else – expenditures per pupil, pupil-teacher ratios, teacher experience, instructional materials, or the age of school buildings, for example – came close. Decades of research have confirmed Coleman's findings, research summed up in 2001 by Richard D. Kahlenberg of the Century Foundation:

*What makes a school good or bad is not so much the physical plant and facilities as the people involved in it – the students, the parents, and the teachers. The portrait of the nation's high poverty schools is not just a racist or classist stereotype: high-poverty schools are often marked by students who have less motivation and are often subject to negative peer influences; parents who are generally less*

*active, exert less clout in school affairs, and garner fewer financial resources for the school; and teachers who tend to be less qualified, to have lower expectations, and to teach a watered-down curriculum. Giving all students access to schools with a core of middle-class students and parents will significantly raise the overall quality of schooling in America.*

In 1998, I first explored the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement in Baltimore-area schools in a report for The Abell Foundation. That study, which examined student achievement in Baltimore City and Baltimore County, found a very strong inverse statistical relationship between a school's success rate on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) tests and the proportion of low-income children enrolled in that school.

In that report, I concluded: “To be an educational fortune-teller, you don't have to know the background of a school's principal or its teachers, its expenditure per student, nor its average class size to have a pretty good idea what the school's academic level will be. At least 80% of the answer lies in the circumstances of the children's homes –  
*continued on page 2*

and their neighborhood.”

That conclusion remains valid today, as the results of a new study of the Baltimore area demonstrate. In this case, I analyzed student achievement not just in Baltimore City and Baltimore County, but in all 372 public elementary schools in the larger seven-county Baltimore region. Once again, this study of standardized test scores and demographics confirms the crucial role that socioeconomic status plays in educational achievement.

In sum, the results make plain that the economic mix of a school has a strong effect on students’ achievement in both math and reading. The numbers also show that the greater the number of students from non-low-income families in a school, the higher its students’ scores on standardized tests.

The results suggest that mixing low-income children into overwhelmingly middle-class schools will produce significant gains in the low-income students’ academic achievement. Indeed, socioeconomic integration may be the best educational strategy for improving those students’ academic performance.

Unfortunately, public schools in the Baltimore metropolitan region are far from integrated economically. In fact, the data show a distressing trend in the opposite direction: the region’s schools are growing increasingly segregated, both racially and along socioeconomic lines. Any effort to reverse this trend will be exceedingly difficult, but we cannot ignore the fact that students from the least advantaged backgrounds will pay the price as the schools become ever more economically segregated.

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**Demographics**

Enrollment trends over the last decade provide a dramatic measure of just how racially segregated the Baltimore region’s schools are becoming.

First, we should review Baltimore City’s population drain between 1993 and 2002. In that decade, the City school sys-

tem lost 14% of its students; enrollment in the older, inner suburbs (Baltimore County and Anne Arundel County) grew modestly (15% and 11% respectively). Enrollment in the outer suburbs’ enrollment (except Carroll County) grew more robustly.

An important racial shift was also taking place. In that decade, the total number of white students in the region’s public schools grew by a negligible 1%, while African American enrollment soared 15%. Although the Baltimore City public schools still account for the lion’s share of African American enrollment, black students were dispersed throughout the metro area’s school districts (except Queen Anne’s County).

At the same time, both the Baltimore City and Baltimore County public schools lost white students in substantial numbers. Clearly, white child-rearing families are decamping to the outer suburbs with Carroll, Howard, and Queen Anne’s Counties experiencing double-digit increases in white enrollment during the decade.

**Table 1**  
**Overall enrollment levels in metro Baltimore school districts 1993-2002**

School District	1993	2002	% Change
Baltimore City	110,662	95,475	-14%
Baltimore County	93,270	107,212	+ 15%
Anne Arundel County	67,427	75,081	+ 11%
Carroll County	23,165	28,127	+ 7%
Harford County	33,797	39,966	+ 18%
Howard County	32,959	46,257	+ 40%
Queen Anne’s County	5,752	7,232	+ 26%
Totals	367,032	399,350	+ 9%

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**Table 2**  
**Racial enrollment trends in Baltimore area school districts 1993-2002**

School District	1993	white		1993	black	
		2002	% change		2002	% change
Baltimore City	18,297	9,967	- 46	91,029	83,719	- 8
Baltimore County	70,297	64,018	- 9	19,071	36,160	+90
Anne Arundel County	54,395	55,802	+3	10,843	15,107	+39
Carroll County	22,372	26,833	+20	474	680	+43
Harford County	28,702	32,048	+8	3,864	5,897	+53
Howard County	25,566	31,789	+24	4,844	8,234	+70
Queen Anne's County	4,830	6,369	+32	852	740	- 13
Totals	224,459	226,826	+1	130,977	150,537	+15

**Table 3**  
**Enrollment by race in 125 majority-black Baltimore area elementary schools in 2002**

percentage black enrollment	no. of schools	black pupils	white pupils	cumulative % of all black enrollment
99-100% black	44	18,188	51	27
95-98.9% black	27	13,774	216	47
90-94.9% black	10	4,871	167	54
80-89.9% black	12	4,491	423	60
70-79.9% black	14	4,532	1,006	67
60-69.9% black	7	2,464	895	71
50-59.9% black	11	2,597	1,597	74

**Table 4**  
**Enrollment by race in 247 majority-white Baltimore area elementary schools in 2002**

percentage white enrollment	no. of schools	black pupils	white pupils	cumulative % of all white enrollment
50-59.9% white*	17	3,272	3,144	96
60-69.9% white*	20	3,978	5,896	93
70-79.9% white*	31	3,644	9,495	87
80-89.9% white*	51	3,655	18,520	77
90-94.9% white*	50	1,890	21,006	59
95-98.9% white*	65	1,027	32,574	39
99-100% white*	14	52	6,730	74
Totals (tables 3 & 4)	372	68,435	101,720	na

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*Overall, 74% of African American pupils attended majority-black schools.*

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As significant as these numbers are, district-wide statistics tend to mask the substantial degree of segregation by race that still exists in the area's public schools. (See Table 3).

At one extreme, in 2002 the region had an astounding 44 elementary schools (all in Baltimore City) whose student populations were 99 to 100% black; more than one-quarter of the region's African American pupils attended these all-black schools. Eighty-one elementary schools were more than 90% black. Overall, 74% of African American pupils attended majority-black schools.

At the other extreme, the region had 129 elementary schools that were more than 90% white; they enrolled 59% of the region's white pupils. In all, 96% of white pupils attended majority-white schools. In sum, when it comes to race, the Baltimore region's schools are highly segregated.

Moreover, the numbers reveal a high correlation between racial segregation and economic segregation. Every one of the 44 all-black schools had a majority of students whose family income qualified them for free or reduced-priced meals at school (referred to in this report as "low-income" students). On average, 89% of pupils in all-black schools qualified for subsidized meals. Similarly, at 27 schools that were nearly all-black, an average of

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**Table 5**  
**Economic profile of 125 majority-black**  
**Baltimore area elementary schools in 2002**

percentage black enrollment	number of schools	majority low-income schools	average % low-income
99-100% black	44	44	89
95-98.9% black	27	27	78
90-94.9% black	10	5	60
80-89.9% black	12	9	66
70-79.9% black	14	11	68
60-69.9% black	7	3	58
50-59.9% black	11	6	51
	125	105	75

**Table 6**  
**Economic profile of 247 majority-white**  
**Baltimore area elementary schools in 2002**

percentage white enrollment	number of schools	majority low-income schools	average % low income
50-59.9% white	17	6	45
60-69.9% white	20	3	33
70-79.9% white	31	7	30
80-89.9% white	51	6	23
90-94.9% white	50	3	14
95-98.9% white	65	1	10
99-100% white	14	0	7
Totals	247	26	21

78% of the students qualified for subsidized meals.

The results are equally striking at the other end of the scale. As shown in Table 6, only four of 129 schools that are 90% or more white have majorities of low-income students. The odds are nine to one that a child in a majority-white school will have a majority of middle-class (non-low-income) classmates. The 247 majority-white schools averaged only 21% low-

income children.

To summarize, in the Baltimore area, racially segregated schools are economically segregated schools.

What are the educational consequences?

### **Socioeconomic status and schoolwide CTBS scores**

The Maryland State Department of Education’s (MSDE) annual “report card”

for each public school offers a rare opportunity for researchers. In addition to providing overall test scores for each school’s pupils, MSDE’s report breaks down results by different categories of pupil characteristics – gender, race and ethnicity, special education status, Limited English Proficiency, and, most importantly for this study, by general economic status.

This study relies on test score data for all 372 elementary schools in the Baltimore metropolitan area – Baltimore City and the six counties of Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Carroll, Harford, Howard and Queen Anne’s. The test used was the nationally-normed Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), used by MSDE in concert with the former MSPAP, and currently with the recently introduced Maryland State Assessments (MSA).

Unlike MSPAP results, CTBS provides individual student data that allow us to distinguish between scores for low-income pupils and middle-class pupils. From this, we can assess the effect a school’s socioeconomic profile has on certain categories of students.

For this report, I charted each school’s median percentile results for 2nd and 4th grade reading and math on the CTBS for 2000, 2001 and 2002. I then compared the composite percentiles (six figures for each school) with the average percentage of low-income or non-low-income pupils, over the same three-year period.

Not surprisingly, the numbers showed a very high correlation between socioeconomic diversity and test scores. Overall, a school’s percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-priced meals explained 81% of the school-by-school variation in CTBS results. In somewhat imprecise layman’s terms, this means that knowing the percentage of low-income pupils, one can predict a school’s CTBS score within 7.5 percentiles of the actual

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score 95% of the time.

Looking at it another way, the results showed that, on average, every 1% change in the proportion of low-income versus non-low-income students will change the school’s median composite CTBS scores by – 0.48 percentile. That is, as the proportion of pupils eligible for free or reduced-priced meals increases, a school’s median CTBS score goes down.

**Socioeconomic mix and low-income pupils’ CTBS scores**

Some data were also available regarding individual test scores for both eligible low-income students and those who are not eligible. The data were available only for two years of test scores, 2001 and 2002, and results for sample groups of less than five students were withheld. This smaller volume of data reduces the reliability of the analysis.

Even with that limitation, the data confirm the relationship James Coleman first identified 37 years ago: low-income

pupils make measurable academic progress when attending middle-class schools.

A regression analysis shows that classmates’ socioeconomic status explains 21% of the variation in low-income pupils’ reading scores, 28% of the variation in math scores, and 27% of the variation in combined scores. For every 1% increase in middle class classmates, in other words a low-income pupil’s scores will improve, on average, 0.18 of a percentile.

These numbers are not as dramatic as those depicting the relationship between a school’s socioeconomic profile and school-wide CTBS scores. Nevertheless, it is a powerful, statistically significant relationship.

Table 7 illustrates this by grouping schools into deciles based on socioeconomic status. Looking at the bottom of the table, we see that low-income pupils in schools with more than 90% low-income enrollment averaged in the 31st percentile in their CTBS test battery. Low-income pupils in a subset of six schools that had

an almost entirely low-income enrollment averaged in the 24th percentile.

On the other hand, low-income pupils in schools that had more than 90% non-low-income enrollment scored, on average, in the 48th percentile.

This finding is remarkably parallel to the results of other research, as summarized by Richard Kahlenberg. Similarly, in my own study of Albuquerque schools, I found that the average pupil from a public housing household increased CTBS scores by 0.22 percentile for every 1% increase in middle-class classmates. In a study of Texas school districts, results showed that for every 1% increase in middle-class pupils, low-income pupils increase their chances of achieving a passing rate on the Texas state exams by 0.27 of a percentage point.

Whether it’s Albuquerque, Texas, or metropolitan Baltimore, the conclusion is clear: Putting low-income children into middle-class schools will lead to important gains in their academic achievement. Indeed, integrating our schools across income levels may be the best way to improve those students’ performance.

**Looking ahead**

The Baltimore regional test data again demonstrate the role that socioeconomic status plays on both individual student achievement and school-wide results. At the same time, the enrollment figures highlight the increasing economic segregation in the Baltimore region – segregation that will inevitably penalize students from the area’s low-income families. The area’s leaders must look for ways to address this situation. There are at least three to consider:

I. One obvious but politically treacherous solution would be to enroll students across county lines. Missouri, for example, funds a longstanding “voluntary,” cross-district integration program that was

**Table 7**

**Distribution of CTBS median percentiles for low-income pupils by deciles of percentage of low-income and non-low-income pupils in 337 elementary schools in 2001 and 2002**

percentage of low-income or percentage of non-low-income	number of schools	mean of low-income median percentiles
90-100% non-low-income	101	48.2
80-89.9% non-low-income	53	45.8
70-79.9% non-low-income	47	45.0
60-69.9% non-low-income	18	41.1
50-59.9% non-low-income	19	40.4
50-59.9% low-income	26	41.4
60-69.9% low-income	15	39.7
70-79.9% low-income	22	35.7
80-89.9% low-income	27	35.1
90-100% low-income	45	30.8
[95-100% low-income]	[6]	[24.0]

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brokered in the shadow of a civil rights suit. The State provides special funding to 16 suburban districts that enroll 12,500 black students annually from the City of St. Louis and to the city school district that enrolls 1,500 suburban students in its magnet high schools.

However, given the political realities here, it would be more productive to consider less dramatic action. For example, the Baltimore region has fewer school districts than any comparably sized, multi-county region in the country. What would be the result if each of the seven school boards adopted a common policy to achieve maximum economic integration within each of the seven districts?

School boards in La Crosse, Wisconsin; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Wake County (Raleigh), North Carolina; and San Francisco have adopted just such policies in recent years. The most common approach is to try to have the enrollment of low-income students in every school approximate that of the district-wide average (plus or minus 15% points).

Simulating such an integration policy would lead to substantial enrollment realignments within Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Harford Counties. A modest realignment would occur in Howard County, while little realignment would take place in Carroll or Queen Anne's Counties. Simulating such a policy of maximizing socioeconomic integration within each district would reduce the economic school segregation index from 61.7 to 53.5 – about a 13% improvement.\*

With Baltimore City having only one elementary school with fewer than 50%

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low-income students, such an economic realignment policy is not worth considering. There are just not a sufficient number of white or non-low-income pupils left within the City schools to make any difference. Yet it remains a fact that nearly seven out of 10 of the region's black elementary school pupils and more than half of its low-income pupils are enrolled in the City schools – in effect quarantined from better educational opportunities.

II. Though some gentrification is occurring in Baltimore as in many cities, the middle-class newcomers are overwhelmingly households that have either no children or that choose to send their children to parochial or private schools. No central city has yet succeeded in re-attracting large numbers of middle-class children back into its city school district.

Nonetheless, Baltimore City has some strong assets around which it could rebuild

its middle-class pupil population school by school. The City continues to be the location of major, high-quality employment centers, including a strong downtown with its corporate offices, banks, utilities, law, accounting, and other business-services firms and federal, state, and city-county office complexes; major medical centers; and major university and college campuses, like Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland.

Across the country there are many examples of major private and public employers that use their own corporate or institutional funds to provide grants for down payments and to subsidize low-interest mortgages for employees who will buy homes in surrounding neighborhoods. Such employer-assisted housing benefits are becoming increasingly common both to reduce employees' commuter times and costs and as a strategy to gentrify the declining neighborhoods in which many such hospitals and college campuses are located.

In Albuquerque the city government and school district have collaborated to create two elementary schools with special enrollment policies. Both schools are located in predominantly low-income, but slowly gentrifying neighborhoods surrounding downtown Albuquerque. The school district provides an enriched, magnet-school curriculum. The City covers the costs of an extended day program. A smaller neighborhood attendance zone has been created so that no more than half of each school's capacity is filled by neighborhood children. The rest of the enrollment is reserved for children of downtown office workers who drop their children off at school on the way to work and pick them up again at the end of the work day. Both schools have been very popular with working parents.

On a school-by-school basis, such creative policies might help rebuild the

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\* The "segregation index" (a statistically common "dissimilarity index") uses a scale of 0 to 100 in which 100 would equal total economic school segregation – that is, there would be entirely separate schools for all low-income pupils and all non-low-income pupils. An index score of 0 would mean that every school would have the same percentage of low-income pupils (35%) as the seven-county, region-wide percentage.

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middle class enrollment of the Baltimore City Public School System.

III. Over the long term, the area's leaders must recognize that to achieve greater racial and economic integration, we must act on a metropolitan-wide basis through changes in the housing market. More racially and economically integrated neighborhoods will produce more racially and economically integrated neighborhood schools.

One model can be found in Montgomery County, Maryland, which for three decades has had the nation's most comprehensive inclusionary zoning policy. Complying with a near-countywide policy adopted in 1973, private, for-profit homebuilders have delivered more than 11,000 Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDU) as integral parts of new subdivisions and apartment complexes. MPDUs must be sold or rented to eligible families that earn no more than 65% of the area's average income. (By law, the County's public housing authority purchases or rents one-third of the MPDUs in order to assist very low-income families as well.)

Adopting a regional inclusionary zoning law would be the most important single step that any metro area, including greater Baltimore, could take to reverse trends toward greater economic segregation. Such a redistribution of low-income workers would invariably lead to a greater socioeconomic integration in schools outside the city. While actions to balance school enrollments socioeconomically within each district could hypothetically reduce economic school segregation by 13% (from 61.7 to 53.5), a

region-wide mixed-income housing policy over the past 20 years could have further reduced economic school segregation to 25.8% – a 60% reduction! Even achieving half such an ideal result would mean that the Baltimore region's schools would be among the nation's most economically integrated.

The consequences for Baltimore City would have been dramatic. From a system with 83% low-income pupils, the dis-

trict average would have been reduced to 53%. Meanwhile, no suburban district would have exceeded the regional low-income average (35%). No suburban elementary schools would have enrolled a majority of low-income students.

We can also say with confidence that a more balanced income mix in the classroom would lift achievement levels for students from low-income families. ■

## ABOUT DAVID RUSK

“David Rusk is the hottest urban expert in the nation today,” the Baltimore Sun commented in reviewing *Baltimore Unbound*. *Cities Without Suburbs*, the *Congressional Quarterly* wrote, has virtually become “the Bible of the regionalism movement.” The Government Finance Review called Rusk's most recent book, *Inside Game/Outside Game*, “a must-read for all practicing local government officials, elected or appointed, working in a metropolitan area.”

Rusk combines strong analytical skills with practical political experience. He is a former federal official, New Mexico legislator (1975-77) and mayor of Albuquerque (1977-81), the USA's 36th largest city.

Rusk is now an independent consultant on urban and suburban policy. Since 1993 he has spoken and consulted in over 120 US communities. Abroad, Rusk has lectured on urban problems in England; Berlin, Stuttgart, and Frankfurt, Germany; and in Toronto and Victoria, Canada. In 1997 he served as an advisor to the government of South Africa on metropolitan governance in Johannesburg, Capetown, and Durban. During 2000 he was a visiting professor at the University of Amsterdam and Delft Technical University in The Netherlands.

Rusk attended the University of California at Berkeley, graduating Phi Beta Kappa as the outstanding undergraduate student in economics (1962). From 1963-68 he was a full-time civil rights and anti-poverty worker with the Washington Urban League. He then entered the U.S. Department of Labor, serving as the Manpower Administration's legislative and program development director. In 1971 he and his wife, the former Delcia Bence of Buenos Aires, Argentina, moved to Albuquerque, where they raised their three children. They now live in Washington, DC.

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## ABELL SALUTES:

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East to pay for contraceptive supplies for uninsured women. The clinic's family planning efforts have met with success: in FY2003, just 5% of its 180 active family planning patients and less than 6% of adolescent family planning patients had unplanned pregnancies.

Other numbers reinforce the clinic's success story: Maternity Center East provides its services to approximately 800 needy women in three clinics — Pregnancy Registration, Adolescent Pregnancy, and Family Planning – conducting nearly 2,400 patient visits per year at a cost of \$156 per patient visit. In a neighborhood with a teen birth rate that is nearly one and a half times the City-wide rate, and where more than 76% of families with children under age 18 are headed by single parents, these are dollars well spent to prevent unintended pregnancies and ensure that teens and women who do give birth have healthy babies. Boasting a teen pregnancy rate less than a quarter of the estimated rate (26%) for the surrounding Madison/East End neighborhood, Maternity Center East is having an important impact on the lives of its adolescent patients.

The clinic's accomplishments have not gone unnoticed: Maternity Center East was named "best Hopkins clinic" by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations in 1998 and 2001, and "best community clinic" by the Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition in 1998.

Although teen pregnancy and birth rates have declined significantly over the past decade, Baltimore continues to outpace Maryland and the United States in

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its rate of births to teens. In 2000, Baltimore's teen birth rate of 83.3 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19 was more than double the statewide rate of 41.2, and 72% more than the national rate of 48.5. With an estimated 44% of teen pregnancies ending in abortion or miscarriage, the teen pregnancy rate is far higher than the teen birth rate – approximately 150 pregnancies per 1,000 females ages 15-19, or 15%, in Baltimore. In addition to teen births, the proportion of babies born to unmarried women – 70.5% of all births in the City in 2000 – is among the highest in the nation. Moreover, 7% of Baltimore women who gave birth in 2000 received late or no prenatal care, nearly twice the statewide rate of 3.7%.

These numbers have serious consequences for individual women and their children. Nearly 14% of babies born in Baltimore in 2001 had low birth weights,

placing them at higher risk for a range of developmental delays and lifelong disabilities. In 2001 Baltimore's rate of 11.9 infant deaths per 1,000 live births was 50% higher than the Statewide rate of 7.9. In addition, numerous studies have documented the risks posed to both teen and unmarried mothers and their children, including: higher rates of school dropout among teen mothers; higher rates of poverty in families headed by teen and single mothers; higher rates of child abuse and neglect; and poorer school performance among children raised in these families. These outcomes underscore the importance of quality, affordable, accessible family planning and reproductive health care for women in Baltimore. By providing such care to hundreds of low income women each year, Maternity Center East helps its patients pursue their lives without the burden of an unwanted pregnancy, and helps Baltimore's children enjoy a healthy start in life.

Jeri Mancini is the director of Maternity Center East and speaks with understandable pride of the clinic's remarkable record. "We are often serving three generations in the same family," she says. "To these families we are more than clinic. Here they find the comfort and hope of home, hospital and counseling center. Many of our clients come in just to talk. Maybe that confidence in us is the best endorsement of our work."

The Abell Foundation salutes Maternity Center East, a clinic where women who want to take charge of their health can come in and "just talk," while receiving first-rate family planning and prenatal care. ■