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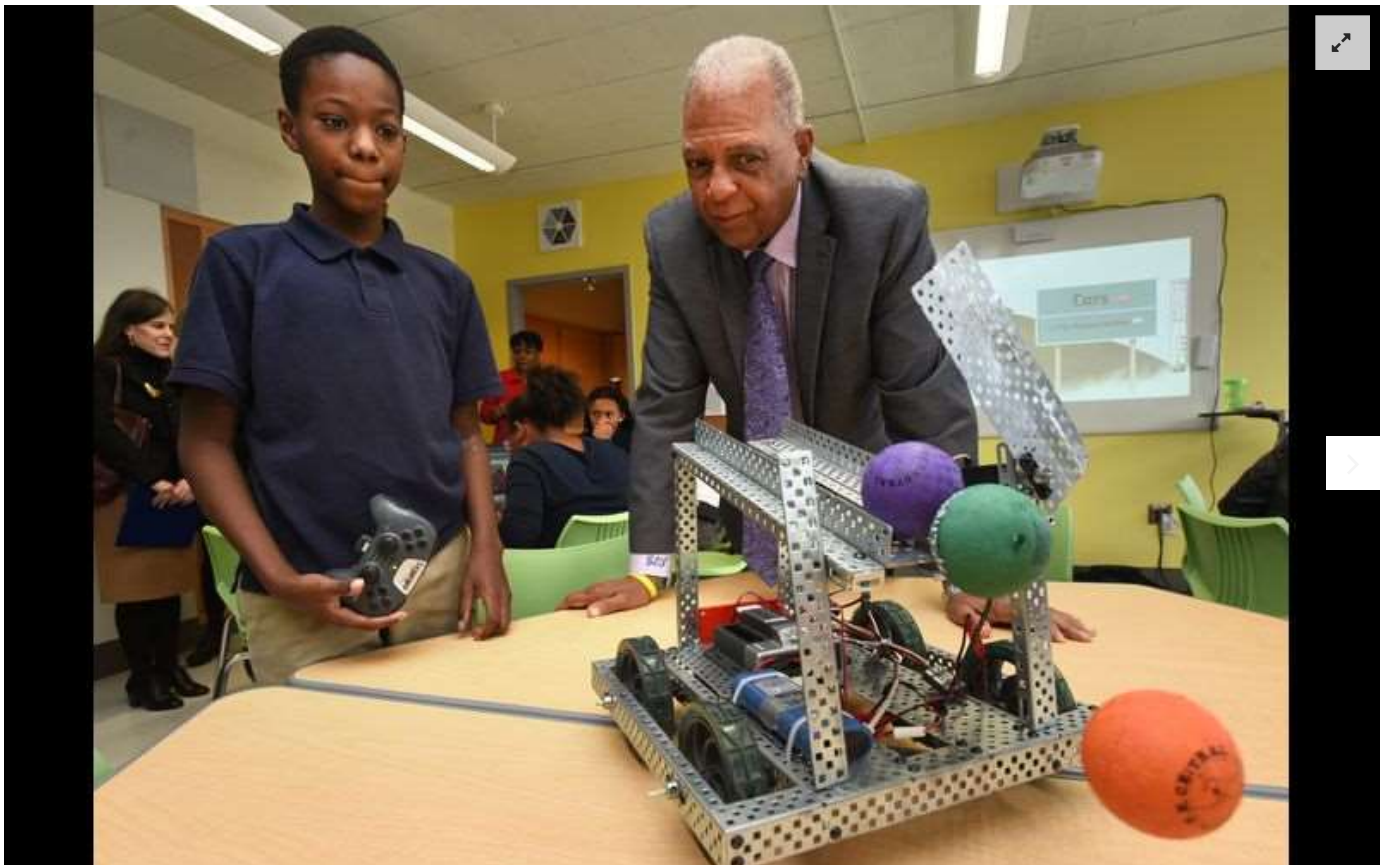
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Hopkins opens new engineering lab in city elementary school

By ERICA L. GREEN
THE BALTIMORE SUN | NOV 12, 2015



Barclay Elementary/Middle School

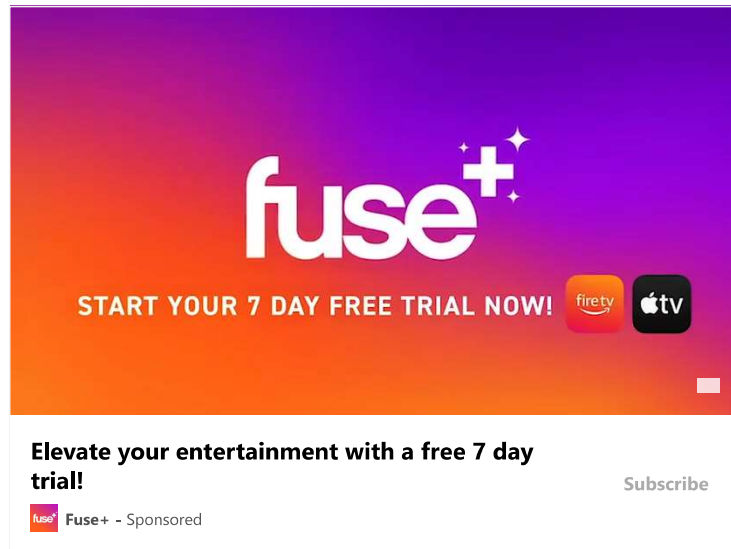
Sixth grader Gary Hawkins III, left, demonstrates for Baltimore City Schools CEO Gregory Thornton how one of the robots designed for the "Vex Nothing But Net" competition works. It was designed in an after school robotics program, held at the 29th St. Community Center. School officials and representatives from Johns Hopkins University visited Barclay Elementary/Middle School to celebrate the launch of a \$5 million engineering and computer science oriented curriculum, funded by the university with a ten-year commitment. (Amy Davis / Baltimore Sun)

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Gary Hawkins III stood with a group that was admiring the ball-carrying robot he'd built in about one month. The Baltimore seventh-grader was glad they appreciated his work, but he wasn't satisfied.

"It's stable, it doesn't break down," he said. "But there's always room for improvement."

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The aspiring engineer looked around brightly lit engineering lab unveiled Wednesday at Barclay Elementary/Middle School, and seemed to map out plans: programming new codes and rearranging the tables and chairs to allow for a bigger, better robot to zoom across the expansive room.

"In this space," he said, "the possibilities are for something great."

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With a \$5 million,10-year investment from the Johns Hopkins University's Whiting School of Engineering, Barclay became the city's first pre-kindergarten-through-eighth-grade school to offer engineering and computer sciences.



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Hopkins officials showed off state-of-the-art technology that included Smart Boards, 3-D printers and computers that are custom-programmed for engineering applications.


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The Whiting School will help implement the curriculum and train teachers, and offer weekend and summer and enrichment opportunities.

The partnership is one of many to which Hopkins has committed in its plan to help strengthen the 10 neighborhoods that surround its Homewood campus. Officials say the plan is driven by a philosophy that schools should serve as magnets and anchors in their communities.

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Hopkins President Ron Daniels has pledged \$10 million over five years toward that effort.

At the celebration Wednesday, he said the lab represents investments that can tackle problems facing the nation. American students rank among the lowest performers of math and science in the developed world.

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"We have this deficit in the sciences and math that we know greatly hobbles our children's futures," Daniels said. "From that abstract level of urgency, we have to do something concrete to fix this problem, and this is part of that [effort.]"

Ed Schlesinger, dean of the Whiting School, said exposing students to engineering creates thinkers that can change the world.

"Engineers are problem-solvers," he said. "The skills they're learning reinforce the skills in all disciplines. When you solve problems, you can improve people's lives and make the world a better place."

Schlesinger said the engineering program will be a 10-year commitment — a stretch that means it will be in place as students who are just starting at the school now as pre-kindergartners become eighth-graders.

Principal Armanda Carr said the curriculum will bolster Barclay's existing science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics theme.

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Aareanna Seldon, a sixth-grader, said she was surprised by the lab — and by how much it made her enjoy science and math.

"At first I was like, 'it's not going to be all that,'" she said. "Then I saw it was so big and had all of this equipment. Being in here is a good start to changing people's mindset."

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