

## School Days: The Green School of Baltimore

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Downtown Baltimore Family Alliance in Charles Cohen, School Days



### The Green School of Baltimore

2851 Kentucky Avenue

*In our series, **School Days**, downtown families share their experiences sending their children to Baltimore City Public Schools. Our hope is that this series can become a resource for downtown parents making important decisions about their children's education.*

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#### **What's your name and what neighborhood does your family live in?**

Charles Cohen, Fells Point

#### **What are your children's names and ages?**

Ellie, 8, Lilah, 5

#### **What grade are they in at The Green School?**

Kindergarten and 2nd Grade

#### **How long have they been attending?**

A year and three years

#### **Tell us a bit about your process in choosing a school for your children. Did you consider other schools? How did you settle on The Green School?**

Ellie's name came up on the lottery. We heard rave reviews of The Green School. The selling point at the time was the school's heavy reliance on writing and reading and the fact that the curriculum

utilizes nature every chance it gets. Ellie was a nature freak and we just wanted to see what would happen. We also liked that the school was relatively small. Then she went into Kindergarten and we have never looked back. I have to say Ms. Buckley and Ms. Buie have created one of the greatest kindergartens. I'd put it up to any school, anywhere. They're on my second child and it's amazing to watch Lilah just soak up all this info in such an unforced way.

### **Is The Green School a zoned or city-wide lottery?**

The Green School is entirely lottery.

### **What is your child's favorite and least favorite part of their school day?**

Do you really want me to honestly answer this question from their point of view. Next.

### **In what areas do you believe your school is excelling?**

The school invests heavily in reading and writing. The classes revolve around keeping journals. The results are rather astounding. It seems like everyone in Ellie's class is reading at some kind of advanced level. Even those that are struggling are struggling at a higher level. As the school's name indicates, The Green School utilizes nature and the environment at almost every turn. They do science investigations a la field work style. They observe and record their findings, have discussions and at times make some kind of presentation like in a journal. As a result the boundaries between say math, reading, writing and science are not as formal as when I was a kid. Best of all the kids seem to flourish under these conditions.

### **Are there any unique offerings at your school that set it apart?**

Again, the environmental based curriculum is the obvious distinguishing factor. Each grade has a field of study. The Kindergarteners focus on pollinators. The fourth graders delve into oysters as a keystone species in the Bay. But to me, the school's teachers are what distinguishes it. The teachers seem to be always assessing year to year and aren't afraid to make changes. For example, my oldest daughter is in second grade which for the first time is rotating teachers through the day -- one teaches math, another handles reading etc. much like they would do in much older grades. My daughter loves this dynamic and I think it helps her become more adept at learning from different styles, dealing with personalities.

### **What are some of the challenges your school faces?**

The same strength is also limits the school somewhat. It's teacher based and sometimes there lies a gap between us parents and educators. If you ever hung out with teachers and they start getting into that education speak, you know what I mean. Sometimes it's hard to know what's going on and you have to step up and ask for some details. That being said, my kids come home happy and fulfilled everyday, well not every day, come on. But you sense their days are enriched, that learning is being presented in an exciting way.

Of course testing casts a long shadow over everything and as a parent you watch the school struggle with their goals along with meeting the pressure to produce high scores.

### **What are your hopes for your school moving forward?**

I hope the school can maintain the momentum. Our kids are still in the younger part. Kindergarten to second grade. From what we see so far, they're excelling along with the school. We only hope this can continue as kids get older, grow and become more complicated, more headstrong (if that's possible). Can the school fulfill it's own promise. Chances look good from where we sit. We'll see when we get there.

### **How should parents contact the Green school if they have questions?**

410-488-5312

*Charles Cohen is a Baltimore based freelance writer and documentary filmmaker and surprisingly it seems, a life-long city native.*

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*The more schools we are able to profile in our **School Days** series, the better this resource can become for local parents. If you would like to contribute to the **School Days** series, we would love to have you! Please **contact us!***

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