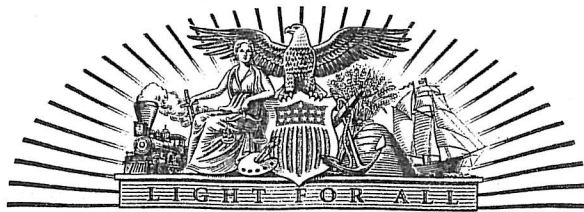


# THE SUN



Nicholas Brady, a 16-year-old student at Baltimore City College, explains his photos to Muffy Oatway of the Maryland Federation of Art at the Circle Gallery in Annapolis, where a reception was held Wednesday night.  
PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH MALBY [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

## Photos reveal decrepit state of city schools

Legislators invited to view students' pictures on display in Annapolis gallery



Kaneshia McCaffity, a 15-year-old student at Frederick Douglass High School, displays her work to David Lever, executive director of the state's school construction program

BY SARA NEUFELD  
[SUN REPORTER]

As the first dignitaries arrived, 16-year-old Nicholas Brady headed straight to Del. Jane E. Lawton of Montgomery County and escorted her to his photograph of a hole in the library floor at his school, Baltimore City College. A girl tripped and sprained her ankle there, he explained.

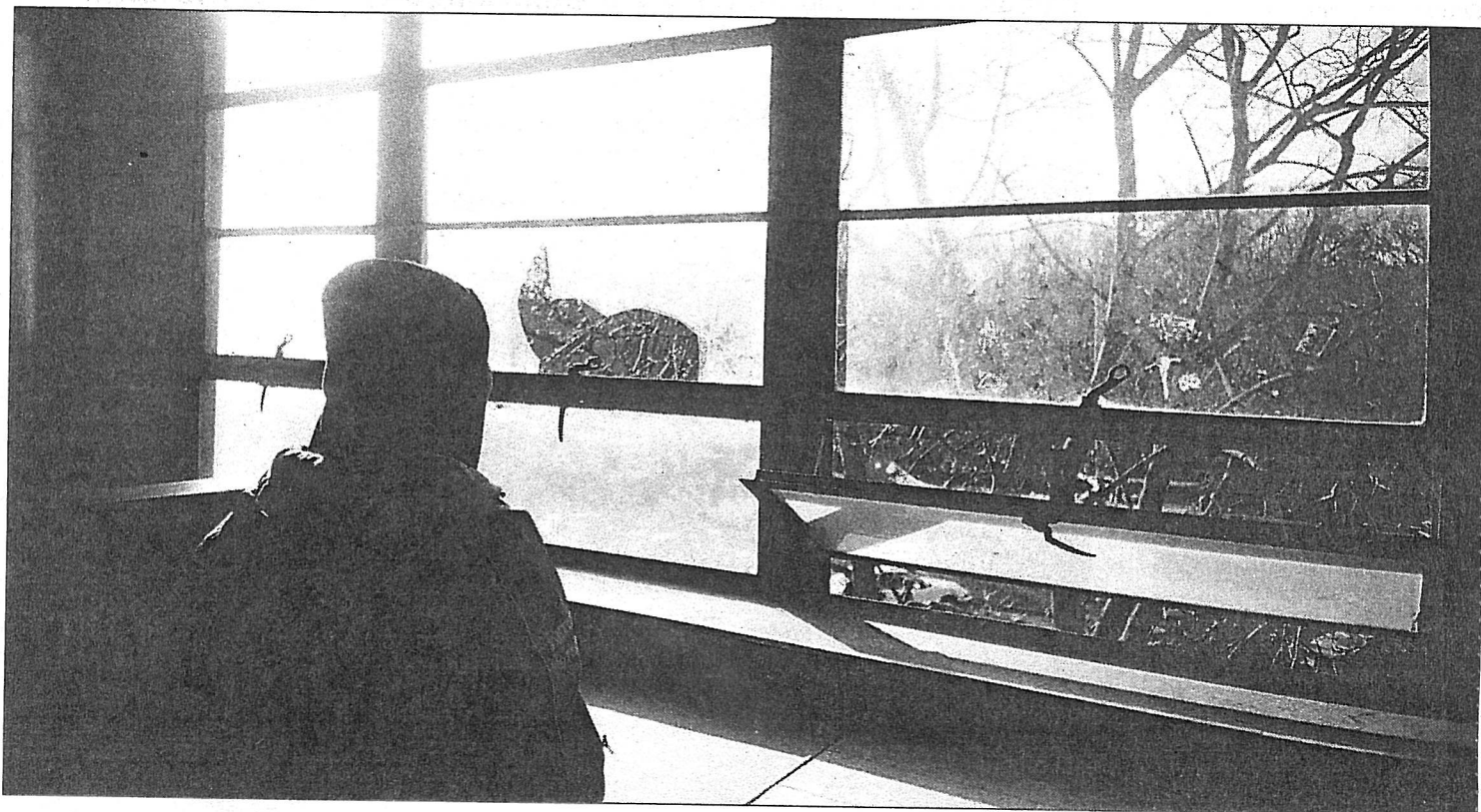
"Oh my gosh," Lawton said with a gasp. "Even the caution tape is broken."

It was the kind of reaction that Nicholas and other Baltimore students were looking for when they invited state legislators to an exhibit of 45 black-and-white photos they took to document conditions in their schools. The photos show broken heaters, broken toilets and broken windows. Cockroaches. Moldy walls. A stairwell filled with garbage. Library shelves with no books.

The young photographers and their sponsors hope their audience will take the exhibit to heart and find the money that's needed to repair Baltimore's crumbling school buildings.

A reception for lawmakers at the Circle Gallery — across from the State House in Annapolis — came a week after city school officials released a plan calling for \$2.7 billion in school construction and repairs over the next decade. That may be more money than Maryland gives to all 24 of its school systems for construction in the next 10 years, but administrators and school board members say they want to publicize the extent of the city school system's needs.

The student photographers do, too. Signs on the gallery walls next to their pictures tell visitors that 86 percent of Baltimore's public schools were built before 1979, that 95 percent contain un-



Ian Starks, 15, took this photo, "Broken Window," and provided a caption: "This window has been broken for months."  
ELIZABETH MALBY [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

## City students picture school conditions

**PHOTOS** [From Page 1B]

safe or inadequate conditions such as leaking roofs and asbestos, and that 104 of 175 don't meet basic standards for heating, cooling and humidity.

Among the captions the students wrote for their photos:

- "This is a picture of a heater that doesn't work. Our fingers get cold and we can't write."

- "Boarded-up windows — we can't see out them. You can feel the air coming through. There is at least one in almost every class."

- "This is a picture of 2 mouse traps and a ball of paper inside of the lunchroom. I took this picture because it is kind of nasty for mouse traps to be in the place to eat."

Over two and a half hours Wednesday night, 11 legislators popped into the gallery to see the exhibit, sponsored by the photography project Critical Exposure, the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland, the Maryland Federation of Art and Teens for Legislative Change. So did State Treasurer Nancy K. Kopp and David Lever, executive director of

the state's school construction program.

All 188 members of the General Assembly had been invited to the reception, and the student photographers placed phone calls to the entire Baltimore delegation.

The photos in the exhibit were selected from among more than 2,000 taken during the past year and a half as Critical Exposure, a Washington nonprofit, distributed cameras to students around Baltimore. Some student photographers are enrolled in an after-school program with Critical Exposure. Others are involved in activist groups, including the Baltimore Youth Congress and the Youth Dreamers.

Last year, an exhibit of student photos was displayed at a local gallery in Baltimore. This year, the students wanted to show their work in a place where the people who make funding decisions for their schools could see it.

The reception came as the state is threatening to withhold construction money from the city school system if it does not close a significant number of school buildings soon in order to operate

more efficiently. (The system has space for 125,000 students, but 85,000 are enrolled.)

Last week, the system released plans that, pending school board approval, would close five school buildings this summer, displacing more than 5,300 students. The plans also detail how the \$2.7 billion would be spent. Officials have said they need \$1 billion just to fix basic deficiencies.

One after the next, the public officials at Wednesday's reception expressed support for the bill on which young Nicholas had testified earlier that day, to give school systems statewide extra money to repair aging buildings.

"Anything that deals with money for aging schools, I support," said Del. Jon S. Cardin. He and Del. Dan K. Morhaim, both Baltimore County Democrats, were quick to point out that, after Baltimore City, Baltimore County has the second-oldest stock of school buildings in the state.

Cardin presented the students with a certificate on behalf of the House of Delegates, congratulating them on turning their decrepit surroundings "into a gift."

Some photos in the exhibit

show that learning takes place in the city schools despite the surroundings. One shows a blackboard filled with meticulous cursive writing. In another, a girl stands by a sign that says, "I AM COLLEGE READY." A third shows a wall of paintings in an art classroom, beside a caption that states, "Despite the lack of funding in our schools, as well as the fact that the arts and music programs are the first programs to lose funding, we keep painting."

Lever, the state school construction chief, expressed disappointment when he learned that the exhibit would be taken down Saturday, saying it should stay up for the duration of the legislative session. Pointing to a photo of a broken bookshelf, he said, "When kids see that and they have the sense that adults don't care, they won't care. ... It's amazing the effect that a well-built school can have on behavior."

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The students' photo exhibit, "Eyes on Education," is on display until 5 p.m. today at the Circle Gallery, 18 State Circle in Annapolis.