

Better Buildings: Better Schools, Issue 19 (May 2004)

*Monthly news on DC Public School facilities from the 21st Century School Fund (21CSF), a Washington DC based, nonprofit - **working to build the public will and capacity to improve urban public school facilities.** To subscribe or unsubscribe please email: newsletter@21csf.org.*

Brown vs. Board of Education Anniversary

May 17, 2004 is the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court's Brown vs. Board of Education decision to end state sanctioned racial segregation in the public schools. The Washington, DC case of Bolling v. C. Melvin Sharpe was one of the cases that led to this landmark decision. In 1951, junior high school students accompanied by local DC activist Gardner Bishop requested that eleven students be admitted to John Phillip Sousa, a brand new whites only junior high school. The students were refused and ordered to return to their grossly inadequate school. With the 1954 Brown decision, the Supreme ruled, "segregation in the District of Columbia public schools...is a denial of the due process of law guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment..."

Washington, DC has a long and difficult history around race and public education. To share your experiences on the desegregation of the D.C public schools with us and others, go to the 21CSF bulletin board at <http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/bb/>

Community Forum on DCPS Closings and Consolidations - May 18th

21CSF will be leading a community forum on Tuesday, May 18th on DCPS school closings and consolidations. The forum will: (1) provide the public with information on current school populations and building utilizations, and current closing/consolidation policies and procedures; (2) discuss what citizens can do if their school is underutilized; (3) discuss long-range neighborhood planning implications; and (4) review a proposal for revised planning and closing policies. The forum will be held from 5:30 - 8:00PM at the Charles E. Sumner School Museum, 1201 17th St, NW (Metro red line: Farragut North Station). Please call 745-3745 to register or for more information.

DCPS FY05 Budget Update

On April 19th, the City Council held a public hearing on the DCPS budget for next year, and 21CSF provided testimony. Our testimony urged the Council to work with us and other DC education advocacy groups to find the resources needed to fully fund the local schools, including supplemental services and facilities maintenance/construction, and to build capacity in the central office to support the local school needs. For a copy of our testimony (by Mary Filardo and Jordan Spooner), visit our website after May 15th at www.21csf.org and click on "Publications." The final steps in the budget development process are Council approval, and then submission to Congress for approval.

Anacostia High School Feasibility Study

The architects hired by the District of Columbia Public School System are recommending that Anacostia High School be entirely demolished and a new high school of an ultra modern design be constructed on the site. Although the plans were revealed at a public meeting, very few members of the public were there. To see a copy of the plans, contact Gregory.williams@k12.dc.gov .

Send Us Your Own Updates!

21CSF has decided to try something new: asking our readers to send periodic facility-related updates on schools. We'd like to hear concerns or updates from you about construction or maintenance issues at schools that you know. Aside from wanting to hear more from our readers, this is brought on by the recent suspension of the Board of Education committee structure (e.g., Finance & Facilities), and the DCPS Facilities office production of monthly reports. We had relied on both sources for information to share with the public. Examples of updates we'd like to hear include: How are construction projects going (e.g., activity, progress, site security and orderliness)? Are there major school maintenance issues? How is swing space working out (e.g., transportation, parental accessibility)? Send updates to info@21csf.org, and include "Citizen Update" in the subject heading. Thank you!

For more information: Contact Jordan Spooner, (202) 745-3745, X16, or jspooner@21csf.org