

**District of Columbia Budget Hearing, May 4, 2011**  
**Office of Public Educational Facilities Modernization**  
**Testimony of Nancy Huvendick, DC Program Director, 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund**

I am Nancy Huvendick, DC Program Director of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposal to consolidate OPEFM into a larger city-wide Department of General Services as proposed in the Mayor's State of the District Address and the 2012-2017 Capital Budget.

The Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization (OPEFM) was set up with the Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007 as part of the Mayoral takeover of DCPS. The new agency was headed by Allen Lew, currently the City Administrator.

Now, OPEFM is scheduled to close and a new DC Department of General Services is poised to consolidate all DCPS school capital projects along with parks and recreation, fire and emergency, police, and other government building capital projects. Some agencies such as Libraries, University of the District of Columbia and the Department of Transportation and WMATA still retain control of their own building projects. Educational facility planning for PK12 public schools will be under the Deputy Mayor for Education.

There has been tremendous change in the management of public school capital programs over the decades. Between the 1960s and 1990s the Department of Public Works in the District Government was responsible for capital projects—including schools. During this regime public school buildings fell into great disrepair. In the early 1990s, at the recommendation of the Federal City Council, DCPS obtained procurement authority for its own capital projects. When the Control Board assumed power in the mid to late 1990s school facilities became their responsibility, and at the behest of DCPS Superintendent General Becton, the Army Corps of Engineers was enlisted to help manage school facilities.

**DC Public School Construction Authority Time Line**

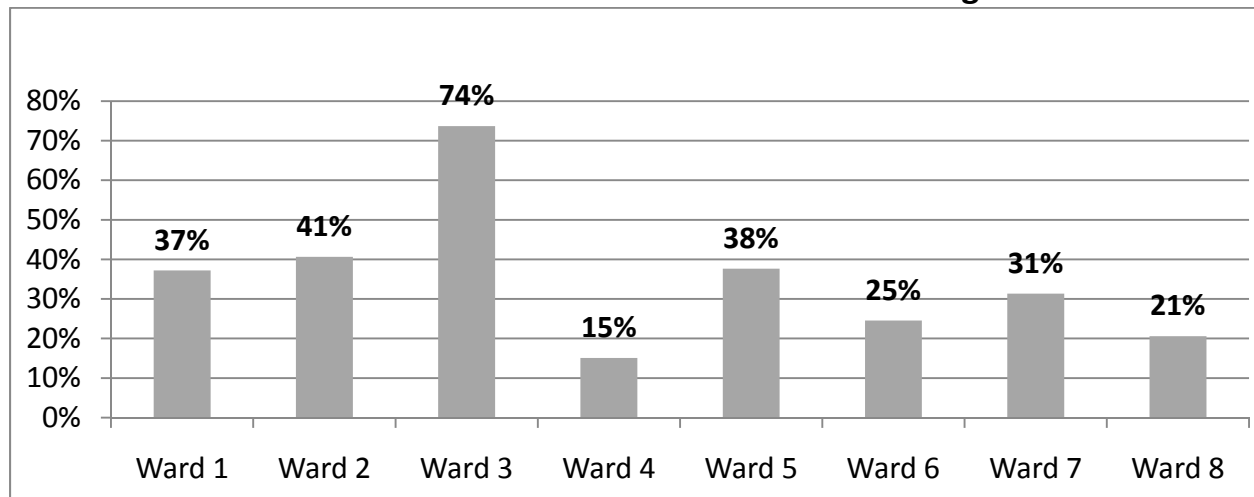
Pre - 1960s:	Federal Government Services Administration
1960s – 1990s:	DC Department of Public Works
1990s – 2007:	DCPS Office of Facilities Modernization (early assistance by the Army Corps of Engineers)
2007 – 2010:	OPEFM – DC Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization
2011 - ????	DC Department of General Services (GSA)?

In the mid 1990's when the law suit over fire-code violations and delayed openings because of emergency roof repairs underlined the crisis in DC school facilities, District citizens insisted on school facility legislation backed with massive funding and the strong oversight of an advisory committee, master planning with citizen input, and regular public audits. We gained this process and controls through progressive legislation championed by the Council. But today we have no advisory committee, the master plan remains to be up-dated, no audit has emerged - - and now we are poised to close OPEFM.

It is unclear what problem is being solved by consolidating capital agencies. Over the past decade both DCPS and OPEFM slowly built up expertise in school facilities construction, modernization and repair. When school opens next fall the District will have a total of 31 new and fully modernized DCPS schools, 25% of all DCPS facilities, all opened since 2001 - - slightly more than half of them since 2007 under OPEFM. This is in addition to major building stabilizations affecting all DCPS schools.

If capital agencies were to be consolidated successfully, it would require major systems change, oversight change, thoughtful planning and completely re-organized staffing including an initial pilot possibly involving the capital projects in a few small agencies. There is real concern that starting such a complete re-organization with one of the largest (and some would say, most important) capital program is to put the renaissance of the District's public schools facilities at great risk.

**Percent of DCPS Students in Modernized or New Buildings SY2011-12**



By the opening of school next fall, 74% of DCPS students in Ward 3 will be in fully modernized buildings as compared to 15% in Ward 4 and 21% in Ward 8. Fully three-quarters of DCPS' buildings remain to be modernized or replaced. We will have to plan carefully, manage projects exquisitely and watch budgets prudently to stretch the dollars far enough to get quality facilities in all of the schools in all of our neighborhoods. With the proposal to consolidate school projects into a Department of General Services, we truly risk losing the lessons learned and the momentum of the past decade. This is not the time to side-track the engine.

We urge council members to retain OPEFM as created in 2007 unless a new Department of General Services has been successfully piloted.

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