Better Buildings: Better Schools

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Public Meeting on the Future of Public Schools in DC

Join 21st Century School Fund, DC Voice, Empower DC and WeActRadio.com on Thursday, March 29th from 6PM-8PM for a panel presentation and public discussion on:

- DC history of race, class and public education
- Where we are now
- Perspectives from Chicago neighborhoods
- Finding a path for our future

The meeting will be at the Metropolitan Community Church (474 Ridge Street Northwest 20001 near 5th and M Sts. NW, 2 short blocks from the Convention Center Metro). For more information see this flyer and/or contact Nancy nhuwendick@21csf.org.

21CSF Conducting Feasibility Study for a K-12 State School Facilities Directors Organization

The 21st Century School Fund has received a grant from the Advancement Project to work with the state facility directors to conduct a feasibility study on developing a K-12 state school facilities director's organization. Nationally, school districts spend nearly $100 billion per year on school facility operations (utilities and janitorial), maintenance, repairs and capital outlay. However, there is no specific organization dedicated to supporting state facility directors and other state officials. These individuals and their agencies deliver capital funding, standards, guidance, oversight, and technical assistance to school districts throughout their states and are a critical part of providing healthy, safe and educationally appropriate facilities.

Flawed Report Delivered to DC by the Illinois Facility Fund

On January 25th, the District of Columbia Deputy Mayor for Education released "Quality Schools, Every Child, Every School, Every Neighborhood" a report that purports to identify a "service gap" between the supply of and demand for "performing seats" in both DCPS and public charter schools. The Deputy Mayor for Education is using this report as a basis for recommendations on school closings, turnarounds and privatization.

Michael Siegel, Public and Environmental Finance Associates in association with Mary Filardo, 21st Century School Fund completed a review of the Illinois Facility Fund's analysis. There is no question that the District needs...
quality schools for every child, in every neighborhood. Unfortunately, IFF's study will not help us reach these ends because its findings misrepresent both quality and deficiencies in public schools and its recommendations for closing, turnaround or private management do not address the real challenges in public schools.

**DCPS Facility Modernization Schedule Update**

For the last decade the District has been trying to catch up with much needed school modernizations. In last year's capital budget 20 schools were planned to have Phase I modernizations or additions starting this summer. However, for the following 5 schools, Phase I modernization is reported to have been delayed: Houston ES, M.C. Terrell ES, Marie Reed ES, Peabody ES, Ron Brown MS. Additionally, the Roosevelt and Coolidge High School communities were surprised to learn that complete modernizations expected to start this summer at Roosevelt and next summer at Coolidge might be pushed back a year.

Schools with delayed schedules are urged to work with their council members to ask for a clear accounting from DGS and DCPS as to why schedules have changed and what is being proposed right now for next year's Capital Improvement Plan (capital budget and schedule).

**Fix America's Schools Today: Legislation Update**

President Obama included $25 billion for the repair and maintenance of K-12 school facilities in his FY13 budget. However, it looks like the FAST legislation (H.R. 2948/S.1597) will not be introduced for debate in this legislative work session. Most likely the legislation will appear near or in 2013. This is strong support for federal assistance for local school districts struggling to meet the needs of their existing school buildings and grounds. An October 2011 independent survey by United Technologies Corporation found that nearly 75% of Americans support federal assistance for local public school facilities. There are 17 co-sponsors of FAST in the Senate and 116 co-sponsors in the House. This issue won't go away, as the importance of school facilities to learning, communities and sustainability is too critical. Visit [www.fixamericasschoolstoday.org](http://www.fixamericasschoolstoday.org) for more information.

**Chicago School Facilities Update**

Illinois State Senator Iris Martinez - the chief sponsor of SB3239 (school closure moratorium) -- and her co-sponsor State Sen. Mattie Hunter, have launched an [ONLINE PETITION](http://www.ThinkBeforeYouCloseMySchool.com) - urging parents, students, community members, educators and the public to SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR A 1-YEAR MORATORIUM ON Chicago PS SCHOOL ACTIONS AND TURNAROUNDS! State Rep. Cynthia Soto, chief sponsor of HB4487 (the companion bill in the State House) is also urging the public to SIGN ON TODAY! And let everyone know, this is a critically important step to restore fairness and common sense to efforts to improve all of Chicago neighborhood public schools. Here is the message that Sen. Martinez, Rep. Soto, and Sen. Hunter:

> Unfortunately, the process that CPS has chosen to close these facilities has been detrimental to many families in Chicago. Even more concerning, is CPS' lack of interest in hearing from those most affected by their decisions.

> I am sponsoring a measure that would put a one-year school closure moratorium on all CPS closures to allow the public the opportunity to be heard by CPS officials. The one-year moratorium would also give CPS more time to create and implement required transitional plans identifying academic support, security, and transportation issues before students are re-assigned.

> Please visit [www.ThinkBeforeYouCloseMySchool.com](http://www.ThinkBeforeYouCloseMySchool.com) to sign a petition showing your support for a one-year moratorium on school facility closures and do not forget to forward it on to your friends.

**The Impact of School Buildings on Childhood Health and Learning**

The [Center for Green Schools](http://www.thecenterforgreenschools.org) at the U.S. Green Building Council joined with The McGraw Hill Foundation to release [The Impact of School Buildings on Childhood Health and Learning: A Call for Research](http://www.thecenterforgreenschools.org). The paper is an accessible account of current research in this field, research needed, and how individual groups (teachers and students, design professionals, government agencies, etc.) can help draw connections between where students learn and their health and learning outcomes. Anyone searching for clear, defensible research to support the need
for better, healthier classrooms will find the summary of research into how students breathe, see, hear, move and learn immensely useful.

**Featured 21CSF Publication**

Co-location Analysis of IS 303 in Brooklyn New York
Co-location of public schools is difficult, but can be achieved if good practice is used and if done fairly, openly and if a principle of “first do no harm” is applied. However, school districts have yet to develop good tools for co-location planning or analysis. In 2011, the 21st Century School Fund analyzed a co-location proposal of the NYC Public Schools on classroom utilization and capacity between Coney Island Prep Charter School and three public schools at the request of the Advocates for Justice, a public interest law firm in New York City. The school building, located in the Coney Island area of Brooklyn, currently serves three schools, I.S. 303 (a middle school), Rachel Carson High School for Coastal Studies and P771K (an inclusion program). This analysis is an example of the type of work that needs to accompany consideration of co-location and should be done BEFORE any decisions are made and should be a part of decision making and planning co-locations.