Public School Buildings in DC: the Challenges

DC’s children deserve to be educated in clean, safe, and well-equipped facilities, whether they attend traditional public schools or public charter schools. Unfortunately, that does not always happen now.

School buildings in poor condition and repair make it difficult to teach and learn; affects student and teacher morale and performance, parental and public support; and leads to loss of students and teachers.

Inadequate maintenance and repairs by the DCPS Office of Facilities Management
- Loss of in-house, skilled repair workers means DCPS relies on expensive outside contractors.
- Declining enrollments in the same amount of space and less funding through the Uniform Per Pupil Funding means less dollars available for maintenance.
- Best practices for energy efficiency, healthy maintenance, environmentally responsible design and water management are not incorporated into facilities management.
- Information for decision-making is less than complete, accurate and commonly shared.

Inconsistent cleaning
- With declining enrollments, the weighted student formula means less money for custodial staff, but they still have to clean the same amount of square feet.

Poor local school management of maintenance and repair
- Locking restrooms in an effort to curb vandalism is ineffectual and creates health risks.
- Inadequate training and support of principals as on site building managers.

School building designs need modification to support appropriate educational programs and services and community use and their major systems and components have exceeded their lives and are beyond repair.

Insufficient DC capital funds to meet the level of need.
- A $3 billion Educational Facilities Master Plan to modernize 60 of the existing 150 schools, and build 35 new schools, and support numerous smaller projects was approved by the Board of Education and the DC Council in December 2000 and updated in 2003.
- The Master Plan set unrealistic expectations for modernizing and constructing schools, given overspending on the first 9 projects, fiscal constraints and large numbers of component replacements and repairs need in all the other schools.

Rapid decline in capital funds has slowed the pace of modernization and construction and left schools with improvements in various stages of planning and design with uncertain outcome.
- Unlike most urban school districts, DC must pay for 100% of its school construction, without state support, like in New Jersey, Ohio, California, New York or many other states
- Federal government, although the original financier of schools built in the city, provides no regular school construction funding since home rule.

Lack of internal capacity at DCPS to carry out the modernization and construction of schools in a timely manner and within budget.
- Management and control issues such as inadequate systems, number of people and depth of skill sets, inefficiencies and duplications of effort among public entities

DCPS has more classrooms than are needed for current enrollment; the charter schools are clamoring for adequate educational space.

DC has an inefficient student assignment system.
There are attendance boundaries associated with each DCPS neighborhood elementary, middle and junior high school, and comprehensive high school:
- DCPS city-wide specialty schools by admissions
- DCPS policy giving parental choice on a lottery and sibling preference basis
- Lottery system for public charter schools
Publicly supported vouchers for some students
Student transportation only for special education students

**Excess space in DCPS public schools compounds the funding shortage for cleaning, maintenance and repairs**
- Facilities budgets for both DCPS schools and the public charter schools are from the District budget and need to be balanced so that funds are used more efficiently.

**DCPS does not have a comprehensive building inventory or an asset management plan.**
- Underutilized space and excess capacity presents opportunities for mixed-use development or co-locations with recreational or social services, public charter schools and/or non profit entities. DCPS' facilities portfolio has not been adequately or effectively managed in order to best leverage assets and exploit revenue potential.

**Lack of community trust in the Public Commitment and Capability to Address the Facilities Issues, but Distrust of Private Sector Motives**

**DCPS doesn’t do a good enough job of community engagement concerning school facility issues, as evidenced by:**
- Suspicion in the community of DCPS intentions, because of things like insufficient notice of, and inconvenient times for, community meetings.
- Inadequate means for clear communication to all community stakeholders, such as students.
- Lack of information and transparency from DCPS about facilities issues.
- Lack of communication of context for facilities management (i.e. budget, staffing, etc.) and funding commitments and constraints which can lead to unreasonable or unachievable expectations.

**Lack of student, parent and local school input into prioritization of repairs and on capital planning.**

**Goals for Change, Measures of Success: 1 year, 3 years, 5 years**

**Build Our Capacity and Desire to Maintain Clean, Safe, and Healthy Schools**

**Year 1: 2005**
- Prioritize maintenance and repairs to "seal the building envelopes", keep exit doors safe and secure, and keep restrooms open, functional, clean, and safe on every floor in every school.
- Establish regular schedule for Custodial Maintenance Academy to train staff on repairs.
- Develop a system for students, parents, and teachers to guide facilities issues in each school.

**Year 3: 2007**
- Rebuild in-house capacity to make skilled repairs.
- Hire enough custodians to be at 75% of the industry standard for custodians needed per square foot
- Measurable increases in student, teacher, parent, and neighbor satisfaction with upkeep of buildings and grounds.

**Year 5: 2009**
- Comply with industry standard for number of custodians needed per square foot
- Increased satisfaction by students, teachers, parents, and community with schools and facilities.

**Assess Our Real Estate Holdings, Manage Our Portfolio, Improve Our Policies**

**Year 1: 2005**
- A well “scrubbed” portfolio data base and analysis based on this data base.
- Updated and documented process for consolidations, closings and sharing of space
- Review of boundary policies and impact on space utilization with detailed report prepared.

**Year 3: 2007**
- Excess space reduced in terms of absolute amount of square footage and the per student square footage ratio, freeing up dollars for maintenance, repairs, and larger capital improvements.
- Increased use of space by charters, public and non-profit agencies, and community organizations.
- Increase in revenue from leases and use permits from third parties
Twenty schools “modernized”

Year 5: 2009
- Continued lowering of excess space, absolute and ratio
- Continued increase in use and rental income
- Forty schools modernized (8/year)

Incorporate Healthy, Environmentally Sound, and Energy Efficiency Standards into our Custodial, Maintenance and Construction Plans & Practices

Year 1: 2005
- Identify and adopt healthy, environmentally sound, and energy efficient custodial, maintenance, and repair practices that are a key part of staff training and performance expectations.

Year 3: 2007
- Incorporate healthy, environmentally sound, and energy efficient standards into all modernization.

Year 5: 2009
- Incorporate healthy, environmentally sound, and energy efficient standards into all new buildings.

Develop Models, Partnerships, and Financing Alternatives to Demonstrate Effective Change

Year 1: 2005
- Update the Master Facility Plan to reflect new priorities and funding sources.
- Confirm a realistic cost for school modernization and construction, school by school.
- Identify and coordinate the various sources of capital funding needed to complete this capital improvement program for component replacement, modernization, and new construction.
- Sign a Memo of Understanding between DCPS and the City’s Office of Planning in conjunction with the City’s Comprehensive Plan to redevelop the schools as centers of community and economic revitalization, starting with those with the most critical needs since they can become “Hot Spots of Development” that also help revitalize surrounding neighborhoods (cf. 10/03 OP report).
- Endorse Congresswoman’s Norton’s bill – District of Columbia Fair Federal Compensation Act which provides an annual payment of $800 million which can be used for debt service payments as well as capital improvement projects for public schools and public charter schools
- Increase the number of schools financed through mixed-use developments and other creative financing mechanisms, such as sale-leasebacks.
- Increase the number of co-locations and partnerships to more efficiently use existing space and prevent school closures and consequent loss of schools as centers of community.

Year 3: 2007
- Report to the public on the progress and number of schools that have been redeveloped, approaches used, and financing mechanisms employed.

Year 5: 2009
- Report to the public on the progress and number of schools that have been redeveloped, approaches used, and financing mechanisms employed.

Improve our Community Outreach to Build Support for Facilities Improvements

Year 1: 2005
- More direct outreach by DCPS; more people at community meetings on school issues.
- More active PTSA’s and LSRT’s which are dealing with facilities issues (10%)
- More partnerships with outside organizations, especially non-profits.

Year 3: 2007
- Even more direct outreach by DCPS; even more people at community meetings on school issues.
- More active PTSA’s and LSRT’s which are dealing with facilities issues (30%)
- More partnerships with outside organizations, especially other public agencies.

Year 5: 2009
- Still more direct outreach by DCPS; still more people at community meetings on school issues.
- More active PTSA’s and LSRT’s which are dealing with facilities issues (90%)
- More partnerships with outside organizations, especially those from the private/business sector.
Strategies for Short-Term Quick Gains & Longer Term Change

Build Our Capacity and Desire to Maintain Clean, Safe, and Healthy Schools

**Short-term Strategies**
- Spend part ($5-10 million) of the FY’05 city surplus on deferred maintenance, health, safety, and cleanliness during Summer 2005 to achieve “Ready Schools” by September.
- Compile major “health and safety” maintenance lists and complete those projects; ensure that all schools are safe and secure, “Seal the Envelope”.
- Ensure that MPD and DCPS fully coordinate their safety and security reviews of public and public charter schools.

**Longer-term Strategies**
- Align all functions within the Office of Facilities Management to include Building Operations, Building Maintenance, and the DCPS Capital Program as required to establish a Comprehensive Maintenance Program
- Develop maintenance guidelines that incorporate best practices for indoor air quality, energy conservation, non-toxic materials.
- Legislate mandatory use of greater of $5 million or 10% of any annual DC budget surplus for “Ready Schools” each year (In addition to regular DCPS maintenance budget, not in place of).

Assess Our Real Estate Holdings, Manage Our Portfolio, Improve Our Policies

**Short-term Strategies**
- Assess conditions of all buildings and compile a common set of well-explained definitions of space, capacity, and data spread sheets to go with them as a shared basis for decision-making.
- Prioritize “worst” to “least worst” buildings as a basis for sequencing on improvements list.
- Compile a data base of all outside uses of buildings and grounds, including community groups, health clinics, adult education programs, other DC agency uses, leases, etc.
- Recruit new school facilities specialists with real estate development, construction and finance backgrounds to manage the inventory and capital improvements.
- Revise procurement regulations so DCPS can obtain design, management, and construction services using a variety of contract vehicles (e.g. design/build, stipulated sum, and guaranteed maximum price contracts.)
- Monitor and assess more closely the tasks outsourced under contract.
- Identify and secure proper resources required for effective Facilities Management to include the funding requirements for enhancements to human resources, general contracted services and the DCPS capital program.
- Establish a new customer service model, customer focus, & accountability standards within DCPS.

**Longer-term Strategies**
- Address boundary, student enrollment and capacity issues to maintain controlled optimal levels of space utilization and effective building use and management across the District.
- Align District-wide agencies and associated resources to provide for better integration of DCPS and DCPCS on construction and use of buildings and grounds.
- Increase funding for facilities to ensure that funds are available to sustain the long term plan: from Federal sources (DoE, Homeland Security, HUD), public/private partnerships with foundations and corporations, and creative financing mechanisms: special bonds (EZ, QZAB, PABPS), tax increment financing, sale-leasebacks, etc.).
- Improve project management in implementing the capital improvement program (outsource modernizations, but better manage the outsourcing).

Incorporate Healthy, Environmentally Sound, and Energy Efficiency Standards into our Custodial, Maintenance and Construction Plans & Practices

**Short-term Strategies**
- Incorporate best practices for indoor air quality and energy conservation, such as management and maintenance of HVAC systems, review and monitoring of all building maintenance procedures, waste management, renovation and repair procedures, especially involving potential generation of molds and other allergens, and non-toxic maintenance materials and procedures.
- This will include training for all local school staff and Central Office maintenance personnel, and then holding them accountable for results and their own performance.
Improving School Buildings & Facilities  Report & Recommendations

- Student, faculty and staff monitoring of lighting, computer, appliance and electrical equipment, with a percentage of documented savings returned directly to the participating schools.

**Longer-term Strategies**
- Incorporate proven principles for healthy, energy-efficient, environmentally-responsible design, construction, operation and maintenance of all new and modernized facilities and properties.
- This will include energy-efficient building shells (walls, windows, roofs), daylighting in classrooms, superior indoor air quality, high-performance lighting and HVAC; efficient water usage, wastewater and stormwater management; renewable energy, environmentally-responsible site planning, recycling of demolition and construction materials. Cost-effectiveness to be determined by life-cycle cost analysis, energy usage analysis tools and building commissioning.
- These short-term and long-term practices have produced substantial savings in operating expenses, reduced absenteeism due to chronic allergic reactions and associated diseases, and improved student performance, with minimal initial cost increases, in school systems around the US and world-wide.

**Develop Models, Partnerships, and Financing Alternatives to Demonstrate Effective Change**

**Short-term strategies**
- Review of top ten most likely public/private or public/public partnership campuses with early conceptual ideas (e.g. co-habitation with a charter school or closure, then occupancy by a charter)
- Showcase successful models (e.g. Oyster School/housing development, co-location of DCPS schools with the STAY program.)
- Present these as case studies from which to learn and market models to interested parties.
- Identify and publicize new models (e.g. School Without Walls partnership with GWU, Thurgood Marshall Academy co-location with Savoy ES and Department of Parks and Recreation, and Wilson High School with Parks and Recreation).
- Examine the DCPS inventory to identify likely candidates for mixed-use development.
- Establish a publicly chartered school construction trust, non-profit development corporation, or similar entity to modernize and construct public schools through public private partnerships.

**Longer term strategies**
- Keep a running list of QZAB-eligible projects.
- Evaluate the DCPS portfolio of buildings, land, and air rights via a private asset management assessment of the portfolio and public action on the resulting recommendations (e.g. sale-leasebacks, securitizations, and other such mechanisms).
- Develop internal DCPS capacity to carry out public/private partnerships.
- Develop DCPS’ capacity to carry out a capital improvement program that modernizes or replaces individual schools every 25 years (useful life of facility).
- Establish a reliable long-term capital improvement budget for DCPS and update it regularly.
- Develop creative funding approaches to stretch our capital dollars (sale-leasebacks, historic rehabilitation tax credits, etc.).

**Improve our Community Outreach to Build Support for Facilities Improvements**

**Short-term Strategies**
- Conduct community forums on facilities issues sponsored by the Office of Facilities Management.
- Establish a general phone number (i.e., call center) for community contact with OFM.
- Distribute a community guidebook to DCPS school facilities, including information on where the money comes from, how the money is spent (i.e., capital improvement program), a description of OFM, procurement processes, accountability, and how the community can be involved.
- Institute OFM webpage improvements (e.g., school-specific information; opportunity for community feedback; information on impact of facilities on learning, health, etc.).
- Sponsor “good neighbor” or ‘weekend warrior” fixes to school facilities (e.g., spruce up grounds).
- Conduct surveys of teachers, students, and parents on facility needs and desired improvements.

**Longer-term Strategies**
- Conduct a series of school-specific meetings to generate priorities and build support.
- Ensure that more language translators are available for meetings and other communication.
- Partner with community-based organizations to help with community engagement.
- Adopt a policy to facilitate community partnerships to fix facilities, including an adopt-a-school program.
Adopt a policy to improve overall community engagement, especially for sufficient student, parent, teacher, and community notification and input on major issues such as co-location and closures.

Provide more education to students and community members about the facilities management context (i.e. budget challenges), coupled with training in civic engagement to enhance their skills.

### Recommendations for Each of the Sectors to Enable These Changes

#### Public Officials (Board of Education, Council, Mayor, U.S. Representative)

- Provide adequate funds to comply with operations & maintenance industry standards.
- Make available a predictable, adequate and consistent flow of capital improvement funds.
- Remove barriers to private sector solutions and innovative public/private partnerships.
- Require school plans and practices to be healthy, environmentally sound, and energy efficient.
- Make available a calendar/timeline of relevant major milestones.
- Support effective marketing, public engagement; and better community notification.

#### DCPS Central Staff

- Fully implement the already adopted Clean Schools Initiative.
- Create a school climate with custodial staff that emphasizes preventive maintenance and eradication of graffiti as soon as it appears.
- Continue to enhance capacity to plan, finance, implement, and evaluate facilities improvements for both DCPS and public charter schools.
- Work more closely on planning, operations, and assessment with counterparts in other agencies.

#### Principals, Teachers, and Support Staff

- Fully implement the Clean Schools Initiative to address maintenance and repairs issues.
- Create a school climate with custodial staff that emphasizes preventative maintenance and eradication of graffiti as soon as it appears.
- Create a culture of openness about community use of facilities and better communication with community stakeholders.
- Work to educate students, parents, and other stakeholders about facilities issues and solutions.

#### Students & Youth Organizations

- Solicit recommendations about how to deal with safety and violence within the schools.
- Take responsibility for good stewardship of school buildings, grounds, and equipment.

#### Parents & Parent Organizations (PTAs, LSRTs, et al.)

- Increase involvement with, and talk about, facilities in related organizations and groups.
- Encourage participation in maintenance and repair projects.
- Involve all the existing organizations and groups in raising and resolving these issues.

#### Neighborhood & Community Groups

- Actively participate in policy and operational advocacy on facilities.
- Get more involved with neighborhood schools as meeting places and centers of community.

#### Social Service & Out-of-School Providers

- Participate in development of policies on community access to buildings after school and on weekends and joint-use policies.
- Work for better relationships with schools, principals, teachers, and staff.

#### Colleges, Universities, & Higher Education Organizations

- Insure facilities space for after school programs that provide GED and other graduation assistance to older students and drop outs, as well as potential students.
- Adopt schools, recruit volunteers, provide facilities management expertise.
- As the state/municipal university, more effectively involve UDC and its resources.

#### Business Organizations

- Participate in joint-use projects; think creatively about development possibilities.
- Adopting schools, offer volunteer assistance, share facilities management expertise.
- Provide state-of-the-art training programs for building managers and maintenance staff that emphasize healthy, environmentally sound, energy efficient, cost effective materials & procedures.
**Foundations & Philanthropists**

- Offer incentive funding to creatively plan, finance, and do capital projects.
- Encourage providing school-based services that can generate revenue for facility improvements.

**Responsibility of Public in Making this Change Happen**

- Be firm in demands to improve schools, yet also be realistic in expectations given the severity and breadth of the system-wide needs.
- Be open to creative mechanisms for building and/or financing schools (mixed-use, co-locations, etc) and help dispel myths that exist in the community.
- Be willing to volunteer to solve problems, not just to identify them.
- Hold door-to-door conversations with your neighbors, be a force for communication
- Be committed to going to your children's school (not just for parent/teacher conferences)
- Develop relationships with the principals and staff
- Participate in community forums and public workshops

**Role of this workgroup over next year and beyond**

- Form the nucleus of a new Citizens Advisory Council on School Facilities that would work with public officials and DCPS staff to build public will, monitor progress on plans, and exercise oversight.
- Apr-Dec 2005: develop implementation plans, work with DCPS staff, sectors, and others to build support, problem-solving, and stewardship for recommendations.
- Jan-Dec 2006: assess progress, re-visit recommendations, maintain energy & enthusiasm.

**Members of the Workgroup on Improving School Buildings & Facilities**

**Assessment & Policies Team**
- Cornell Brown, DCPS
- Robert Cane, FOCUS
- Alex Donahue, Principal, Roosevelt STAY SHS
- Mary Filardo, 21st Century School Fund
- Jack Koczela, PROP 100%
- Eric Lerum, DC Council staff
- Kathy Padian, Fight for Children
- Victor Reinoso, DC Board of Education
- Jeffrey Wilkes, DC Smart Schools
- Bob Wulff; Hazel Land Companies

**Models & Partnerships Team**
- Emel Alexander, 21st Century School Fund intern
- Hugh Allen, DC Congress of PTAs
- Reggie Ballard, Principal, Cardozo SHS
- Tom Brady, DC Public Schools
- Brian Cohn, PROP 100%
- David Domenici, Maya Angelou PCS
- Terry Eakin, Eakin/Youngentob Associates
- Terry Golden, Federal City Council
- Tami Lewis, DC Council staff
- Mike Peabody, FOCUS
- Cathy Reilly, SHAPPE
- Kendrinna Rodriguez, City Administrator's Office
- Jonathan Stith, YEA
- Jill Weiler, Teaching for Change

**Community Outreach Team**
- Ann Caton, YEA
- Linda Cropp, DC Council Chair
- Mary Green, DC Council staff
- Nancy Huventick, 21st Century School Fund
- Leroy McDonald, Anacostia HS PTA President
- Jordan Spooner, 21st Century School Fund
- Michelle Walker, Executive Office of the Mayor

**Other Members**
- Peggy Cooper-Cafritz, DC Board of Education President
- Kathy Patterson, DC Council
- Mirian Saez, DC Board of Education Vice-President
- Russell Smith, DC Board of Education staff

**Leaders, Support, Facilitator**
- Chair: Mary Filardo, 21st Century School Fund
- Facilitator: Bill Schechter, DC Education Compact