



Better Buildings: Better Schools Issue 27 (April 2005)

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.

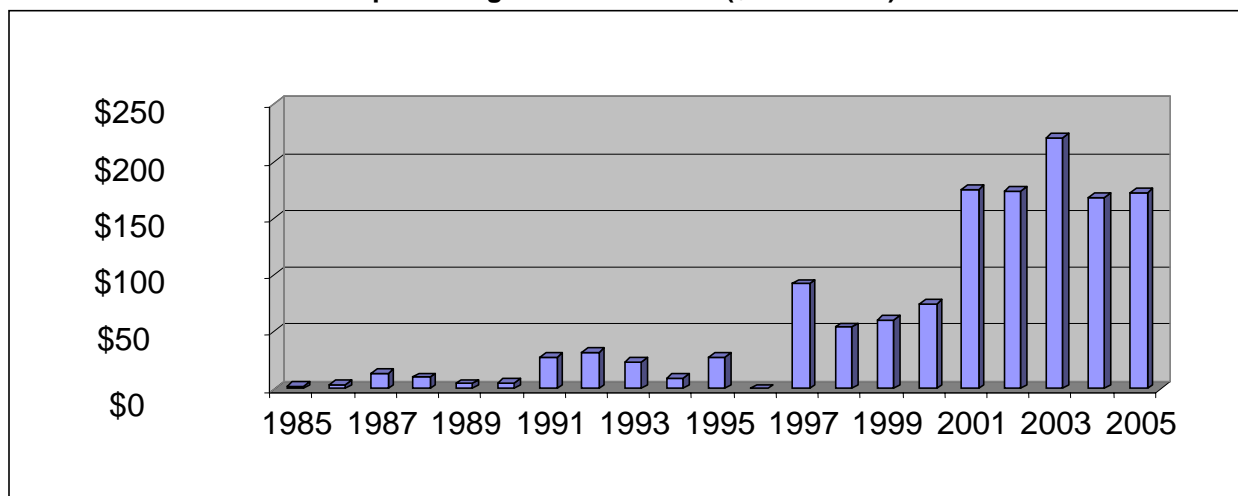
Brookings Greater Washington Research Program and 21CSF Release “Program Coordination and Facilities Planning Best Practices” Project

In January 2004, the District of Columbia, Office of the City Administrator contracted with the Brookings Greater Washington Research Program in partnership with the 21st Century School Fund to conduct a three-part study of the city’s master facility planning and capital budget process. Alice Rivlin, Carol O’Cleireacain and Mary Filardo collaborated on the three-part project.

The motivation for this project stemmed from concern about the extent of District’s need for investment in its public infrastructure, and the realization that utilizing public buildings and land efficiently could improve programs and services and minimize pressure on the District’s capital and operating budgets.

The first task in the project was the review of best practices in coordinated public facility and capital budgeting processes around the country. The second task was to assist the District of Columbia in the design and implementation of a new, coordinated facility planning and capital budget process. Since 1997, the District of Columbia has authorized over \$1 billion in capital funds for DCPS (Chart 1) and total District expenditures for public charter school facilities has increased dramatically (Table 1).

DCPS Capital Budgets FY 1985-2005 (\$ in millions)



Source: DCPS Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports

Table 1: Public Charter School Per Pupil Facilities Allowance 1997-2004

School Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Allowance (\$)	617	1,058	1,482	1,422	1,981	2,380
Students	6,980	9,656	10,651	11,600	13,743	15,800
Total \$	4,306,660	10,216,048	15,784,782	16,495,200	27,224,883	37,604,000

The third task, led by 21CSF, was to provide an analysis of the DC Public School and Public Charter School capital projects, budgets and expenditures and to develop some alternate criteria for setting capital investment priorities for schools.

Four areas were identified for analysis and recommendations for the DCPS schools and the public charter schools:

1. **Planning** – including master, capital and project-specific plans.
2. **Decision-making and oversight** – of facilities management and the capital program.
3. **Reliability and adequacy** – of both operating and capital funding.
4. **Management** – of facility operations and improvements.

Reports on all three tasks were released to the public on April 15, 2004, and are available on the 21st Century School Fund web site, www.21csf.org.

DC Education Compact (DCEC) – Report to be Released

Hold the date for the release of the final DCEC Report and the DCPS Strategic Plan.

Date: May 2, 2005

Time: 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm, Presentation with reception to follow

Location: Kelly Miller Middle School (**updated location**)
301 49th Street, NE
Washington, D.C.

In March, all Working Groups and Sector Groups submitted final reports and recommendations to the DCEC leadership and to the DCPS Superintendent. Since then, a DCEC Vetting Team has been reviewing all of the reports, and is responsible for preparing an overall DCEC Report, including recommendations and priorities for action. This overall DCEC Report will also be provided to the Superintendent and will inform (through collaboration between the Ed Compact and DCPS) a DCPS Strategic Plan that is currently being drafted by the Superintendent's team.

The DCPS Strategic Plan will also be informed by findings from key local and national reports, and input from key advisors to the Superintendent. Therefore, not all of the Compact recommendations and priorities are expected to be included in the DCPS Strategic Plan. However, the DCEC leadership will help to select the highest priority initiatives from the Plan, and other stakeholders will have opportunities to negotiate the inclusion of additional recommendations as DCPS periodically updates and revises the Plan. The long-term role of DCEC is still undefined, but it is expected to help with some of the implementation of the DCPS Strategic Plan.

DCPS Summer Maintenance

The City Council recently allocated \$6 million from surplus reserves in the city's current FY05 operating budget to DCPS to immediately address urgent maintenance and repair needs. This funding will largely be used for summer maintenance at many schools to ensure that these facilities are ready for opening this September, as opposed to previous years. Much of the credit for this is due findings from the *Ready Schools Project* conducted by DC Voice (www.dcvoice.org/Public%20Engagement/initiatives.htm) this past year.

At the City Council's Committee on Education, Libraries, and Recreation hearing on the DCPS FY06 Capital Budget on April 11th, Superintendent Janey testified that the \$6M will be used to complete:

- Critical painting projects at 32 schools;
- Auditorium/gymnasium repairs (including flooring) at 11 schools;
- Grounds improvements (parking, lighting, playgrounds) at 11 schools;
- Grass cutting and landscaping at all schools;
- Deep cleaning at 39 summer school sites; and
- Purchase of materials and supplies for maintenance and repairs.

Also, DCPS has included an additional \$4M in their FY06 Operating Budget request to be used for the same focused effort next year, if sufficient funding is received.

DCPS "Transitional" Capital Improvement Plan Passed After Much Debate

After much debate and delay, the DCPS '06-11 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP, capital budget) was passed at the end of March. Called the "Transitional CIP," the budget provides \$640 million dollars over the coming six years: \$147 million for this coming year and \$98 million for each of the following years through 2011. This was adopted as a "transitional" budget because the administration plans to update the Facilities Master Plan next year to conform with the Superintendent's forthcoming Educational Plan and to take into account the unanticipated but rapid drop in enrollment, exploding construction costs and pressure from increasing numbers of charter schools.

Debate primarily concerned whether DCPS was abandoning the Facilities Master Plan as determined in 2000 with its ambitious program to completely modernize or rebuild all of the system's 147 schools within a 15 to 20 year period. Many objected strongly to the shift toward plans for more modest "systemic rehabilitations" as a lack of the political will to fully fund more extensive complete modernizations as originally envisioned. They urged the Board of Education to request at least an additional \$40 million in capital dollars.

Others argued that the problem was less a matter of sufficient funding and more a problem of management and execution. After spending or encumbering over one billion dollars since 2001, the Facilities Master Plan was not being implemented as envisioned. Only ten of the system's 147 schools have been rebuilt, trapping the vast majority of students in sub-standard facilities for the foreseeable future. Although the discussion has been intense, all factions recognize the others' desire for vast improvements to DCPS facilities as soon as possible.

FY2006 DCPS Operating Budget Increased for Maintenance and Repair: Pay Raises Unfunded

The Mayor pledged to increase the current Operating Budget by an additional \$6 million for the "Ready Schools" initiative that covers maintenance and repair (See DCPS Summer Maintenance, above). Earlier, the Board of Education approved reprogramming \$4 million for maintenance and repair in the '06 budget. Facilities and Infrastructure in the '06 budget was scheduled to increase by \$3 million to nearly \$35 million. Operations and Maintenance increased more than \$4 million to

\$28 million for '06. All of these funding efforts reflect a welcome coming to grips with the mountain of deferred maintenance in DCPS buildings.

Another \$21 million was added this year (with \$5 million for charter schools as well) for such things as establishing parent resource centers, or raising high school graduation standards - - generally defined as "un-met needs." The total operating budget reached \$800 million for 2006.

However, the current budget does not account for current step increases for teachers or the pay raises expected based on the new contract with the Washington Teachers Union. A similar situation prevailed last year when the local schools had to cut more than 500 teachers, and other employees had to cover a long promised 9% increase in teacher compensation. As many as 400 positions may again be in jeopardy.