DCPS Reorganization: Major Changes Proposed

The DCPS campaign to “Renew, Revitalize and Reorganize” proposes to reconcile the number and location of buildings and students in order to focus resources on teaching and learning rather than building maintenance. In addition, the plan proposes to follow through on standardizing grade configurations initiated with the Master Education Plan and takes a new look at student assignment policies, feeder patterns, and out-of-boundary policy.

A comprehensive staffing plan is proposed to be phased in at every school to include support staff for academics, wellness, enrichment, administration and facilities. The highlights of the proposal are: closing or relocating 23 schools; creating 13 new PS through 8th grade schools; moving 6th graders from 55 elementary schools to 14 middle schools; and changing boundaries for middle and senior high schools to reflect coherent feeder patterns. A dozen new programs are also proposed. See the November 28th press release for a complete listing of proposed changes: [http://www.k12.dc.us/media/PressReleases/DCPSNewProgramsAndConsolidations.pdf](http://www.k12.dc.us/media/PressReleases/DCPSNewProgramsAndConsolidations.pdf).

Decisions on closings, grade configurations and feeder patterns are expected to be final by the end of January in time for the annual out-of-boundary placement process, which goes from January 28 to February 28th.

View School-by-School Reorganization Details, at DCPS CloseUps

A wealth of easy-to-read information on individual schools, including the specific proposals for reorganization can be accessed at DCPS School CloseUps at [www.21csf.org](http://www.21csf.org). Click on the red school house at the left. A tabbed page for each school outlines proposed changes, along with maps, satellite photos, enrollments, test scores, population demographics, and facility information.

Community Input to Reorganization Proposal

Many of the District’s DCPS schools and school communities have spent the past month learning about and responding to the November 28 announcement by the Mayor and the Chancellor.

The timetable for input, consideration and final decisions is aggressive. Six community meetings for the affected schools were held in December; another set of 3 meetings are planned for January; the Mayor’s hearing will be January 17th with a decision due shortly thereafter.

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<tr>
<th>Wards 1, 2, 6</th>
<th>Wed., January 9</th>
<th>Miner ES, 601 15th St., NE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wards 4 and 5</td>
<td>Thurs., January 10</td>
<td>Emory ES, 1720 1st St., NE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wards 7 and 8</td>
<td>Fri., January 11</td>
<td>Hart MS, 601 Mississippi Ave., SE</td>
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Council Bill Proposes Process and Assessment System
A bill has been introduced in the council that would require council approval of school closings and institute a system of assessments to track school enrollment, maintenance and operation costs, utilization, building condition and effective use so that communities would get annual reports of their local school’s viability. You can see the whole bill (B17-536) at: http://dccouncil.us/lims.

In conjunction with the school closings, the Council Committee of the Whole has announced a public oversight hearing on “The Closure of District of Columbia Public Schools” on Monday, January 14, 2008. For information about the hearing contact Aretha Latta, Administrative Assistant to the Committee of the Whole at alatta@dccouncil.us.

Commentary– Mary Filardo, 21st Century School Fund
The 21st Century School Fund is part of a research team working to understand school enrollment patterns and neighborhood change and has been providing staff support on the reorganization.

The DCPS school reorganization proposed was outlined in 2006 Master Education Plan and the reduction of 3 million square feet of space was a part of the Facility Master Plan and was approved by DCPS Board of Education in April 2006. Moving from paper to action is always a challenge.

These changes will affect students and families, local school staff and neighborhoods throughout the city. But while such comprehensive change may seem overwhelming, the reason school reorganization and school space reduction were recommended in these plans is because the problems DCPS faces are extreme and they are real.

- The population of children in the District of Columbia has declined since 2000, even as the overall population in the District has increased;
- Parents, many of whom might have sent their children to DCPS schools, are sending their children to public charter schools; and
- Local school budgets are strained, as DCPS tries to maintain 150 buildings and 162 schools with enrollment that has declined by 30,000 students since 1990 and as it tries to staff the local schools so they can support high quality education.

Should the Council have been better informed about the planning? Should the community and local schools have been a part of early discussions about criteria for closing schools? Do modifications to the plan need to be made based on what has been communicated from the public? Absolutely.

Hopefully modifications will be made to the proposal and decisions follow soon. Time is need for implementation to be done with care. If we use the winter and spring to prepare for the reorganization of 2008-2009, I believe DCPS can turn the corner. I believe DCPS can attract parents into the reorganized, renewed and revitalized DCPS schools and that if parents and community stay engaged, not just in fighting closings, but in making our schools all they can be, that we will not be disappointed.