

## **Better Buildings: Better Schools, Issue 44, September/October 2007**

Monthly news and commentary 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/unsubscribe, please email: [newsletter@21csf.org](mailto:newsletter@21csf.org)

### **Research Team Explores School Planning and Neighborhood Growth**

A research team including The Brookings Institution, the Urban Institute, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund recently provided DCPS and city leadership with analysis of school enrollment patterns and neighborhood change as part of the basis for decisions about how to allocate public school space. This work was done at the request of the DCPS Chancellor Michelle Rhee, Deputy Mayor for Education Victor Reinoso and State Superintendent of Education Deborah Gist.

The policy framework and proposed criteria for decisions on the allocation and utilization of public school facilities are based primarily upon analysis of student demand, school supply, and neighborhood context. The team collaborated with city officials through several reviews that included studying how alternative scenarios for school closings, consolidations, or co-locations would affect the distance students' travel, the redistribution of enrollment among schools, and likely effects on surrounding neighborhoods. The study team continues to provide technical assistance to city and school leaders, including suggested avenues for community engagement and public participation in the decision-making process.

### **DCPS Moves All 9<sup>th</sup> Graders to Senior High Schools**

DCPS underwent a major reorganization this Fall when for the first time, all 9<sup>th</sup> grade students attended high schools. Formerly, with eight jr. high schools (7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades) out of our 25 mid-level schools, DCPS 9<sup>th</sup> grade students might have attended **either** a Jr. high school or one of 17 high schools. This change was outlined in the Master Education Plan of 2006. It addresses concerns with academic control over the value of the Carnegie units that students accumulate toward graduation. With Carnegie units being awarded for work at jr. high schools, high schools were sometimes uncertain of the value of the Carnegie units that transferred with students into high school. Now, with all students in high school from 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, principals have more direct control over all of their students' graduation credits. Some high schools scheduled a special orientation day for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in late August.

All DCPS high schools already had 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes, but with the addition of all rising 9<sup>th</sup> grade students several high schools saw a substantial increase in enrollment levels. The extent of increased enrollment should be clear when the October 5<sup>th</sup> student census becomes available. The eight former jr. high schools now serve a depleted student body of only 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. These schools received supplemental funding to help preserve program offerings. The Middle Schools expect to increase their student body in 2008 when 6<sup>th</sup> graders are expected to move into Middle Schools and/or K-8 school throughout the district.

### **Hardy Middle School Modernization July 2008**

A press conference was held October 1st, the first day Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization (OPEFM) Director Allen Lew was officially on the job. Mr. Lew and Mayor Adrian Fenty explained that they were terminating the contractor and project manager of the Hardy Middle School modernization. The Hardy project had been awarded to Arrow/Schlosser, Joint Venture as general contractor in November of 2005 and The Temple Group, as project manager in the spring of 2006. The modernization was to have been completed this December but is estimated to be at least six months behind schedule and roughly \$12 million dollars over budget -- total project budget was originally \$33 million. The builder and contractor were required to be off the site by the end of the day. The DCPS press release stated that neither the contractors nor DCPS staff had met the District's expectations.

Hardy students will continue to be bussed from the Georgetown site at Wisconsin Ave and Whitehaven Parkway NW to swing space at the former Hamilton Jr. High School near the Gallaudet University campus. At the start of the first year of relocation last September the school registered about 100 students fewer than the total enrollment of 400 students the previous year.

The request for proposals for completing the construction was issued on October 8<sup>th</sup> with proposals due on October 25<sup>th</sup>. The RFP divides the work into a Preconstruction Phase (starts Nov. 1, 2007) during which time the selected developer reviews plans, evaluates previous work and contracts with sub-contractors while developing a guaranteed maximum price and a schedule along with proposed revisions. The guaranteed maximum price proposal is due December 1<sup>st</sup> and the Construction and Design Management phase is to start December 15<sup>th</sup>. The contract requires 15% of the construction fee to be at risk. Consequently, the contractor could earn 85% of their agreed upon fee if the school is late or over budget, but it includes the possibility of earning 110% of the guaranteed fee if the contractor meets the deadline for substantially completing the school by July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008.

### **Newly Renovated DCPS School Libraries on Capital Hill**

Capital Hill neighborhood students are delighted about their 5 newly renovated school libraries and enjoy browsing and reading books in these new comfortable reading environments. This past summer and early fall, the all volunteer School Libraries Project, an initiative of the Capital Hill Community Foundation, completed the restoration of children's libraries at: Peabody Educational Center, Maury Elementary, Tyler Elementary, Payne Elementary, and Watkins Elementary. Libraries at Brent, Ludlow-Taylor and Stuart-Hobson were finished last year. As an augmentation of the DCPS initiative that will renovate all 100 DCPS elementary school libraries by the end of this year, this 8 school project matched DCPS funds on a nearly dollar-for-dollar basis. These new spaces are colorful, inviting, encourage reading and also symbolize to the children that education and school is important and valued. For more details about the School Libraries Project, please visit [www.schoollibrariesproject.org](http://www.schoollibrariesproject.org).

### **DC VOICE to Release Ready Schools Report**

On November 10<sup>th</sup> at 11 am at Brightwood Elementary School (1300 Nicholson street, NW), DC VOICE will release the findings of their 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Ready Schools Project. The Ready Schools Project collects data about systemic support for opening day at individual DC Public Schools through confidential interviews with the school principals. Utilizing almost 200 volunteers, DC VOICE was able to interview virtually all of the 138 DC public school principals. To view previous Ready School Project Findings or more information regarding DC VOICE, please go to [www.dcvoice.org](http://www.dcvoice.org).

### **Ford Foundation International Program Managers Visit Oyster Elementary**

Ford Foundation program managers and staff representing 9 countries toured and held discussions at Oyster Elementary. The managers discussed with Mary Filardo, Executive Director of 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund, how the public-private partnership process used for Oyster Elementary could be utilized within their own international educational and political environments. Wendy Puriefoy, Executive Director of Public Education Network talked about the impact of local education funds on school reform and Dick Deasy, Director of Arts Education Partnership, discussed how arts education can improve the quality of education. For further background on the Oyster Elementary School Public-Private Partnership, please go to [www.bestschoolfacilities.org/best-home/Project3.asp?ProjID=11](http://www.bestschoolfacilities.org/best-home/Project3.asp?ProjID=11)