Better Buildings: Better Schools
Issue 39 (November/December 2006)

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/unsubscribe, please email: newsletter@21csf.org

**Happy Holidays and thank you for your support of public education!**

**Contribute to Community Engagement in the Rebuilding of Public Schools in New Orleans**

This holiday season, please take a moment to think of the thousands of children in New Orleans and areas affected by Hurricane Katrina that still do not have access to adequate public school buildings.

Out of 124 public school buildings in the city:
- 32 school buildings sustained minor damages
- 74 buildings were badly or severely damaged and
- 18 school buildings were totally destroyed

This past year 21st CSF reached out to parents in New Orleans to see how we might help in rebuilding their public school facilities. Please join us in contributing to a new parent founded not-for-profit in New Orleans that is dedicated to eliminating deplorable school building conditions for all public school children.

All 2006 contributions to the 21st Century School Fund will support parents working to reopen high quality public schools in New Orleans. To donate, please visit [www.21CSF.org](http://www.21CSF.org)

**Master Facilities Plan – Update and 21CSF Concerns**

The Master Facilities Plan (MFP) outlines how DCPS plans to allocate, use, and improve school buildings, offices, and other facilities to support high-quality teaching and learning in the District, and is also intended to follow the priorities laid out in the 2006 Master Education Plan approved by the Board of Education. The proposed MFP was released to the public this past September, and recommends:
- (1) full-scale modernizations or school replacements;
- (2) priorities for modernizing high schools and middle schools with most neighborhood elementary schools many years in the future;
- (3) reducing DCPS inventory by an additional 2 million sq. ft. of space through closings and consolidations (1 million was eliminated this year); and
- (4) four to six prekindergarten-8th grade demonstration schools.
21CSF has a number of concerns with the MFP that has been submitted to the Board of Education for approval:

- There is no plan to address the current inadequacies, health and safety or other substandard conditions in schools;
- The plan poorly aligns to educational requirements of schools, for example, there is no technology plan, secondary school boundaries are not coordinated with feeder patterns, and there are no educational enhancement priorities except as part of whole school modernization;
- The enrollment projections are unsubstantiated;
- It is a boiler plate plan, without the creativity that comes with working with local school communities who know their neighborhoods and schools; and
- The swing space recommendations are premature and do not reflect individual local school engagement or planning required to make good decisions about project implementation.

Please see our website (www.21csf.org) in the publications section for our testimony.

The Administration is continuing to revise the MFP to reflect feedback, and a new version was to be submitted to the Board on December 18th. Public roundtables on this new version are tentatively scheduled for early January, and the Board will be deliberating at their Committee of the Whole meeting on January 10th.

**DCPS Capital Improvement Plan and Budget**

DC law requires every city agency to submit a 6 year capital improvement plan/budget, typically referred to as a CIP, each fall. A CIP is essentially meant to be a detailed (i.e., facility-by-facility) 6-yr. capital spending and work plan for implementing an approved and longer range Master Facilities Plan (MFP).

DCPS administration released a truncated FY 2008 – 2013 CIP proposal in late November without specific project budgets. The proposal includes three different timeline options for implementing and completing the above mentioned MFP: 7, 10, or 15 years. The 7-year option appears to be considerably cheaper than the longer options ($2.7 billion, versus $2.9 billion for the 10-year and $3.6 billion for the 15-year), due to inflation and other factors, but it would also present a much greater management challenge for DCPS in terms of procurement, overseeing projects and their quality, and moving students around to accommodate construction. It would also require inordinately large funding allocations from the District for those few years.

The Board of Education held a public hearing on the newly proposed CIP on December 4th, and 21CSF presented testimony. Please see our website (www.21csf.org) on the publications page for this testimony. Hopefully, a detailed CIP will be available to the public soon. And as with the MFP, the Administration is continuing to revise the CIP.
New Luke Moore High School Opens

Congratulations to Principal Reginald Elliot and the students, faculty and staff at Luke C. Moore Academy High School who moved into a modernized and expanded building in mid-October. Luke C. Moore is an historic school originally built in 1891 with additions in 1903 and now, 2006. It is near the Brookland Metro station at 1001 Monroe St., NE.

The new school is more than twice the size of the old one with a media center, cafeteria, auditorium and gymnasium. Where the old school was cramped with 225 students in 26,911 square feet, the modernized Luke Moore is already at capacity with 360 students in 65,530 square feet.

The school was in swing space for three years at the former Evans Middle School on East Capitol St. at the District’s far eastern corner. Enrollment growth during re-location is a testament to the strength of the school’s city-wide alternative education program.

Parent Watch Forum on Mayoral Control with Parent and Community Representatives from Chicago and New York City

Mayor-elect Fenty’s interest in taking a greater role in the DC Public schools has sparked considerable controversy. Any change toward mayoral control of the public schools in DC would also be expected to change the way public school facilities are managed, maintained and modernized. Recent discussion at the December 13 Parent Watch Forum at Kelly Miller Middle School provided important insights from parent and community activists in Chicago and New York City who talked about their experiences with increased centralized municipal control of the school system. Parent Watch hopes to have a video of the session posted on the YouTube website soon.

Wanda Hopkins and Julie Woestehoff from Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) in Chicago talked about changes within the Chicago Public School System. After Mayor Daly was given control of the school system a decade ago there was a controversial series of school closings and initial brief upturn in test scores which have since proved disappointingly flat. A twelve page pamphlet titled “School Reform Chicago-Style” outlines PURE’s approach to more effective change and points to the importance of parental involvement and Local School Councils - - elected school governance bodies analogous to LSRTs (Local School Restructuring Teams) within DCPS. Other school districts such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg were suggested as more appropriate models for the District.

Leonie Haimson, a NYC public school parent and founder of Class Size Matters, a non-profit group based in New York City, along with Eugenia Simmons-Taylor and Monica Avuso, parent leaders from District 4 East Harlem and District 28 in Queens, talked about school reform after Mayor Bloomberg took over the public schools four years ago and appointed Joel Klein Chancellor. In her statement “Mayoral Control: Are We Better Off Now?”, Ms. Haimson described New York City’s school reorganization as very swift.
with a startling lack of either transparency or public input and very little to show in improved test scores or graduation rates.

For more information see http://www.classsizematters.org/washingtontrip.html and www.pureparents.org. Please see www.21csf.org in the Data Shop box for copies of “School Reform Chicago-style” and “Mayoral Control: Are We Better Off Now?”.

The booklet handed out at the Parents Watch meeting included sheets from their web site. Two of the links are:

http://www.pureparents.org/data/files/interactive.pdf  Interactive versus didactic instruction

http://www.pureparents.org/data/files/LSCimproveschools.pdf  Local School Councils Improve Schools