

Better Buildings: Better Schools, Issue 56 August/September 2010

News and commentary on public school facilities with a local and national perspective 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.**

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Free Webinar on Community Use of Schools: Recovering Costs to Extend Benefits

Join us for this [free webinar](#) on September 22, 2010, 2pm Eastern organized by the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities (NCEF), 21st Century School Fund, and the Center for Cities & Schools (CC&S). Community use of public schools is important to our communities, but it is not without cost to school districts. Learn about what it really costs school districts to operate and own their public school facilities and what can be done to provide transparent and fair fees to recover costs.

The 21st Century School Fund and the Center for Cities and Schools will introduce a free joint-use cost calculator tool developed to: 1) identify the components of school district facility costs; 2) calculate the cost of owning and operating the facilities; and 3) formulate cost recovery options. The webinar will also present findings from a SchoolDude.com national survey of community use of schools. The webinar will be one hour and [Registration is required](#). To learn more about a community's use of public school space, read our latest publication, [Joint Use of Public Schools: A Framework for a New Social Contract](#).

How Does a Phased Modernization Compare to the Full Modernizations in DCPS?

The average projected cost once all three phases are complete is about \$21 million per school. But the expenditure for the modernizations for schools that are being done with all three phases at once average \$51 million for the middle schools and \$32 million for the elementary schools. A thorough investigation should be done to compare the phased approach to the full modernization approach and understand the reasons for the considerable difference in cost, when Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization indicated that the phased approach achieves the same objective as a full modernization.

Costs of All Phased Schools (2009-2019)			
	(\$ in millions)		
Phase	Total \$\$	Schools	Average \$\$ Per School
Phase I (2009-2014)	\$433.29	80	\$5.42
Phase II (2014-2018)	\$482.98	80	\$6.04
Phase III (2017-2019)	\$738.95	79	\$9.35
Total/Average	\$1,655.22		\$20.81

Source: DC Council Budget Staff

New Parent/Community Resource Centers at Roosevelt and Cardozo High Schools

21st Century School Fund in partnership with SHAPPE (Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators) and with Roosevelt and Cardozo high schools has helped facilitate the opening of a Parent and Community Resource Center at each school. The Centers are planned to increase parental and community support for high schools - - and increase support for families and community from the high schools. The first year of the initiative was funded by Capital One Foundation's "Schools Transforming Communities" Grant Program. The Centers are reaching out to the parent communities as well as the neighborhood and local non-profits. Some of the activities already underway in the Parent and Community Resource Centers include:

- Planning parent and community outreach for Back to School Nights
 - September 22, 6:00-8:00 at Cardozo
 - September 23, 6:30-8:30 at Roosevelt
- Setting up computer access for parents so they can get information from and communicate with teachers, DCPS and government offices

- Identifying volunteers to help staff the Centers
- Reaching out to parents to assist with registration

Planned activities for the Centers include:

- Developing opportunities for student internships and student community service
- Creating a cadre of trained parent and community volunteers
- Hosting workshops on housing, financial literacy, jobs, and computer literacy

The Center at Roosevelt serves both the Roosevelt Day and STAY programs. At Cardozo, the Community Outreach Specialist from DCPS' Ward I Parent and Family Resource Center has office hours at the Center on Fridays.

Both centers will be staffed part-time; currently they are open most afternoons, 2:00-4:00. To reach the Roosevelt Center, e-mail RooseveltP.C.R.C@gmail.com or call 202-576-8475; for Cardozo contact cardozopcrc@gmail.com.

Update on Federal Funds for School Construction

21CSF has been tracking the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) funding for school construction. Almost no grant funding from the State Stabilization or Government Services funding has been spent on school construction, although it was an allowable use. However, with the tax credits for borrowing, school districts have taken advantage of \$6.6 billion in Qualified School Construction Bonds (QSCB). The \$6.6 billion used by school districts is far less than the \$22 billion available to the 50 states, outlying areas and the 100 largest low income local education agencies. Only 30% of the total QSCB has been issued as of September 2010. However, school districts have also been using another ARRA financing subsidy. According to www.recovery.gov, Build America Bonds (BABs) constitute about 21% of the municipal bond market and there have been nearly \$126.8 billion in BABs issuances as of September 3, 2010, with approximately \$14.3 billion used by public school districts and authorities. This represents 11.3% of the total BABs that have been issued. (BAB total as of September 3rd, 2010; [only projects easily identified for PK-12 schools totaled.](#))

FEMA Grants for U.S. PK-12 School Construction

Between August of 1998 and May of 2010 the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) [obligated \\$3.2 billion](#) in Public Assistance Grants for PK-12 school construction. Hurricane Katrina accounted for \$2.1 billion, or 67% of these grants. The [Public Assistance Grants](#) are made available to communities to recover from disasters. Public Assistance Grants provide funds for repair, replacement, or restoration of publicly owned facilities, including public and private schools. The Public Assistance Grants can only be used to restore a facility to its *pre-disaster condition*, which in some cases is quite poor. The only exceptions to this, is that the grants may also be used for upgrades that are necessary to meet certain applicable codes and standards and for hazard mitigation measures.