

Better Buildings: Better Schools, Issue 53 January/February 2010

Monthly 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**. To subscribe/unsubscribe, please email: newsletter@21csf.org

DC Audit of DCPS Capital Projects Begins

When the funding stream for DCPS school modernization was established in the School Modernization Financing Act of 2006 the requirement for an annual audit of capital improvement projects was included. The first audit was supposed to have been completed by the District of Columbia Auditor no later than June 1, 2007. No audit has yet been done, although there is now, an audit of the capital program underway by the DC Auditor's office. The audit report is to include an annual report to the public on the use of the capital funds by the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization; with a school- and project-specific audit of all expenditures for school facility capital improvements, maintenance, repairs, and operating costs and an assessment of whether the District has met the process, quality, schedule, and cost objectives of the Facilities Master Plan and Capital Improvement Plan and Budget. **If you have input you would like to provide to the auditor** about a public school capital project or procurement, please contact the auditor at odca@dc.gov, with the subject line: OPEFM audit.

OPEFM has expended approximately \$1 billion dollars in the last three years. It is critical that we learn from what has been done and that there is accountability for high quality projects and decisions that survive the test of time.

OPEFM Master Facilities Plan and Capital Improvement Plan Due at the End of March

The Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization held two community roundtables on the Master Facilities Plan "DC School Modernization: Lessons Learned -The Road Forward". The first meeting was on Saturday, February 20th at School Without Walls and the second was Wednesday, February 24th at Brent Elementary School. The meetings included an introduction from Director Allen Lew, and a power point presentation by OPEFM staffers which reviewed projects completed over the past several years and planned in the near future.

At the meetings OPEFM reported that the revised Master Facilities Plan and annual six-year Capital Improvement Budget (CIP) are due to the Council at the end of March. However there was no specific information offered about either. Only around a dozen parents and community members attended the Saturday meeting. The meeting at Brent was reported to have been roughly similar in format and attendance. There will be a **Master Facilities Plan hearing** for OPEFM on March 24th in front of the Committee of the Whole of the D.C. City Council. Check with Aretha Latta at 724-8196 or alatta@dccouncil.us for location and time.

OPEFM Announces SIT Team Meetings for Upcoming Work

Schools in Phase 1 Modernization:

Burrville Elementary School
Drew Elementary School
Johnson Middle School
King Elementary School
Thomas Elementary School
Truesdell Education Campus
Tyler Elementary School
J.O. Wilson Elementary School
Whittier Education Campus

Schools in Major Renovations:

Anacostia Senior High School
Dunbar Senior High School
Eastern Senior High School
Janney Elementary School
Stoddert Elementary School
Wilson Senior High School
H.D. Woodson Senior High School

SIT Committees are made up of parents, teachers, administrators, staff and community members. They work with the OPEFM staff, architects and project managers to ensure that plans for the school and school grounds are a good fit with the program and make sense in the long term for the community as well.

Get involved early! For meeting dates and locations, please go to [OPEFM website](#).

Public School Facilities: DC Oversight and Budget Hearings

Performance and Oversight Hearing for OPEFM Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization - covering activities and projects from last year: March 11, 2010 (Thursday); Room 412; Committee of the Whole (Chairman Vincent C. Gray); starting at 3:00 p.m. **Budget Hearing for OPEFM, Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization**; for next year's budget which will be presented to the Council at the end of March: April 27, 2010 (Tuesday); Room 412; Committee of the Whole (Chairman Vincent C. Gray); starting at 3:00 p.m. People wishing to testify at these hearings may contact Aretha Latta at 724-8196 or e-mail alatta@dccouncil.us. For some hearings, testimony may be limited to 3 minutes.

New Photo Book on School Facilities Released

21st Century School Fund, Critical Exposure, and Healthy Schools Campaign are thrilled to announce the launch of their new book, **"Through Your Lens: Student and Teacher Views of School Facilities Across America"**. The book is a selection of the over 400 photo and essay entries received from students, teachers, and community members from 23 states in response to a national contest on school facilities.

The photos and stories speak with clarity about our school building conditions and are especially relevant as Congress considers legislation for school modernization and repair. The book was distributed to congressional offices and received great responses from congressional staffers.

Please help spread the word about this book so that our friends, neighbors, colleagues and elected officials nationwide have the opportunity to look into this window on the reality of our school buildings today. To view the book online or to purchase a copy, go to www.ThroughYourLens.org.

Federal School Construction Legislation Update

In late January, Senator Jim Webb (D-Va.) and Senator Mark Warner (R-Va.) introduced the [Rehabilitation of Historic Schools Act of 2010 \(S2970\)](#). This act would amend the IRS code of 1986 to allow rehabilitation expenditures for public school buildings to qualify for rehabilitation credit. Currently, the IRS code on the historic tax credit contains a "prior use" rule disallowing the credit to be used by private investors to renovate a school building and to turn the same building back into a modernized school. This act has been referred to the Senate Committee on Finance for consideration.

Missed Jobs Opportunity: Federal Funding for Public PK-12 School Facilities

The 21st Century School Fund, through its Building Educational Success Together (BEST) collaborative, is tracking the effect of federal stimulus funding on the condition of PK-12 public school facilities and whether or not the distribution of ARRA funding related to public school facilities is helping reduce the disparity of capital expenditures among and between school districts. This brief report highlights initial findings related to the following questions:

- How much disparity exists in school facility spending by state and locality?
- How were school facilities addressed in the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act?
- What has happened to our nation's school facilities as a result of ARRA provisions?
- Which schools and which students benefited from ARRA expenditures?

[Read "Interim Analysis of School Facility Funding in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009"](#).

Creating Jobs by Improving Maintenance and Repair Investment in Our Nation's Schools

[Repair for Success: An Analysis of the Need and Possibilities for a Federal Investment in PK-12 School Maintenance and Repair](#) released by the 21st Century School Fund describes how a new national commitment to address the deferred maintenance and renewal of our nation's PK-12 public school buildings will improve our education system, the economy and the environment. A \$27 billion federal investment, just 10% of the minimum estimated total need, would take us a major step closer to ensuring that the nearly 55 million staff and students who attend school daily are in healthy, safe and educationally appropriate environments. This investment will also quickly create between 160,000 and 235,000 jobs that will protect our environment and sustain the public infrastructure investments made by earlier generations.

This analysis was utilized by the Economic Policy Institute in their ["American Jobs Plan"](#) study to address the U.S. jobs crisis.

Join the Coalition for Community Schools for their 2010 National Forum:

[Building Innovative Partnerships for Student Success: The Key to America's Future](#)

April 7-9 2010, Philadelphia, PA

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