

Better Buildings: Better Schools Issue 33 (January 2006)

SCHOOL MODERNIZATION FINANCING ACT: LOBBY DAY THIS FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3

The DC School Modernization Campaign is organizing a Lobby Day this Friday starting with a rally at 10:00 am at the Wilson Building, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. Organized visits to council members' offices will follow through noon.

Please consider signing on to the DC School Modernization Campaign, TODAY, at <http://modernizations.org>. The Campaign is a grassroots effort to encourage the City Council to pass legislation that will modernize our public schools. Signatures will be totaled up at the end of January and reported in support of the February 7 vote by the full Council.

Key Upcoming Dates in 2006, for the School Modernization Financing Act (B16-250):

- Friday, Feb. 3: Lobby Day, 10 am
- Tuesday, Feb. 7: 1st Reading, full Council
- Tuesday, March 7: 2nd Reading, full Council

Contact the DC School Modernization Campaign for more information:

<http://modernizations.org/keydates.shtml>

The Committee on Finance and Revenue modified the funding portion of the bill by directing the first \$100 million in sales tax revenue each year to the Public School Capital Improvement Fund established by the bill. This funding would be made available to D.C. Public Schools in addition to the annual capital budget for the school system. Because the sales tax revenue normally goes into the District's general fund, diverting \$100 million toward school modernization would create a shortfall in the budget.

Councilmember Evans, Head of the Finance Committee, has suggested using additional new revenue certified by the Chief Financial Officer to fill this shortfall. The Chief Financial Officer certifies additional revenue that exceeds the annual revenue estimate on a quarterly basis; \$29 million has already been certified as available now and another certification is expected on February 15.

Thanks to Cathy Reilly for this report from the SHAPPE Newsletter.

NEW THOMSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OPENED JANUARY 17TH

Thomson Elementary School moved back into a partly new and partly modernized facility over the long Martin Luther King Holiday weekend. After years in swing space at Logan School, Thomson students, teachers and staff moved into shiny new classrooms,

in a four story building that boasts a large new gymnasium, a renovated cafeteria/auditorium, a new media center, underground parking and a new main entrance hall with glass walls and an oculus that provides a view to the floor below.

One surprising feature are several large, covered outdoor verandas fitted with soft poured rubber flooring that serve as playgrounds in this school that has no schoolyard at all.

Congratulations to the Office of Facilities Management on finishing the last of the original tier 0 schools! A formal ribbon-cutting event is planned for later this year - - watch for a chance to tour this uniquely designed renovation.

DAMAGED PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES IN NEW ORLEANS

On January 24, 2006, staff members from the 21st Century School Fund traveled to New Orleans to survey damaged public school facilities in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. All 124 New Orleans Public School buildings were damaged by the storm. According to Alvarez and Marsal, a management firm in charge of the school system, 32 school buildings sustained minor damages, 74 buildings were badly or severely damaged and 18 school buildings were totally devastated. During the 21st CSF site visit, staff members surveyed damages to five school buildings, two of which are scheduled to reopen in 2006. Staff members also met with a representative from the Bring New Orleans Back Education Committee. This committee was created by the Mayor of New Orleans to plan for the rebuilding of the educational system in the city. Photos of the New Orleans public school facilities will be available soon on the 21st CSF website.

DCPS MASTER EDUCATION & FACILITY PLANNING

Superintendent Janey and Board members decided to release the Master Education Plan (MEP) in late February to coincide with the release of the FY2007 Operating Budget. "Based on a close review of draft recommendations, Board members and I agreed that we needed to spend more time clarifying the budgetary implications of several proposals," Janey said.

The Master Education Plan will lay out in detail the school system's education priorities for the coming years. It will provide more detailed descriptions and timetables for DCPS' plans in areas such as:

- Standards and curriculum
- Strengthening and aligning professional development
- Schools autonomy and interventions for low-performing schools
- Developing guidelines for the minimum school size
- Added opportunities and supports for both low and high-performing students
- Detailing activities to strengthen high schools
- Partnerships to provide a wide range school based services to students, families and neighborhoods

The MEP will set the stage for development of the Facilities Master Plan which will begin in February and is scheduled to be completed in May, 2006. For more information, visit www.k12.dc.us or the MEP webpage at www.greatschools.k12.dc.us.”