



Better Buildings: Better Schools **Issue 32 (November 2005)**

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.

The Full Funding Campaign Working Hard for School Modernization Legislation: Council Vote on Monday

The Committee on Education, Libraries and Recreation is scheduled to vote on Bill 16-250, the "School Modernization Financing Act of 2005" this Monday, December 5th; the committee meets at 10:00 in Room 123 of the Wilson Building. The bill is expected to go to the full council for deliberation.

The bill continues to undergo revisions but it basically proposes a billion dollars in revenue bonds for a school modernization program over the next decade. The idea of using lottery funds has been shelved since the lottery funds are already spoken for. The bill currently under discussion generates the needed revenue from a small increase in commercial real estate and cigarette taxes and by foregoing the final step in the Tax Parity Act of 1999 which would have reduced income taxes slightly starting next year.

The DCPS Full Funding Coalition has launched a major outreach effort to lobby the City Council to pass the legislation. They will be hanging posters throughout the city and are hoping to print ads in local newspapers, hand out flyers and run a phone bank.

Look at the Full Funding Campaign website www.fullfunding.org to see how you can help. Go to www.fixourschools.net to download the colorful "Schools B4 Stadiums: Full Funding for Modernization" page-size poster, or otherwise contribute to the cause.

DCPS Master Education Planning

DCPS and its team of consultants (including 21CSF) are working on the Master Education Plan (MEP) and Facilities Master Plan (FMP). Superintendent Janey plans to submit the MEP to the Board of Education in January, and the FMP to the Board in April.

Public input is critical to the MEP. DCPS is developing these plans with input from parents, teachers, principals and neighbors throughout the city, as well as with help from leading education experts.

Over the past month, DC residents have had the chance to contribute their views on the content of the MEP through **five community forums** held around the city. The forums were on Nov. 9 at Patterson Elementary School (Ward 8), Nov. 14 at McKinley Tech Senior High School (Ward 5), Nov. 15 at Cleveland Elementary School (Ward 1), Nov. 17 at Janney Elementary School (Ward 3), and Nov. 21 at Kelly Miller Middle School (Ward 7).

Additionally, a short phone survey on the Master Education Plan went out to all DCPS parents last month in both English and Spanish. You can add to that survey at the **special web site** (www.greatschools.k12.dc.us) DCPS launched in November to help keep staff and community members informed. The web site includes background information on many topics under consideration — from early childhood to high school ... from school structure to extended learning. Users can contribute their views by taking extensive surveys or joining discussion groups. The site will be regularly updated, so check back frequently.

An **information hotline** (202-535-1524) was also created to help keep DCPS staff and the general community up to date on developments related to the MEP. The hotline is staffed Monday through Thursday, 9:00-4:00.

Community feedback from the forums, surveys and all other outreach activities will be incorporated into the final proposal to the Board of Education.

High School Roundtables

Three public roundtables on DCPS high school reform were held in October and November to make recommendations for the Master Education Plan about improving high schools. More than 100 people attended the roundtables including 19 teachers, 53 community members, 12 principals and 17 DCPS senior administrators. The sponsoring organizations were S.H.A.P.P.E., DC VOICE, DC PTA, DCEC (DC Education Compact) Parent Sector, 21st Century School Fund, and Youth Education Alliance.

The recommendations fell into three categories: student supports, student academic success, and community involvement. Specific recommendations are currently being finalized for submission to the Master Education Plan.

Two recommendations where there was general agreement are:

- all 9th graders would be welcome in the high schools;
- schools in various levels of “in need of improvement” according to NCLB (No Child Left Behind) test score criteria should not be handed over to educational management organizations. There should be a year of planning prior to any restructuring change with community input as recommended by the U.S. Department of Education.

DCPS Current Student Enrollment

DC Public School enrollment declined again this year, following the pattern of the past decade. The October student census counted 59,616 students in the system, a loss of 2,690; roughly 5%. The greatest loss came at the elementary school level where enrollment declined by 2,433 students. High school enrollment increased by 648.

Public charter school enrollment increased to 17,819 students, an increase of 1,978 over last year. Public charter schools now enroll about 23% of the students in the city who are educated with local public funds. There are now 52 public charter schools in 64 buildings.

This was the second year of federally funded vouchers (the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program) which were awarded to 1,733 Washington DC students for tuition at private and parochial schools in 2005-2006. This is an increase of about 400 vouchers over those awarded last year. Voucher students attend 59 non-public schools in the District.