21st CENTURY SCHOOL FUND | IMPROVING URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES

Better Buildings: Better Schools

Issue 25 (January 2005)

Monthly news on DC Public School facilities from the 21st Century School Fund (21CSF), a Washington DC based, nonprofit organization **working to build the public will and capacity to improve urban public school facilities**. To subscribe or unsubscribe please email: *newsletter@21csf.org*.

Thank You for Your Support!

Happy New Year! 21CSF would like to thank all of those who have generously supported our organization. Your donations are greatly appreciated. Thank you!

DC Education Compact: A New Initiative to Bring Public Support to Public Schools

The DC Education Compact (DCEC) is a community-wide private/public partnership that has come together to improve learning and achievement among DC public school students. Officially launched with a retreat in early November, the Compact is a unifying dialogue bringing together fragmented discussions, encouraging citizens and public officials to collaborate. This process will be a year-long effort to support the new Superintendent in getting his agenda understood and accomplished.

DCEC is committed to ensuring that the public schools educate the District's children, and that there is effective and efficient community collaboration. DCEC is a voluntary group that consists of parents, teachers, principals, system administrators, businesses, community groups, local foundations and elected officials. The Compact's work is privately funded and does not use any tax payer dollars. Funders include the Fannie Mae Foundation, the Kimsey Foundation, and the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region. 21CSF is on the DCEC planning committee.

Work has been proceeding since November in various groups, covering 11 issues (e.g., instructional capacity) and 8 sectors (e.g., parents). 21CSF is co-leading a facilities issue group, which has focused on (1) improving processes and policies for managing DCPS facilities and real estate; (2) developing innovative models for school construction financing, such as co-location of other entities within DC public schools; and (3) improving community engagement concerning school facilities. Three meetings have been held to date for this group (December 6th and 21st, and January 6th), and an interim group report has been submitted to the Compact leadership. Information and minutes from these meetings, as well as the submitted report are available on our website (www.21csf.org).

Community Forums on Public Education

The DC Compact has scheduled three community forums to discuss improving public education in the District. The interim reports will be presented for the public's feedback. The forums will be held on:

Tuesday, February 1, 2005 (For Youth) 5:00 – 7:00p.m. Thurgood Marshall Center 1816 12th Street, NW	Thursday, February 10, 2005 6:00 – 8:30p.m. Noyes Elementary School 2725 10th St, NE
Wednesday, February 9, 2005 6:00 -8:30p.m. Savoy Elementary School 2400 Shannon Place, SE	Saturday, February 12, 2005 9:00 – 11:30a.m. Cardozo Senior High School 1300 Clifton St, NW

Child care and refreshments provided. For more information call 202-274-8027

DCPS FY06 Operating Budget Update

DCPS is finalizing its proposed operating budget for submittal to the Mayor. The school system presented the proposed budget to the public on December 16th, and then held a public hearing at the Board of Education on January 12th. 21CSF testified at this hearing. Some highlights of the operating budget are: (1) $775.5M from local (DC government) sources (federal, private, and other sources are also obtained), which represents a 1.97% increase to the approved FY05 local funds operating budget; (2) a $4.6M increase in maintenance funds, which represents $1.76 per sq. foot, and is closer to the industry standard of $2.2 per sq. foot; and (3) a transfer of planning and design personnel costs from the capital budget to operating, freeing up construction funds in capital and helping to maintain the integrity and functionality of the capital program. 21CSF's testimony (available on our website) applauded the maintenance funding increase and the spirit of open dialogue that DCPS has maintained with local advocacy organizations as the budget has been developed.

DCPS FY06 - FY2011 Capital Budget Update

For capital funding, DCPS presented a revised plan ("Option D") on January 12th prior to the operating budget hearing, based on the premise that the current plan was under-funded and over-promised. The revised plan represents a significant change to the current plan, by shifting a substantial amount of funding from modernization to what DCPS calls "systemic rehabilitation." This term is explained as addressing critical health, safety, and quality of life improvements (focusing on building components and "sealing the envelopes"), and not educational space shortfalls or failing building structures typically addressed by modernizations. The new plan retains some strengths of the approved Facilities Master Plan, by completing current construction and design (although re-scoping design) projects, but calls for the development of a Master Education Plan that will drive the remainder of the Facilities Master Plan.

Both the operating and the capital budgets are available at http://www.k12.dc.us/dcps/home.html

Improving School Buildings *For Generations to Come*

Now available in print, *For Generations to Come*, a Leadership Guide to Renewing Public School Buildings, provides a framework for community involvement in the complex process of modernizing or building new public school buildings. A shipment of bound copies is fresh off the press and available for $10 each. Please contact Marissa Bachman (mbachman@21csf.org) if you would like to order a copy. The 60-page document is available also available for downloading on our website (www.21csf.org).