



Better Buildings: Better Schools Issue 28 (June 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 or unsubscribe please email: newsletter@21csf.org.

Schools & Communities Meeting at Ford Foundation

On May 12, 2005, approximately forty local and national leaders from the public education (primarily school facilities) advocacy, community development, research, and philanthropy sectors gathered at Ford Foundation in New York City to:

- (1) explore the connections between the distinct work fields of school improvement and community development; and
- (2) begin to develop elements of a multi-sector strategy to reduce barriers and create incentives to link the school improvement and community revitalization.

The basic premise of the meeting was that good schools and healthy communities are inter-related and interdependent, yet not enough collaboration is occurring in these areas. The meeting also provided a forum for participants to share the work they have been doing, or plan to do, on linking school improvement and community development, and to discuss various challenges and strategies to overcome them.

The meeting generated energy and many participants stated the desire to work on follow-up efforts. 21CSF will be central to any follow-steps developed and will provide a meeting report which will be available on our website.

BEST Releases Public School Facility Policy Report

The BEST collaborative has developed a set of model policies based on a four-part policy agenda to: 1) increase public participation in **facilities planning**, 2) create and support **schools as centers of community** that offer school-based supports to children to eliminate barriers to success and serve the broader community, 3) improve **facilities management**, including maintenance and capital improvement programs and 4) secure adequate and equitable **facilities funding**. Please visit www.21csf.org to review these policies in their entirety.

It is the responsibility of each state to ensure that every child has access to a quality education. In many states, the courts have determined that school facilities that provide educational settings suited to the state's determined curriculum are a significant part of this responsibility. However, school facility management and construction have traditionally been entirely the responsibility of the school district. Many states, particularly those who have increased their funding to local school districts are putting in place policies, procedures and technical assistance to ensure that their public school facilities are educationally adequate.

State policy reform is one tool for affecting the planning, design, construction, maintenance and funding practices and processes at the state and local school district levels. However, state level

standards and control must be carefully developed and applied, so that creativity, public participation, and local priorities can drive the facility planning and design outcomes.

The recently released school facilities policies may be used to:

- assess your state and local policies—compare these recommended policies to your state and school district’s policies;
- facilitate a discussion among teachers, parents, students, principals, facility managers, community and business leaders about any policy barriers to well-maintained, educationally adequate school facilities;
- identify policy or funding incentives that can be adopted to support high quality educational facilities for all children; and
- build consensus for state level mandates that require local school districts to engage in best practice for school facility condition, design and utilization.

DCPS – Superintendent’s Strategic Plan

On May 2, 2005, the District of Columbia education community gathered at Kelly Miller Middle School to hear Superintendent Clifford B. Janey introduce the DCPS Strategic Plan. This new plan can be found on the DCPS website (<http://www.k12.dc.us/dcps/SPindex.htm>).

DC Education Compact (DCEC)

In March, all DCEC Working Groups and Sector Groups submitted final reports and recommendations to the DCEC leadership and to the DCPS Superintendent. After a DCEC Vetting Team reviewed all of the reports, an overall DCEC Report was prepared, and included recommendations and priorities for action. This overall DCEC Report (available at <http://www.dcec.org/reports/>) provided the Superintendent with information (through collaboration between the Ed Compact and DCPS) for the DCPS Strategic Plan announced May 2. The DCPS Strategic Plan was also informed by findings from key local and national reports, and input from key advisors to the Superintendent.

DCPS Budget Update

The DCPS FY06-011 operating and capital budgets have been under review by the City Council since submittal by the Mayor in late March as part of the entire city budget. The Council Committee on Education, Libraries & Recreation chaired by Kathy Patterson held public hearings on the DCPS capital and operating budgets on April 11 and 13 respectively. The proposed FY06 operating budget is \$807 million and capital budget is \$147 million. 21CSF Executive Director Mary Filardo testified at the capital budget hearing about the recently released report from the Program Coordination and Facilities Planning Best Practices Project jointly conducted by 21CSF and Brookings Institution. The joint report and Ms. Filardo’s testimony are available at www.21csf.org.

Since the submittal of the Mayor’s budget, three specific school-funding bills have been proposed by various Council members. These bills are outlined as follows:

1. The “School Modernization Financing Act of 2005” introduced by Adrian Fenty, Vincent Gray, and Kwame Brown on April 19. This bill would: (a) provide \$1 billion in additional bond-generated funds beginning on October 1, 2006 for facilities improvements, to be repaid with up to \$60 million from lottery proceeds each year; (b) require the Board of Education to adopt a Multi-Year Facility Plan to guide the expenditure of the funds; and

(c) require the DC Auditor to report to the public on annual progress of the Facility Plan. There is currently no hearing scheduled for the public to testify on this proposal.

2. The "School Modernization Act of 2005" introduced by Linda Cropp on April 26. This bill would establish a revolving, non-lapsing dedicated fund within the General Fund to repay additional bonds issued for facilities improvements, and incorporate requirements and priorities for DCPS use of the bond funds. Priorities would be given to projects that: (a) locate new out-of-District special education programs or create additional capacity for special education within DCPS facilities; (b) create additional capacity for vocational programs within DCPS facilities; (c) co-locate charter schools within DCPS facilities; or (d) develop mixed-use facilities in collaboration with DC Public Libraries, the Department of Parks & Recreation, or other DC agencies. This bill was written directly into the city budget language by Ms. Cropp as the Council chairperson.
3. The "Multi-Year Budget for the District of Columbia Public Schools Act of 2005" introduced by Kathy Patterson. This bill would declare the sense of the Council that the US Congress should amend the DC Home Rule Act to permit the Mayor and Council to adopt a three-year budget for the school system, rather than annual budgets, to facilitate long-term school reform efforts based on stable funding. A hearing has been scheduled by the Committee on Education, Libraries & Recreation for June 23. Please call 202-724-8195 to sign up to testify.

On May 10, the Council Committee of the Whole took their first of two votes on the city budget, and it passed unanimously. Amendments were also submitted and passed unanimously that day to add the following supplemental funds to the proposed operating budget for DC public schools: \$14.9 million to protect against local school staff reductions; \$4.9 million for public charter schools to maintain equal funding with DCPS; \$12.2 million to finance debt service for a newly established school modernization fund aimed at promoting public-private partnerships and increasing capacity in serving special needs children; and a minimum of \$21 million for human service needs, including DCPS. The second vote of the Council on the city's budget will be on June 21.

DCPS Beautification Day – August 27, 2005

A DCPS Beautification Day has been established to clean up public school grounds before school re-opens in the fall. This is intended to be a citywide collaborative effort involving community groups, individual citizens, local businesses, elected officials, and the broad DCPS community. The event is scheduled for Saturday, August 27; tentatively from 8:00am until 1:00pm. Planning for this event is just beginning and more information will be included in our subsequent newsletters as well as on our website. For more information or to get involved, please contact Jordan Spooner at 745-3745, X16.

First Day of School 2005 – Reminder

This year changes to the academic calendar for 2005-2006 require students to return from summer vacation a full week **before** Labor Day. The first day of school for DCPS students is Monday, August 29, 2005. Please mark your calendars, and have a fantastic summer!