

Better Buildings: Better Schools

Issue 42 (May/June 2007)

Monthly news and commentary 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

New Facility Modernization Executive

Allen Lew, currently director of the Sports and Entertainment Commission, will be the first Director of the new DCPS Facilities Modernization Agency, under the Mayor. His experience includes the ongoing development of the new Nationals Baseball Stadium, renovation of RFK Stadium, athletic field recreational facility development in the district, led the development of the Washington Convention Center and oversaw the design and construction effort for capital programs for the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation. His experience will be crucial as he tries to “bulldoze” through city bureaucracy to tackle over 20,000 work orders in the first 6 months and at the same time work with the council and communities on specific school modernizations throughout DC.

Where are the District’s Public School Students?

There will be a meeting open to interested external stakeholders on **Friday, June 29th**, from **10 to 11:30am** at the **Office of the State Superintendent of Education** (441 4th St, NW, Room 1114 South), for an introduction to a study sponsored by them on how the District of Columbia can attract and retain residents and strengthen neighborhoods through enhanced quality school options. The researchers for this effort are the Brookings Greater Washington Research Program, the Urban Institute’s Metropolitan Housing & Communities Center, and the 21st Century School Fund.

The team will conduct an in-depth analysis of student enrollment and mobility patterns, neighborhood characteristics and change, current school options, and school assignment and choice policies. They will conduct focus groups of parents and high school dropouts to learn about how families decide where to send their children to school.

This study will also be strengthened by input from school advocates, neighborhood developers, foundations, and research organizations. We would like to know what you see as challenges to your efforts – and the city’s – to improve residents’ access to quality education and safe, vibrant neighborhoods. Your perspectives, ideas, and questions will be particularly valuable at this early stage as we fine tune our research questions and goals. We will also hold briefings at the completion of each major stage of the project to share our findings and secure input on our analysis.

Please contact Matthew Dunkle (at 202-724-1513 or Matthew.Dunkle@dc.gov) to RSVP.

Summer “Blitz” Program

Summer repair at DCPS schools have been accelerated with \$23 million dollars re-programmed from capital projects that were in the budget but not scheduled to start this year. Blitz repairs are set for 33 elementary schools that are not going into complete modernization for several years (list below). These repairs will target health and safety problems and critical building areas such as leaky roofs or toilets in need of repair. This is part of an effort initiated by the Board of Education in February to make major repairs at 71 schools in the next two years to get them up to standard while they await complete modernization.

Project managers are meeting with prospective contractors and walking through the buildings with principals and other community members to develop and prioritize a scope of work.

Current solicitations can be viewed on the DCPS web site (www.k12.dc.us) under the Office of Contracts and Procurement at <http://www.k12.dc.us/offices/oca/solicitations.htm>. Contact Paul Taylor for further information regarding the blitz at 202-576-5547.

Summer Blitz Schools:

Maury, Davis, Gibbs, Leckie, Simon, Smothers, Aiton, Adams, Garfield, Stanton, Watkins, Kenilworth, Shepherd, Payne, Plummer, River-Terrace, Whittier, Stevens, Brent, LaSalle, Burroughs, Garnett-Patterson MS, Hyde, J.O. Wilson, Beers, Ross, Amidon, Langdon, Mann, Ludlow-Taylor, Orr, Raymond, Janney.

HD Cooke Groundbreaking

A large crowd of neighbors and students assembled June 7th outside the shuttered HD Cooke Elementary School in Adams Morgan to officially break ground on the modernization project that has been stalled while students have been bussed off-site to swing space at Lewis Elementary for three years. Students read their essays (in both Spanish and English), the school chorus sang, drummers drummed and numerous public officials offered remarks.

The completely modernized school should be finished for the opening by September of 2009 after a \$25 million dollar renovation and addition with construction services from Gilbane Building Company.

Mark Your Calendars - - Volunteers Needed Saturday August 25th

The 3rd annual DCPS Beautification Day is scheduled for Saturday, August 25 from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm at your local neighborhood school. Parents and students will join their neighbors in sweeping, planting flowers, mulching, watering trees and generally accomplishing a final spruce up before school starts. Rain or shine. Bring a hat, work gloves, extra water and tools if you have them; some tools will be provided.

Call Naimah Beyah at 727-0488 or e-mail volunteer4schools@k12.dc.us to register officially. Get more information on the DCPS web site at www.k12.dc.us.

Ballou Teacher Room to be Renovated

The Washington Architectural Foundation provided pro bono services of Hickok Cole to the 21st Century School Fund for interior design services to fully renovate the Ballou Teacher Room into high quality professional space. Hickok Cole has provided a design that will provide Ballou teachers, space to work, meet, eat, and prepare materials for instruction. It is planned and designed to be a respite area that is comfortable, yet supportive of teachers' need for work and respite.

A part of the funds to renovate the teacher room are being provided by the Kimsey Foundation, the 21st Century School Fund is seeking approximately \$100,000 in other funds to implement the design and improvements to doors, floors, lighting, plumbing, appliances, and millwork. If you are able or interested in contributing, contact Mary Filardo at the 21st Century School Fund, mfilardo@21csf.org.

21CSF Receives Ford Grant to Build Public Will in New Orleans

21CSF and its BEST national collaboration partnership sought and were awarded funds to support a local parent activist, Angela Daliet launch a local advocacy group, modeled in part after 21st Century School Fund, which they have named Save Our Schools (no relation to the DC SOS). Save our Schools will work with parents and communities to build the public will to rebuild their public schools so they support high quality education and revitalized neighborhoods. After a May 31st visit to New Orleans Mary Filardo said, "Many of the schools are just like they have been frozen in time right after the flood." This was not the first visit to New Orleans for staff. 21CSF has met with officials, parents, and community activists in assessing the challenges of rebuilding schools and proposed a public-private partnership model specifically tailored for the New Orleans community.