



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

# DC PUBLIC SCHOOLS MASTER FACILITIES PLAN 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

The District of Columbia Public Schools are now in the midst of the most massive transformation of a public school district in the country. No more than three years ago, many considered the possibility of providing educational excellence in D.C. public schools an unattainable goal. Years of neglect left the District's public school facilities in a truly deplorable state. The 2008 District of Columbia Public Schools Master Facilities Plan (MFP) is the action plan that will finally deliver classrooms that do support educational needs and provide safe, positive learning environments to the children of the District.

The 2008 MFP builds upon information garnered over the past several years and sets a new course, based on current facilities conditions. At the heart of this plan is the premise that the quality of the learning environment significantly impacts student achievement. No child should wait 15 years or more before their school is brought up to a standard of excellence. This plan will bring the benefit of modernized schools to as many students as possible, as soon as possible.

Using academic principles grounded in sound policies, the 2008 MFP plans for modern, well-maintained, and efficient facilities. The MFP is driven by the "Guiding Principles" established by the Office of the Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools (OOC), in order to align educational programs with facilities. The resulting facility plan will be implemented by the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization (OPEFM), the District agency charged with central management of the planning, design, construction and maintenance of school facility programs.

Building on the success and lessons learned from the school renovations projects of the last two years, we know now that with targeted modernization investments we can turn a school facility around in just one year. With a strategic approach, it is possible to modernize the core academic components of every DCPS school in the next five years. By utilizing such an approach, the 2008 MFP will fulfill the goals of the School Modernization Financing Act within the anticipated budget and



MCKINLEY  
Technology High School

meet every parent's vision of being able to send their child to a safe, welcoming and supportive learning environment.

Moreover, the 2008 MFP envisions modernization as a continual process. By making substantial investments in the components of our schools on an ongoing basis and implementing a comprehensive maintenance program, the District will maintain the level of quality and sustain the functionality of each building, maximizing the benefits to the learning environment and its long-term investment. Finally, the MFP delivers both an immediate response and a long-term strategy to address the central issue of serving the present population while simultaneously preparing for growth as DCPS' goals are achieved and families return to the system.

### Taking Action

Upon assuming responsibility for the modernization of DCPS facilities in mid-2007, OPEFM encountered a situation of severe need. Not only had many anticipated modernization projects incurred years of delays and budget shortfalls, but the deferred maintenance problem across the entire system had grown so severe as to present serious health and safety concerns for students, teachers- and staff. Symptoms of these problems were evident in the fact that, in many prior years, school buildings were threatened with closure by the fire marshal at the beginning of the school year for fire code violations, or were "cited" at the beginning of the heating season as boilers and distribution systems failed, leaving many students with little heat in their classrooms.

EASTERN  
Senior High School



Therefore, OPEFM immediately structured a "Stabilization" effort that would allow, from late-FY 2007 through 2008, for a rapid series of "blitzes" to address major problems immediately. The overriding objective of the Stabilization program was to ensure healthy, safe and comfortable environments. Students and parents who arrived at these modernized schools instantly recognized the investment made in their schools. Students remarked on the improved lighting, new lockers, new ceilings and new floors, to cite a few examples. One parent was quoted in The



Washington Post after dropping her grandson off at newly modernized Eliot-Hine Middle School that she was thrilled with the changes and that it was a great improvement. The 2008 MFP will bring this type of improvement to every school by 2013.

### **Bringing Modernization to All Schools Sooner**

Since the earliest recommendations of the 2001 Master Plan, the reference for a "facility modernization" denotes both the process that takes a facility from current condition to a completed renovation and the resulting condition of the building once all construction activity has been completed. A "modern" facility is expected to have operational and efficient building systems, clean and maintainable interior finishes, bright and "healthy" classrooms and public spaces. They should be flexible, functional and focused on both school and community needs. These are the same expectations for a "modernized" facility. If we overlay this list of expectations and consider the current conditions of many of our school buildings, we begin to understand what modernization means for school facilities. Turning to examples of work that has already occurred in school facilities such as the renovations at Browne Education Campus and Smothers Elementary School, we can see the balance between the care for the original building and bright, supportive academic spaces, realizing that the definition of "modernization" is applicable to facilities with varying conditions assessments from the start.

The 2008 Master Facilities Plan organizes modernization into three categories based on the kind of building component being modernized: Academic, Support, and Systems. The MFP will be implemented through a phased approach, building on the investments already made, particularly in the classrooms, during the stabilization initiatives through the summer 2008. In the first phase of implementation, OPEFM will focus on the Academic Components; aggressive improvement of the learning environment is the immediate priority. Support and Systems Components will be prioritized for the second phase - beyond the first five years - except where necessary to address immediate concerns and ensure that the building remains stable and supportive of the academic program. Pre-planning and coordination among various modernization projects will be an important task in OPEFM's work plan to ensure that the order of work and the relationship between projects is coherent and efficient with resources. The law requires that the MFP be updated every three years. This review-and-revision process provides a systematic way to ensure that the Support and Systems Components are continually evaluated

### **Academic Components**

As a priority, school modernization will be completed first in the areas of a school where students spend the majority of their time - classrooms. With such investments, the impact on student achievement will be realized sooner; by approaching it in a targeted, system-wide manner, the impact also will reach more students. Academic Component modernization consists of targeted improvements and small capital projects designed to improve a student's educational environment. For example, a particular school may lack certain classroom facility supports, such as ample lighting, comfortable climate control and access to the Internet. The 2008 MFP details a strategy for ensuring these academic components meet a certain standard, in every school, within the first five years of the plan.

### **Support Components**

The second phase of modernizations will focus on strengthening the support components within school facilities. Shared classroom space for classes such as art and music require the same attention as regular classrooms, particularly in high schools where non-core classes and extracurricular programs are a key component of a well-rounded academic program. Other school space such as auditoriums, gymnasiums and locker rooms currently reflect some of the most serious neglect in our schools. These spaces must be renovated to support a full range of extra curricular offerings that help create a well-rounded educational environment. Modernization of these Support Component features in school buildings is important to the overall educational environment and must be addressed with the same strategic approach, focusing on those most in need in order to support the academic program and to complement modernization work for core Academic Components.

### **System Components**

With the Stabilization initiatives complete, most systems (mechanical, electrical, plumbing, etc.) in schools are functioning; the 2008 MFP leverages the work already done on those systems components, allowing the immediate focus to remain on the Academic Component modernization. As the first phase is completed, the scope of the modernization work will turn back to a Systems Component



modernization in order to upgrade and extend the life of each school facility. For some schools, Systems Component modernization may involve targeted small capital projects needed to update or replace components of a facility that is otherwise stabilized - increasing the school's electrical capacity to support computer labs or repairing or replacing a broken chiller that no longer adequately cools the gymnasium and auditorium, for example. In some cases, like in the Coolidge gymnasium, the facility may lack any air conditioning, and Systems Component modernization will rectify this issue. Coordination among Academic, Systems, and Support Component modernizations will be key with respect to projects that overlap.

### **A System of Excellence**

Thankfully, the many residents of this community who remain dedicated to the fundamental principle that every child deserves a first-rate public education did not give up on wanting more for District children. Today, due to the commitment by the Mayor, the Council and the residents of the District who refused to settle for a broken system, a new day is facing the students of the District of Columbia Public Schools. The strategic, phased



**PATTERSON**  
Elementary School

approach of the 2008 MFP allows OPEFM the opportunity to target improvements to every student's educational environment that under the old approach would have had to wait years for their place in line. By focusing on the learning environment first, the 2008 MFP will finally position the District and its school system finally to reach beyond dealing with deferred maintenance, backlogged repairs, and crumbling buildings. Every classroom, and therefore every student, will be impacted in the first five years of this plan. The 2008 MFP presents an aggressive plan and a radical new approach to modernizing schools - one that will meet the expectations of parents and teachers across the District by providing bright, welcoming, supportive learning environments for every student.