

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION FACILITIES MODERNIZATION**



Testimony of

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**Before the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the
Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia**

On

“On the Path to Great Results for the District’s Public Schools”

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**Dirksen Senate Office Building
Room 342**

Good morning Chairman Akaka and members of the sub-committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. For the record, my name is Allen Lew and I am the Executive Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization, which I will refer to during my statement as “School Construction”.

School Construction was established by D.C. Act 17-38, the “Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007,” and is responsible for the renovation and rehabilitation of existing District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) facilities, the construction of new schools and facilities and the development of a revised Master Facilities Plan for DCPS.

During the same period of time that we were establishing School Construction, we were engaged in pushing forward on several initiatives aimed at quality of life issues necessary to support a classroom environment that is conducive to learning and where a quality education can be obtained.

These initiatives – the DCPS Athletic Fields Renovations, Summer Blitz, Targeted Repairs, Fire and Health Code Violations and the Heating Blitz Program – concentrated on the most glaring deficiencies affecting DCPS facilities when the Mayor took control of the system.

The Athletic Fields Renovations project involved renovating six DCPS senior high school football fields: Dunbar, Coolidge, Roosevelt, McKinley, Wilson, and Ballou. We installed the same artificial turf on those fields that is used by many National Football League football stadiums and by Division I college football teams. In addition to the athletic fields, the renovations included field lights, repairs to bleachers, installation of press boxes and locker rooms. Running tracks made from the same composite materials that will be used at the Summer Olympics were also installed. Field event areas for high jump, pole vault, shot put and long jump were included in the design. These long-needed renovations are a source of pride for the schools and the surrounding community.

The Summer Blitz and Targeted Repairs programs, which involved 70 schools, focused on urgently-needed repairs to schools that involved roofs, gutters and leaders, bathroom plumbing issues, carpet and tile replacement and installation of new windows. The effort to remediate fire and health code violations involves the installation of fire alarm systems, installation of new door locks, cameras and security monitoring systems.

The Heating Blitz program addressed the conditions of the boilers providing heat to DCPS schools. While there are 142 schools, the boilers

serving these schools number some 411, and each school required at least one boiler providing heat by October 15th, which is the official beginning of the cold season. We've also been working on the distribution systems in an effort to better regulate the level of heat in individual classrooms.

I am pleased to report that we have successfully implemented each of these urgent-need initiatives. At the same time, I'm proud to say that we've been able to undertake significant management reforms since I last appeared before the Subcommittee, while also preparing for major new construction initiatives this Spring and Summer. I would like to provide a few comments on what we've achieved in this area and where we're headed:

Organizational Reforms

- Set up an office from scratch in under 2 weeks to manage the summer blitz and targeted repairs work and athletic fields renovations.
- Drafted and published new procurement regulations.
- Drafted new personnel regulations.
- Competitively procured a Program Management team that provides roughly 22 FTEs to augment School Construction and OFM's staff.
- Conducted an audit/review of DCPS-OFM's former structures and weaknesses.
- Assumed responsibility for DCPS-OFM maintenance functions.
- Engaged a management consultant to develop state of the art procurement, human resources and file/information management systems.
- Began the process of transitioning former OFM personnel into School Construction.

Modernization Projects Planning and Implementation

- Former culture of project management has been "jolted awake" by replacement of the Hardy Middle School Project Management and Construction Management contractors as well as the Savoy Elementary School Pre-Construction contractor
- All renovation and new construction project budgets have been reviewed and "right-sized", to accurately reflect probable actual costs
- All projects, and we have some 20 of them in various stages of design, preconstruction and construction, are moving forward

Work Orders/System Enhancements

- As a result of the focused Summer Blitz and Targeted Repair programs at 70 schools from June to October 2007, we substantially reduced the backlog of Maintenance Work Orders.
- We are currently in the process of clearing those closed work orders from the reporting system.
- As part of the upcoming Stabilization Program, it is anticipated that the remaining open work orders will be eliminated.
- We have established a rudimentary triage system, which we are constantly upgrading, to create the capacity to quickly address emergency service order requests

Air-Conditioning Blitz

- A solicitation in the form of a Request For Proposal (RFP) to provide air-conditioning in all classrooms by this spring was issued and contracts have been awarded to three construction firms
- Preliminary engineering and conditions assessments are underway to determine the level of electrical service required for each school

Stabilization and School Consolidation Program

- We are about to initiate a Stabilization Program that will focus on 70 schools that were not touched by the Summer Blitz and Targeted Repairs programs last year
- Between the end of the school year and the opening of schools in the fall, School Construction will prepare schools to receive additional students and new educational programs

- For the schools that are being closed, School Construction is developing a plan to insure the integrity of the building systems and to secure the buildings.

Master Facilities Plan

We are working with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education and the Chancellor to refine school/grade configurations across the system, prioritize facility delivery, and identify systemic efficiencies that will allow us to move more students into new and modernized school buildings faster, with the objective of presenting a revised Master Facilities Plan, that is fully aligned with the Chancellor's academic vision, to the public and the Council by the end of May.

Before that time, we will complete the following analyses:

In addition to the data used to develop the educational specifications for the Chancellor's school consolidation plan, much of the data developed in the 2006 Master Facilities Planning effort is still relevant. The facility assessments were revalidated in 2007 and that information assisted us in the heating and electrical "blitzes" that we have undertaken. The demographic data is being revalidated now and will be integral in confirming projected school sizes. Finally, the specific school-by-school recommendations are being reviewed and re-estimated to ensure the plan is financially sound.

We will incorporate the most effective combination of rehabilitation and new construction in the revised Master Plan. This approach will allow us to align the modernization with the academic programs planned for each school and also address the District's historic preservation and Green energy-efficient building goals.

I am excited to be working with Mayor Fenty, Deputy Mayor Reinoso, Chancellor Rhee, the principals, parents and, most importantly, the students and the larger community to construct new schools and modernize existing school facilities so that they can become centers of education, recreation and community life. The Mayor has made clear his goal of having excellent schools, and school buildings, across the District and he and the Deputy Mayor have been very helpful in eliminating bureaucratic obstacles to ensure our success in this respect.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I look forward to answering any questions that you and members of the Committee may have.