



Why are School Facilities Important?

Every student deserves to have a school environment that is safe, makes them feel welcome and proud to be at school, and supports their learning and engagement. Research shows the physical space where students learn has **direct effects on how they learn** and their **mental well being**.

Key Components of Modern School Facilities



Healthy and Safety: All schools need baseline health and safety measures like locks on all doors, soap in bathrooms, proper cleaning supplies, air conditioning and heating systems, safe drinking water, and rooms free of mold, toxins, or leaks.



Modern Design: Maximizing access to natural light, creating spaces to encourage collaboration, and open floor plans all help keep students interested in learning and foster curiosity. Additionally, making schools more energy efficient frees up more money to go towards learning versus utility costs.



Supports for 21st Century Learning: Modern learning environments need to support different types of learners (hands-on, visual, audio, reading/writing), support both individual and group work, promote interaction and a sense of community, and foster both formal and informal learning. Access to modern technology is vital to help build students' life skills and college and career readiness.



Who is in Charge of DC School Facilities?

The Deputy Mayor for Education (DME):
In 2016, the Planning Actively for Comprehensive Education Facilities Amendment Act of 2016 (PACE) was passed. The PACE Act requires the Office of the DME to prepare a Master Facilities Plan (MFP) to create a roadmap to develop adequate public school facilities for both DCPS and public charter schools. The MFP includes information about:

- **School capacity:** is the building overcrowded or underutilized?
- **Conditions and needs of school facilities:** Are the current conditions healthy, safe, and conducive to learning? Do the current facilities support high-quality specialized school programs?
- **Enrollment and estimates for the future:** Is there an expected population increase or decrease in the next ten years?

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Who is in Charge of DC School Facilities?

The Department of General Services (DGS):

- Manages repairs and renovations to DC-owned DCPS schools (under the Mayor).
- Leases out vacant school buildings to public charter Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

DCPS:

- DCPS school facilities are owned and controlled by the DC government. They do not pay rent, but they do pay for regular maintenance like custodian services and utilities.
- Funding for construction and renovations are included in DC's capital budget (budget for building or infrastructure projects like roads or other facilities).
- The Council's Committee on Government Operations and Facilities provides oversight.

Public charter LEAs:

- Public charter LEAs are responsible for securing and maintaining their own buildings.
 - Oftentimes they lease or purchase buildings on their own.
 - Alternatively they can lease vacant school buildings from the DC government (specifically DGS), if available.
- Receive a per-pupil allowance for funding facilities from DC, which can be used for acquiring a school building, leasing, renovation, expansion, and more - but does not have to be used for facilities.



Current State of School Facilities in DC

Each year, as stated in the PACE Act, **DCPS and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB) release data that share info on the current state of school buildings and their facilities.**

DCPS and the PCSB use different methods of collecting data, which makes it difficult to compare across sectors. The latest reports are available on the **DME's 2021 MFP Supplemental Report.**

Only some DC schools are properly **renovated**, which is important for ensuring basic health and safety. Some schools are still lacking the basics: working plumbing, air conditioning, and more. Not all schools are **modernized** with 21st century learning supports. Given the significant impacts on students, this is a clear equity issue.



How Can You get Involved?

- Testify at a DC Council Performance Oversight Hearing on DME, DCPS, and PCSB.
- Contact your child's school to advocate for renovations/modernizations.
- Look out for PAVE's updates on DC education initiatives to share your voice.
- Contact PAVE at info@dcpave.org for more info.