

Board of Education Testimony by Jordan Spooner (21st Century School Fund)
on the FY06-FY11 DCPS Capital Budget (10/25/04)

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to testify yet again on the DCPS capital budget – this time for the FY06 to FY11 program. My testimony tonight will be largely restating testimony that we have given before on the Capital Improvement Program, because much has not changed with the recent program or the external forces on it, and because we believe it's critical to continue to discuss some of the following issues.

First, I want to restate six principles that I outlined to you back on September 9th, during the FY05 reallocation hearing, that we think are lacking from the recent program and should be the foundation for going forward:

1. The program should be aligned to *budget reality*. As implemented so far, the program has appeared to treat funding as if an ample supply will remain available.
2. The program should be *needs-based*. A critical part of aligning limited resources to meet public and educational goals and aspirations is to set project priorities according to building, student, educational, and neighborhood needs.
3. The program should be *tailored to specific building, educational, and community requirements*. The Facility Master Plan provides for only fully modernizing or replacing each school, but the program should be tailored to reflect the unique requirements of each school.
4. The program should *reflect capital funds already invested*. Significant capital funding has already been spent in recent years, and this should be reflected by downsizing the scope of some of the modernization projects going forward.
5. The program should *incorporate a phased approach*. DCPS should keep its promises to schools already in line for improvements, but the scope of the improvements should be modified according to their need and the relative need of others. This can be done in such a way as to improve the school, but not leave so many others with so little.
6. The program should *identify ways to save operating and other capital dollars*. This includes things like making energy efficiency improvements.

Second, we urge you to take a harder look at the scope of some of the upcoming modernization projects by thinking about which building resources that are already being or have been constructed can be shared. For instance, can new gyms being constructed in certain planning areas serve more than one school, and therefore allow a phasing of projects down the line and the ability to spread more funds around to more schools. This will certainly require good planning and dialogue with the community, but we think that DCPS is up to this task.

We would be happy to discuss any and all of these ideas with you further, as part of our efforts to improve the facilities for *all* of the District's public school children.

Thank you.