

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
BALTIMORE DISTRICT, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
COMPLETE STATEMENT  
OF  
COLONEL CHARLES FIALA  
COMMANDER, BALTIMORE DISTRICT  
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
BEFORE THE  
D.C. SUBCOMMITTEE  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ON  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT  
PROGRAM

APRIL 25, 2002

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee.

I am Colonel Charles Fiala, Commander of the Baltimore District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I am here today at your request to testify on the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) Capital Improvement Program. In my statement, I will discuss the role of the Corps of Engineers in assisting DC Public Schools in executing projects and will update you on the program development and evolution. I will also describe our current strategy to manage the transition from a program in which we play a major role in project execution, to a program implemented by DCPS without our support.

We have been working with DCPS to execute the school capital projects since April 1998. The partnership between the Corps and the school system remains strong. The Corps staff and an increasingly professional and experienced DCPS staff form a cadre of government employees committed to ensuring that resources are efficiently and effectively used to improve educational facilities and to enhance learning environments.

The Corps' support to DCPS has had three main phases. First, we began by addressing urgent health, safety, and operational problems in schools. The second phase has been to develop and to begin a long-term renovation and new construction program. As we continue to execute the work, the third phase is to help DCPS to establish a sustainable, effective system for design and construction procurement and management.

Working together with our partners in the DCPS Facilities Office, we have come a long way, eliminated hundreds of critical health and safety deficiencies, and replaced dozens of major failing building systems. This first phase of our work, has provided dramatically safer classrooms for children and has allowed schools to open on time for four consecutive years.

The central heating plant at Hendly Elementary School in Southeast was recently replaced as part of a boiler room renovation. Seventeen boiler replacement projects were completed this year. We are installing a new central cooling plant at the Sharpe-Health school, a year-round program in Ward 4 serving students with special needs. Nine cooling plants have already been replaced this year, and six more are in progress. Over one-third of the city's students benefit from new heating and cooling systems replaced in the past four years.

The students and staff at Banneker High School are now enjoying new energy-efficient windows. Banneker was one of six schools with window replacements completed this year, while work continues in five more schools. We also are replacing roofs, renovating bathrooms, removing asbestos-containing material, and making Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements. Overall, these health, safety, and replacement projects help improve the learning environment for every student at every school in the DCPS system.

The second phase of our support to DCPS, modernizing and replacing outmoded school buildings, is well underway. This phase began with the development of a comprehensive, community-based Long-range Facility Master Plan. We helped to develop the plan by providing technical facility assessments and contracting support. Approved by the Board of Education, the plan calls for the modernization of 10 schools each year.

Eight new or fully modernized schools are currently under construction in every part of the District. These are Barnard, Key, Miner, Noyes, Patterson, and Randle-Highland Elementary Schools; Kelly Miller Middle School; and the Technology High School at McKinley. Three more schools will be under construction this summer: Cleveland Elementary, Thomson Elementary, and a combined middle/high school to replace Bell Senior High and Lincoln Middle School. Other schools are in planning and design. These new, modern schools will provide an improved working and learning environment for teachers and students, and will ultimately reduce operating, maintenance, and repair costs for the school system.

The next phase is one where DCPS staff takes on an increasing amount of the workload. This phase also has begun. Last year, DCPS executed about one-fourth of the minor capital projects. This year, DCPS is responsible for four of 10 modernization designs and has taken on an increasing role in asbestos management. We are committed to assisting DCPS through this transition period, and to ensuring that school facility operations remain successful.

During the four years of Corps involvement with DCPS, more than \$360 million in contract awards have been made and annual capital dollar investments have increased four-fold. More than one-half of the contract dollars have gone to small businesses, while one-third have gone to businesses based in the District of Columbia. This year, about \$200 million will be invested in capital improvements, an all-time high for the District school system.

This is a program with huge challenges matched only by the rewards of bringing real, tangible improvements to schools for the District's children. Despite all the accomplishments in recent years, much remains to be done. The continued support of the City and Federal Government will enable DCPS to continue improving school facilities, and to accomplish the ambitious rebuilding effort called for in the Board of Education's facility plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. Attached to my written testimony are several reports showing in more detail some of the capital program accomplishments.