

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Report Shows More than Two-Thirds of School Buildings in “Very Poor” Condition; Highlights Need for Urgent Action**

*City Schools unveils unprecedented third-party assessment of district portfolio;  
will use to develop plan to bring buildings up to 21<sup>st</sup>-century standards over next 10 years*

(Baltimore, MD)—Joined by the mayor, the city’s state legislators and other elected officials and key community partners and leaders, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners and Baltimore City Public Schools CEO Andrés A. Alonso today released the first-ever comprehensive report on the physical condition of the district’s school buildings. The report asserts that City Schools buildings fall far below national standards, and gives the district an overall rating of “very poor.”

District leaders hailed the report both for the story it tells of unacceptable learning conditions for City Schools students, and for its critical role in advancing the transformation of City Schools and the revitalization of the city. It shows what it will take to provide better school buildings, which in turn will better position students to achieve at the highest levels and bring more families to the city—and by extension, more students to its schools.

The Jacobs report—named after Jacobs Project Management Co., the firm City Schools hired to lead the yearlong study—provides an overview of the district as a whole, and individual reports on all of its schools. The facts are stark:

- The vast majority of City Schools buildings pre-date the color TV and man on the moon—23 percent were built prior to 1946 and 74 percent were built between 1946 and 1985
- More than one-third of the space in these buildings, 34 percent, is going unused
- 50 of the district’s 182 school campuses are in such poor condition they are candidates for replacement or surplus
- To bring the buildings up to acceptable standards would cost \$2.5 billion

City Schools commissioned the Jacobs report to fully understand the condition of its buildings and how they are being used. With this information, the district can begin to identify physical improvement needs and priorities and, by working closely with individual school communities, develop a 10-year plan for repairing, renovating and replacing buildings to bring them up to 21<sup>st</sup>-century standards.

The report follows many months of close collaboration between the district, the mayor’s office, local and state lawmakers and key community partners to lay the groundwork for achieving the same standard of school buildings in Baltimore City that students have access to across the country. It comes on the heels of last week’s passage of a bottle tax in Baltimore City to fund school construction. And, together with the 10-year plan it informs, the report will be critical during the 2013 General Assembly in urging state lawmakers to pass a bill to allow City Schools the necessary flexibility to raise and spend the money to support a school re-building initiative with such vast implications for the progress of students and the city.

“The release of the Jacobs report is the next big milestone in the transformation of City Schools,” said Neil E. Duke, chair of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. “We understood at the outset of our reform work that the physical condition of our district was a huge drag on our ability to support excellent teaching and learning. But for so long we did not know the full scope of the challenge, and for a long time, the challenge

seemed insurmountable. Thanks to the leadership, commitment and collaboration of so many in the last two years, the poor state of our schools is a challenge we now feel confident we can overcome. We have identified necessary funding streams and now, with the report, we have what we need to build a roadmap.”

“We have known for years that our children are going to school each day in old, out-of-date buildings that don’t begin to meet their educational needs, let alone support the important progress they are making,” said Dr. Alonso. “The Jacobs report is huge because it tells this story in a clear and irrefutable way. It’s a story about unacceptable conditions for our kids. And it’s a story everybody with a stake in Baltimore should know and tell, not just because it is outrageous, but because it presents an unprecedented opportunity for our city. The Jacobs report gives us what we need to say, ‘No more’ to fifth-rate school buildings and to provide buildings that support the best possible education and, by extension, forward movement for our kids and our city.”

“To get Baltimore growing again, we need to step up our game and work together to improve our schools,” said Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. “The release of the Jacobs report, and the signing into law of the city’s first and only new funding source specifically dedicated to school construction, mark an important milestone in this journey to improve our school buildings. These two documents represent a philosophy about what is needed to address decades of underfunding, neglect and avoidance of hard decisions.”

City Schools commissioned Arlington, Va.-based Jacobs Project Management Co. to assess the condition of all district-owned buildings and the educational adequacy of all buildings in the City Schools portfolio. Jacobs has provided a range of feasibility and engineering services to several other Maryland school districts, and it has performed educational adequacy assessments and master plan development for other similar sized and larger public school districts around the country. The Jacobs report for City Schools represents the firm’s Baltimore City findings, and in so doing, provides important information the district has never had before.

- **Facilities Condition Index.** For all City Schools-owned buildings only, the report provides an overall assessment of the physical condition of school buildings coupled with the cost of upgrading them versus the cost of replacing them—and maintaining the buildings over 10 years. Called the Facilities Condition Index, or FCI, this is represented by a percentage scale of 1 to 100 where the higher the percentage, the poorer the condition of the building and the better a candidate for replacement versus repairs.
- **Educational adequacy.** For all school buildings across all 182 City Schools campuses—district-owned buildings, leased buildings and buildings owned by outside operators—the report provides a measure of how well schools’ physical structures, technology and instructional space support their academic mission. Called “educational adequacy” and based on existing physical conditions of the buildings and their sites in relation to teaching and learning, this is represented by a point scale of 1 to 100 in which higher scores reflect buildings that are better at meeting educational needs.
- **Functional capacity.** The report provides an overview of the district’s functional capacity compared to the number of students it serves.

Combined, these three pieces of information are essential for City Schools to determine how it can best provide buildings that support 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching and learning for all schools in a cost-effective way.

And the report’s findings paint a bleak picture of the overall physical plant of the district, which spans 18.5 million square feet across 182 school campuses:

- The 10-year Facilities Condition Index for the district as a whole is 60 percent, which according to Jacobs reflects “facilities in very poor condition”
  - 125 of the 182 school campuses Jacobs assessed for condition—*69 percent, or more than two-thirds*—have FCIs of 50 percent or higher, meaning their condition is “very poor”
  - 50 of the 182 campuses—*27 percent, or more than one-quarter*—have FCIs of 75 percent or higher and should be considered as candidates for replacement or surplus
- The average educational adequacy score for the district is 55 percent, which according to Jacobs is a “failing grade”
- City Schools uses just 66 percent of its available space
  - While its utilization rate for elementary schools is 82 percent and for K-8 schools 78 percent, its utilization rate for middle schools is just 43 percent and for high schools 51 percent

These statistics, coupled with the detailed reports Jacobs has provided for each school, quantify the impact of physical structures and space on teaching and learning. For example, Jacobs shows the following at one particular school: The roof has holes; the floors throughout are damaged; classrooms have insufficient electrical outlets and data ports; light switches do not have dimmers; windows lack blinds; classroom doors lack windows; sinks and lavatories are damaged; there is no air conditioning system; there are no usable drinking fountains; there are insufficient coat hooks, cubbies and teacher storage; cable access is limited, there is not a functioning PA system and an inadequate phone system serves only a portion of the school; the playground equipment needs replacing; and asphalt paving across the campus and concrete walkways are damaged and parking lots lack clearly delineated spaces; etc. These are just a few of the problems Jacobs cites with this particular school's physical plant, and any one of them in isolation might be manageable. But these are basic requirements of an educational setting and the cumulative effect of their state of disrepair deeply affects teaching and learning.

"I constantly get complaints from teachers about the condition of the school buildings, and improving them will create a much better teaching and learning environment for everybody—our teachers and our children," said Marietta English, President of the Baltimore Teachers Union. "Each year we are fortunate to make over one classroom through our Extreme Classroom Makeover process and we see the difference when we go into these classrooms that have been made over and we see teaching environments that are so inviting and the children who are so excited ... This report and this initiative provide an opportunity for us to make our classrooms state-of-the-art for all of our students in all of our schools."

In its report, Jacobs concludes that it will cost \$2.5 billion to bring the condition of all district-owned buildings up to minimally acceptable standards; to correct, where possible within all existing building structures, educational adequacy deficiencies; and to maintain all building systems for at least 10 years.

"The report by itself does not provide recommendations and it is not a plan. But it gives us critical information we need to develop a plan," Dr. Alonso said. "The report tells us the extent to which a school's building can support a 21<sup>st</sup>-century education, and it tells us how many other schools are in close proximity to that school, and their capacity and physical condition. From there, we will look at the actual school programs in the area and other factors such as transportation and the needs of the surrounding community. And we will look at the cost to improve the building compared to the cost to replace it. Many things will factor into the recommendations that emerge in coming months and comprise our 10-year 21<sup>st</sup>-century buildings plan. And the input and continued hard work of all members of the City Schools community will be vital to that process."

Starting this week, with the Jacobs report in hand, the district launches a series of 14 community meetings that will take place between now and early August to inform all 200 of its school communities about what a 21<sup>st</sup>-century school building is—and what their students and staff deserve; about the condition of their particular buildings; and about how their school buildings fit into and support the needs of their larger communities. Input from the communities, in turn, will inform the values that drive City Schools' development this fall of a 10-year 21<sup>st</sup>-century buildings plan the district hopes to begin implementing in 2013-14.

The plan will be essential to finalizing a plan to finance the \$2 billion-plus buildings initiative, which largely hinges on the city and state allowing City Schools to receive state construction funds in the form of a block grant versus its current annual allocation. With more money up front and at once, the district can better raise the balance (and bulk) of the necessary funds by issuing bonds. A bill to allow this was introduced during the 2012 legislative session but was held back in anticipation of the Jacobs report and an ensuing 10-year plan. City Schools will deliver that plan to the legislature before the 2013 session begins in January.

The full Jacobs report and much more information on City Schools' 21<sup>st</sup>-century buildings plan is available on the City Schools website at [www.baltimorecityschools.org/betterbuildings](http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/betterbuildings).

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