

**Montgomery County Council Office of Legislative Oversight Study:
*A Review of the MCPS Revitalization/Expansion Program***

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has a systematic process for evaluating the condition of its older schools and scheduling them for major upgrades—called “revitalization/expansions.” The original term for these projects was “modernizations,” but the name was changed to better reflect the fact that nearly all of these projects expand the capacity of schools as they are revitalized. Increasing school capacities is very important in this time of large enrollment increases.

In 2010–2011, the school system worked with a consultant and a range of school system, community, and county agency stakeholders to update the method used to score the condition of older schools. The methodology is known as “Facility Assessment with Criteria and Testing,” or FACT. Following Board of Education adoption of the methodology, the FACT was used to assess the condition, and develop a score, for 53 schools. Based on the score schools received, a queue was established for scheduling revitalization/expansion projects.

The revitalization/expansion program requires a large share of capital improvements program (CIP) funds and is of great importance to communities with aging schools. Due to its importance, the Montgomery County Council requested that the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) study the program and review the FACT methodology. The OLO study had two main findings:

- The length of the queue of schools is estimated to take 20 to 30 years to complete. The OLO report noted that conditions change as schools age, and this may require periodic reassessments and scoring.
- Errors that were found in the calculation of some school conditions that, when corrected, could change the FACT scores for schools and their order in the queue.

MCPS has acknowledged these findings and has committed to reconvening the group of stakeholders that updated the FACT methodology in 2010–2011, known as the FACT Review Committee. This committee will meet later this year and review all of the findings of the OLO study. The FACT Review Committee will make recommendations on any changes deemed necessary to the FACT methodology. In addition, recommendations will be made on whether schools assessed using the 2010–2011 FACT methodology need to be reassessed, and whether more frequent assessments and a shorter queue of schools would be desirable going forward.

It is anticipated that the FACT review committee will complete its work in spring 2016. The superintendent will then send a recommendation to the Board of Education on the FACT methodology and how the queue of schools will be addressed over time. Depending on the recommendation and Board action, reassessment of schools using an updated FACT methodology could be required. Accordingly, the order of schools in the current queue for revitalization/expansion could change. (A number of schools now in the queue for revitalization/expansion were assessed prior to the 2010–2011 FACT process, and their schedule for revitalization/expansion will not be affected by the upcoming review of the program.)