

FREDERICK DOUGLASS HS AT THE NORTHWESTERN BUILDING



September 2024

As part of the 21st Century School Buildings Program, the Frederick Douglass Building is currently undergoing a complete renovation with additions. During construction of their building, Douglass will use the Northwestern Building as a temporary school space (“swing space”) for the next two school years. As excitement surrounding this and other school modernization projects spreads throughout the city, we are committed to keeping surrounding communities involved and informed. **Please see answers to recent questions about the Northwestern Building below.**

PARKING & TRAFFIC CONDITIONS

Q: How will the need for additional parking be addressed?

On-site parking has been expanded. Frederick Douglass High School (Douglass) has approximately 90 faculty and staff. Western High School (Western) has approximately 130 faculty and staff. Baltimore Polytechnic Institute (Poly) has approximately 150 faculty and staff. The goal is to accommodate as many faculty and staff on-site as possible. Students are not guaranteed parking and are provided student passes for the MTA.

Q: How will increased traffic be addressed?

Department of Transportation (DOT) has worked with MTA to adjust the Day-Tripper bus schedule to coincide with Douglass’ bell schedule. Most students commute by public transportation or walk to the Northwestern Building, including a significant number of students who live in the same zip code as the building.

Q: How will arrival and dismissal peak times between Fallstaff Elementary/Middle School and the Northwestern Building be conducted?

Buses and bell times are staggered to minimize traffic on Fallstaff Road and Park Heights Avenue. All high school bell times are currently 8:00 AM, and Fallstaff Elementary School bell time is 7:30 AM.

Q: Where can I find information on upcoming events to avoid peak traffic times?

Visit bit.ly/DouglassNorthwestern or dougnaathletic.org to find the school’s schedule for fall athletic events, including those happening on Fridays.

SCHOOL AMENITIES

Q: Will the community have access to school amenities such as the pool and athletic fields?

Yes. Schools have priority use of these amenities including for after-school athletics; non-school hours and summer hours that do not conflict with these uses are open to the community through the permit process. City Schools values making our facilities and assets, such as fields, available to the Baltimore community. In the past year, Real Estate issued more than 397 permits to over 300 organizations. As we improve the Northwestern building and grounds, we look forward to continuing this practice here.

Q: How do I obtain a permit?

Community members may submit permit requests online at <https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/o/bcps/page/using-school-buildings>

Q: Is there a different type of agreements for frequent users?

Yes, for users who have previously been on a permit and would like to partner with the school. City Schools' Real Estate Office will collaborate with the requesting entity to develop a comprehensive, multiyear agreement. This agreement will detail the specific requirements and establish a consistent time frame for the use of space. To renew the agreement on an annual basis, the entity, Real Estate, and school leadership will conduct an annual review to ensure all requirements are met and adjust the community use schedule as needed, considering school-related activities.

SAFETY & SECURITY

Q: How will student safety be addressed?

School administration and staff will continue to make sure that students feel safe at the school and in the new community. Additionally, staff will be outside during arrival and dismissal to make sure students are getting where they need to go safely. There is also a school police officer in the building.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Q: Are there plans to forge community relationships?

City Schools is invested in building a relationship with the community so there is mutual respect between the school and the community. City Schools plans to hold community walks so students and community members can meet one another.

Q: Who should community members contact in case of any concern?

While Douglass is occupying the building, please contact their school staff:

- Principal Dave Verdi, dverdi@bcps.k12.md.us
- Assistant Principal Laura Schulz, lschulz@bcps.k12.md.us
- Assistant Principal Maceo Cooper, mcooper@bcps.k12.md.us
- Assistant Principal Christopher Cash, ccash@bcps.k12.md.us
- Community School Coordinator Thomas Downs, tdowns@bcps.k12.md.us
- The school phone number is [\(410\) 396-7821](tel:(410)396-7821).

NORTHWESTERN BUILDING FUTURE

Q: It seems like the increased number of students is what will impact the community. How many students will be coming compared to the number there when Cross Country was in the building?

Douglass has about 550 students; Western 1300; Poly 1600. Cross Country had about 660 students, so Douglass is a similar size to Cross Country. The new parking solutions mentioned above will address the increased need for Douglass and Western, but we'll likely have increased needs for Poly. Part of the timing decision to start with the smaller school and end with the largest is that we'll have time to scale up and brainstorm other solutions to challenges such as parking.

Q: When will the other high schools be using the Northwestern Building?

Frederick Douglass High School is expected to return to its renovated facility in summer 2026. Western High School will be housed at Northwestern Building starting in the 2026-27 school year and stay through the 2027-28 school year. Baltimore Polytechnic Institute will be there from the 2028-29 school year through 2029-30.

Q: What will happen with the Northwestern building when all three high schools have moved into their new buildings?

The fate of the Northwestern building after all three high schools have transitioned into their new facilities is currently unknown. In the event that additional school modernization funding is not secured, we are cognizant of the challenges posed by leaving buildings vacant, both for our staff and the community. We will keep the community updated about future plans while ensuring good stewardship throughout this time. We consider changes to facility usage during our Annual Review of Schools process that starts every November and concludes in January.

Q: Why is the Northwestern Building used for so many of these school renovation projects?

The Northwestern building, previously used as swing space for Cross Country Elementary/Middle and currently serving as crucial swing space for Frederick Douglass High School, is the only swing space that can accommodate high schools.

We have an enduring commitment to educational equity and the ongoing quest to modernize Baltimore City's public school infrastructure. Our efforts, backed by initiatives like the 21st Century Buildings Program and the Built to Learn Act, have already made significant strides in addressing the pressing need for improved facilities. However, the resources allocated to these endeavors are finite, underscoring the importance of advocating for the renovation of all our schools. It is our solemn responsibility to continue advocating until every single one of our school buildings is healthy, safe, efficient, and modern school buildings all children deserve.

Should further funding materialize to renovate our remaining buildings, the Northwestern building will continue to play a pivotal role in ensuring our students receive the educational environments they deserve.

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For more information, please contact Ivy McNeill from the 21st Century Schools Office at 21stCenturyBuildings@bcps.k12.md.us