

Frequently Asked Questions: Future of Dennis Lab School

Updated Jun 13, 2023

Below is a summary of frequently asked questions that DPS Administration has received throughout this process regarding the closure of the two Dennis Lab School buildings. This information will be added to and updated as more questions and information arise.

When was the last time a school safety survey was completed for both buildings?

The last 10-year Health Life Safety (HLS) Surveys and Reports were performed in 2013. Copies of these reports are linked above.

Were any structural deficiencies found with either building in the previous HLS survey?

No, no structural deficiencies were identified in 2013.

Were any engineering or architectural surveys of the Dennis buildings completed as part of the plan to move Dennis to Lincoln Park?

Previous administrations decided to replace the Dennis buildings as part of the DPS BOLD Plan and other facility planning processes. The current DPS administration inherited the task of constructing a new Dennis building, which eventually was slated for construction at Lincoln Park due to lack of other suitable property in the West End of Decatur. During the planning for the new building, no in-depth engineering or architectural surveys were performed on the existing Dennis buildings, as they were slated for replacement and not renovation.

How did these issues get missed over the course of the past decade since the last structural review?

Architects and engineers have said there's no reason to believe that this was missed when the last Health Life Safety review was completed in 2013; we believe that these serious issues developed within the past few years and would have likely been found during this year's Health Life Safety Inspection.

Why did we seek outside firms for the structural analyses of the Dennis buildings?

We wanted outside parties that have no previous connection, existing vested interest, or conflict of interest with Decatur Public Schools.

How long will it be before students can get back to attending school at the Dennis Lab School buildings?

We are working with DPS Buildings & Grounds staff, as well as BLDD Architects, to review the structural recommendations, cost estimates, timeline, and feasibility of repair and/or replacement options for the two Dennis campuses. As this work has just begun, we do not currently have a timeline for when these reviews will be completed.

What process will be used to determine if repairs will be made to the existing Dennis buildings?

Once staff and architects have reviewed the recommendations, cost estimates, timeline, and feasibility, that will determine our next steps in the process.

Do DPS staff have the capacity to complete summer projects AND move two Dennis schools to a new location?

Staff are working to reprioritize summer projects so that Dennis staff and students can be moved to a different location.

Has the administration explored other locations to build a new Dennis?

At this time, there is not a viable location within the current Dennis boundary suitable to build a new facility to replace the existing Dennis buildings.

Will the Dennis school bell times change for the 2023-24 school year?

Until we determine where Dennis staff and students will be located, we cannot determine if school bell times will change.