

04

OPTIONS FOR MASTER FACILITIES PLANNING

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4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPTIONS

Taking into account the insight gained from stakeholder and community feedback, base-year analysis, enrollment projections, and gap analysis, this section presents options for effective and equitable development of school facilities in Washington, DC.

The following principles were used to formulate the MFP options:

1. Utilize current educational space in the best ways possible
2. Retain educational space for educational purposes
3. Grow the total portfolio of space for educational use
4. Review enrollment policies to manage utilization
5. Streamline planning processes, data collection and knowledge sharing

Interdependence is fundamental to the MFP options; they are meant to reinforce one another, in order to holistically address facility challenges and take advantage of opportunities. The extent to which they are taken forward should consider District-wide supply and demand as an overlay, in order to best assess the interrelationships of an integrated implementation strategy. Different combinations of these options will lead to different outcomes.

The structural differences between sectors are equally important. Differences relating to facility provision, management, and maintenance create the context for variable interpretations of the MFP options by each sector. As the school-of-

DISTRICT-WIDE OPTIONS	LEA OPTIONS
Strategic Facilities Framework	Shift Grade Configurations
Co-locate Sectors	Co-locate Elementary Schools
Re-Use Public Facilities	Co-locate Grade Bands
Pool Public Agency Real Assets	Centrally Locate District-wide Education Facilities
Grow Asset Pool through Development Projects	Retain Educational Space for Educational Purpose
Evaluate Facility Allotment	Integrate Capacity Needs with CIP + PACE
Assess Supply + Demand Annually	Expand FCA Data Collection Initiative
Collect, Track and Share Data and Planning Information	Create an Even Distribution of Students
Geographically Distribute Program Offerings	Replace Portables with Permanent Space
Transportation Study to Improve Access	

right system, DCPS must preserve flexibility across its supply of schools, address facility modernizations, and maintain adequate facility supply. Public charter schools must find and obtain affordable, educationally appropriate space, close to the students they are trying to serve. As these responsibilities are unique and

fundamental to each sector, they will interpret these options through their own lenses.

All of the options listed here require detailed implementation planning. The MFP options should be further developed for feasibility, return on investment, and impact analysis. Not only does each recommendation need to be weighed for feasibility, but it also must be examined as part of a larger, integrated strategy. Next steps would include identifying the organizational entity leading the effort, scoping of each recommendation, documenting the resources required, and setting an implementation planning time horizon. During the development of an implementation plan, the DME will also engage students, school-based personnel, and parents; and will hold public meetings with community stakeholders including Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, local school advisory teams, school improvement teams, and ward-based and city-wide volunteer civic groups in order to gather stakeholder priorities and values. As each community is unique, DME will work with them individually to create specific communications and involvement plans as a part of the implementation plan process.

District-Wide Options

Strategic Facilities Framework

Create a District-wide strategic framework that includes key facility performance targets for all educational facilities.

Creating a unified strategic framework would identify and set key performance targets for all educational facilities. With the aim of making facility data accessible and transparent, a strategic framework would include target metrics for physical condition, capacity, and utilization for both sectors. By standardizing these performance goals and a corresponding data collection process, a unified strategic framework would incentivize data collection on an ongoing basis, create the context for benchmarking progress, and streamline future MFP processes. While these data points should be uniform across sectors, it is important to acknowledge that the methodology used to calculate data points will vary. As an example, the LEAs may calculate programmatic capacity differently; in order to provide clarity around this data, understanding the calculation methodology is essential for understanding performance relative to a

strategic framework. Interactions with community members and other stakeholders during the preparation of this MFP study suggest that a Strategic Facilities Framework could be piloted. Taking this approach, DCPS, public charter LEAs, and community members would work together to identify key performance facility targets and the methodologies used to calculate them. With the goal to identify the key performance indicators and understand the similarities and differences in how the metrics are conceived, used, and calculated across sectors, this approach could be an effective way to strengthen relationships between the sectors and lay a foundation for District-wide adoption of a Strategic Facilities Framework.

Co-locate Schools Across Sectors

Optimize the use of our educational facilities by co-locating schools across sectors.

Co-locating sectors within existing educational facilities would help to balance supply and demand. By pooling assets and sharing resources, the use of existing educational facilities can be improved, and increased access to existing space can be equitable, bidirectional, and based on need. Operational and financial incentives, like the sharing of services, operating costs, and lease swaps, would need to be created in order to make resource sharing bidirectional. Other sector-specific incentives should be explored, like the reduction of maintenance payments from DCPS to DGS, sharing subsidies with public charter schools to maximize facility allotment, and multi-year lease guarantees for public charter schools. Taken together, all incentives should serve to make cross-sector co-location very accessible.

Re-Use Public Facilities

Leverage the use of public facilities for educational purposes.

To grow the total portfolio of space used for educational purposes, this strategy focuses on the re-use of underutilized or vacant public facilities through enhanced public agency collaboration. An inter-agency task force could be created to assess the District's real estate portfolio and take a targeted approach to any potential assets that could be repositioned for educational use. Vacant District-owned facilities are potential options to explore. Examples of vacant DCPS facilities include Thurgood Marshall ES, Old Miner ES, Fletcher-Johnson ES,¹ Old Randle Highlands ES, Spingarn HS, and Winston EC. It should be noted that vacant DCPS buildings are also

¹ Fletcher-Johnson Elementary School will be turned over to DMPED for redevelopment in 2018.

used as swing space, which are a necessity for modernization efforts and should be evenly-distributed geographically. Vacant DCPS buildings have been provided to public charter schools in the past, either as short-term or long-term leases, and should be considered again in the future. However, the expected enrollment in specific DCPS schools and programmatic growth also needs to be taken into consideration.

Pool Public Agency Real Assets

Investigate the development of vacant parcels for public mixed-use projects that incorporate educational uses.

Where the previous strategy focuses on the re-use of existing public capital assets, this strategy examines the viability of developing publicly owned vacant parcels for educational use. As of SY2017-18, there were eight half-acre-sized public agency-owned parcels where new mixed use or educational facilities, temporary or permanent, could be sited and constructed. Six of these parcels are owned by DGS, one by the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and one by the Department Housing and Community Development (DHCD). It is recommended that DGS, DPR, and DHCD partner to determine the feasibility of developing or leasing these parcels for public benefit. Given the longer-term nature of establishing public partnerships around land use and capital construction, this strategy should be considered for the five-and ten-year planning horizons.

Grow Asset Pool for Educational Use through Development Projects

Proactively plan for Washington, DC's forecasted population growth by expanding access to educational facilities citywide.

According to the District of Columbia Office of Planning, Washington, DC's population is expected to grow by over 11,000 people per year for the next 20 years. Accommodating this growth will require proactive planning to increase the total portfolio of space for educational use. As the number of households steadily grows, incentives should be established for developers to include educational space in future mixed-use developments. Incentives can take various forms; for example, developer projects that commit educational space can receive floor area bonuses, and developers can also be given a prorated property tax exemption for the ratio of educational space to total development gross square footage. Additionally, the District can collect impact fees on new or proposed development projects to pay for the costs of providing services to new developments, including education.

In conjunction with the Zoning Commission, Office of Zoning and Office of Planning, it is recommended that more structural changes to Planned Unit Development zoning processes to encourage educational uses be explored. To respond to immediate needs and community feedback, large redevelopment projects currently in various stages of planning and development under the auspices of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development should be examined for educational purposes. Sites where space should be immediately reserved include: Saint Elizabeths Hospital, Hill East, the former Fletcher-Johnson school, and a District-owned site located at 1325 S Street NW. Any future large development area should be added to this list.

Evaluate Facility Allotment

Assess facility allotment through the collection of operational cost data and the development of a total cost projection model.

Charter leadership feedback received during the MFP public outreach process strongly indicates that the current per pupil facility allotment is not adequate to cover schools' operating expenses. An evidence-based approach is recommended in order to evaluate the true cost of school operations and to determine how to provide sufficient funds. With the goal of regular data collection and financial transparency, this strategy recommends that facility operation costs be collected on an annual basis from public charter schools and DCPS. It is also recommended that a total-cost projection model that integrates data from both sectors be created. The creation of a comprehensive cost model will impart the knowledge necessary to appropriately plan, budget, and allocate sufficient facility funding. A data collection process can be undertaken to collect the following information: administration costs (payroll, purchasing, insurance, pension, and benefits) and capital costs (rent, debt service, and capital management costs).

Assess Supply + Demand Annually

Create a clear and transparent planning cycle to routinely assess alignment of supply and demand.

Given the educational context in Washington, DC, where new schools open regularly, and existing schools sometimes close, it is recommended that greater consideration be paid to the alignment of supply and demand on an annual basis. Due to the ripple effect caused by the opening of new facilities, a critical part of this strategy recognizes that new school approvals, school expansions, and relocations make this forecast imperfect. In alignment with the Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force Recommendations, a coordinated annual District education planning cycle should be established that overlays current and five-year forecasted educational facility supply with demand, coupled with providing data regularly to policy makers, school leaders, and the community to assess. The goal is to enable citywide education leaders to make informed decisions on the pace of growth of educational facility supply in relation to enrollment projections.

Collect, Track and Share Facility Data and Planning Information

Create a database of facility data and planning information as part of a strategic facilities framework across both sectors.

This option would allow facility planning information and facility data to be made uniform, accessible, and public. With the goal of creating a unified set of data for all education leaders to use to make planning decisions, it is recommended that the following facility planning information be collected: schools' programmatic capacity needs and future plans to accommodate those needs, plans for opening new schools, plans for siting approved schools, and plans for closing schools. Recognizing that plans change, these forecasts should serve as a guide, not a binding set of constraints. In coordination with the creation of a strategic facilities framework, physical condition, capacity, utilization, and operating cost data should be collected on an ongoing basis. While the data points should be uniform across sectors, it is important to note that the methodology used to calculate data points be transparent and also included in the data collection process. For example, each sector may calculate programmatic capacity differently. In order for there to be clarity and consistency across both sectors, understanding those methodologies is essential. It is recommended that one organizational entity (DME) own the data collection process and that data from both sectors be stored in a centralized, accessible location.

Geographically Distribute Program Offerings

Unique program offerings should be geographically distributed and easily accessible.

This strategy recommends that unique programs be made available across all areas of Washington, DC and geographically distributed to promote equity and access across Washington, DC. The Current State of Educational Facilities (Chapter 2) provides an analysis of the unique program offerings across Washington, DC, by sector, and their locations by ward and by educational facility. For example, the analysis shows Dual Language/Language Immersion programs clustered in Wards 1, 4, and 5, and Montessori programs clustered in Wards 4 and 5. Feedback gathered at community meetings also clearly indicated that communities want programs all across the city. It is recommended that student demand data be further studied to understand programmatic interests.

Transportation Study to Improve Access

Undertake a detailed transportation study with the aim of improving access to schools District-wide.

While the MFP study examines transportation access and student mobility patterns at a high level, a deeper understanding of transportation equity and the relationship among transportation, student enrollment, choice, and program distribution is necessary. In Chapter 2 of this report, it is shown that, on average, Wards 7, 5 and 3 have the lowest levels of transit service for school facilities, and students attending schools in these wards have reduced access to public transportation. This analysis is consistent with community feedback received at every outreach meeting, in which concern for transportation equity was a consistent theme and area of public concern. Therefore, it is critical that a detailed transportation study be conducted to assess equity of access to in-boundary schools, out-of-boundary schools, and public charter schools. In order to make better-informed decisions about siting educational facilities near transit options, examining the correlations between access to schools, facility utilization, and program distribution; conducting a cost-benefit analysis of ways to improve access to schools; and identifying implementation options are all critical next steps.

LEA Options

Shift Grade Configurations

Shift grade configurations to optimize the use of existing space in DCPS schools.

As Washington, DC's population grows over time, the five and ten-year gap analyses show that certain schools will become increasingly highly utilized. As a strategy to relieve overcrowding both today and in the future, space can be leveraged in underutilized middle schools for highly utilized elementary schools. The gap analysis shows that there are several high school feeder patterns with highly utilized elementary schools feeding into underutilized middle schools. Potential grade configuration shifts should take into account this feeder pattern utilization analysis, as well as the balance of in-boundary and out-of-boundary seats of the schools in question.

Co-locate Elementary Schools

Co-locate elementary schools to optimize the use of existing space in DCPS schools.

In order to address overcrowding, both now and in the future, space can be shared between underutilized elementary schools and highly utilized elementary schools, with grades moving on an as-needed basis to use existing space. It is recommended that planning efforts be concentrated within high school boundaries to preserve the continuity of feeder patterns and the geographic proximity of potentially co-located elementary schools.

Co-locate Grade Bands

Co-locate grade bands to optimize the use of existing space in DCPS schools.

The gap analysis also shows that many of the high school boundary feeder patterns contain underutilized and very underutilized middle schools. To take advantage of underutilized space in middle schools, this strategy focuses on cross-grade band co-location to allow for elementary school grades to move on an as-needed basis. This is similar to the previous two options that focus on shifting grades to alleviate utilization pressure. As with the prior option focused on co-locating elementary schools, it is recommended that planning efforts concentrate within high school boundaries to preserve the continuity of feeder patterns and the geographic proximity of potentially co-located elementary grades with middle schools.

Retain Space for Expansion

Enable the retention of educational space for educational purposes.

The MFP recognizes that over time, schools may change their location. When schools move to new facilities and vacate their existing space, a need is created to reposition the formerly occupied space when appropriate. When a facility needs to be repositioned, this strategy advocates for the retention of educational space for educational purpose. It is important to maintain a comprehensive understanding of which schools are moving, opening, or potentially closing, in order to maintain enough quality space for educational uses. For instance, if public charter school currently leasing space in District-owned facilities elect to move, there would need to be a strategy in place to retain the vacated space for educational purposes.

Centrally Locate District-wide Education Facilities

Centrally located underutilized schools can become assets for citywide education.

In order to optimize the use of space, centrally located underutilized schools can become assets for citywide education. Centrally-located, easily accessible school facilities that offer quality, diverse programming could provide an incentive for more students in Washington, DC to choose public education. It is recommended that these schools be non-application schools in order to promote equity and access to diverse program offerings.

Integrate Capacity Needs with CIP + PACE

Integrate capacity needs for schools that are currently planned for modernization.

Where appropriate, integrate capacity needs for schools that are currently planned for modernization over the next ten years. Specifically, for the schools included in the FY2019-FY2024 CIP, and the schools identified for modernizations by PACE rankings (schools ranked numbers 1-20 will fall approximately within the ten-year timeframe of this MFP), investigate the need to incorporate plans for additional expansion or renovation. This would also include site planning information needs for temporary and flexible space.

Expand Facility Condition Assessment Data Collection Initiative

Incorporate site and facility capacity information into the existing FCA data collection effort.

The current DGS plan to collect Facility Condition Assessment data on every DCPS school on a rolling three-year basis presents an opportunity to expand the type and amounts of data being collected. With the goal of streamlining planning processes and expanding data collection and knowledge sharing, this strategy recommends the following facility-level data be incorporated into this effort: alignment with DC Public Schools Educational Specifications Prototype Programs; the feasibility for expansion on the site of the facility; the total gross square footage; and the total assignable square footage, work orders, warranties, and preventive maintenance plans.

Create an Even Distribution of Students

Using enrollment policies, create an even distribution of students that align with school capacities.

In order to better meet school capacities, enrollment policies can be implemented so that public school students are more evenly distributed across Washington, DC. Recognizing that enrollment policies must promote equity and access across Washington, DC, and align with the strategic goals of each sector, this strategy focuses on enrollment policies that, if implemented, can help to balance supply and demand:

- + Geographic DCPS School Boundaries: Revising DCPS school boundaries, specifically adjacent boundaries, so that they are nested geographically into elementary, middle, and high school feeder patterns, can redistribute students from very highly utilized schools into schools with existing capacity, and can provide flexibility for a more even distribution of students. Although outside of the purview of the MFP analysis, school boundary changes align with the DCPS strategic initiative to provide increased predictable pathway options for students. While the next comprehensive boundary review process is anticipated to occur in SY2022-23, it is advisable to accelerate that schedule to increase economic returns on existing school facility space.

- + Overly Utilized Schools and Out-of-Boundary Seats: This recommendation considers student assignment policy in relation to school overcrowding. The gap analysis shows that, not only are there schools of all grade bands that are highly utilized today, but that elementary schools will continue to become more highly utilized over time. These neighborhood schools can decrease the number of out-of-boundary seats they offer as a strategy to alleviate pressure. This recommendation would have to carefully consider the equity implications involved with reallocating out-of-boundary seats, while still ensuring that the minimum number of out-of-boundary seats are retained.

Replace Portables with Permanent Space

Program facility expansion at DCPS facilities that are currently using portables.

Many DCPS facilities utilize portables to accommodate students that do not fit into existing permanent space. This situation is particularly acute in Ward 3. Where other enrollment management projects are infeasible or inadvisable, LEAs can consider programming the development of additional space, through expansions of existing buildings or construction of new buildings on the same land parcel, in order to accommodate the student population currently housed in portables. This would improve equitable access to high-quality school facilities for DCPS students.