



# DC Public Education **MASTER FACILITIES PLAN 2018**

A Foundational Study





# FOREWORD



Dear Washingtonians:

The 2018 DC Public Education Master Facilities Plan (MFP) is a forward-thinking study that will provide my Administration, school leaders, stakeholders, and the community with the information essential to supporting current and future school facilities planning in Washington, DC. I am pleased that for the first time, this MFP offers analysis of not only our traditional DC Public Schools (DCPS) but our public charter schools as well.

This report includes extensive information detailing facility utilization, facility condition assessments, facility modernization efforts, population forecasts, school-specific enrollment projections, and aspirational school enrollment plans that will allow us to better understand the current landscape of these facilities, as well as our public education facilities needs over the next decade. The analysis within the MFP will help us address our schools which are in high demand, more efficiently prioritize and allocate capital funding, better utilize the DC Government's real estate assets, and make better use of available resources in our growing public education system. In addition, the recommendations provided will aid us as we continue closing opportunity and achievement gaps, and enable us to build more equity and excellence into our public and charter school systems.

Robust stakeholder engagement was an essential piece of the development of this MFP. Our team, led by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), met with parents, teachers, residents, and community leaders throughout Washington, DC. In addition, nine Districtwide community engagement meetings were held and over 500 public school parents were surveyed to understand their priorities. Feedback offered by the community has made this report all the more stronger.

Ensuring that our school facilities meet the needs of students and communities across all eight wards is chief among my priorities. By using this foundation, together we will address and overcome longstanding challenges and continue making improvements as we create a renewed vision for all of our public and charter schools. Let's keep pushing!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Muriel Bowser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Muriel" and last name "Bowser" clearly legible.

**Muriel Bowser**  
Mayor

# 00

EXECUTIVE  
SUMMARY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The District of Columbia's Planning Act for Comprehensive Education Facilities Amendment Act of 2016 (PACE) (D.C. Law 21-219; D.C. Official Code § 38-2803) requires the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) to prepare ten-year master facility plans to anticipate and enable the development of adequate public school facilities. This 2018 Master Facilities Plan (MFP) analyzes the state of Washington, DC's current school facilities and specialized programs, forecasts future enrollment growth, analyzes the gap between enrollment and facility capacity now and in the future, and makes recommendations for efficient and equitable delivery of high-quality public school facilities over the next ten years. The information provided in this study represents a significant milestone. With it, District officials and school leaders can work with the community to make informed decisions and determine which recommendations should be implemented.

The District is committed to a core system of high-quality public neighborhood schools complemented by high-quality public schools of choice. This means that school-aged children in Washington, DC can attend the District of Columbia Public School (DCPS) school that they have a right to attend in their geographic school boundary, enroll at a DCPS school outside of their geographic school boundary, or enroll at a public charter school (PCS). While this creates opportunities for students, it also creates challenges for facility planning. This MFP, unlike previous iterations, includes data and analysis of facilities from all types of public schools, representing both DCPS and public charter schools.

### **Three overarching objectives have guided the MFP process:**

1. Provide critical analysis and future estimations to address the needs of Washington, DC's public education facilities.
2. Outline key opportunities and challenges in current educational facilities planning processes in the District, and include recommendations for future educational facilities planning processes.
3. Develop a report, data visualizations, and publicly-available data sets for local education agencies (LEAs), District agencies, residents,



and other education stakeholders to use in their work to improve public education in Washington, DC.

This study includes the compilation and analysis of a wide range of information including facility locations, facility conditions, programmatic capacities, facility utilization, and gross square footage. The MFP also includes specialized program offerings, enrollment patterns, transportation accessibility, population forecasts, and enrollment projections. The most recent information included is from School Year (SY) 2017-18, and historical information is included when possible. The MFP analysis does not incorporate school quality, as the new public school rating system, the School Transparency and Reporting (STAR) framework, will be released after the completion of this report. It is recommended that the MFP study findings be complemented by the STAR framework when it becomes available.

Finally, this MFP incorporates feedback from parents, community residents, and school leaders on the MFP priorities, preliminary analysis, and recommendations. Over 600 people collectively participated in the public outreach process that consisted of a series of public workshops and in-person surveys conducted in April, August, and October of 2018. As related to the scope of this planning study, the main topics emphasized by local communities were:

- + Facility maintenance and school modernization
- + Enrollment growth
- + Transportation access
- + Specialized program access
- + Underutilized and overcrowded schools

Community participants stated that the MFP should address these issues across all wards, to serve all students, and to address the specific needs of DCPS and the public charter schools. There were also discussions on educational technology, school quality, and safety, three themes that extend beyond the scope of this study but are important factors to consider moving forward.

The following summarizes the main findings of the MFP.

## Overview of the Supply of Public School Facilities

As of SY2017-18, there were 212 facilities housing 249 public schools that enrolled over 91,000 public school students. While there are public school facilities across Washington, DC, the greatest concentration of school facilities is in Wards 5 and 8 and the least is in Wards 2 and 3. Additionally, there are no public charter schools located in Ward 3. The number and location of school facilities have changed over time as schools have opened and closed.

As of SY2017-18, DCPS schools operate in 110 District-owned and managed buildings. The picture differs for public charter schools, which are responsible for securing their own facilities: 31 were leasing in District-owned buildings, 40 were leasing via private or commercial leases, another 22 owned their facilities through private acquisition, and nine owned a former DCPS building. The 71 privately owned or leased properties are not owned or managed by the District. (Schools in these facilities either own the facilities or enter into leases with private entities.) The District is not a party to these private leases. The District also maintains 13 public school buildings that DCPS uses for swing space for modernization purposes, for administrative purposes, or are currently vacant.

## Facility Condition and Modernization

Washington, DC has been successful in modernizing a large share of the publicly owned school facility stock over the past fifteen years, particularly during the last ten years with the advent of Mayoral control in 2007. More than three-quarters of DCPS school facilities have been modernized or renovated since 2002; 71 of those investment projects have been undertaken since 2009. Twenty additional schools are slated for modernization between fiscal years 2019 and 2024, with a focus on the schools that have had either no previous or minimal modernization efforts.

With a view to keeping school facilities in good condition in the future, the District has adopted a rigorous and systematic facility condition assessment program. Facility Condition Assessments (FCAs) are evaluations of all structures, systems, and components of a facility. The condition of all District-owned school facilities (occupied by both DCPS and public charter schools) will be assessed over the period 2017 to 2020. During the MFP study period, 65 FCAs were completed for District-owned

facilities by a third-party civil engineering firm, with another 26 FCAs of District-owned buildings completed during this calendar year (completed outside the study period). In addition, the same third-party engineering firm completed FCAs for 49 public charter school facilities that are privately held. This is the first time that the District has obtained facility condition information for public charter schools in privately held buildings that were evaluated across the two sectors in a comparable way. Of the 114 school facilities evaluated during the study period, 79% received a “Good” or “Fair” facility condition rating. Sector-wise, 85% of the District-owned facilities were rated “Good” or “Fair” (consisting of both DCPS and public charter schools), while 71% of non-District owned charter school facilities were in one of those two categories. It is recommended that a robust facility cost study be undertaken and be made publically available to continue to promote quality facility conditions across the sectors. While there is still work to be done, the steps taken to date have moved Washington, DC closer to realizing the goal of offering quality school facilities to all public school students.

## Specialized Programs

This MFP study examined the distribution of specialized programs in DCPS and public charter schools, as defined uniformly by both sectors and included in the My School DC school finder. More than 40% of all public school students were enrolled at a school that offered at least one of these specialized programs in SY2017-18, and just over one-third of all school facilities in Washington, DC offered at least one specialized program (76 out of 212 facilities). Of those, 64% were in DCPS facilities, 28% were in charter school facilities, and 8% were in co-located facilities (that is, facilities that house either two public charter schools or a DCPS school and a public charter school). Dual language/Language Immersion programs were the most prevalent, representing 19% of all programs offered, followed by Career Technical Education (13%), and International Baccalaureate (12%). Accessibility to special programs, measured by within a half-mile to the specialized school facilities or within a half-mile of areas with high levels of transit service, identified that some areas of the city had more transportation access to the programs than others. Public school students in Ward 1 had the most access to specialized programs and Ward 3 had the least. Looking at transit accessibility to individual specialized programs,

students had the most access to STEM programs followed by International Baccalaureate and Montessori.

Based on the evaluation of specialized programs, facility underutilization, and sector growth plans, it is recommended to increase access to unique program offerings across Washington, DC in order to achieve the strategic goals by sector and promote improved utilization of underutilized facilities. The MFP advocates for cross-sector coordination in planning for unique program distribution across the city. This recommendation aligns with feedback from the community outreach process, where parents expressed the desire for increased access to specialized programs in their home ward.

## Transportation

Due to the recent expansion of the Kids Ride Free (KRF) program to include free ridership on Metrorail (beyond the originally free bus access), transportation costs are less of a barrier for public school families than before. However, during the MFP community engagement sessions, parents consistently raised transportation and access to schools as a concern. This study evaluated proximity and frequency of service to public transit from the perspective of both the students’ homes and school facilities. The conclusion was that, when proximity and level of service (number of Metro or bus stops per hour) were taken into account, the level of service across the District was uneven, with high service levels mostly concentrated in the central parts of the city. This makes it difficult for some students living in other areas of Washington, DC to travel by public transit to their school, whether it is their neighborhood school or school of choice. It is recommended that the District carry out a more in-depth transportation study in order to inform policies that will increase student access to schools.

## Current and Future Enrollment

Overall, total public school enrollment has been on the rise since 2008, growing at a rate of 2.8% annually and reaching a total of 91,484 students in SY2017-18. The MFP study examined enrollment between SY2013-14 and SY2017-18 as a baseline for estimating future enrollment. During the five-year period, public elementary school students increased more than any other grade band (16%). High school students increased the least (6%).

As described earlier, Washington, DC students have the ability to choose where they attend public school — at their DCPS school-of-right or at a different DCPS or public charter school. As of SY2017-18, 26% were enrolled in their by-right DCPS school, 27% were enrolled in a DCPS school other than their by-right school, and 47% were enrolled in a public charter school. Between SY2013-14 and SY2017-18, DCPS schools in Wards 1, 3, and 4 had the highest in-boundary student enrollment growth over a five-year period, while in-boundary enrollment at DCPS schools in Wards 5, 7, and 8 decreased during this time period.

Understanding public charter enrollment trends is also critical. The share of students enrolled in public charter schools started at 36% of public school students in SY2008-09, reaching 47% in SY2017-18. If this trend were to continue in a straight line (or with a consistent annual increase), 62% of public school students would be enrolled in public charter schools in five years and would rise to 73% by SY2027-28. During the MFP community engagement process, residents shared their sentiment that Washington, DC should consider a position on optimal or minimum share of public school education that should be provided by traditional public schools, as well as the need to ensure quality education options for every student in every ward. The implications of continued public charter growth will help inform what recommendations the District decides to implement.

To assist in planning for facilities in the future, the study presents DCPS school-level enrollment projections based on historical enrollment patterns and population growth forecasts provided by the DC Office of Planning. The DCPS school-level projections are presented as estimated in-boundary and out-of-boundary enrollments. The sum of the DCPS school-level projections plus 47% of the future school-age population for public charter students results in the total public school enrollment reaching approximately 100,300 students in five years and approximately 112,700 students by SY2027-28. Calculating enrollment projections is always a challenging endeavor, and there is greater room for error in Washington, DC because of the school enrollment choice policies, the uncertain increases in future population, and the changing supply of schools and facilities. To rise to the challenge, it is critical for the District to build on the long-term projections included in this study and continue to update and revise them annually.

This study also takes into account the planned growth in programs and facilities of DCPS and public charter schools. For DCPS, the planned

programmatic growth includes increased Pre-K programs at existing elementary schools and education campuses (which are converting to elementary-only facilities), an additional early childhood facility, one additional middle school, one former public charter school converted to a DCPS school, and two new high school programs. DCPS and city agencies are working to phase in these programmatic and facility options over the next ten years.

Additionally, 51 public charter LEAs reported their aspirational planned future growth, representing 81% of the total public charter school enrollment as of SY2017-18. This includes growing out grades in existing facilities, expanding enrollment in current or future facilities, and replicating existing schools. More than two-thirds of the submitted charter growth plans were within their enrollment ceilings (or the maximum enrollment allowed per the DC Public Charter School Board [PCSB]) as of SY2017-18. Public charter growth plans that include expanding enrollment or replicating schools are more aspirational in nature, as they rely on the public charter schools finding new facilities in an already tight real estate market and in some instances rely on the PCSB to increase their enrollment ceilings.

Taking growth plans into account, DCPS and public charter schools aspire to expand to 111,400 students in SY2022-23 and to 122,700 students in SY2027-28. The enrollment projections including programmatic growth for both years exceed the estimated future student-age population without even taking into account private school enrollment. This underlines the need for regular and consistent cross-LEA and cross-sector collaboration and planning as recently recommended by the Cross Sector Collaboration Task Force.

## **Underutilized and Overcrowded Schools Now and in the Future**

Another critical aspect of facilities planning is understanding how full schools are now and how full they may be in the future. This study relies on stated programmatic capacities, determined by a standard methodology for DCPS, and individually by public charter LEAs. Programmatic capacities reflect the maximum number of students that can be housed in each school building given the school's facility and existing educational programs, class size, schedule, and staffing. The DCPS programmatic capacities include



portable capacities such as trailers, as they are used by DCPS to manage overcrowding. (A section of the report focuses exclusively on the schools using portables as of SY2017-18.) Schools having 80-95% utilization are considered to be in balance, and 32% of all public school facilities are in this category in SY2017-18. Approximately one-fifth of DCPS facilities experienced overcrowding (over 95% utilized), while just over one-quarter were underutilized at less than 65% capacity. There is variation across the grade bands and wards: elementary schools have the highest rates of utilization and middle schools have the lowest. There are also overcrowded DCPS and PCS schools in every ward: this is particularly true in Ward 3 for DCPS and Ward 5 for PCS. Alternatively, there are underutilized DCPS schools in every ward except for Ward 3 and underutilized PCS schools in every ward except for Ward 2. These variations suggest that steps should be taken to improve the balance between capacity and utilization. DCPS schools-of-right must accept students within their boundary, which creates different challenges than those experienced by city-wide schools (available in both sectors) and makes it more difficult to find the right balance. Several options are provided in Section 4 as ways to possibly address the issues of underutilization and overcrowding, such as re-using underutilized or vacant public facilities, developing publicly owned vacant parcels, growing facility assets through development projects, and co-locating different schools.

This study also identifies gaps between projected enrollment and programmatic capacity at the facility level in five and ten years. Looking at the total projected enrollment including growth plans from both sectors, enrollment growth including population increase and aspirational programmatic growth outstrips current facility capacity in Wards 4 and 7 in five years, as well as in Ward 1 in ten years. Wards 5 and 6 will stay within existing capacities by SY2027-28, and Ward 8 will be at its full capacity. Wards 2 and 3 will experience a greater deficit of space in five and ten years than they already experience. The supply-demand mismatch between total enrollment and total capacity at the ward level highlights the need for improved coordination among traditional schools and public charter schools in order to identify facility investments capable of generating high benefit-cost ratios.

Looking at DCPS specifically since they operate as the school-of-right system, DCPS elementary schools on average are estimated to be crowded at 110% utilization in SY2027-28, while DCPS middle schools are projected

to have capacity (at 80% utilized), despite growth in that grade band. At the ward level, DCPS schools in Wards 2 and 3 are overcrowded now and continue to be in five and ten years, while DCPS schools in Ward 4 are projected to be overcrowded in five years (at 101%), and those in Wards 1 and 6 are projected to be overcrowded ten years from now (at 113%, and 102%, respectively). DCPS schools in Ward 5 are estimated to continue to have a surplus of space in ten years (at 68% utilization). Additionally, the report provides the utilization rates by DCPS high school feeder pattern in SY2017-18 and then estimated for five and ten years later. DCPS and the District will work proactively in the next five and ten years to address the projected underutilized and overcrowded schools.

## Moving Forward

This study concludes with a suite of options that the District may employ to assist with meeting public school students' education facility needs. The MFP recommended options respond collectively to the analysis of the facility conditions and modernizations, transportation, specialized programs, enrollment growth, and facility utilization now and in the future, as well as the insights formulated from the community and stakeholder engagement processes. Grouped either as District-wide or LEA options, all are in service of creating better outcomes for students. The options fall into five broad categories:

1. Utilize the District's current educational space in the best ways possible
2. Retain the District's 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

Fundamental to the recommendations are their interdependence; 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.

Equally important are the structural differences between the sectors. 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-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, sometimes near the students they are trying to serve and other times in a more central, accessible location. As these responsibilities are unique and fundamental to each sector, they will interpret these options through their own lenses.

Collaboration among sectors and among schools is crucial to responding to the District's educational facility challenges and enhancing the quality of education to all public school students. Collection and dissemination of data and analysis, which are furthered by this MFP, can be the first step in improving cross-school collaboration. For instance, this was the first time the District undertook long-term school enrollment projections in a comprehensive manner in order to assist future planning and future modernizations. Data transparency and accountability around facility-oriented decisions is essential. Many community members shared their sentiment for transparency on how data are used to make planning decisions, of which the sharing of information across sectors and with the public is a critical component.

All of the options listed in this MFP require detailed implementation planning. MFP options should be further developed for feasibility, return on investment, and impact analysis. It is important to note that different combinations of these options will yield different outcomes. Not only does each option need to be weighed for feasibility, but it also must be examined as part of a larger, integrated strategy. This report recommends that the DME work with District agencies and school leaders, with substantial community input, to scope out each recommended option, document the resources required, and then set an implementation planning time horizon. This MFP is the critical first step in laying the groundwork for a more robust, cross-sector facility planning process.

# CONTENTS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.0 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

1.1	Context for Education Facility Planning in Washington, DC	1-2
1.2	MFP Objectives	1-5
1.3	Study Methodology	1-6
1.4	Community Engagement	1-7

### 2.0 STATE OF DC PUBLIC SCHOOLS SY2017-18

2.1	School Facility Conditions and Trends	2-2
2.2	School Enrollment	2-34
2.3	School Facility Capacity and Utilization	2-50
2.4	Main Conclusions of the Base Year Assessment	2-55

### 3.0 FUTURE STATE OF DC PUBLIC SCHOOLS

3.1	Capital Improvements Planning	3-2
3.2	Education Facility Financing	3-5
3.3	Enrollment Projections	3-7
3.4	Gap Analysis	3-19

### 4.0 OPTIONS FOR MASTER FACILITIES PLANNING

4.1	Recommendations and Options	4-2
-----	-----------------------------	-----

## APPENDICES