

Summary

Arlington Public Schools (APS) currently uses design capacity to determine the number of available seats and the capacity utilization rate at each school. Design capacity represents the initial count of classrooms intended to support both general and specific educational programs when a building is originally designed or undergoes significant renovations.

Program capacity identifies how current spaces are used during a school year to meet core and specific educational program needs. APS believes that program capacity provides a more accurate and real-time view of capacity utilization and seat availability, showing how a school's general and specific educational programs impact capacity. Through this lens, APS can develop a more systematic process for program placement that avoids capacity challenges at schools.

APS employs an interdisciplinary teacher teaming approach to create smaller, more cohesive communities for middle school students. Students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 pursue a core curriculum of academic subjects, including English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, with Disciplinary Literacy in Grade 6¹. The middle school model features a seven-period school day that includes both core curriculum and elective classes. The number of teams per grade level is determined by the Spring Update to enrollment projections for the following school year and APS planning factors².

Middle School's Design and Program Capacity Overview

Gunston Middle School	Design	Program*
September 30, 2024 Enrollment	1038	1038
Capacity	992	1152
Capacity Utilization	105%	90%
Available Seats	-46	114

*Program Capacity is based on APS planning factors.

¹ [APS Middle School 2024-25 Program of Studies](#)

² [APS Planning Factors](#)

2025 Program Capacity Study – Middle Schools

The following guidelines serve as the baseline for the middle school program capacity study:

- Three teams per grade level:
 - Grade 6: 5 core academic classes per team,
 - Grade 7: 4 core academic classes per team, and
 - Grade 8: 4 core academic classes per team.
- Specific classrooms to support students with disabilities³:
 - Two (2) special education self-contained classrooms per grade level,
 - One classroom to support functional life skills, and
 - One classroom to support interlude.

The following resources are used in this study:

- SY2024-25 planning factors⁴,
- Current class schedules within Synergy,
- Current floor plan for each middle school, and
- Guidelines for School Facilities in Virginia's Public Schools⁵.

Appendix A provides additional details on core⁶, specific, resource, and specialized spaces at each school compared to VDOE's prototypical space program for middle schools.

³ APS 2024-30 Strategic Plan: The expectation for all school levels is "By 2030, at least 80% of students with disabilities will have consistent access to general education curriculum by spending 80% or more their school day in a general education setting."

⁴ [FY2025 Adopted Planning Factors](#)

⁵ [Guidelines for School Facilities in Virginia's Public Schools-2021](#)

⁶ APS uses 660 sf as the minimum design standard for core academic spaces. Some middle schools do not have enough core classroom spaces that meet this standard and have been identified as candidates for feasibility studies currently underway.

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Appendix A: SY2024-25 Program Capacity by Program

GUNSTON MIDDLE SCHOOL Design Capacity 992 9/30/2024 Enrollment 1038		APS Classroom Usage in 2024-25			Virginia Department of Education			APS Teaming Approach Based on 3 Teams		
		No. Of Classrooms	Planning Factor or SF Factor	Program Capacity	Prototypical Space Program for MS	Planning Factor	Program Capacity	No. of Classrooms	Planning Factor	Program Capacity
PERMANENT SPACES (CAPACITY GENERATING)										
General Education	Grade 6	15	24	360	13	25	325	15	25.15	377
	Grade 7	10	25.15	252	13	25	325	12	25.15	302
	Grade 8	20	23	460	13	25	325	12	25.15	302
	Flex (Unscheduled, Other Use)	2	21	42	0	0	0	0	25.15	0
	TOTAL CORE - GENERAL ED	47		1114	39		975	39		981
Special Education	Self-Contained	1	8	8	3	8	24	6	8	48
	FLS	1	10	10				0	10	0
	Interlude	0	10	0				1	10	10
	MIPA	0	6	0				1	6	6
	SPSA	0	10	0				0	10	0
	Flex (Unscheduled)	2	10	20						
	TOTAL CORE - SPECIAL ED	4		38	3		24	8		64
TOTAL CORE CAPACITY GENERATING		51		1152	42		999	47		1045
NON CAPACITY GENERATING SPACES										
Art Rooms (Visual)		1			1			1		
Music Rooms		3			2			2		
Resource (EL, Pull-Out, SGI)		5			6			7		
PE (Gym, Aux, Weight Room)		2			1			2		
Health		0			2			2		
CTE (Bus/IT, F&CS, TechEd, Journalism)		4			6			4		
World Languages		8			0			4		
Auditorium/Stage		1			1			1		
Theater Arts		1						1		
Flex (Unscheduled)		1								
TOTAL NON CAPACITY GENERATING SPACES		26			19			24		
TOTAL CLASSROOM SPACES		77			61			71		

Appendix B: Relocatables

Relocatable classrooms are modular, movable structures placed on school grounds to provide additional space when permanent facilities are at or over capacity. Relocatables serve as a flexible, short-to-medium term solution for schools experiencing capacity pressures, supporting enrollment growth, programmatic needs, and swing space during construction or renovation. Relocatables do not count towards a school’s program capacity.

There are relocatables onsite at Gunston MS.

Gunston Middle School Relocatable Classrooms	SY2024-25 Relocatable Capacity # of Classrooms	SY2024-25 Relocatable Capacity # of Seats Based on Planning Factor
Flex	1	25
Montessori Middle School Program	5	126
Total	6	151

Appendix C: Definitions

Capacity – How many students a building can support based on the general and specific educational programs.

- Design Capacity – Original spaces assigned during construction or major renovation to meet the core and specific educational programs for students.
- Program Capacity – Current spaces assigned during a school year to meet the core and specific educational programs for students.

Capacity Generating Classrooms – Classrooms identified to meet core and specific educational requirements and used to calculate the number of seats available in a school.

- Examples include K-5 in elementary schools, core curriculum classes in middle schools, PreK VPI, PreK Special Education (SE), MIPA or self-contained special education classes.
- Classrooms that do not contribute to capacity would be small group instruction, English Learner (EL) classes, Speech.

Capacity Utilization – School enrollment divided by a building's capacity. A building can have a design capacity utilization and program capacity utilization.

Core Educational Spaces – General learning environments such as Grades K-5 and at secondary levels English, Math, Science or Social Studies.

Flex Spaces – Classrooms identified to be capacity generating but assigned as a resource space.

Specific Educational Spaces – Focused self-contained learning environments such as Pre-K special education (SE), Interlude, or Life Skills.

Appendix D: Space Classifications and Descriptions

Administrative – Spaces that support administrative staff (e.g., office, guidance, counseling, clinic).

Auxiliary – Spaces that support building operations (e.g., cafeteria, storage, custodial, maintenance, toilets).

Core – General learning environments (e.g., grades K-12, science, math, social studies).

Resource – Enriched learning environments to support educational plans (e.g., English Learner, small group instruction, math coach, OT/PT).

Specialized – Specialized instructional environments (e.g., library, gym, art, music, exemplary projects, STEAM).

Specific – Focused learning environments (e.g., PreK, Special Education, MIPA, Interlude, Life Skills).

Appendix E: Capacity Formulas

$$\text{Program Capacity} = (\text{Total \# of specific educational classrooms} \times \text{class size planning factor}) + (\text{Total \# of general educational classrooms} \times \text{class size planning factor})$$

$$\text{Design Capacity Utilization} = \frac{\text{School's September 30th Membership Enrollment}}{\text{Design Capacity}}$$

$$\text{Program Capacity Utilization} = \frac{\text{School's September 30th Membership Enrollment}}{\text{Program Capacity}}$$

Appendix F: Additional Resources

1. [November 19, 2024, School Board Work Session Presentation on Program Capacity](#)
2. [September 30, 2024, Membership Enrollment](#)
3. [SY2023-24 Class Size Report](#)