

Executive Summary

Understanding a school's capacity allows Arlington Public Schools (APS) to plan for future enrollment needs in the near and long term. In the near term, through the annual Enrollment Management Plan, APS can determine what operational adjustments are needed to manage enrollment for the next school year that include specific program placement (e.g., Special Education, Option Programs) and neighborhood and targeted transfers to schools with available capacity. In the long term, understanding a building's capacity and utilization rate allows APS to identify Capital planning needs.

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. It is a static reference point that may not reflect current conditions.

Program capacity identifies how current spaces are used during a school year to meet core and specific educational program needs. APS believes a school's program capacity provides a more accurate and real-time view of capacity utilization and seat availability and shows 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 does not create capacity challenges at schools.

As part of the program capacity study, a program capacity profile is developed for each middle school. Each profile contains a table that compares a school's design and program capacity together with a school's September 30th official membership enrollment and seat availability. Appendices provide more detailed information on program types, number of classrooms, a comparison to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) prototypical program space for middle schools, a table that shows prototypical spaces for APS middle schools based on three teams per grade level, definitions of terms, space classifications and descriptions, capacity formulas, and referenced resources. A school's design and program capacity may differ for reasons including:

- Change in number of general and specific educational programs or
- Repurposing capacity-generating classrooms for administrative, resource, or specialized spaces when space is available due to lower enrollment. These repurposed spaces are identified as flex spaces in the profile.

Table 1 summarizes each middle school's design and program capacity, September 30th membership enrollment, capacity utilizations, and available seats.

Middle Schools' Design and Program Capacity

Table 1

Middle School	9/30/2024 Membership Enrollment	Design Capacity	Design Capacity Utilization	Program Capacity (Based on Target Class Size)	Program Capacity Utilization	Total Capacity Generating Classrooms	Total Number of Relocatable Classrooms	Seat Availability - Program Capacity
Dorothy Hamm	949	1000	95%	1090	87%	50	0	141
Gunston	1038	992	105%	1152	90%	51	6	114
Jefferson	1064	1086	98%	1095	97%	59	0	31
Kenmore	1013	1045	97%	1205	84%	58	2	192
Swanson	954	948	101%	1044	91%	49	6	90
Williamsburg	813	997	82%	1036	78%	48	2	223
	5,831	6,068	96%	6,622	88%	315	16	791

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.

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.

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

² [APS Planning Factors](#)

2025 Program Capacity Study – Middle Schools

- 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: 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, PreK VPI, PreK Special Education (SE), MIPA.
- 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 repurposed as administrative, resource, or specialized spaces.

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

Appendix B: 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 projections, STEAM).

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

Appendix C: 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 D: Additional Resources

1. [November 19, 2024, School Board Work Session Presentation on Program Capacity](#)
2. [September 30, 2024, Membership Enrollment](#)
3. [FY2025 Planning Factors](#)
4. [Class Size Report 2024-25](#)