

Fairfield Board of Education - Facilities Planning Principles

Adopted
on
June 22, 2010

1. Core Facilities - *Additional classrooms shall not be added without addressing the core facilities that they will impact.* With any new classroom additions at our schools, we must equally incorporate relative additional space to expand core facilities when necessary. More children may bring more space needs in the cafeteria, library, gymnasium, bathrooms, and hallways.

2. Class Size - *Facilities planning, whenever possible, shall have a goal of providing adequate space to enable educational guidelines to be met.* Class size should not be viewed as a variable designed to simplify facilities and budgetary problems. Class size should not be used as a means to fit students into the limited space we have, wherever it may be. Instead we should endeavor to provide appropriate facilities that meet educational specifications throughout the district.

3. Specialized Curriculum - *We must provide, whenever possible, appropriate and dedicated spaces for specialized curriculum needs such as special education, art, music, and technology.* We should endeavor to provide appropriate and dedicated spaces for specialized curriculum needs, as specified in the Educational Specifications that are generated for our elementary schools. In particular, space must be provided for art, music, technology and special education. These critical components of our curriculum cannot be effectively delivered “on a cart,” in a closet, or in similar inappropriate spaces.

4. Enrollment Projections - *A long term plan should account for and accommodate peak enrollment projections.* When realistic and feasible we should not ignore the new dynamics that play a role in school population like in-migration, zoning density, regional economy, or being named “The Best Town in Connecticut” by CT Magazine. We should endeavor, whenever possible, to use projected enrollment figures that account for these factors, and that compensate for the fact that recent projections have at times underestimated actual enrollment, when determining space needs.

5. Stability - *We should strive to create district plans that provide stability for the district’s students.* We should endeavor to plan for stability in our educational system. Whenever possible, redistricting should not be revisited every 3-5 years, especially without a major event such as a school opening or closing.

6. Headroom – *To ensure stability we should leave headroom in each school - the maximum number we should PLAN to is 90%/85% of capacity.* We should ensure that headroom is built into our calculations for school planning. Because enrollment projections are not an exact science district planning must account for the statistical variance between projected and actual enrollments. As such, whenever possible, schools should be operated at a utilization level that accommodates year-to-year fluctuations in enrollment without resorting to inappropriate measures such as redistricting, or buying and installing portable classrooms. For elementary schools, this utilization level is 90%. For middle and high schools, this utilization level is 85%.

7. Commitment to Adding Space Where Students Are Located – *At the elementary school level we must have a commitment of maintaining the concept of “neighborhood schools” and/or allowing students to attend the elementary school which is reasonably close to the students’ homes whenever educationally feasible and possible.* We should not be busing students past or away from their neighborhood school or a school which is reasonably close to their home because there is an open seat in another school located in different part of town. Therefore, the planning process must evaluate where the population centers are and build or expand in those areas.

8. Phase out Temporary Solutions (Portables) - *Eliminate the Town's reliance on portable classrooms as a permanent substitute for brick and mortar classrooms.* Whenever possible phase out the temporary solutions by eliminating the Town’s reliance on temporary portable classrooms – wood, steel, or otherwise – as a permanent substitute for brick and mortar classrooms.