

Program Capacity Utilization & Action Thresholds

Purpose: This document provides guidance for evaluating building utilization in our school district using Program Capacity. It establishes thresholds for underutilization, efficient use, and overcrowding to support decision-making regarding school facility planning.

Definitions:

- **Program Capacity:** The number of seats available for students after accounting for special program spaces (e.g., special education, labs, career/technical rooms).
- **Utilization Rate (%):** A measure of how full a school building is relative to its Program Capacity.

$$\text{Enrollment} / \text{Program Capacity} \times 100 = \text{Utilization Rate (\%)}$$

Utilization Thresholds & Actions:

Utilization Rate	Meaning	Example Action
< 70%	Underutilized	Low occupancy relative to functional program space. Consider repurposing, consolidation, or programming shifts.
70–84%	Monitor	School is within acceptable range; track trends and consider adjustments if downward trend continues.
85–100%	Target / Efficient	School is operating within its designed functional capacity; no immediate action needed.
100–110%	Stressed	Enrollment exceeds Program Capacity. Consider portable classrooms, boundary adjustments, or adding program space.
>110%	Overcrowded	Immediate capacity relief required; enrollment exceeds functional seats, which may impact instructional quality.

Best Practices: 1. Document all assumptions in Program Capacity calculations (e.g., which spaces are excluded and why). 2. Track portable/temporary space separately; include supplemental columns for decision-making. 3. Apply different utilization targets by school type or grade level if needed. 4. Analyze trends over multiple years to identify sustained over- or under-utilization. 5. Define decision triggers (e.g., >105% utilization for two consecutive years triggers capacity relief planning).

References: 1. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), *Forum Guide to Facilities Information Management*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov> 2. Association for Learning Environments (A4LE), *Educational Facility Planning Standards and Guidelines*. <https://www.a4le.org> 3. Chicago Public Schools, *Capacity Utilization Methodology* (example district standard). <https://www.cps.edu>

Note: This document is intended for internal use by the district's building utilization evaluation committee and is based on nationally recognized facility planning standards. It should be updated as Program Capacity methodology or enrollment patterns evolve.