



Watkins Elementary

Notes regarding the
Comparison of Existing Conditions and Uses to the
DCPS Education Specifications
November 6, 2014

Disclaimer: These are comments on Ed Spec only. They are not comments on proposed reprogramming or potential design solutions, which are yet to be presented. Those comments will be provided as the parent community is engaged in the design process.

The layout of Watkins reflects its age and the design themes are indicative of a 1962 building. The building is a simple, 4-story structure with long, double-loaded corridors. As educational methods have evolved and the use of technology and innovated programs have become more prevalent, new uses have been squeezed into spaces originally designed as classrooms. As such, inefficiencies are prevalent throughout the building. The majority of classrooms are undersized. Teaching support and staff spaces are sometimes oversized.

The modernization/renovation should respond to DCPS' commitment to "right-size" the school enrollment. The Classroom and Capacity Chart on page 5 of the Ed Spec (draft Nov. 2013) should be updated to reflect current enrollment and future "right-sized" capacity. Right-sizing will also be required to create proper size classrooms (e.g. creating 2 classrooms where there was previously 3).

	Current		Right-Sized	
Grade	# of classrooms	Capacity	# of classrooms	Capacity
1 st Grade	4	88	4	88
2 nd Grade	5	96	4	88
3 rd Grade	4	94	4	100
4 th Grade	5	126	4	100
5 th Grade	4	94	4	100
Total	22 classrooms	498 students	20 classrooms	476 students

The attached comparison chart, created by Watkins parents, compares current space utilization to the DCPS Education Specification standards as drafted in November 2013. Rooms that are inadequately sized pursuant to the Ed Spec are highlighted in red. Rooms that are oversized for current uses are highlighted in yellow.

MAJOR THEMES

- Watkins deserves full modernization to reflect the needs of this large school with a co-located DPR Rec Center.
- Modernization should support the “right-sizing” of this school as approved by DCPS. Right-sizing means 4 classes at each grade for a total of 20 classrooms.

CLASSROOMS

- To reflect right-sizing of total school enrollment and to bring classroom square footage requirements to within the Ed Spec standard, combine 3 classrooms into 2.
- 86% (or 19 of 22) classrooms are too small according to the Ed Spec. On average, these classrooms are 189 square feet smaller than they should be.

SPECIALS ROOMS

- With the exception of our Library and Art rooms, all of the rooms used for our other specials (computers, Spanish, FoodPrints Lab, music, PE, and science lab) are undersized by, on average, 22%.

LIBRARY

- The Library should be totally redesigned to promote quiet and focused use (no more hallway and use of overhead doors)! While the library is technically within the Ed Spec standards in terms of size, its functional and practical usage is greatly compromised given the hallway.

MUSIC ROOM

- The music room is insufficient in size and lacks sufficient storage space. The music room is located too far from the multi-purpose room (stage).
- There is not sufficient storage for a growing program, which as of this year will include 30 orchestral instruments secured through a collaboration with the DC Youth Orchestra.

MULTI-PURPOSE/PE ROOM

- The building needs a second multi-purpose/PE room of 3,400 square feet. This is needed not only because of the current and projected enrollment of the school but also because of DPR’s use of the current room after 3:30 p.m.
- Because DPR uses the multi-purpose room after 3:30 p.m., afterschool programming for non-Rec students is held in classrooms or other insufficiently sized rooms.

LOBBY

- The current lobby is unwelcoming and inefficient.
 - Create Welcome area, with integrated security desk
 - Relocate Janitor’s office
 - Relocate Main Office

FOODPRINTS FOOD LAB/TEACHING KITCHEN and OUTDOOR GARDENS

- The parent community expects that the teaching kitchen is protected and not damaged during any construction activity. The build out of this space was funded, designed, and built by parents and community volunteers.
- The parent community does not want this space to count toward the DCPS specification for a science lab.
- The parent community expects that all outdoor gardens be protected during the renovation. The gardens represent a significant contribution by our community, both financial and physical effort. If gardens and their associated infrastructure (raised, beds, irrigation system, fencing, walking paths, amphitheater, etc.) are impacted, we expect that DGS will ensure replacement with equal or higher quality materials.
- Of particular concern is the vegetable garden on E Street. We prefer that this garden not be relocated. But, if relocation is required to accommodate an addition we are interested to hear the thoughts of DCPS/DGS and the design team about a feasibility of a roof-top vegetable garden.

CAFETERIA KITCHEN

- The serving kitchen is poorly designed. While adequately sized in terms of square footage, its design configuration does not allow for dual service lines. Because it takes longer for students to cycle through the lunch line, the school must have 5 lunch periods thus making the multipurpose room unavailable for indoor recess.

HVAC

- HVAC is horrible in the building. West facing classrooms bake in the afternoon sun. In the winter, classrooms are frigid, requiring students to wear winter coats.

DPR CO-LOCATION

- DCPS Ed Specs call for additional spaces when a DPR facility is co-located within a school. These spaces include a game room, craft room, additional meeting rooms, and lockers. These spaces are not currently present. If DPR is to continue operating at the school, the school should be right-sized and these additional spaces should be built out as part of this modernization. DPR should provide the necessary planning and financial resources.

SITE

- Concerns about the safety of the parking lot, particularly afterschool when students/DPR participants are crossing to the field.
- The space used by the pool and pool house is underutilized. The pool is antiquated and its use is limited. The space would be better used as the location of a new DPR office and support center (e.g. bathrooms, office, classroom) for the field.

- The DPR trailer should be removed. The trailer is in poor repair and has been known to harbor rodents. Uses contained in trailer are better suited in a new DPR support center as noted in bullet above.
- The stairs between the playground and the northeast door are dangerously steep.

CAPITOL HILL COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL

- If the school lacks excess space according to the DCPS specification, then this third party use should be discontinued. This decision should be made after consultation with all stakeholders, including the third party vendor, the Watkins parent community, and DCPS. However, the needs of the DCPS school should be prioritized over a third party vendor.

GREEN BUILDING / SUSTAINABILITY

- The parent community is in full support to maximize green building materials and practices. The current design RFP indicates a LEED-Schools Gold standard. The parents would like to be informed about how the scorecard will be met to achieve this standard.

PARENT EXPECTATIONS of DGS / DCPS:

- 1.) Regular communication from DGS to the school and community regarding process and meeting times.
- 2.) Complete window replacement during summer 2015.
- 3.) Undertake a purposeful planning process to address as many needs as possible with the FY15 funding (\$14.276 million).
- 4.) If \$14.2 million is insufficient for the needs of a Phase 1, then DGS and DCPS should clearly communicate the needs to the Mayor's office for potential "reprogramming funds" and/or otherwise outline a plan to fully fund the Phase 1 modernization needs.
- 5.) Notwithstanding whether \$14.2 million is sufficient for a "Phase 1", DGS / DCPS should determine when future phases will be completed, defining the scope, and requesting the necessary funding allocations. Currently, neither additional phases nor funding for such are identified in the current 6-year Capital Improvement Plan budget (through 2020). This is too long and is very concerning.
- 6.) Outline any multi-year, multi-phased modernization plans and fully communicate said plans to the community.
- 7.) DPR should bring resources to the table: participating in all SIT meetings and provide capital funding commensurate to their programmatic use of the building. DPR is a major user of this building and site.