

Capacity Calculations

School program capacity is defined by the State of Maryland as the maximum number of students that can reasonably be accommodated in a facility without significantly hampering delivery of the given educational program. School capacity is the product of the number of teaching stations at a school and the average class size for each program (based generally on the student-to-teacher ratio). The state of Maryland and MCPS rate capacities use slightly different student-to-teacher ratios.

■ MCPS Program Capacity

Class size for regular and supplemental programs, such as English Language Development (ELD), is based on MCPS policy, regulation, and budget guidelines. Many jurisdictions in Maryland, including Montgomery County, strive to reduce class sizes. State and federal regulations mandate a maximum class size limit for preschool programs.

Capacity ratios were recently updated in Regulation FAA-RA to align with the Tiered model which has replaced the terms focus and non-focus schools. Program capacity is based on the current classroom ratios shown below. These updates took effect on September 24, 2026.

• Head Start and prekindergarten—2 sessions	40:1
• Head Start and prekindergarten—1 session	20:1
• Grade K—Base and Tier 1	22:1
• Grade K—Tier 2 and 3	19:1
• Grades 1–2—Base and Tier 1	22:1
• Grades 3–5—Base and Tier 1	24:1
• Grades 1–2—Tier 2 and 3	19:1
• Grades 3–5—Tier 2 and 3	22:1
• Grades 6–8 Middle	25:1*
• Grades 9–12 High	25:1**
• ELD (secondary)	15:1
• Discrete Special Education Services	8:1

*Program capacity is adjusted at the middle school level to account for scheduling constraints. The regular classroom capacity of 25 is multiplied by .85 to reflect the optimal utilization of a middle school facility (equivalent to 21.25 students per classroom.)

**Program capacity is adjusted at the high school to account for scheduling constraints. The regular classroom capacity of 25 is multiplied by .9 to reflect the optimal utilization of a high school facility (equivalent to 22.5 students per classroom.)

Small instructional spaces and specialized classrooms are provided for all schools and are allocated on the basis of enrollment size and the need for supplementary instructional activities, such as reading support, special education resource, speech, art, and music.

In situations where the educational program will not be adversely affected, MCPS leases space on an annual basis to appropriate outside organizations. In most cases, these organizations are referred to as “joint occupants” and are usually day-care providers. Before and after school programs also are provided in many MCPS schools. Spaces used by day-care providers on MCPS sites range from shared use of multipurpose rooms before and after school, to relocatable classrooms on a school site that are financed by the provider and operated for the school community. If space is available, one or more classrooms can be leased for full-day programs.

■ State-rated Capacity

State-rated capacity, used to determine state funding, is calculated using the following calculations. These calculations make MCPS and state capacity ratings differ. See appendix F for a comparison of capacity ratings for all schools..

• Head Start and prekindergarten—1 session	20:1
• Grade K—full-day	22:1
• Grades 1–5 Elementary	23:1
• Grades 6–12 Secondary	25:1*
• Special Education	10:1

*Program capacity differs at the secondary level in that regular classroom capacity in the regular classroom capacity of 25 is multiplied by .85 to reflect the optimal utilization of a secondary school (equivalent to 21.25 students per classroom).

