

Salem City Schools Facility Fact Sheet

Answering the entirely reasonable question: *How is there a need for more classrooms when student enrollment in Salem is relatively stable?*

There are a number of converging factors that create a need for more instructional space. Some factors impact all schools and others are specific to elementary and secondary education in the 21st Century.

All Schools

Technology and the appropriate education of students with disabilities impact facility use in all schools, specifically:

- Computer labs have displaced what used to be regular classrooms at all levels
- The appropriate education of students with special needs is time, staff, and space intensive, requiring instructional spaces at all levels that historically were traditional classrooms.

Elementary Level

Over the last few decades, federal and state mandates have reduced class size. Prior to these reforms, an elementary school with 460 students and 27-28 students per homeroom would require 16-17 traditional classrooms. That same school with a class size of 22 students per class requires 4-5 additional teachers *and* classrooms.

Even as class size reduction efforts required additional classrooms, fewer traditional classrooms were available due to conversion to serve as computer labs and spaces for students with special needs.

In Salem, each of our four elementary schools houses a specialty program for students with special needs so that every employee (including custodians and food service staff) in each school has the opportunity to receive training necessary to help special populations be successful:

- East Salem – Pre-school Program for Students with Disabilities
- G.W. Carver – Students with Emotional Disabilities and Regional Program for students with Multiple Disabilities
- South Salem – Students with Developmental Delays (including Autism Spectrum Disorders)
- West Salem – Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Secondary Level

At the high school level, credits required for graduation have increased dramatically in recent years. When Salem High School was constructed in the late 1970's, a student had to receive permission from the principal to take a full schedule of classes. During that era, most students had at least one study hall where large numbers of students could be supervised by just one teacher.

In the 21st Century, students are encouraged to take as many rigorous courses as possible to prepare them (and our nation) for a globally competitive workplace. Nationally, credits earned increased from 21.7 per student to 25.8 between 1982 and 2004. Students in the Salem High School Class of 2009 earned an average of 28.2 credits with two-thirds earning an Advanced Studies Diploma. Many Salem graduates earn well over 30 credits because college admissions offices are looking for more math, science, and foreign language coursework than is required even by the Advanced Studies diploma. As more students complete more courses, more teachers and classrooms are required than an Educational Plan for a facility constructed decades ago ever anticipated.