

2.0 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

This chapter of the *Facility Master Plan* describes the methodology used to understand the educational programs in the district and also defining the facility implications for those programs. In order to complete this work, MGT conducted a thorough analysis of programs, both in place and planned, and then developed the educational suitability assessment that would capture data from each school. The educational program analysis described under the Educational Program Development section were conducted through individual interviews with district curriculum staff. The facility implications from that program analysis, described under Educational Suitability Assessment section, were gathered through a review and assessment of each school.

MGT's activities related to the educational program were focused on ensuring that MGT understood the district's current and planned instructional programs, especially those with facility implications. For example, when a district focuses on performing arts and ensuring that all students have opportunities to graduate ready for college and career, the facility implications are significant.

The space requirements for specialized programs vary from one type of room to another and the facility implications of instructional decisions are important to understand and build into a long-range plan if the district is to ensure that all students are provided opportunities to learn in adequate and equitable spaces, regardless of where they go to school. Ensuring a safe learning environment is also critical.

Improving facilities is a huge challenge for most school districts, including RCAS. Many schools in the district were not built/designed to support all of the needs for special education, English Language Learners or Title I programs, each of which requires space to do that work. Buildings designed before the mid-1970's typically have classrooms only. There were no spaces for itinerant PT/OT staff, psychologists to do testing, or ELL/special education/Title I staff to do pull-out groups or instruction. Schools that lack these instructional resource spaces may have to put counselors in closets, speech therapists on the stage, and English tutors out in the hallway. Schools that lack these spaces use whatever is available, but they may not be adequate to fully support the instructional program. Schools designed and built before 1990 typically also lack the infrastructure to support current and future technology. Schools may not even have adequate electrical service to support current HVAC demands.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

MGT conducted a series of focused interviews and discussions with district staff in spring 2015. These interviews included administrative and curricular staff representing each content area (e.g., science, performing arts, technology, media, etc.). For each area, MGT asked questions regarding both current and planned program changes. Some specialized programs require specialized spaces. For example:

During the discussions with RCAS staff, MGT provided a template to guide the discussion. The discussions started with a review of existing and planned programs, including a review of the district's adopted curriculum guides for each grade level. RCAS staff also described the planned timeline for new program implementation. Part of the discussion concerned equity – did/should the programs exist in all schools or were they only in certain schools?

From these discussions, MGT developed the *Educational Suitability and Technology Readiness Reference Guide* (see **Appendix A**) to define the facility standards. These standards are based on the district's current educational specifications and design practices. This document was reviewed and approved by the district and used as the basis for the educational suitability assessments described in the next section. The standards define four components for each type of instructional space:

- ◆ **Learning environment** – Does the space provide an appropriate physical configuration, HVAC, lighting, acoustical treatment, etc. to support student learning?
- ◆ **Size** – Does the space meet the defined size standard for square footage?
- ◆ **Location** – Does the space exist in the right location?
- ◆ **Storage/Fixed Equipment** – Does the space have what teachers and students need to be successful, including safety equipment, permanent cabinetry, and technology?

The *Guide* also defines standards for non-instructional areas like cafeteria, administration, and health suite and deals with safety issues like security vestibules, fencing, and bus/parent traffic patterns.

In addition to curricular areas, MGT discussed the district's current and planned technology structures in support of instruction. IT staff from RCAS reviewed standards and assisted in the development of the tool used to assess Technology Readiness. The Technology Readiness assessment reviews how well the infrastructure in the schools supports technology: electrical service to support charging of devices, wireless access, video streaming capacity, etc. It does not include an evaluation of the IT software or equipment.

The MGT staff who conducted assessments received specialized training to use the *Guide* as the standard when assessing each school.

EDUCATIONAL SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT

As described, MGT developed the *Educational Suitability and Technology Readiness Reference Guide* for RCAS to define the standards for each type of space.

The *Guide* was used to calibrate the MGT software, BASYS® (Building Assessment System). BASYS® was used in RCAS in 2005-06 as the assessment software when the last district-wide facility assessment was conducted. (Note: BASYS® has been revised since 2005-06 to provide greater emphasis on the learning environment and instructional flexibility.) The *Guide* was also used to train the assessors who visited each school and document the suitability of each space. (See **Section 6.0** for the Educational Suitability Assessment data.)

MGT staff assessed each school based on the standards defined in the *Guide*. Site visits were scheduled by MGT through the district to ensure that knowledgeable staff were available at each site during the visit. Each evaluator met with the school principal to review the program(s) at each site and then walk the school to gather data about the spaces available to support the planned programs as well as the safety issues, play/athletic areas, and non-instructional spaces. As each walk-through was completed, the assessors entered data into the BASYS software while in the field. All data were initially reviewed for accuracy and completeness through MGT's quality control process and have been reviewed and approved by the district.

The BASYS software has four assessments: Building Condition, Site Condition, Educational Suitability, and Technology Readiness, each of which are on a 100-point scale with 90-100 being "Excellent" and scores under 50 typically being "Unsatisfactory." This scoring system is easily understood by the public that is accustomed to educational grading systems on a 100-point scale. (For more information about the assessments conducted, see **Section 6.0**.)