

**Northwest Territories Schools  
Capital Standards and Criteria (2020)**

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## 1.0 Introduction

Space standards and criteria for schools were first established for NWT Schools in the 1990s. A new set of standards and criteria were subsequently adopted in 2005. Standards and criteria need to be revised from time to time to reflect current delivery of education programs. This document replaces the 2005 Standards and Criteria (the Standards).

### 1.1 Purpose

The Department of Education Culture and Employment (the Department) identifies capital funding needs for school infrastructure projects including new construction, renovations, and upgrading of facilities and equipment. Capital needs are demonstrated by assessments of existing building functional and technical conditions, projected school enrolments, and education program requirements.

The Standards are based on the principle of providing suitable and equitable education facilities across the NWT:

- Criteria are used to assess and determine needs
- Standards describe the amount of space considered adequate to meet those needs

### 1.2 Changes from 2005 Standards and Criteria

Changes included in this 2020 edition of the Standards were made as a result of a comprehensive review of current education programming goals, a scan of changes being made in other jurisdictions, and an assessment of spaces in schools designed to meet the 2005 standards. Of note:

- space allowances have been modified to better meet space needs
- explanations of what types of spaces are included in the different categories have been improved
- new allowances to better support NWT students

## 2.0 Application of Standards and Criteria

The Standards are to be used to establish space allowances for schools: they are not meant to determine how space is organized or designed. Guidelines and best practices for the design of school spaces are referenced in Appendix D. An explanation of how the Standards apply to existing schools, renovation projects and new facilities follows.

### 2.1 Existing Schools

Standards and Criteria can be used as a benchmark to determine the overall quantitative adequacy of existing school spaces in different space categories. Recommendations by the Department to replace or renovate an existing building will take this assessment into consideration, however variances will not necessarily indicate the need for a capital project.

### 2.2 Major Renovations and Additions

#### *Standards*

Major renovations and additions will generally be planned and constructed in accordance with these standards; however modifications may be made to take existing building characteristics into consideration. A comparison of the spaces in the existing school with these standards will be completed to illustrate variances that should be considered when projects are planned.

#### *Criteria*

Major renovations and/or additions to an existing school will be recommended by the Department when:

Major building systems are within 5 years of their expected service life and a **technical assessment** demonstrates that renovations completed in the next five years could extend the life of the building another 20 years for less than the cost to replace the building, and the overall utilization of all community schools would exceed 85% if the school was closed.

OR

Enrolment projections show that the total **capacity** of all community schools will be exceeded within the next 5 years, an expansion to an existing school will meet the needs of the community, and a **technical assessment** determines that an addition to an existing school building is possible.

## 2.3 Minor Renovations

### *Standards*

Minor renovations will generally not increase the gross area of the school or decrease the capacity of the school.

### *Criteria*

Minor renovations to an existing school will be recommended by the Department when:

**Functional** and **technical assessments** demonstrate program delivery will be enhanced or the service life of building components will be increased, and the criteria for a major renovation or replacement project will not be met within the next five years.

## 2.4 New Facilities

### *Standards*

All new schools will be planned and designed in accordance with these standards.

### *Criteria*

A new school will be recommended by the Department when:

There is no existing school building in a community with a population of over 100 people where the NWT Bureau of Statistics is projecting population growth of at least 5% within the next 10 years.

OR

The condition of an existing school building is found to be unsafe, a **technical assessment** demonstrates that extensive renovations to extend the life of the building for 20 years will be needed in the next five years, the cost of renovations would approach the cost new construction, and the overall utilization of all community schools would exceed 85% if the school was not replaced.

OR

Projected enrolments show that the total **capacity** of all community schools will be exceeded in the next 5 years, the NWT Bureau of Statistics is projecting population growth of at least 5% within the next 10 years, and an expansion to an existing school buildings is not advisable either because it would not meet community needs, or it is not recommended for technical reasons.

## 3.0 Overview of Standards and Criteria

Space allowances are organized into seven categories:

- Learning and teaching
- Resources
- Recreation Activities
- Gathering and Circulation
- Learning Support
- Administration
- Building Services

### 3.1 Space Allowances by Category

Allowances are determined only at the category level. The sizes and numbers of individual rooms and areas are not prescribed in the standards, in order to allow flexibility in the allocation of space to meet the particular needs of individual projects. Examples of how space allowances can be allocated are included in Appendix A.

- The space **allowance** for each category is determined by formula
- Where formulas provide a space per student, the number of students to be used in the calculation is set by the Department as a **target enrolment**
- Before new buildings or renovations are designed, detailed space requirements are determined in consultation with users, and documented in a **functional program**
- The functional program will provide guidance on how the allowance is to be allocated to individual rooms and areas, and how rooms and areas are to be grouped:
  - Space provided for learning and teaching must meet the standard allowance as a minimum
  - Trade-offs may be considered between category allowances, with the exception of building services, as long as the total space allowance for the school is not exceeded

## 3.2 Target Enrolment

Space allowances are determined using **target enrolment** numbers. The target represents a reasonable estimate of the enrolment numbers a school should be able accommodate at 100% utilization. Targets are set using best available information when assessing or planning for schools, and taking the following into consideration:

- A minimum target enrolment of 20 should be used
- Community population projections provided by the NWT Bureau of Statistics and particularly a review of population demographics and birth rates
- Economic development forecasts and anticipated impacts on community populations
- 5 and 20 year planning horizons (aligned with the Corporate Capital Planning process)
- Potential fluctuations in enrolments over the life of the school building, and in particular over the first 20 years of the building
- Potential for adding space at a reasonable cost if actual enrolments exceed the target enrolment
- Future enrolments projected annually by ECE, but as they vary from year to year - **projected enrolments** from at least 3 different years should be reviewed to inform the target enrolment
- A growth factor of at least 15% should be added to projected enrolments to provide the ability to maintain an optimum utilization rate of approximately 85%, and to provide some flexibility for future program changes

## 3.3 Capacity

Once a school is designed or constructed, the number of students it is able to accommodate is referred to as the **capacity**. Buildings have an expected service life of at least 40 years. The capacity is fixed at the time of design, but may be adjusted by the Department when standards are revised, when renovations are completed, or when learning areas are reallocated to accommodate new program needs.

The capacity of an existing school is determined by:

$$\text{Learning and Teaching Areas (designed or actual) / Learning and Teaching allowance} \\ = \text{Capacity (number of students)}$$

When designing new buildings, the target enrolment set by the Department for the project will be equal to the capacity of the school.



### 3.4 Modifications to Standard Allowances

Space allowances in any category may be modified only as set out in these standards. The deputy minister may authorize any alteration tagged as a 'modification'. Total space may not be increased without the approval of the Financial Management Board.

The approval of the Financial Management Board is also required when **funding from a third party** is to be used to provide additional space beyond what is allowed for in the standards. If additional areas are to be provided through funding from a third party, a **joint use agreement** must be in place to set out terms and conditions for the use and maintenance of the space. Further, if additional learning areas are provided because of funding from a third party, the additional area may be considered when determining or adjusting school capacity at the discretion of the deputy minister. In the event the minister, on recommendation of the deputy minister, approves a more detailed policy than the rules provided in these Standards regarding the application of third party funding, that policy will supersede the Standards.

In communities with a total target enrolment greater than 600, and with the approval of the deputy minister, an area allowance for a new school building may be determined by combining area allowances that would be determined if separate schools were provided for different grade ranges. For greater clarity, the space that would be allowed if two separate schools were designed can be combined into a single building with the approval of the deputy minister.

All approved modifications to the standards must be documented either by an amendment to the Standards, or in the functional program and asset records.

## 4.0 Space Category Allowances

A general description of the space allowance for each category is provided. The descriptions focus on the types of activities to be accommodated, or functions supported, rather than prescribing the types of rooms. This approach is used because new approaches to education are being adopted, and common space names are changing. For example, where libraries were once a central space in all schools, resource centres or learning commons are beginning to take their place. Examples of rooms or areas typically included in each category are provided to assist with interpretation.

Where a specific type of activity or function is not mentioned, some judgment must be used to determine the appropriate space allowance category.

### 4.1 Teaching and Learning Area Allowance

This allowance provides for learning and teaching activities that may involve students working alone or in groups, and where teachers provide instruction or facilitate activities. Space for furnishings and equipment such as computers, portable or permanently installed equipment, project supplies, and temporary storage space for student projects are also provided for under this category.

Spaces typically included in this category are classrooms, learning centres, activity stations, seminar rooms, break-out spaces, food preparation rooms, science laboratories, and shops or studios.

A basic allowance provides for activities that will generally be common at all schools. A special allowance is added depending on the range of grades offered at a school, to accommodate permanently installed equipment or furnishings (such as multiple sinks and kitchen appliances for cooking, fume hoods for science experiments, power tools for trades, or indoor play structures for junior kindergarten programs).

**Table 1: Space Allowance Teaching and Learning**

Grade Range	Area
All schools	Basic allowance of 4 m <sup>2</sup> / student
Schools offering all grades from JK to 12	Additional 0.5 m <sup>2</sup> /student
School offering any combination of grades between 6 and 12	Additional 1 m <sup>2</sup> /student

## 4.2 Resource Area Allowance

This allowance provides space to accommodate centralized resources, work areas where students can be engaged in self-directed individual or small group learning activities, and workstations for full-time staff dedicated to this function. This allowance is also intended to provide space for the storage of shared resources that may be taken to learning and teaching areas. With a greater emphasis on inquiry based learning, and the increasing use of technology, resource areas are transitioning from libraries to 'learning commons'.

Spaces typically included in this category are libraries or resource centres, storage rooms for learning kits or supplies used for learning activities, as well as new kinds of spaces such as 'learning commons'.

This area is generally used on an ad hoc basis and may be open to students or community members outside of regularly scheduled school hours.

**Table 2: Space Allowance Resource**

Target Enrolment	Area
20 - 49	20m <sup>2</sup>
50 - 99	20m <sup>2</sup> plus 0.3 m <sup>2</sup> /student
100 - 149	30m <sup>2</sup> plus 0.3 m <sup>2</sup> /student
150 - 299	60m <sup>2</sup> plus 0.3 m <sup>2</sup> /student
300 - 500	70m <sup>2</sup> plus 0.3 m <sup>2</sup> /student
Over 500	80m <sup>2</sup> plus 0.3 m <sup>2</sup> /student

**Modifications:** In communities where no public library facility exists an additional **50m<sup>2</sup>** is allowed if it is used to provide a public community library through a joint use agreement

### 4.3 Recreation Activity Areas Allowance

This allowance provides space for school sports, recreation, assembly, performance, and leisure activities, or other education activities such as science, heritage or career fairs. Also included are spaces such as workstations for teachers dedicated to recreation programs, and storage of associated equipment and mobile furnishings.

Spaces typically included in this category are recreation rooms, gymnasias, fitness studios, game rooms, performance stages, audience seating areas, change rooms, equipment storage rooms, gym teacher office, and canteens.

**Table 3: Space Allowance Recreation Activity**

<b>Target Enrolment</b>	<b>Area</b>
20 – 149	350 m <sup>2</sup>
150 – 299	550 m <sup>2</sup>
300 – 500	850 m <sup>2</sup>
Over 500 (i.e. 501+)	1,000 m <sup>2</sup>

**Modifications:** In communities where there is more than one school, and total community target enrolment is greater than 300, an additional **300m<sup>2</sup>** is allowed at one of the schools if the community would not otherwise be eligible for at least one school with an allowance of 850 m<sup>2</sup>.

#### 4.4 Learning Support Area Allowance

This allowance provides space to accommodate student counseling, specialist services (such as speech therapy), facilities for students with special needs, and space for elders, community partners or volunteers to work with small groups of students outside of learning and teaching areas.

Spaces typically included in this category are small meeting rooms that can be used as temporary offices, quiet rooms, or allocated to community uses to suit local program needs.

**Table 4: Space Allowance Learning Support**

<b>Grade Range</b>	<b>Area</b>
All	0.4 m <sup>2</sup> /student
School offering any combination of grades ranging from 6 to 12	An additional 0.1 m <sup>2</sup> / student

#### 4.5 Administrative Area Allowance

This allowance provides space to accommodate administrative functions and semi-private areas for teachers and school staff to work or relax.

Typically this category includes general office areas, principal and vice-principal offices, staff lounges including places for coats and boots, staff washrooms, workrooms, storage of centralized stationery supplies as well as any internal circulation when rooms are grouped in a suite.

**Table 5: Space Allowance Administration**

<b>Target Enrolment</b>	<b>Area</b>
20 - 49	20m <sup>2</sup>
50 - 99	45m <sup>2</sup>
100 - 149	60m <sup>2</sup>
150 - 299	60m <sup>2</sup> plus 0.3 m <sup>2</sup> /student
300 - 500	70m <sup>2</sup> plus 0.3 m <sup>2</sup> /student
Over 500	80m <sup>2</sup> plus 0.3 m <sup>2</sup> /student

**Modifications:** Space allowance may be increased by 10% for schools in communities not accessible by all-weather road to provide additional storage for bulk supplies

## 4.6 Early Childhood Space Allowance

This space allowance is provided to add floor area to an eligible school project for the purpose of accommodating early childhood programs. The amount of space provided will be calculated pursuant to program criteria developed via departmental policy. Space will be provided on a case-by-case basis when and where it is substantiated with reference to policy or program criteria; not all school projects will automatically include extra space for early childhood programming.

**Table 6: Space Allowance Early Childhood**

Situation	Area
Eligible projects determined by policy or program criteria	Additional area as determined by policy or program criteria.

If additional space is added as part of the school building itself, the extra space provided under this allowance pursuant to a qualifying project may be added to the total program area used as the reference value when calculating gathering and circulation (s. 4.6), building services (s. 4.7), and structure (s. 4.8).

## 4.7 Distance Learning Allowance

This space allowance is provided to add floor area to an eligible school project for the exclusive purpose of accommodating distance learning activities, calculated pursuant to the following rules:

**Table 7: Space Allowance Distance Learning**

Target Enrolment	Area
20 – 149	50 m <sup>2</sup>
150 – 499	80 m <sup>2</sup>
500+	150 m <sup>2</sup>

**Global Restrictions:** Distance learning space must primarily be designed for, and fit-up to support, distance learning. Reallocating this space for other uses under other allowances is **strictly prohibited by these standards**. It may not be converted into generic teaching and learning, administration, learning support, or other types of spaces. Once constructed, this space may be designed and fit-up to accommodate other teaching and learning activities provided that its primary purpose as distance learning space is not materially compromised. The space provided by this allowance must *always* in *all circumstances* be able to support distance learning activities without major modifications or adjustments to the space or its contents.

**Restrictions on 80 m<sup>2</sup> allowance:** The 80 m<sup>2</sup> allowance for schools with enrolments between 150 and 499 students **shall not** be used to create a single large classroom or room of any kind. The allowance **must** be used to create two smaller distance learning rooms. This could be two 40 m<sup>2</sup> rooms, or a 50 m<sup>2</sup> and a 30 m<sup>2</sup> room, or another acceptable combination. The smallest room size possible is 20 m<sup>2</sup>. No room created out of this allowance may be less than 20 m<sup>2</sup> in size.

**Restrictions on the 150 m<sup>2</sup> allowance:** The 150 m<sup>2</sup> allowance has two purposes: one, to create distance learning rooms for students taking courses; and two, to create one classroom specifically to deliver distance learning courses assuming a Northern Distance Learning-style territorial program. It is intended to create the physical space necessary for a school to become a dual-node (students take courses; teachers teach courses) for a territorial-wide program. Therefore, one of the rooms created out of this allowance must be 70 m<sup>2</sup>. The remaining space is subject to the same restrictions as the 80 m<sup>2</sup> allowance: no room may be smaller than 20 m<sup>2</sup>; it cannot be used to create a single large room; it can be used to create combinations of rooms of various sizes depending on the needs of the school, subject to the preceding restrictions.

## 4.8 Mental Health Support Space Allowance

This allowance provides dedicated space in schools specifically for Child and Youth Care Counsellors (CYCCs). This space must be used for CYCCs, their successors or equivalents. The space provided for this function is as follows:

**Table 8: Space Allowance Mental Health**

Target Enrolment	Area	Measure
20 – 74	16 m <sup>2</sup>	Counselling office
75 – 249	16 m <sup>2</sup>	Secure office for each CYCC in the school
	30 m <sup>2</sup>	Group activity room per school
250+	16 m <sup>2</sup>	Secure office for each CYCC in the school
	50 m <sup>2</sup>	Group activity room per school

**75+ School Restrictions:** For schools with identified, permanent CYCCs (i.e. schools not serviced by the itinerant team), the space provided under this allowance may only be used to establish a dedicated, secure office and a group therapy room for the provision of mental health services to students. It may not, under any circumstances, be reallocated to another allowance or used for general purpose teaching or office space. This is required to maintain the confidentiality of student health records and counseling services

offered in connection with mental health programs. Offices are over-sized in order to provide the space necessary to store records on-site as well as providing sufficient space for individualized counseling sessions.

**<75 School Restrictions:** Where a school is serviced by the itinerant team, one office is provided, though it can be used for other purposes when not required by CYCCs because no permanent/semi-permanent staff require confidential storage there. CYCCs have absolute priority to use this space when in town.

## 4.9 Gathering and Circulation

This allowance provides space where students can gather to interact socially, and information can be displayed, as well as circulation space providing access to rooms and building exits. Other functions that are provided for in this category include storage of student personal belongings during the school day.

Spaces typically included in this category are lobbies, vestibules, corridors, lounges, gym viewing areas, and coat and boot storage areas.

**Table 9: Space Allowance Gathering and Circulation**

<b>Target Enrolment</b>	<b>Area</b>
Under 300 and offering Grades including Grade 12 Or under 500 offering Grades between JK and 8	30% of the sum of area allowances for learning, resource, recreation and leisure, administration, learning support, early childhood, distance learning, and mental health including any space modifications
Over 300 and offering Grades including Grade 12	25% of the sum of area allowances for learning, resource, recreation and leisure, administration, learning support, early childhood, distance learning, and mental health including any space modifications

## 4.10 Building Services

This space allowance is provided to assist with preliminary planning, and as a guide for categorizing space in existing schools for assessments.

Spaces typically included in this category are student, staff, and public washrooms (not including washrooms that are part of an administration suite or incorporated into learning areas), mechanical and



electrical service rooms (not including water or wastewater tank space), network closets, and janitorial/maintenance rooms including space for bulk cleaning supplies.

**Table 10: Space Allowance Building Services**

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Area</b>
All schools	Base area of 10 m <sup>2</sup>
Trucked water and sewer	An additional area equal to <b>14%</b> of the sum of area allowances for learning, resource, recreation activities, administration learning support, early childhood, distance learning, and mental health
Piped water and sewer	An additional area equal to <b>12%</b> of the sum of area allowances for learning, resource, recreation activities, administration, learning support, early childhood, distance learning, and mental health

**Modifications:** the space allowance may be increased or decreased based on advice from the Department of Infrastructure (INF) if needed to meet regulatory requirements, adapt to site conditions, or because of specific equipment or storage tank requirements. Mezzanines, crawlspaces or basements are to be considered as modifications.

As noted in 3.1 the building services category space allowance is **not** included when considering space trade-offs between categories.

#### 4.11 Structural Allowance

This space allowance is provided to assist with preliminary planning and budget estimations.

**Table 11: Space Allowance Structural**

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Area</b>
All schools	An additional area <b>equal to 8%</b> of the sum of all other space allowances.

## 5.0 Site Area Standards

School sites should provide space for:

- The building footprint plus front, rear and sideyard setbacks at the time of construction
- Space for future expansion of the building
- Outdoor use areas including playgrounds, sport fields, and outdoor classrooms
- Pedestrian route(s) to the school entrance from the main road and parking areas
- Parking spaces equal to a minimum of one parking space for every 75 m<sup>2</sup> of Learning and Teaching areas, or as required by local bylaws
- Parent temporary parking to allow parents to park and accompany students to the school, or pick them up from the school and take them to the vehicle
- Passenger drop-off area
- School bus drop-off area
- Dedicated service vehicle access route from the street to building service

**Table 12: Minimum site areas**

Target Enrolment/Capacity	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Under 200	Minimum of four times the total school building area allowance
Over 200	Minimum of 65 m <sup>2</sup> /student

**Modifications:** Additional outdoor areas may be combined with the school site where land is made available by the community or any other organization contributing to the cost of developing and maintenance the site. Examples of additional site areas include:

- Sports fields that can be used for community and school events
- Parking areas sized to allow for community events
- Parking areas for students

## 6.0 Glossary of Terms

Allowance	total area (space) that can be used
Allocation	division of allowance into discreet areas (actual areas assigned)
Capacity	the number of students that the learning and teaching areas in a school is able to accommodate in accordance with the space standards
Capital Plan	funding approved by the Legislative Assembly for capital projects
Criteria	conditions that must be met before the Department will support a course of action
Enrolment	the number of students registered and attending school as of September 30 <sup>th</sup> each year
FTE	Full Time Equivalent used to recognize some students attend school part-time
Functional program	a written description of program operations and related space requirements including a list of rooms and areas
Head count	the actual number of students in a school at a given time
Learning Commons	A term used to describe a resource space where technology is provided for self-directed student research and problem solving activities
NBC	National Building Code of Canada
Projected enrolment	estimated future enrolment, calculated annually based on past enrolment trends and community birth rates
Target enrolment	future enrolment number used for planning purposes and set to establish a reasonable long term capacity (at 100% utilization)

Technical assessment	a comprehensive review of the condition of a building. It may be produced by the Department of Infrastructure (INF) or Professional Architects or Engineers. The report usually indicates the remaining life of building systems such as structure, interior and exterior finishes, windows, doors, heating, plumbing, ventilation, lighting, power supplies and communication systems
User groups	students, teachers, administrative staff, parents and other community members who regularly attend school or other activities in the school
Utilization	a measure of space use calculated by dividing current enrolment by the school capacity