

Portsmouth Middle School
Education Specifications
September 08, 2008

DRAFT

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Section II The People and Program to be Housed
(Space Comparisons and Program Needs)

Purpose:

This document is intended to provide a clear explanation of the current middle school program, the space that currently exists for that program, and the justification for any requests for changes to that space in the proposed building renovation project above current space and/or NH State requirements per ED 321.

Introduction:

This narrative follows the draft document produced by JCJ Architecture/DeStefano Architects on September 3, 2008 that outlines the inventory of all existing spaces in the current middle school, NH State requirements per ED 321 and the related spaces proposed in the 134,565 square foot building design. It is intended to be read with the above-referenced document in hand. This narrative will outline justifications for the requested space organized by the same main categories that exist in that document with square footage calculations for each room. It should be noted that while there are some square footage requirements for individual rooms in the NH State requirements per ED 321, the total allowable size for the purpose of reimbursement is determined by a per student formula. To say it another way, one cannot simply take the sum of square footage requirements since some required rooms have no required number of square feet.

General Information:

Portsmouth Middle School provides a comprehensive educational program for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. This organizational pattern would stay the same at the conclusion of the building project. The number of transitions for students would stay the same. Presently our three elementary schools all service students in grades K-5. Students leaving eighth grade transition to Portsmouth High School. The only exception to this pattern occurs with the students enrolled from the town of Newington, who enter into Portsmouth Middle School in seventh grade and then continue on to Portsmouth High School.

Portsmouth Middle School adheres to the middle school model embraced by nearly 2/3 of the nation's schools serving this age group. Our teaching professionals strongly believe that this model is the right one for our students. The middle school model places an emphasis on providing highly skilled teachers and administrators who understand adolescent students, have appropriate content knowledge and employ instructional methods that best help these students learn. Learning is active, the curriculum is challenging and relevant, and class sizes and learning communities (teams) are appropriate for providing a personalized education.

Programming at Portsmouth Middle School is designed to enhance the development of the whole child. This means paying attention to the social, physical, and personal needs of each student and understanding the relationship each of those needs has with academic achievement.

Each grade at the middle school is organized into two teaching teams. A team has five or six teachers who work with approximately ninety students. One of the teachers on each team is a specialist in the adaptation of instruction to the learning needs of individual students. Teaching teams meet during the school day to plan instruction collaboratively and to discuss the progress of their students.

Teams are an important part of the middle school model. The team approach allows the opportunity for strong, positive relationships to be built among students, teachers, counselors and administrators. This bonding is critical to healthy intellectual and emotional development and sets the stage for future academic success and personal/social development of young adolescents. Teaming also allows for core teachers to have common planning time to follow individual students and implement interdisciplinary units.

Portsmouth Middle School meets or exceeds the state requirements for core subjects, exploratory programs (unified arts), advisory programs and other recommended practices. Portsmouth Middle School also incorporates the framework from the Aspirations Program that has as its 8 conditions for student success: Belonging, Heroes, Sense of Accomplishment, Fun and Excitement, Curiosity and Creativity, Spirits of Adventure, Leadership and Responsibility and Confidence to Take Action.

These conditions have clear space and design implications. For example, to nurture a sense of *belonging*, the Portsmouth Middle School staff incorporated an advisory period into the daily schedule. During the advisory period, a staff member meets with about ten to twelve students. The school facility needs to support this kind of small group activity. Every effort is made to integrate those eight conditions in every aspect of the school community.

The goal of this project is to produce a quality facility that creates a positive learning environment for students. The Portsmouth Middle School program is a model in many ways for the state and a renovated and expanded space is needed to support the high quality and extensive programs. What follows is a description of those programs and related space needs.

Main Administration

Description of Program:

The main office is the welcoming place for visitors and the hub for day-to-day administrative functions. This space is utilized for small group meetings with parents and students as well as a variety of office staff functions. While this space is critical for welcoming visitors, some important considerations in this space include security and confidentiality.

Existing Space:

The existing space for these functions includes a variety of small spaces less than 200 square feet each. Presently the space does not include any office storage or student “time out” space.

NH State Requirements:

State requirements only include office space for a Principal and Assistant Principal, as well as conference room space and storage. The minimum total area for administrative office space is 1,200 square feet.

Proposed Space and Justification:

The proposed building includes a storage room and a student “time out” room, as well as a duplication of all existing spaces, with some designed smaller than they are currently and some designed to be bigger. The waiting area and entry vestibule are slightly smaller while many offices are designed to be slightly larger. The present conference room space, for example, is inadequate for the necessary small group meetings. One of the other identified needs throughout the existing building is the need for appropriate storage space. Presently, some of the bathrooms are utilized for storage space. The design accounts for about 1,000 additional square feet over current space and state minimums.

Health Suite

Description of Program:

The school nurse collaborates with Clipper Health, guidance, staff and parents in a team approach to meet students' health care needs. Health services provided by the nurse include: assessment and management of acute illness and injury, coordination of care of students with chronic illness and a resource of health care information for students, parents and staff. The nurse also provides wellness and health screening programs which include: vision, hearing, dental and blood pressure checks, height and weight monitoring, nutritional counseling, postural screening and an immunization program.

Health promotion and injury/illness prevention activities are also provided through our health office. These programs include: helmet and seatbelt programs, the *Put Prevention into Practice Program* (offered to all sixth grade students) and the health advocate program. The goal is to empower students in self-care by assisting them in developing good health habits and avoiding high-risk behaviors. The school nurse reinforces and encourages safe practices and healthful habits.

Existing Space:

The health suite consists of the school nurse's office and related areas, including waiting and rest areas, as well as storage and toilet areas.

NH State Requirements:

Required spaces for the school nurse include administrative space, a waiting area, space for examining patients that include a sink with hot and cold water, secure dry and refrigerated storage for medications and a patient isolation area which includes one cot for every 200 students in the design capacity. The minimum total square feet in this area for a school designed for under 750 students is 300 square feet.

Proposed Space and Justification:

While the proposed total space for the health suite is over 500 square feet above the 300 square foot minimum, it is actually smaller than the square footage of the existing program space. The reduction was made in the size of the 4 student rest areas, from 158 square feet to 75 square feet each.

Guidance

Description of Program:

A guidance counselor is assigned to each team and remains with that group of students as they move up through the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades at Portsmouth Middle School. The guidance program includes weekly team meetings to review student progress, individual counseling, topic and support groups, mediation and conflict resolution and consultation with parents, teachers and administrators.

The guidance office coordinates internal student services, as well as referrals to outside agencies and community resources. On an annual basis, the guidance counselors coordinate activities for incoming sixth grade students and they work with eighth grade students, teachers and parents to complete the course selection process for high school registration. School-wide standardized testing is coordinated through the guidance office each fall and spring. Guidance counselors arrange team meetings for parents and coordinate the referral process for student evaluations.

Existing Space:

Presently there are five offices in guidance and an area for an administrative assistant. Four of the offices are 80 square feet.

NH State Requirements:

State requirements consist of a private office for each guidance counselor.

Proposed Space and Justification:

The proposed design includes office space for four counselors, with the Outreach Counselor having a larger space due to the need to meet with small groups of students. In addition, there is a conference room for any of the counselors to meet with small groups of students or parents for any of the guidance programs. There is also a file room for the purpose of having a secure location for confidential student and testing files.

Team Areas- Grade Six

Description of Program:

Students in grade six stay with one core teacher for the first three periods of the day. They then rotate between eight classrooms according to which subjects are being taught.

Teams may schedule time blocks flexibly so that time periods spent on a subject vary according to the demands of the lesson being taught.

At the sixth grade level, students are assigned a core group for language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Students stay with this core group for an extended block of time each day for these subjects. They also study courses in art, music, health, family and consumer science, technology education, international languages and computer education. They may elect band and chorus, which also meet during the school day.

The special education program follows an inclusive model, which supports the success of coded students in the regular classroom setting. Each sixth grade team has one full time special education teacher. In order to support student success, it is often necessary to group students into flexible groups and provide supplemental small group instruction. By doing this, coded and non-coded struggling students receive timely and targeted support in learning the most essential concepts for success in the regular curriculum.

Existing Space:

The total sixth grade team area presently totals 7,720 square feet. There are eight classrooms ranging in size from 592 square feet to 808 square feet for an average room size of 735 square feet. There are two special education classrooms ranging in size from 592 square feet to 600 square feet for an average room size of 596 square feet. Presently, the sixth grade program is challenged by a lack of adequate classroom space and area for team level activities.

NH State Requirements:

ED 321.10 (h) states: For the elementary, middle and junior high schools, a general purpose classroom shall provide a minimum of 900 square feet, including storage, or 36 square feet per child, whichever is greater.

Science combination lab-classrooms are to be designed to accommodate 60 square feet per pupil with a minimum of 1,200 square feet. To design the space to be used by a class of 24 students, the space would need to be 1,440 square feet.

Proposed Space and Justification:

About 1,900 additional square feet over existing space is needed to bring classrooms up to the 900 square foot minimum. Space for the special education teachers has been reduced from existing space. Science classrooms are designed at 1,200 square feet instead of the 1,440 square foot minimum by ED 321 standards for 24 students. This is justifiable due to the nature of the sixth grade science program and the reduced lab focus in comparison to the seventh and eighth grade programs.

1,000 additional square feet is designed for team breakout space. This space is fundamental to the team concept as space for the team to meet together regularly for team meetings, student presentations, and collaborative work. The proposed design calls for one team breakout area for each grade level, centrally located to the grade level classrooms. The central location of the team breakout area is critical to the effective use of the space.

450 additional square feet is designed for a teacher collaboration area/conference room. This space will be utilized for collaborative teacher planning, parent teacher meetings and, at times, small group instruction or tutoring for students.

To make more efficient use of space in a safe manner, lack of storage space has been cited as a major concern with the existing building by school administration as well as by fire department officials. To remedy this, storage space has been designed for each grade level area as well as adequate space for custodial supplies. Presently, some of our bathrooms are used for the storage of these and other supplies.

Team Areas- Grade Seven

Description of Program:

Each grade at the middle school is organized into two teaching teams. A team has five or six teachers who work with approximately 90 students. One of the teachers on each team is a specialist in the adaptation of instruction to the learning needs of individual students. Teaching teams meet during the school day to plan instruction collaboratively and to discuss the progress of their students. In seventh grade, instruction is departmentalized and students move from classroom to classroom depending on the subject being taught. Teams may schedule time blocks flexibly so that time periods spent on a subject vary according to the demands of the lesson being taught.

The special education program follows an inclusive model, which supports the success of coded students in the regular classroom setting. Each seventh grade team has one full time special education teacher. In order to support student success, it is often necessary to group students into flexible groups and provide supplemental small group instruction. By doing this, coded and non-coded struggling students receive timely and targeted support in learning the most essential concepts for success in the regular curriculum.

Existing Space:

The total seventh grade team area presently totals 8,717 square feet. There are six classrooms ranging in size from 592 square feet to 886 square feet for an average room size of 696 square feet. There are two science classrooms ranging in size from 690 square feet to 993 square feet for an average room size of 842 square feet. There are two special education classrooms ranging in size from 563 square feet to 809 square feet for an average room size of 686 square feet. Presently, the seventh grade program is challenged by a lack of adequate classroom space and area for team level activities.

NH State Requirements:

ED 321.10 (h) states: For the elementary, middle and junior high schools, a general purpose classroom shall provide a minimum of 900 square feet, including storage, or 36 square feet per child, whichever is greater.

Science combination lab/classrooms are to be designed to accommodate 60 square feet per pupil with a minimum of 1,200 square feet. To design the space to be used by a class of 24 students, the space would need to be 1,440 square feet.

Proposed Space and Justification:

About 2,400 additional square feet over existing space is needed to bring classrooms up to the 900 square foot minimum. Space for the special education teachers has been reduced substantially from existing space. Science classrooms are designed at the 1,440 square foot minimum by ED 321 standards for 24 students. The nature of the seventh grade science program requires more complete lab space for labs in the physical sciences, including chemistry.

1,000 additional square feet is designed for team breakout space. This space is fundamental to the team concept as space for the team to meet together regularly for team meetings, student presentations, and collaborative work. The proposed design calls for one team breakout area for each grade level, centrally located to the grade level classrooms. The central location of the team breakout area is critical to the effective use of the space.

450 additional square feet is designed for a teacher collaboration area/conference room. This space will be utilized for collaborative teacher planning, parent teacher meetings, and, at times, small group instruction or tutoring for students.

To make more efficient use of space in a safe manner, lack of storage space has been cited as a major concern with the existing building by school administration, as well as by fire department officials. To remedy this, storage space has been designed for each grade level area, as well as adequate space for custodial supplies. Presently, some of our bathrooms are used for the storage of these and other supplies.

Team Areas- Grade Eight

Description of Program:

Each grade at the middle school is organized into two teaching teams. A team has five or six teachers who work with approximately 90 students. One of the teachers on each team is a specialist in the adaptation of instruction to the learning needs of individual students. Teaching teams meet during the school day to plan instruction collaboratively and to discuss the progress of their students. In eighth grade, instruction is departmentalized and students move from classroom to classroom depending on the subject being taught. Teams may schedule time blocks flexibly so that time periods spent on a subject vary according to the demands of the lesson being taught.

The special education program follows an inclusive model, which supports the success of coded students in the regular classroom setting. Each eighth grade team has one full time special education teacher. In order to support student success, it is often necessary to group students into flexible groups and provide supplemental small group instruction. By doing this, coded and non-coded struggling students receive timely and targeted support in learning the most essential concepts for success in the regular curriculum.

Existing Space:

The total eighth grade team area presently totals 9,298 square feet. There are six classrooms ranging in size from 640 square feet to 1,009 square feet for an average room size of 827 square feet. There are two science classrooms ranging in size from 772 square feet to 814 square feet for an average room size of 793 square feet. There are two special education classrooms ranging in size from 562 square feet to 690 square feet for an average room size of 626 square feet. Presently, the eighth grade program is challenged by a lack of adequate classroom space and area for team level activities.

NH State Requirements:

ED 321.10 (h) states: For the elementary, middle and junior high schools, a general purpose classroom shall provide a minimum of 900 square feet, including storage, or 36 square feet per child, whichever is greater.

Science combination lab-classrooms are to be designed to accommodate 60 square feet per pupil with a minimum of 1,200 square feet. To design the space to be used by a class of 24 students, the space would need to be 1,440 square feet.

Proposed Space and Justification:

About 1,700 additional square feet over existing space is needed to bring classrooms up to the 900 square foot minimum. Space for the special education teachers has been reduced substantially from existing space. Science classrooms are designed at the 1,440 square foot minimum by ED 321 standards for 24 students. The nature of the eighth grade science program requires more complete lab space for labs in the life sciences, including biology.

1,000 additional square feet is designed for team breakout space. This space is fundamental to the team concept as space for the team to meet together regularly for team meetings, student presentations and collaborative work. The proposed design calls for one team breakout area for each grade level, centrally located to the grade level classrooms. The central location of the team breakout area is critical to the effective use of the space.

450 additional square feet is designed for a teacher collaboration area/conference room. This space will be utilized for collaborative teacher planning, parent teacher meetings and, at times, small group instruction or tutoring for students.

To make more efficient use of space in a safe manner, lack of storage space has been cited as a major concern with the existing building by school administration, as well as by fire department officials. To remedy this, storage space has been designed for each grade level area, as well as adequate space for custodial supplies. Presently, some of our bathrooms are used for the storage of these and other supplies.

Special Education

Description of Program:

This special education space category includes office space, as well as space for the related services of physical/occupational therapy, reading specialist, Clipper Health, peer mediation, and speech and language. The office space is designed for the middle school special education coordinator.

The related services mentioned above are designed to respond to individual needs of students both coded and non-coded. These needs are varied and include services to address the physical, academic, social and personal well being of the student population.

Clipper Health offers school-based individual, group and family-counseling services related to health, family problems, peer relationships, substance abuse and academic difficulties.

A variety of special groups for sixth, seventh and eighth grade students are offered throughout the school year. These groups focus on issues such as social skills, building self-esteem, children of alcoholic's education, and dropout prevention. Clipper Health staff work in collaboration with a variety of community agencies, such as New Heights, the Police Department and local mental health providers to coordinate delivery of services. Clipper Health staff also work with the school's guidance department to offer peer mediation services.

Existing Space:

Limited space presently exists for the coordinator's office, speech and language, the reading specialist and peer mediation. In each case, the space does not meet the program's needs with issues of over crowding and lack of privacy/confidentiality.

NH State Requirements:

ED 321.11 (b) states: Exclusive use space shall be provided for speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and private counseling. Physical and occupational therapy may be co-located.

ED 321.11 (e) states: A private office shall be provided for the special education coordinator if there is a position on the school staff.

ED 321.11 (d) states: Locked, fireproof containers shall be provided for record storage.

Proposed Space and Justification:

The proposed design includes increasing the size of the present spaces to better serve the program, as well as the addition of a physical/occupational therapy room, space for Clipper Health and peer mediation, as well as a secure file room for special education files.

Special Education- Developmentally Disabled

Description of Program:

This program allows students with severe needs to be included in regular classes, more so than in the past. The program also provides individual or small group instruction outside the regular class as needed. This program offers many services including: paraprofessional support in regular classes, electronic devices and the use of specialized computer hardware and software. Speech, occupational and physical therapy is offered, as well as adaptive physical education.

The developmentally disabled program allows the district to serve a population of students who would in many other places be placed out of district in a specialized program. It is part of the district philosophy and culture that these students should be included in the school community and the regular classroom in the least restrictive manner. By doing this, not only are these students better served, but also the expense to taxpayers is greatly reduced compared to the out of district option.

Existing Space:

This program presently operates in inadequate classroom space with a small changing room, totaling 762 square feet.

NH State Requirements:

The state does not require schools to have a developmentally disabled program. Exclusive special education space in ED 321.11 (c) is to contain a minimum of 600 square feet.

Proposed Space and Justification:

The additional 388 square feet over existing space is due to the inclusion of a toilet and increases to existing spaces. Due to the nature of this program, a full size classroom is needed even though the program serves a smaller number of students. This program requires a kitchen/laundry area, toileting facilities and storage for large equipment such as a Hoyer Lift, wheelchairs, etc.

Special Education- KIDS Program

Description of Program:

The KIDS program (Kids in Difficult Situations) is a small, regional program for students with emotional disabilities. Although some of these students also participate in regular classes, this program offers parallel instruction in a small, self-contained classroom when needed. Group and individual counseling is provided and program staff work closely with parents. As in all special education programs, students are referred to KIDS by special education teams that always include the parents.

Existing Space:

The KIDS program presently operates with one large classroom, an office, a time-out room, a small counseling space and a small testing space. While the staff makes the best of it, the current space is inadequate for the program to function as designed.

NH State Requirements:

There is no state requirement to have a KIDS program.

Proposed Space and Justification:

The classroom is designed to be smaller than current size. Other existing spaces that are inadequate for their function are designed to be bigger. Additional space is designed for a toilet, a conference room and storage. The toilet is to have a more self-contained program when appropriate, while the conference room is for the many private parent/student meetings that occur in this program.

Media Center

Description of Program:

The school library media specialist serves the entire school population (sixth through the eighth grade), as well as paraprofessionals and staff members. Students learn to work independently and cooperatively in the library.

The role of the school library media specialist in this information age is to help teachers teach and students become life-long learners and users of information. In order to accomplish this task, the school librarian provides cooperative learning experiences for students, connects areas of the curriculum through library programs and links students with the rest of the world through resources and electronic networks.

Our computer literacy program offers students the opportunity to gain valuable hands-on experience with a variety of computer applications. The Portsmouth Middle School computer program adheres to the state guidelines for high school graduation.

All grade levels experience a variety of technology-enriched activities with the assistance of the Technology Integration Specialist.

The majority of this work occurs in the main computer lab, which is staffed by a paraprofessional. In sixth grade, a variety of computer skills will be taught, including word processing, database management and Internet skills. In seventh grade, students build upon their word processing, database, drawing, and Internet skills.

Existing Space:

Presently, the media center is housed in a total of 6,142 square feet. This includes the present library media center at 3,191 square feet and two computer labs at 1,204 square feet each. Other spaces include a workspace, office and storage. While the media center itself is adequate in size, the size of these related spaces is not adequate for their function.

NH State Requirements:

ED321.10 (j) states: Library-media centers shall be sized at 40 square feet per student for 10 percent of the core space design capacity or a minimum of 1,800 square feet.

Proposed Space and Justification:

The proposed design calls for a reduction in the present space of the library media center. The media center is designed at the state minimum of 2,600 square feet. The computer lab space is reduced to one room of 900 square feet. Other related spaces were increased to an adequate size for their function. In addition, the design calls for a professional development room for educator resources, a file server room and an IT coordinator office for a total of 4,720 square feet.

Student Commons

Description of Program:

Children develop healthy habits for life with a strong partnership between the School Nutrition Department and classroom programs. Research shows that good nutrition and overall physical health is linked with increased academic achievement. The school nutrition program is proud to be a continued partner in education in the Portsmouth School District.

The present cafeteria is utilized for three lunches, one per grade. This schedule works well for coordination with grade level and team level activities. The cafeteria is also used for some large events as well as after school meetings.

Existing Space:

The present cafeteria is 3,150 square feet. There are a number of related spaces, many of which are inadequate for the present or future student commons functions.

NH State Requirements:

ED 321.12 (d) states: The following standards shall apply to kitchens and cafeterias:

- (1) The kitchen and cafeteria shall be sized so as to allow each student a minimum of 10 minutes, not including serving time, to sit at a table and consume his or her meal during a specified lunch period
- (2) The cafeteria shall be sized based upon 12-15 square feet per student for the maximum number of diners in any given lunch period. The throughput of the serving line or lines shall ensure that all students can be served in the allotted time and that no student has to wait for a seat to become vacant before eating; and
- (3) The kitchen shall be of sufficient size to allow the proper installation of all necessary equipment with the necessary spacing between appliances to meet the applicable safety requirements as specified by the manufacturer, the state building code under RSA 155-A, and the New Hampshire Department of Labor.

Proposed Space and Justification:

The proposed student commons space does not differ significantly in size from the present space. There are adjustments in the design of many of the related spaces to better serve their function. This includes a bigger kitchen, staff dining, food storage, and kitchen office, as well as an additional dishwashing space that will allow the kitchen to rely less on disposable trays and adopt more sustainable practices. Storage space is increased to address critical shortage in the present facility.

Physical Education

Description of Program:

Physical education classes meet twice a week in sixth grade and three times a week in seventh and eighth grade. Students are offered a wide variety of activities including badminton, basketball, capture the flag, circuit training, country line dancing, field hockey, fitness testing, floor hockey, jump rope, kickball, newcomb, project adventure, recreational games, soccer, softball, step aerobics, team handball, tennis, touch football, ultimate football, volleyball and whiffleball.

Students in sixth grade attend class twice a week and are given an introduction to a number of cooperative activities and sport skills. An emphasis on developing social skills and interacting with peers is stressed throughout the year.

Students in seventh grade attend class three times a week and are involved in activities that stress team-building skills. Students have the opportunity to experience being a member of a team during different cooperative and sport activities.

Students in the eighth grade attend class three times a week and are involved in advanced cooperative activities and sport skills and are exposed to strategies associated with team activities and team sports.

Existing Space:

The present gymnasium space is 7,055 square feet. There is also a health classroom at 1,178 square feet and other related areas. This area is challenged with a lack of adequate storage.

NH State Requirements:

State requirements include sufficient lockers, changing areas, and showers, as well as adequate storage for athletic equipment.

Proposed Space and Justification:

The proposed gymnasium is 7,000 square feet, with adequate space for related areas. The health classroom is reduced to 900 square feet. There are additional bathrooms in the proposed design.

Performing Arts

Description of Program:

Grades six and seven are provided with a general overview of music. Music theory is studied which leads into the playing of recorders. Grade six students create their own rap songs and become involved with the families of musical instruments. Grade seven students study American popular music and study the lives, times and music of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven.

Grade eight elective courses are offered in guitar, keyboard, and percussion. Students use school-owned instruments to learn the basics of playing and reading music.

Grade six chorus is a non-auditioned, in-school vocal group that rehearses twice a week. The group is open to anyone interested in singing. This chorus has three concert performances per year in December, March and May.

Grades seven and eight chorus is a non-auditioned vocal group that meets daily and performs 3-5 part chorus music of all styles. Outside appearances are also scheduled in addition to the three school performances.

Performing groups (concert bands, strings, and ensembles) are open to all middle school students. Each group provides students with opportunities to perform a wide range of musical literature.

There are numerous performances throughout the school year including school concerts and community performances. Concert bands are available in each grade level and meet daily during the school day. Strings meet after school in grade 6 and are incorporated into the band program in grades seven and eight.

Existing Space:

The existing space for the performing arts includes a 1,552 square foot band room, a 764 square foot chorus room, and a 1,201 square foot general music room. With the exception of the general music room, these instructional spaces are greatly inadequate for the program at Portsmouth Middle School. The student involvement in these programs is extensive and the programs have been challenged with a serious lack of adequate space.

NH State Requirements:

There are no state minimums in regards to performing arts space. Size and quality of performing arts programs varies greatly throughout the state with many schools needing far less space for their programs.

Proposed Space and Justification:

In Portsmouth, we have one of the most extensive and high quality programs in the state.

The proposed design includes an adequately sized band room and a reduced sized general music room. The largest increase in size is due to the multipurpose auditorium/student commons space at 4,000 square feet. This space will dually serve as instructional space for the choral program. Additional space is also included for instrument repair.

Foreign Language

Description of Program:

Portsmouth Middle School students begin the study of either French or Spanish during the middle school years. The international language program is structured to prepare students for success and mastery of the first level of HS French or Spanish. This expectation is different than many middle schools, which give exposure to a language with no expectation of entering high school beyond the beginning of level 1. Students in grades six and seven receive instruction for three days out of a six-day rotation for the entire year and students in eighth grade meet every day for an entire year.

This schedule has been accomplished with two full time teachers, although class size and demand for program expansion is increasing.

The purpose of the foreign language class is to develop skills in the four areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and to enhance an appreciation of international cultures. Communicating in another language is a powerful and important skill for today's world!

The English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) program is designed to help students with limited or no English background catch up to their same-age peers in communicative competence and academic success. Classes are offered at five levels in listening, speaking, reading, writing and cultural orientation. Students are assessed and reclassified each year. They have access to computers and audio-visual equipment.

Existing Space:

Presently there are two classrooms of 1,063 square feet each and an ESL room of 320 square feet.

NH State Requirements:

There are no state requirements for middle school foreign language and programs vary widely throughout the state.

Proposed Space and Justification:

In Portsmouth, we have an extensive foreign language program with a unique combination of high student enrollment and a rigorous curriculum. The classrooms in this area are actually reduced from present size to 900 square feet.

Visual Arts

Description of Program:

General art is offered to sixth and seventh graders, where students experiment with and increase their proficiency in a variety of media and techniques, including printmaking, drawing and painting, fabric art, crafts and mixed media creations. Students also work with clay and with a variety of sculptural and three-dimensional materials. Creativity is encouraged, along with self-evaluation and the process of making satisfying artistic choices.

In eighth grade, students choose among art electives, which include: sculpture, pottery, black and white photography, calligraphy, drawing, painting and computer graphics. These selections allow students to explore an art medium in more depth and greater detail; they also offer the opportunity to try something they might not otherwise be able to experience.

Throughout middle school, art students work with art concepts and styles from different cultures and periods in art history, along with making connections with the vibrant Portsmouth artistic community. We welcome parent involvement.

Student artwork is on display in art galleries at City Hall, the School Board Room at Little Harbour School, and in the Middle School display areas. Classes also make use of the cultural variety of Portsmouth including galleries and visiting local artists. Annually our students successfully participate in the Boston Globe Scholastic Art Awards competition and have been recognized on the state and national level for the high quality of their work.

Existing Space:

Presently there are two visual arts classrooms with inadequate space for the program and storage.

NH State Requirements:

There are no state minimums in regards to size of space for visual arts programs.

Proposed Space and Justification:

The classrooms are increased to 1,200 square feet each for proper space for the program offered, as well as in-class work and display space. There is an additional kiln room in the proposed design to support the 3-D studio art program. There is also an increase in much needed storage space.

Technology Education

Description of Program:

Technology at Portsmouth Middle School focuses on process as well as product. Students have an opportunity to work with a variety of materials and tools. During their time at the Middle School, students participate, on average, in twelve weeks of technology education per grade. Activities that they will participate in may include: designing, model making, electronics and basic wood construction. Safety, along with appropriate use of tools and material, is emphasized at all times.

Existing Space:

Presently there are two rooms of 1,113 square feet and a small CAD Lab for computer aided design, as well as storage space.

NH State Requirements:

There are no state minimums in regards to size of space for technology education programs.

Proposed Space and Justification:

The proposed design includes two 1,400 square foot labs to adequately and safely accommodate the equipment used.

Family and Consumer Science

Description of Program:

Family and Consumer Sciences are an important component of the unified arts team. Students participate in sewing, foods and nutrition courses. The courses are designed to enhance and contribute to the development of self-esteem through “hands-on” activities and student participation in the completion of relevant projects and activities. Students also participate in community service as part of the curriculum.

In the sixth grade, students participate in two six-week programs developed to provide an introduction to each of the curriculum areas. There is an emphasis on active participation and “hands-on” learning. Students work on both individual and small group projects and activities. In the seventh and eighth grade, students participate in a twelve-week program that provides an in-depth exposure to three of the curriculum areas each year.

Existing Space:

Presently there are two lab classrooms at slightly over 1,000 square feet each.

NH State Requirements:

There are no state minimums in regards to size of space for family and consumer science programs.

Proposed Space and Justification:

The proposed design includes two 1,200 square foot classrooms to adequately serve the program, as well as an increase in storage space.

Operational Support

Description of Program:

Operational support services include custodial space, as well as general supply and mechanical function spaces.

Existing Space:

One of the most obvious deficiencies with the current facility is the lack of operational support spaces. As stated earlier, some school bathrooms have been converted to custodial storage or supply space. Adequate space is needed to serve a twenty first century building.

NH State Requirements:

State requirements include adequate storage for supplies and a custodial office.

Proposed Space and Justification:

The proposed design includes about 2,000 additional square feet in the area of operational support.

Summary

The program at Portsmouth Middle School is unique and reflects the values the community has in the education of early adolescents. The board is committed to the principles below in seeing through this building project.

The plan that is presented to the City Council will:

- Support PMS's educational program
- Result in a High Performance School that is efficient to operate and maintain
- Provide a healthy physical environment that is conducive to learning (good air quality, lighting, flow)
- Maximize the safety of students and staff with regard to traffic, parking, and security
- Be the result of a open process with frequent communication with the public
- Ensure optimal educational investment for taxpayer money

The School Department's administrators, teachers and certain Portsmouth School Board members, in collaboration with JCJ Architects, have all contributed to the development of this document.

*This document is an attempt to analyze the proposed 134,565 square foot project in light of the first school board principle.