

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY

The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) presented in this Educational Facilities Master Plan (EFMP) reflects the amendments to the CIP as a result of an annual review of the demographic and facility needs of the St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS). Based on a decline in enrollment growth that began occurring in 2015 and the systemic renovation needs of the many facilities constructed in the 1990's, the CIP continues to reflect a focus on maintaining existing infrastructure. The school system had previously been pursuing a new elementary school in the central portion of the county, however, current enrollment does not support the continuation of the project at this time. In addition, there have not been sufficient capacity needs to obtain planning approval for a secondary capacity project in recent years. The current enrollment projections do not indicate a change to warrant requesting any new capacity projects within the next six years. The school system will continue to monitor enrollment and review options to address future capacity needs, revising the CIP as warranted. The review of capacity options includes the completion of a locally funded K-12 capacity needs study in FY 2021. The EFMP serves as the planning tool for the State CIP that is presented for approval each fall.

A. Historical Perspective

During the 1990's, the school system embarked on an aggressive modernization program to bring the existing public school facilities up to modern educational standards while meeting the needs of our growing student population. Funding from the state Public School Construction Program (PSCP), during that time, was focused on addition/renovation projects and the school system was able to obtain significant state funding for the addition/modernization of seven elementary schools, two middle schools, and all three high schools. In addition, the school system replaced the former Hollywood Elementary School with a larger facility on a new site to accommodate growth in the northern portion of the Lexington Park Development District (LPDD). The school system maintained a program to address older facilities through systemic modernization including roofs and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, as well as the federally mandated American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) initiative.

As student populations grew, the focus of the school construction program shifted to providing capacity through new school construction. The George Washington Carver Elementary School was replaced with a new facility that was located outside of the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ). The new facility was built larger to meet the student population needs of the LPDD in combination with the addition/renovation of Lexington Park Elementary School, which had been previously completed in 2001. The ability to construct the required additional capacity to meet the needs of a growing community was analyzed at the remaining schools, which had not yet received an addition/renovation. Based on site constraints and location to the proposed student populations to be served, it was determined that a program would be developed around a new school construction plan.

Two new schools were constructed in growth areas to meet the growing elementary school population. Both sites were chosen for their ability to meet the needs of the school system into the future.

Opened	School Name	State Capacity	Location
2009-10	Evergreen E.S.	644	California, MD
2015-16	Captain Walter Francis Duke E.S.	644	Leonardtown, MD

The school system has acquired a site south of Great Mills that can be used as the third new elementary school, when needed. Given the continued slower enrollment growth at the elementary school level, the need for this project is beyond the current six-year CIP. Should enrollment patterns change, the timing of the project will be adjusted accordingly.

To date, the school system has completed the expansion and modernization of eight elementary schools, all four middle schools, all three high schools, one career and technology center, and has built four new elementary schools:

Elementary Schools Modernized (8 out of 18)

Benjamin Banneker (1999), Dynard (1990), Leonardtown (2006), Lettie Marshall Dent (1991), Lexington Park (1999), Green Holly (1999), Park Hall (1992), Piney Point (1995)

Middle Schools Modernized (4 out of 4)

Esperanza (1997), Margaret Brent (1998), Leonardtown (2011), Spring Ridge (2016)

High Schools Modernized (3 out of 3)

Chopticon (1997), Great Mills (1994), Leonardtown (1998)

Career and Technology Center Modernized

Dr. James A. Forrest Career & Technology Center (JAFCTC) (2001)

New School Construction

Hollywood Elementary School (1991), George Washington Carver Elementary School (2003), Evergreen Elementary School (2009), Captain Walter Francis Duke Elementary School (2015)

In 2007 the Chesapeake Public Charter School (CPCS) was opened. This facility serves Kindergarten through eighth grade. The school is currently undergoing an expansion into additional space. The capacity for the 2020-2021 school year will be 480, with plans to reach a capacity of 540 over the next three years.

The school system has met the needs of the existing infrastructure through state-funded limited renovations, roof replacements, HVAC renovations, science lab modifications, Technology in Maryland projects, PreKindergarten (PreK) classroom additions, Kindergarten classroom additions, lighting projects, energy conservation projects, security projects, and gymnasium additions. In addition to the state-funded projects, the school system also meets the needs of the physical environments of our schools with locally funded projects, including: ADA, asbestos abatement, clean air, HVAC, roof replacement, parking, relocatable classrooms, well replacements, sewer plants, playgrounds, flooring, paving, and meeting changing educational program requirements. The average age of facilities in 2019 was 28 years.

B. Current Findings

Projected Student Growth

Based on current enrollment projections, the school system will receive 282 new elementary school students, lose 140 middle school students, and receive 321 new high school students in the next six years. The CIP is fluid and adjusted as growth patterns change and student enrollment is impacted.

The county's population was 105,151 persons in the 2010 Census. This was an increase of 18,940 persons since the last Census and represented a growth rate considered historic by the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) State Data Center. The annual population estimates since the 2010 Census indicate a slowing of the rate of growth, with an estimated growth of 8% since the 2010 Census as of the July 2019 Census population estimate. As of July 1, 2019 the total estimated population for the county is 113,510. The population is projected to reach 129,200 persons by the year 2025. The Southern Maryland region is projected to grow by 38,630 persons over this time frame, with St. Mary's County representing 16,536 persons or 43% of that growth. The anticipated slower growth is indicated in the factors that go into the projections, including a declining birth rate, migration patterns, and average household size.

While the growth patterns are less than previously projected and do translate into slower enrollment growth, they will still result in an overall increase in the number of students entering the school system in the next six years. Enrollment projections indicate that by the 2025 - 2026 school year there will be a total of 18,321 students in the county in grades PreK-12. The projections are for an additional 282 elementary school students (including PreK), a loss of 140 middle school students, and an additional 321 high school students. The CIP is fluid and adjusted as growth patterns change and student enrollment is impacted. Enrollment trends at all levels will need to be closely monitored to determine options for addressing needed capacity while also balancing those needs with funding availability and timing of projects.

C. Proposed Plan

Based on the current projected enrollment needs, the proposed CIP reflects the deferral of any new capacity projects beyond the next six years. While there is a shortfall of capacity at several schools within the county, there is insufficient capacity needs to obtain funding approval from the state, which currently provides 58% of the eligible construction funding. The Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) requires that approximately 50% of the students required for the new school be enrolled at the time of approval and that the remaining students required to fill the building will be in place at occupancy. Our current demographics fall short of the required enrollments for approval based on the state rated capacities (SRC) of our existing facilities.

School Type	Proposed New SRC	Existing SRC	FY 2021 Projected Enrollment	FY 2025 Projected Enrollment	FY 2021 Difference	FY 2025 Difference
Elementary	644	8,771	8,236	8,375	535	396
Middle	500	4,147	4,108	4,011	39	136
High	508	5,085	5,282	5,591	(197)	(506)

While the five year enrollment projections indicate a need for 506 high school seats, the need is not sustained, with high school enrollment declining through FY 2029. Throughout the projection period, there continues to be a surplus of capacity at the elementary school level and sufficient capacity at the middle school level. There is insufficient capacity needs to warrant a new elementary school (644 capacity), middle school (1,000 capacity), or high school (1,695 capacity) during the next ten years based on current enrollment projections. This includes the previously proposed 1,200 seat capacity combination secondary facility as well. A K-12 capacity needs study will be completed in FY 2021 that will allow the school system to explore future capacity options. The school system will also continue to monitor the enrollment and community demographics and update the needs analysis over the next several years, as warranted.

The short term plan for dealing with individual school capacity issues will be the continued utilization of relocatable classrooms. Both state and local resources will be utilized to provide relocatable classrooms where needed.

The proposed FY 2022 through FY 2027 capital plan addresses a large number of systemic and infrastructure related projects that are coming due for life cycle replacement or which have been deferred the past several years as a result of the funding required to construct new schools. These projects include roof and HVAC systems, chiller and cooling tower replacements, plumbing and sewer systems, asphalt overlay and repairs, flooring replacement, and other needs such as athletic and auditorium system replacements. The school system utilized capital funds to renovate many of its existing facilities in the 1990's and early 2000's and now the systemic components of those projects have reached their life cycle replacements. These types of projects will continue to be a large component of the capital plan for the next several years. The funding for these projects is a combination of state and local funding. The State has instituted a new averaged state maximum yearly allocation for each school system. The SMCPS average yearly allocation is \$4.6 million, which will not address the required funding by year, resulting in State funding spanning several years. The project budgets are locked in place at the first approval and do not allow for inflation. This method of funding will result in project budgets that do not reflect the price at bid time. This will cause issues with adequate funding of projects and the amount of projects that we are able to move forward at any given time, resulting in an overall delay of needed projects. The capital plan is fluid and will be adjusted each year to balance the needs to maintain and replace existing infrastructure, meet program requirements and code changes, as well as providing new capacity, as warranted.

The school system will also continue to seek projects via the Aging School Program (ASP), School Safety Grant Program (SSGP), Healthy School Facility Fund (HSFF), and other state funding initiatives as they arise.