

# **Portable Structure Usage Guidelines**

## **Report to the Board of Education**

*Prepared by the Facilities Committee of  
Community Consolidated School District #34  
Glenview, Illinois*

*October 24, 2011*

### **Overview**

The total population of student age children in our community has grown steadily, though not uniformly, over the past 15 years. Although the District has added substantially to its total classroom space over that time, both through permanent construction and the addition of non-permanent “mobile” structures, we are at or nearing the student capacity of our existing physical facilities without modification to our existing program scope, additional increases in pupil limits per classroom, or other changes.

For the past several years, our District has relied upon non-permanent space to accommodate this student enrollment growth with “mobiles” currently in use at Westbrook and Henking Schools. In March 2011, the School Board asked the Facilities Committee to develop a set of guidelines regarding the ongoing use of such structures in the District to help inform future decisions about whether and under what circumstances to continue to rely on these types of structures as one of our enrollment accommodation strategies.

We are pleased to present this report to the Board of Education. Although initially presented as a stand-alone reference document, the Facilities Committee views this Guideline as part of a larger, ongoing project to develop a comprehensive five-year Capital Facilities Plan to assist in budgeting and planning.

## **Guidelines for Portable Facilities**

Portable Facilities (“Portables” or “Mobiles”) are factory-built, transportable structures that can be used as instructional space or that can be used for other District purposes in order to permit conversion of other permanent space for instructional use. Some of the common circumstances necessitating school districts to use Portables are as follows:

- District does not have sufficient time to construct permanent space
- School is land-locked/constrained and cannot support a cost-effective permanent addition
- Enrollment projections indicate that additional space demands at a particular location are temporary or uncertain
- District lacks the bonding capacity or other funds necessary to construct additional permanent space

By design, portables can be used in a variety of ways to increase the total amount of available instructional space at a given location, until either the need for such additional space disappears or until the District can provide alternative permanent classroom facilities. For example, portables can be used for classroom space, administrative offices, fine arts instruction, or for specialized pullout programs. (See Appendix A for a more complete list of potential uses.)

If students are to have reasonable expectations for success, at a minimum, they should have schools and instructional spaces that are not barriers to effective learning. It is said that school buildings become important when they get in the way of learning. The purpose of these guidelines is to define criteria that will focus on school facilities intended to improve the potential for student learning.

### **A. District Experience & Preferences**

As a general proposition, the Committee does not regard portables as a fully satisfactory or desirable substitute for permanent school structures due to issues such as the feeling of isolation and lost instruction time for transitioning students. Nevertheless, the decision as to whether and when to invest in permanent facility expansion is necessarily complex, especially if the duration of the additional space need is uncertain or when additional capital facility expenditures may financially impact other direct instructional resources.

District 34’s experience with portable classroom facilities in recent years has yielded four important conclusions.

- 1) Portables can provide a satisfactory instructional environment for students and teachers, even over extended periods. Parental anxiety about the use of Portables at Westbrook and Henking has generally subsided as those schools and cluster families have gained personal familiarity with their use, and we would expect a similar pattern elsewhere.

2) Portables can be utilized in many different fashions including, but not limited to, general education rooms or specialized instruction or meeting space. An individual school may have no other option but to use the existing mobiles as general classrooms due to limitations that exist within that building.

3) District experience indicates using portables can, depending on the age of affected students and the purpose(s) for which the space is used, create some indirect instructional impacts (and associated mitigation expenses e.g., addition of extra laptop cart, build-out of storage space, and hiring of non-certified staff to facilitate student transitions) that should be carefully weighed whenever new deployments or continued use of existing portables is considered. The Committee believes that it is important for the Board, Administration, and Building leadership to continue giving full consideration to these types of ameliorative measures.

4) The ability to increase classroom space through addition of portables at a school may be limited if the permanent facility's "common space" cannot effectively accommodate the added students. For example, gymnasium, lunchroom/kitchen, and learning resource center capacity constraints need to be analyzed in connection with any expansion proposal. Conversely, portables may be more viable than permanent facility expansions in some cases because they do not necessarily require building-wide upgrades to restrooms and HVAC systems. Accordingly, careful consideration needs to be given to the building context.

## **B. Deployment/Removal Evaluation**

The deployment evaluation model reflects the intended best and highest use of our school facilities directed toward success in student learning. The Facility Committee recognizes that hard and fast rules related to facilities will always be in jeopardy because of special circumstances, many beyond the control of the organization or community. As we move forward, the deployment evaluation model will be of immense value regarding the focus and use of precious community resources needed to support our instructional program.

The Committee recognizes that a multitude of factors must be considered before deploying/removing portables or relocating existing units. The Committee believes the following diagram identifies what are likely to be the most significant considerations in any such decision. Arrows in the diagram indicate what we believe should be the general decision-making flow, although we recognize that any such evaluation will rarely be entirely linear, either because some constraints are known from the outset or because new information emerges over time.

Student enrollment projections are distributed to the Facility Committee in the Fall of each year. The committee would review the enrollment projections for each building location and apply the decision model specified below. Recommendations from the Facility Committee regarding their findings would be presented to Cabinet prior to the January planning meetings each year. The recommendation could include removal of a portable classroom, as well as, deployment of a

portable. If the enrollment projections show a constant growth that is deemed to be “permanent” the recommendation to Cabinet may also include a more permanent solution, such as bricks and mortar.

The Committee discussed, but did not determine a steadfast drop dead date for the removal of a portable structure. The industry standard useful life for a portable of 10 years was discussed. Due to the style, workmanship and on-going maintenance that occurs in District #34, these units will well outlast the industry standard time frame. The guidelines, as presented call for re-evaluation of portable classrooms on an annual basis. Therefore, existing portables will be evaluated and if it is determined there is evidence of sustained or declining enrollment growth, recommendations from the Facilities Committee will be presented to Cabinet for further review and consideration.

# Portable Classroom Decision Model



*Above is a flow chart representing how decisions can be made based upon enrollment projections. If enrollment increasing/decreasing, first look would be at existing program locations. If no change exists, funding scenarios, possible space expansions and timing would be the next triggers to explore. Based upon these three areas of concern, the following six areas/possibilities would be researched to arrive at the best possible solution.*

# Portable Classroom Decision Model Considerations



Do the options before us align with district strategic plan in support of instructional need?



Must be timely, accurate, provide trend analysis, and include an indication of temporary or long-term growth/reduction. Review the constraints of current physical space given the enrollment projections and class size guidelines. On an annual basis following the fall housing report, Facilities Committee will be reviewing the projections and report out findings to Cabinet prior to January planning meetings.



Do options exist to move program location from one school site to another, use alternate “non-district” space, move NSSD programs to NSSD locations, enter into other cooperative type programming arrangements with other local school districts (i.e. STEM academy).



Address potential financing options, total cost of proposal, cost of brick and mortar, cost of mobile, and include lease vs. purchase analysis. As part of any recommendation to the Board, consider whether available District financing options fit within the strategic plan and long range plan, as well as whether there are any other unique funding sources available.



Consideration of land availability, is there proper land or “real estate” available at the site? For example, Attea Middle School is landlocked due to existing agreements.



Is proper time available to respond to current need for renovation or construction of “brick and mortar” space? What is lifespan of mobile unit compared to expected time length of facility capacity need?

**Boundaries**

Consider option to change school of attendance boundaries or grade level cluster locations.

**Alternative Space**

Do opportunities exist for space repurposing, can common area space be repurposed to address needed classroom space, should space be repurposed to provide a change in response to unique instructional purposes, lease space with community. Proper consideration of safety and security for students, staff and physical assets should be given.

**Bricks and Mortar (Physical Space)**

Does the existing footprint and infrastructure support a new addition without hindering common area operations (e.g., Lunch room, Gymnasium usage, Library, restrooms), while also being mindful of any upgrades or additions to current HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems?

**Class Size**

Board should review class size options. Consider if appropriate to reduce class size or increase class size. Review class size by grade and by cluster.

**Other**

Consideration should be given to other circumstances that may be present and yet, unique to the decision at hand. This may include conditions unique to the site, potential student supervision issues, or programming issues.

## C. Portable Facilities Cost Analysis

In evaluating the viability of any facilities expansion scenario, the financial cost of doing so will be a major and perhaps the predominant consideration, especially when comparing the pros/cons of permanent vs. more temporary accommodations. Some of the more obvious costs of adding portable facilities (with clear corresponding costs to adding permanent capacity) at a school location are as follows:

- Design, engineering, and permitting costs
- Land acquisition costs (if applicable)
- Site preparation costs
- Structure purchase/lease costs

Other costs associated with the installation and ongoing operation of portables may be less apparent, at least initially. For example, additional outdoor lighting, fire protection, walkway construction and maintenance may be required, as well as incremental additional instructional resources necessitated by the separate physical space (e.g., additional computer resources). However, it is also true that permanent facility expansion may involve “hidden” costs beyond those initially assumed for the addition of just two or four additional classrooms. For example, adding even a modest amount of extra permanent space may require expensive upgrades to HVAC and plumbing systems throughout the building. (See Cost Analysis page for a more complete list of the range of expenses that should be considered in any evaluation of portable vs. permanent facility expansion.)

For purposes of this Guideline, the important point is simply to emphasize the importance of preparing a comprehensive “total lifecycle cost” analysis before embarking on one facility expansion path or another. Any such comparison will necessarily require consideration of how long the additional facility capacity is likely to be needed, and whether there are subsequent redeployment/mothballing/resale opportunities for portables. Equally important will be good judgment about which additional costs for one type of facility do/don’t have corresponding additional costs at another. For example, extra chairs and desks are needed for additional classrooms, regardless of whether in a portable or permanent structure. Similarly, an additional laptop cart for a portable facility would be an added expense if necessitated by the physical separation from the main building, but would not be relevant for comparative cost purposes if those laptops would have been purchased anyway based on the increase in students.

While the cost of the physical space must be considered, it is one factor in the overall decision-making model. It is important to compare the cost of adding bricks and mortar, the cost to purchase the portable and the cost to lease the portable.

## Cost Analysis

Using 1,960 Sq ft Double-wide (2 Classrooms)

Purchase Price Range  
**\$320,520 - \$332,280**

Leasing Price Range  
**\$313,464 - \$325,224 (5 years)**

Purchase price including installation is \$85 to \$90/sq.ft Base unit price is \$55/sq.ft.	Purchase Price: \$107,800	Budget leasing pricing is \$42 -\$47 per square foot in the first year. The annual cost to lease is ~\$23,520 each year thereafter.	Leasing Price: \$23,520 for the first year.
The installation costs are from \$30 to \$35/sq.ft.	\$58,800 to \$68,600	The installation costs are from \$30 to \$35/sq.ft.	\$58,800 to \$68,600
<b>Extra Costs not included above:</b>		<b>Extra Costs not included above:</b>	
Permits, insurance fees, soil testing, site preparation	\$11,500	Permits, insurance fees, soil testing, site preparation	\$11,500
Electrical service fees including power, fire alarm, data, public access	\$35,000	Electrical service fees including power, fire alarm, data, public access	\$35,000
Toilet facilities (2) including supply water line. 100 foot length	\$20,000	Toilet facilities (2) including supply water line. 100 foot length	\$20,000
Plumbing waste/water connection, first 30 feet of sewer line only	\$15,000	Plumbing waste/water connection, first 30 feet of sewer line only	\$15,000
Concrete sidewalks and paths	\$7,750	Concrete sidewalks and paths	\$7,750
Security	\$3,750	Security	\$3,750
Exterior lighting	\$2,500	Exterior lighting	\$2,500
Site restoration after removal	\$5,000	Site restoration after removal	\$5,000
<b>Sub-Total Extra Costs:</b>	<b>\$100,500</b>	<b>Sub-Total Extra Costs:</b>	<b>\$100,500</b>
10% Contingency plus 10% Architect and Engineering fees	\$53,420 - \$55,380	10% Contingency plus 10% Architect and Engineering fees	\$36,564 - \$38,524

**Cost to relocate an existing portable within district**

**\$15,000 - \$20,000 per unit not including some, if not all, extra costs listed above**

**Lease cost - Breakdown**

**\$219,384 - \$231,144 (1st yr.)  
~\$94,080 (2<sup>nd</sup> yr thru 5<sup>th</sup> yr)**

## Bricks and Mortar Costs for Mobile

### Classroom Replacement

Based upon the most recent classroom construction in Glenview District #34, a construction cost of \$250,000 per classroom is estimated. This estimate assumes ~900 net-square-feet per classroom or, 1,250 gross-square-feet per classroom. The total square footage of a four-classroom addition would be 5,000 gross square feet including corridor. Adding in 10% contingency and 10% Architect and Engineering fees the total project estimate is \$1.2 million dollars. \$1 million for construction and \$200,000 for Contingency & Architect and Engineering fees. This amount equates to \$240 per square foot. (\$1.2 mil/5000)

The square footage and costs noted above include a basic envelope: roof, walls, floors, foundations, windows, doors, HVAC, electrical, finishes, cabinetry, civil work and necessary circulation space (corridors). The costs for Fixtures, Furniture & Equipment (FF&E) are also removed from this example because existing district owned items would be utilized. Exhibit B lists the typical FF&E and pricing required for a typical classroom in District #34. It should be noted that a four-classroom addition would be considered the maximum size without even higher costs due to the necessity of additional restrooms and major mechanical upgrades. The table below shows the comparison between the three options, based on the square footage for **two** classrooms or one double wide mobile.

Bricks and Mortar @ 1,960 sq./ft.	Purchase of Portables @ 1,960 sq./ft.	5 Year Portable Lease @ 1,960 sq./ft.
\$240 sq./ft cost	\$164 - \$170 sq./ft cost	\$160 - \$166 sq./ft cost
\$470,400	\$320,520 - \$332,280	\$313,464 - \$325,224

## **Appendix A – Potential uses for Portable Facilities**

An individual school may have no other option but to use the existing mobiles as general classrooms due to limitations that exist within the building. Otherwise, below is a list of options that could be explored.

- Classroom
- Learning Resource Center
- Music room
- Art room
- Drama room
- Early Childhood Programs
- Administrative Offices
- Support Services Offices
- Teacher's Lounge
- Cafeteria/Lunch Space
- Pullout Program
- Wesley Child Care Center Kindergarten Enrichment
- Reading Support
- Gifted
- Pre-K Program(s)
- ELL Resource
- NSEED Program Space

## **Appendix B - Interior associated costs for each classroom**

The interior expenses will vary based upon actual usage. The list provided is for a typical classroom setting in District #34. If we were to replace the existing mobiles with new additions, bricks/mortar, the existing equipment would be utilized.

Total without Computer cart: **\$15,000**

2010 pricing – Computer cart with laptops: **\$20,000**

- Teacher Desk and Chair
- Teacher Computer
- Student desks and chairs based on grade level and enrollment
- Filing cabinets
- Storage cabinet
- Book shelves
- Document Cameras
- Projector Screen/Smart Board
- Marker Board
- Maps/Flags
- Classroom supplies
- Age Appropriate furniture
- Fire Extinguishers
- HEPA air filter system
- Projector
- Computer cart
- Network wiring
- Sound attenuation