Mount Vernon Community School

1005 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22301

At a Glance…			
Year Built **1923**	*Tax Map* **024.04-02-03**	*Current Square Feet* **120,820**	*Educational Adequacy Assessment* **Borderline (54)**
Zoning ***R-2-5***	*Lot Size* **200,604**	*Floor Area Ratio* **0.45**	*Allowed Square Feet* ***90,272***
POS	**18,831**	***0.0***	**0**
School Site **Borderline (56)**	*Building Assessment* **Inadequate (38)**	*Instructional & Support Spaces* **Borderline (64)**	*Utilization* **Very Inadequate (58)**

Background

The current Mount Vernon Community School structure was built in 1923. Classroom additions occurred in 1941 and 1950 with major building additions in 1967 and 1991. The adjacent Mount Vernon Recreation Center, built in 1997, shares the gym and outdoor fields with the school. The school has a total square footage of 120,820 (not including the gymnasium) over the span of three levels. The school is located at 2601 Commonwealth Ave and surrounded by quiet residential streets.

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In 2014, Mount Vernon had an enrollment of 817 students and a measured capacity of 754 students. By 2020, the enrollment is expected to increase 3 percent to 841 students. Mount Vernon is a community school that encourages partnerships between the school and the community in an effort to improve the academics, health, and development of the community and its students. This relationship fosters a personalized curriculum that teaches real-world problem solving skills. Mount Vernon is an English-Spanish Dual Language program school that aims to make students bilingual, bi-literate and culturally aware.

The academic curriculum at Mount Vernon includes reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. The school also offers:

- Art instruction with a certified art teacher once a week;
- Music instruction with a certified music teacher once a week;
- Fourth and Fifth graders can join band or orchestra;
- Two physical education classes a week with a certified P.E. teacher;
- Health class as part of the Family Life Curriculum;
- Third, Fourth, and Fifth graders receive keyboarding instruction;
- Special education programs;
- Talented and Gifted program for grades K-5; and
- A TAG pull-out program for grades 4-5 in the subjects of math and language arts.

DASHBOARD	
Current Enrollment *(2014-2015)*	**817**
School Capacity	**754**
Projected Enrollment *(2020-2024)*	**841**
Projected Primary Instructional Classroom Deficit	**-6**
Projected Total Additional Square Feet	**4,705**
Electric Usage in kilowatt-hour *(7/1/2013 – 6/30/2014)*	**1,019,300**
Number of Maintainance Calls *(7/1/2013 – 6/30/2014)*	**297**

Key FIndings

Summary

The data collected through this assessment reveal that Mount Vernon Community School meets only 54 percent

of the educational adequacy benchmarks for an ideal 21st century elementary school.

High Priority Items

- Based on the 2020 projections, as it exists now, the school will be over capacity lacking space for 87 students. The school is suffering from a shortage of classrooms which is compounded by the fact that the recommended ratio of square feet per student is not met.
- The classroom conditions are also below satisfactory levels for reasons such as, inadequate classroom size, lack of storage space, poor acoustics and the absence of individual controllability of the HVAC and lighting systems.

School Site

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Site Data	
Environmental Considerations	*Isolated steep area*
Number of Playgrounds	*2*
Recreation Features	
Resource Protection Areas	*No*
Number of Parking Spaces	*271*
Storm Water Management	*Multiple inlets, two underground dentention systems.*

Organization of vehicular and pedestrian traffic patterns are not efficiently organized about the site. Site circulation does not separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic creating potential life safety hazards for all users. Pedestrian paths cross vehicular thoroughfares during after-school pickup times. Additionally, the bus lane is also used as the kiss and ride drop off area which could create a dangerous situation for students. It was also observed, while appropriately located near the main entrance, on-site parking for staff and visitors is inadequate based on the number of spaces provided.

While the apparent rating of the fields is satisfactory, it is important to understand that **only one of two mult-iuse, hard surface, play areas is provided**. The two play fields, located adjacent to the gym, do not meet Virginia Guidelines but are adequate for the school's use. Finally, the field condition is deteriorating with observable divots and dry patches noted that could pose a hazard to students.

Instructional and Support Spaces

The instructional and support spaces of the building earned a borderline rating. Some factors that contributed to this rating include: the rooms do not meet the Division's size requirements, the lack of lighting and HVAC controllability, and noise interference from inside and outside the rooms was not mitigated. Classrooms are often overcrowded with materials and students. Among the core classrooms, the item of greatest concern is the **acoustics**. Many of the classrooms are divided by a thin, operable partition which does not provide an adequate sound barrier between the two classrooms. It was observed that very few classrooms have individual student desks and therefore do not support diverse learning styles or flexible seating arrangements. The student and teacher program furniture, which includes shelving, cabinets, wardrobes and cubbies, is either not adequate or non-existent in most classrooms. Numerous teachers reported mold, humidity and moisture issues in their core classroom which they indicate increases during the warmer months. Classrooms are not equipped with the required number of teaching walls and electrical outlets are not readily available on all walls. The shared spaces, including the gym, art room, and cafeteria are not centrally located.

Based on our assessment, the most urgent items in this section are classroom capacity and HVAC mechanical issues. The average core classroom size for prekindergarten and kindergarten is 885 rather than the suggested 1025 square feet. The measured average

classroom size for grade one through five is 757 square feet rather than the desired 900 square feet needed to provide a flexible learning environment.

The overall capacity of specialty classrooms and small support rooms is approximately 28 percent smaller than the square foot minimums detailed in the educational specification. The facility had significant deficiencies with air temperature, humidity and acoustical elements. The lighting, in most classrooms, was adequate but not adjustable. Finally, while the rating for the overall building was excellent, several classrooms had no natural light or windows with a view outdoors.

Building Assessment

Less than half of the classrooms in Mount Vernon have the technology infrastructure and tools required to support a 21st century learning environment and overall space arrangements do not meet the division's expectations for providing small learning environments and key classroom adjacencies. While classrooms are mainly organized by grade level groupings, there were no defined extended learning areas observed and not all shared programmatic spaces were centrally located.

The building organization also contributed to the school's low rating because the shared spaces such as: the gym, cafeteria and art room are not centrally located and did not meet their intended size or space requirements.

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Recommendations

It should be noted that the existing school exceeds the allowable FAR for the zone. Any additions or significant renovations will require an exception or a rezoning.

Group 1 – Required Planning

- **Site** assessment to determine whether the drop-off location for the school can be relocated/reconfigures (based on property boundaries. Setbacks, etc.). It will also help inform opportunities for additional parking and storm water management issues.
- **Explore** extending the main entry corridor to the existing gymnasium to help address the key shared space organization issues without the need for major reconfiguration or addition.

Group 2 – First Priority

- **Assess** opportunities to reconfigure the spaces within the existing school to meet the recommended size requirements for individual academic spaces as outlined in the educational specifics.
- **Reconfigure** the spaces within the existing school. This would allow for more effective grade grouping and incorporation of collaborative learning spaces.
- **Explore** an addition to the school which may be necessary to attain the additional square footage required but will be more accurately determined once the building reorganization and redistribution has been studied.

Group 3 – Second Priority

- **Assess** possibility of equipping all classrooms and support spaces with individual climate controls, and technology equipment and infrastructure.
- **Explore** additional storage for teachers and students as well as an upgrade to the furniture, fixtures and equipment. The square footage from un-used spaces could be repurposed to increase the size of classrooms used throughout the day by students.
- **Upgrade** existing playing areas and fields.

Group 4 – Long-Range Recommendations

- **Consider** relocating the tennis courts in order to expand the recreation fields

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Exhibit A

Appraisal Summary for :	Mount Vernon			
Summary	**Unweighted Points**	**Tier**	**Priority**	**Rating Category**
1.0 School Site	56			Borderline
2.0 Building Assessment	38			Inadequate
3.0 Instructional and Support Spaces	64			Borderline
4.0: Utilization	58			Very Inadequate
Average	**54**			Borderline

Key	
1	Excellent
2	Satisfactory
3	Borderline
4	Inadequate
5	Very Inadequate

1.0 School Site

Section 1	Unweighted Points	Tier	Priority	Rating Category
A Site Circulation.	36	4	9	Inadequate
B Play areas / fields	75	3	18	Satisfactory
Average : School Site	**56**			Borderline

2.0 Building Assessment

Section 2	Unweighted Points	Tier	Priority	Rating Category
A Building Organization	20	4	4	Very Inadequate
B Technology and Supporting Infrastructure	43	4	9	Inadequate
C Accessibility	50	4	14	Borderline
Average : Building Assessment	**38**			Inadequate

3.0 Instructional and Support Spaces

Section 3	Unweighted Points	Tier	Priority	Rating Category
Core Classrooms				
Meets Size Requirements	51	2	12	Borderline
Internal Organization and Ancillary Spaces	74	4	19	Satisfactory
Loose Furnishings	59	4	14	Borderline
Fixed Equipment and Infrastructure	65	4	14	Borderline
Lighting Quality	81	3	18	Satisfactory
Natural Lighting	92	3	23	Excellent
Acoustics	43	3	8	Inadequate
Air Quality and Temperature	66	3	13	Borderline
Shared Spaces				
Meets Size Requirements	52	2	12	Borderline
Internal Organization and Ancillary Spaces	65	4	14	Borderline
Loose Furnishings	55	4	14	Borderline
Fixed Equipment and Infrastructure	57	4	14	Borderline
Lighting Quality	63	3	13	Borderline
Natural Lighting	74	3	18	Satisfactory
Acoustics	74	3	18	Satisfactory
Air Quality and Temperature	90	3	23	Excellent
Average: Instructional and Support Spaces	**64**			Borderline

4.0: Utilization

Section 4 : Utilization	Unweighted Points	Tier	Priority	Rating Category
A Core Classrooms (Capacity Drivers)	86	2	12	Borderline
B Specialty Classrooms (Core A)	18	3	3	Very Inadequate
C Shared Spaces (Core B)	130	3	3	Very Inadequate
Average : Utilization	**58**			Very Inadequate

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