



PROGRAM GUIDE

BUREAU OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES



Use of Classrooms Located above the First Floor By Children in Grades K, 1 & 2

Category: Commercial Construction

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I. BACKGROUND

Over the past decade schools have struggled with how to meet the diverse educational requirements of elementary students, especially those in kindergarten, first and second grades. There is a continuing need for children to leave their "home" classrooms for instructions in specialty areas such as music, art or computer studies. Children must also leave their home classroom for ESL instruction or for special assessments or tutoring. Very few older schools have sufficient classrooms available on the ground floor to accommodate these specialty programs as well as the regular classrooms for the K through 2 students.

Beginning in October 2004, K through 2 classrooms have been allowed to be located on floors either above or below the first floor if the building was designed or constructed to building code standards after that date. However, building codes dated before October 2004 prohibited rooms used for grades K through 2 to be located above the first floor unless the building was sprinklered and separate dedicated exits were provided for each of the K through 2 classrooms. Earlier codes also prohibited K through 2 classrooms from being located in basements.

In the City of Portland, most schools were designed or constructed before October 2004 and are subject to the K through 2 classroom location restriction. This requirement often puts the program needs of the schools into conflict with the building code requirements governing the school.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this guide is to establish minimum safety standards and operating procedures under which children in grades K through 2 may be allowed to occupy specialty classroom areas located above the first floor for limited periods of time. These standards are intended to address the needs of the schools to provide access to these specialty program areas by K through 2 students while addressing the concerns of the building code for the safety of the students.

III. SCOPE

This program guide only applies to schools without complete sprinkler systems or those constructed prior to October 1, 2004. Schools with complete sprinkler systems for the purpose of location of students are deemed to comply with code provisions.

IV. STANDARDS

The Bureau of Development Services (BDS) and the Fire Bureau will allow children in grades K through 2 to occupy specialty classroom areas located above the first floor for limited periods of time under the following conditions:

- A. Home room classrooms for K through 2 students must be located on the first floor. Floors within a half floor (5 feet) of grade shall be considered as the first floor.
- B. Where substantial remodeling would not be required to effect a relocation (e.g. rewiring for computer or language labs) as space allocation and room assignments are made each year, one of the main priorities shall be to assign any remaining classroom space located on the first floor, to common use classrooms (i.e. classrooms used by all age groups such as music rooms, art room, etc.). Where space is available on the first floor for common use areas, priority shall be given to allocating those areas with the most frequent use by K through 2 students.
- C. Where it is necessary, due to space limitations or construction limitations, to locate common use classrooms (e.g., music rooms, art rooms, computer labs, language labs, etc.) on floors above the first floor, such spaces shall meet the following:
 1. Be located in the building not higher than the second floor level; and
 2. Be located adjacent to an egress stair that provides a direct, uninterrupted, unobstructed means of egress to the exterior of the building. See section 4 below for the process to follow for conditions where it is not practical due to

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construction limitations to locate a common use classroom adjacent to an egress stair.

- D. Where it is necessary to have K through 2 students use common program spaces, which are located above the first floor as described above, the school district shall implement and maintain a policy that requires:
1. Classrooms and common program space located above the first floor which are to be used by K through 2 students shall be limited to rooms adjacent to or immediately across a hallway from an exit stair that provides clear unobstructed egress to the exterior of the school building.
 2. In addition to the common program spaces described above, not more than one additional classroom or program room for limited use by K through 2 students may be located in an area that is not immediately adjacent to an exit stair provided the room is occupied by not more than 30 K through 2 students at any one time and that a sign is posted adjacent to the main door to the classroom which clearly states this limitation on occupancy. The location of and egress pathway from such rooms to the egress stairs shall be specifically approved by Fire and Development Services staff.
 3. For conditions where it is not practical due to construction limitations to locate a classroom or common program space, other than the one additional classroom allowed by sub-section 4b above, adjacent to or across from an egress stair, the location of and egress pathway from all such rooms to the egress stairs shall be specifically approved by Fire and Development Services Staff on an individual case by case basis.
 4. The emergency exiting program for the school shall take into consideration the use of common program spaces located above the first floor by K through 2 students as follows:
 - a. A highly visible yellow dividing line shall be installed on the exit stairs. The dividing line will indicate a separation between K through 2 students and older students;
 - b. Separating the older and younger students will minimize the risk of either age group impeding the safe exiting of the other group. Clear, simple, highly-directional signage shall be installed in the exit stair which clearly indicates which side is reserved for K-2 and which side is reserved for older students.
 - 1) The younger students will exit along the inside (shortest exit route) of the stairs.

- 2) The older students will exit along the outside (longer exit route) of the stairs.
5. Where unassigned staff or volunteers are available, additional supervising adults shall be assigned to accompany and monitor the K through 2 students during transit to and from the common use areas and while involved in the activity in the common use area. These additional adults may be teachers, teacher's aids, or responsible adult volunteers trained in the emergency exiting procedures for the school.
6. The school district will conduct weekly fire drills during the first four weeks of the school year, and will conduct monthly fire drills in all subsequent months when school is in session. The Fire Inspector may require additional fire drills during their inspections. All teachers, volunteers and staff on the second floor will receive special training in the safe exiting of younger students.

V. PROCEDURE FOR APPROVAL OF USE OF CLASSROOMS ABOVE THE FIRST FLOOR BY STUDENTS IN GRADES K, 1 & 2

- A. Before the start of each school year the Facilities Department of the school district shall provide to the Bureau of Development Services four copies of the following information:
 1. A listing of each school operating under this policy.
 2. A floor plan of the school(s) showing each second floor classroom where children in K through 2nd grade are present. The floor plan will also indicate what Standard Q and other fire/life safety upgrades have been implemented.
 3. A record of fire alarm testing, deficiencies, repairs and upgrades.
 4. Bureau of Development Services and Fire Bureau staff will review these submittals and upon successful negotiation with the school district for any necessary corrections will stamp these plans as "APPROVED" indicating the date of approval and the school year for which the approval is valid.
- B. In subsequent years a school which is operating under the provisions of this guide may continue to operate the same program as previously approved without submitting a set of plans for approval provided all information and use areas as previously approved remain unchanged and provided a letter is submitted to the Bureau of Development Services for review by Fire Bureau and BDS staff that requests the continuation of the program under the provisions of this guide. The letter of request shall contain the following information:
 1. The name and location of the school for which the continuation is being requested
 2. The school year for which the request is being made

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3. The date of the approval of the original plans for the K-2 program which this continuation will follow
4. Updated information on standard Q, fire alarm and fire protection system testing, repairs, alterations or upgrades.

Fire and BDS staff will review the letter of request within 10 working days of receipt of the request and if no discrepancies are discovered will stamp the letter as "APPROVED" indicating the date of approval and the school year for which the approval is valid.

Copies of the approved letter will be returned to the school district to be attached to the plans that are maintained by the school district as required by section 6 below. Copies of the approved letter will be attached to the plans retained by BDS and Fire.

- C. Any changes to the location or layout of common use classrooms or program spaces, including any changes that may have been made during the prior school year with the approval of the Fire Inspector, or any remodeling or additions to the school in question will require that a new plan that accurately reflects the actual layout of the school and location of all common use classrooms and program spaces be submitted for review and approval.
- D. The Facilities Department will keep approved copies of these documents on file at the District Office and in the principal's office of each school. The files will be open to inspection by Fire Bureau and the Bureau of Development Services.
- E. If, due to program changes during the school year, changes are required to the approved plan for use of second floor program spaces, such changes are to be immediately discussed with the Fire Inspector. The Fire Inspector shall have the authority to approve such changes provided such changes are clearly indicated on the approved plans and the changes are initialed as "APPROVED" by the Fire Inspector. If for any reason the Fire Inspector is unable to approve the proposed revision to the location of program space, the proposed revision shall be submitted to the Fire Inspection Supervisor for review. The Fire Inspection Supervisor may approve the proposed revision as submitted or may consult with other Fire Bureau and Bureau of Development Services staff before making a decision.
- F. The school district shall designate a single point of contact (POC) for the Fire Bureau. The POC will meet with the Fire Bureau Inspector during drills and inspections. The POC will maintain accurate records of the pertinent documents for the Fire Inspector's review. These documents will include floor plans, Standard Q information, fire alarm and fire protection systems' history of testing, deficiencies, repairs and upgrades.

- G. The Facilities Department will work closely with the Fire Bureau on reviewing the best options for improving fire life safety in schools.
- H. Use of classrooms above the first floor without submitting the required documentation and receiving prior approval from the Fire Bureau and the Bureau of Development Services is a violation of City Code and may be subject to citation or notice to vacate by the Fire Bureau or by the Bureau of Development Services.

VI. FUTURE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

The school district shall implement and maintain a policy stating that any additions or alterations to schools shall:

- A. Place a high priority on creating additional space for common program spaces on the first floor to relocate or establish common use areas that are or will be used by K through 2 students or provide automatic sprinklers throughout the school. In no case shall an addition or alteration to an existing school reduce the number of regular classroom spaces available on the first floor for use by K through 2 students or locate any regular K through 2 classrooms on the second floor.
- B. Give high priority to correcting or improving any deficiencies of the existing egress system (e.g., corridor construction, stair enclosure, exit discharge areas, etc.).