

To support our priority goal of getting students back to in-person learning, safely, DESE is asking school officials to change classroom configurations to space students farther apart from each other, set up additional classrooms in libraries, auditoriums, and cafeterias, and make scheduling changes.

As reviewed and advised by the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center Medical Advisory Board, schools are encouraged to aim for a physical distance of 6 feet when feasible, while 3 feet is the minimum distance allowed as informed by evidence. There is no maximum number for group size, so long as schools adhere to the physical distancing requirements. We encourage schools to physically measure each classroom in addition to using the parametric tool to make sure that space is being maximized to the extent possible.

Classroom Diagrams

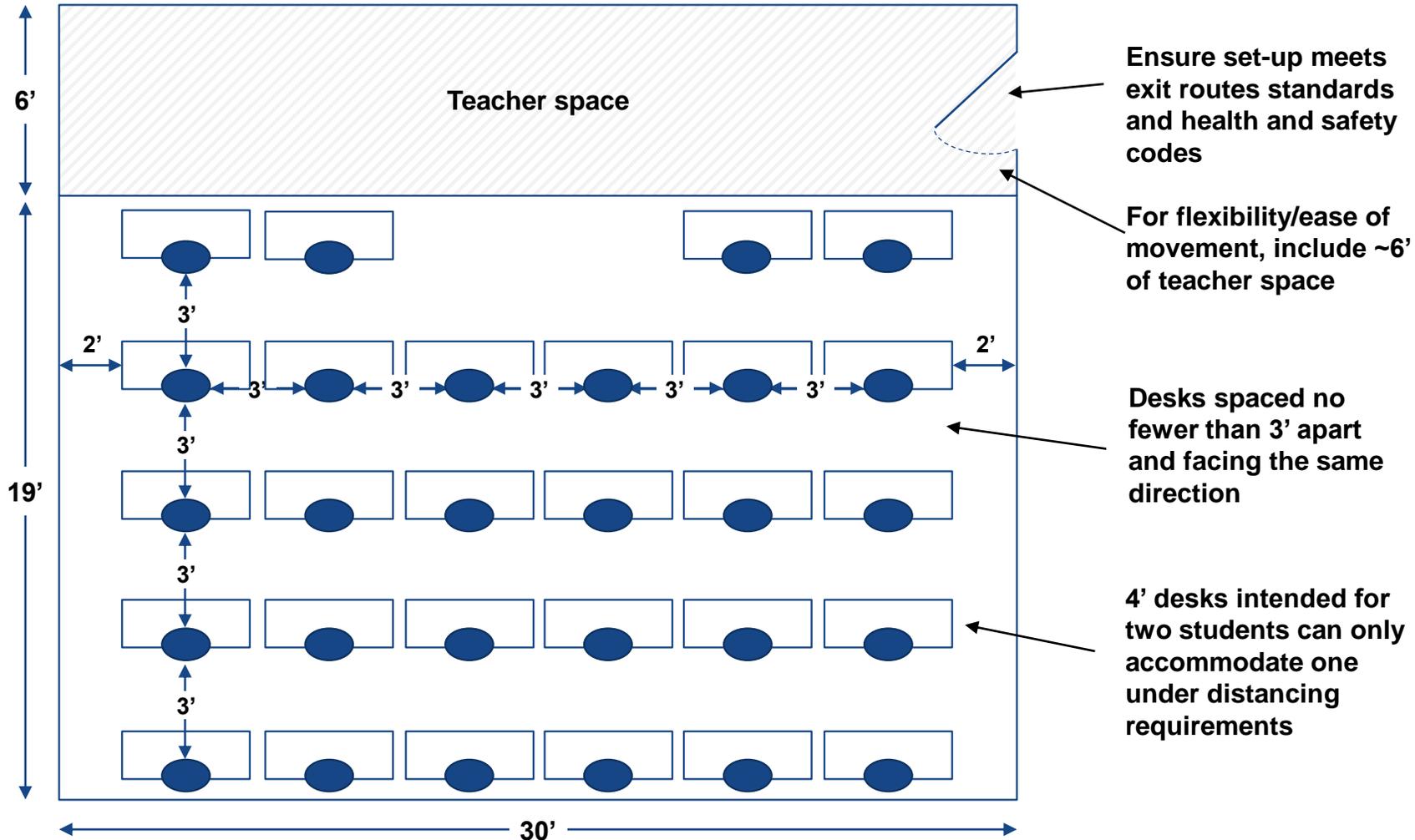
- The illustrative diagrams provide administrators and teachers ideas about how to space desks to maximize the number of students in a classroom, using “seat edge” to “seat edge” measurements.
- The diagrams were developed after touring several classrooms and take into account typical desk sizes.
- The diagrams are intended to help school officials begin to think about how to arrange classrooms to determine what is feasible to return as many students as possible to classrooms, safely.

Best Practices for Classroom Setup

1. **Physical distancing:** To the extent possible, aim for desks to be spaced six feet apart, but no fewer than three feet apart, (edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat) and facing the same direction.
2. **Teacher space:** Allow adequate **space for teachers** to ensure safe physical distance from students.
3. **Furniture:** Consider **removing non-essential furniture** out of classrooms. Explore **storage options** in advance.
4. **Communal areas:** Consider **repurposing communal areas** for additional classrooms.
5. **Other constraints:** When estimating capacity, consider additional constraints that reduce usable desk space (e.g., emergency fire egress, radiators, immovable furniture, desk/furniture size and type, camera angles for synchronous learning).

Example B1: Fits ~28 4' dual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30'); with all furniture/equipment removed

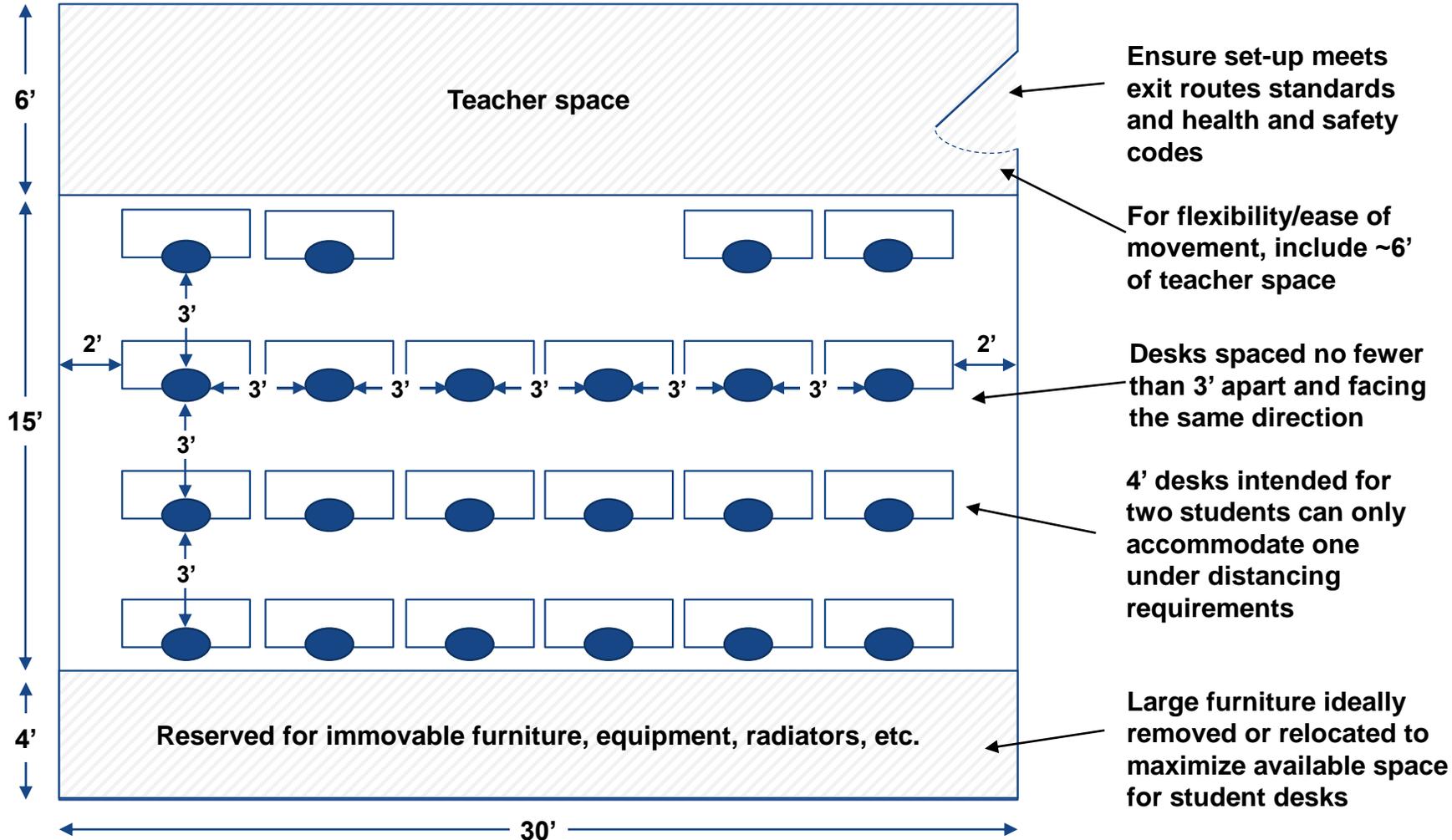


- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~28 students (with furniture/equipment removed)**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)¹

¹ Assumed 1.5' seat width, 4' desk width

Example B2: Fits ~22 4' dual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30')

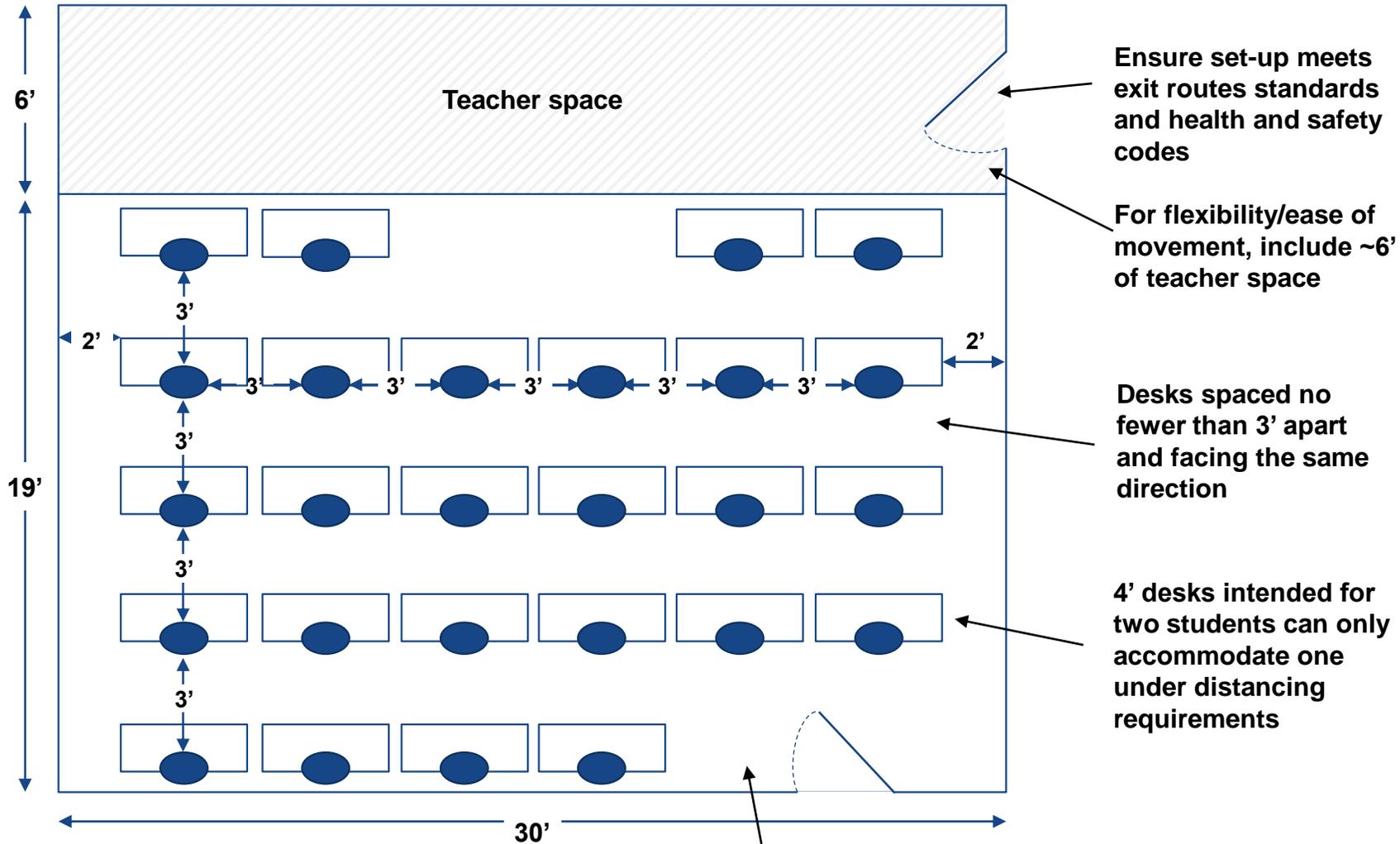


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Example B3: Fits ~26 4' dual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30'); with all furniture/equipment removed



Ensure set-up meets exit routes standards and health and safety codes

For flexibility/ease of movement, include ~6' of teacher space

Desks spaced no fewer than 3' apart and facing the same direction

4' desks intended for two students can only accommodate one under distancing requirements

Potential reduction in number of desks if classroom has a door outside of the teacher space

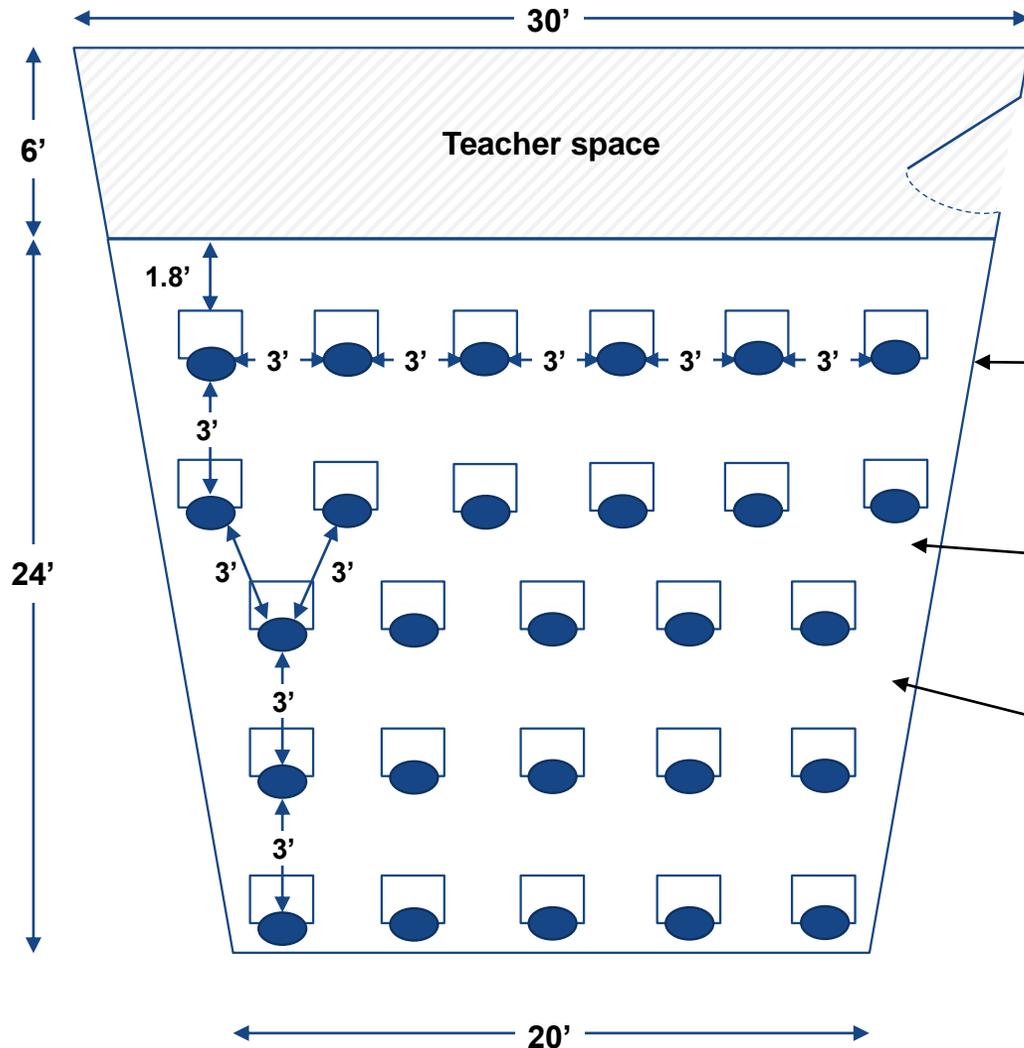


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¹ Assumed 1.5' seat width, 4' desk width

Example C1: Fits ~27 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 30' at widest / 20' at narrowest x 30')



Ensure set-up meets exit routes standards and health and safety codes

For flexibility/ease of movement, include ~6' of teacher space

Desks spaced no fewer than 3' apart (edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat) and facing the same direction

Isometric desk arrangements may be optimal for non-rectangular classrooms

Could increase desk spacing if desks shifted out to walls

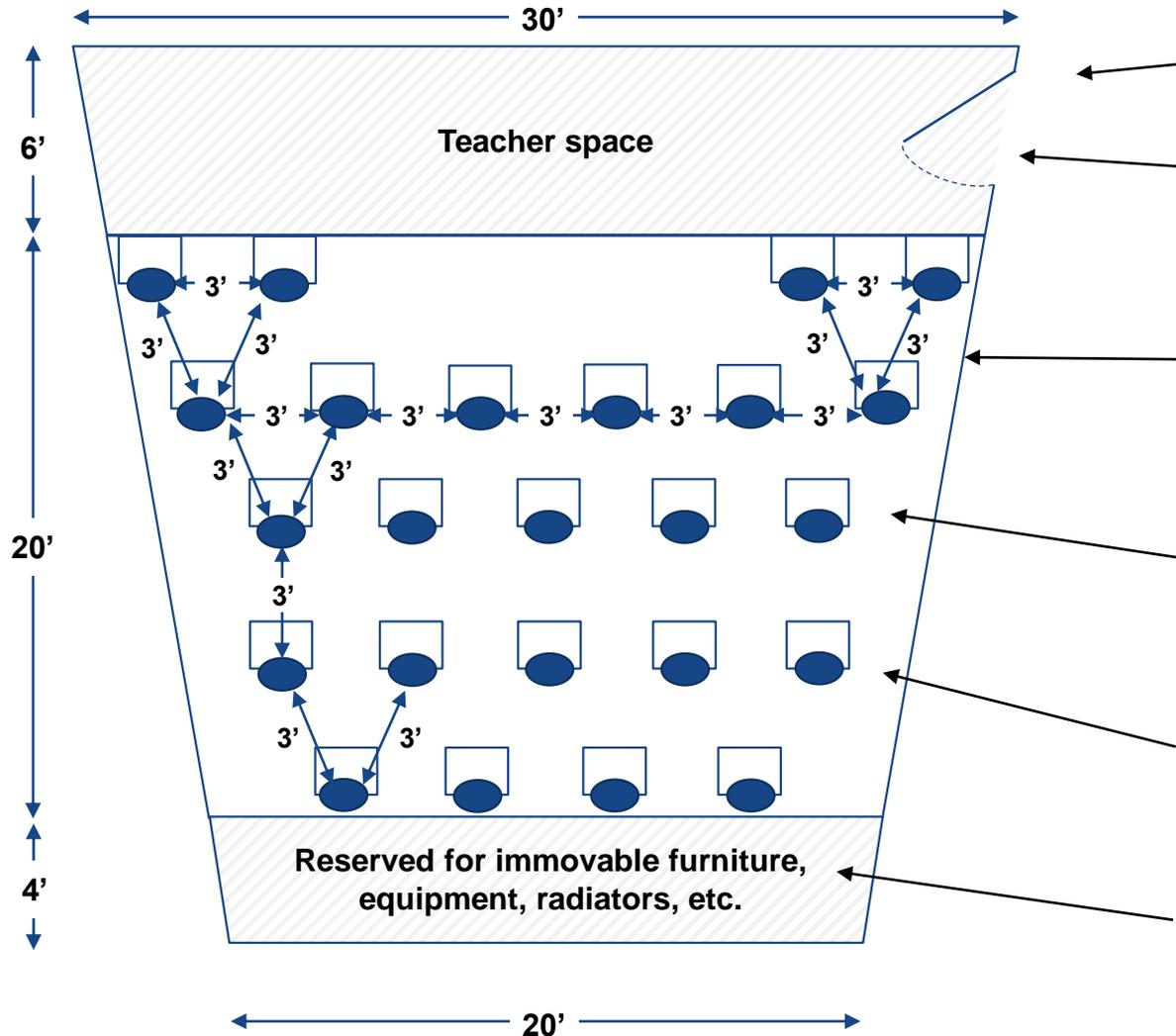


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¹ Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

Example C2: Fits ~24 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 30' at widest / 20' at narrowest x 30')



Ensure set-up meets exit routes standards and health and safety codes

For flexibility/ease of movement, include ~6' of teacher space

Isometric desk arrangements may be optimal for non-rectangular classrooms

Desks spaced no fewer than 3' apart (edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat) and facing the same direction

Could increase desk spacing if desks shifted out to walls

Large furniture ideally removed or relocated to maximize available space for student desks

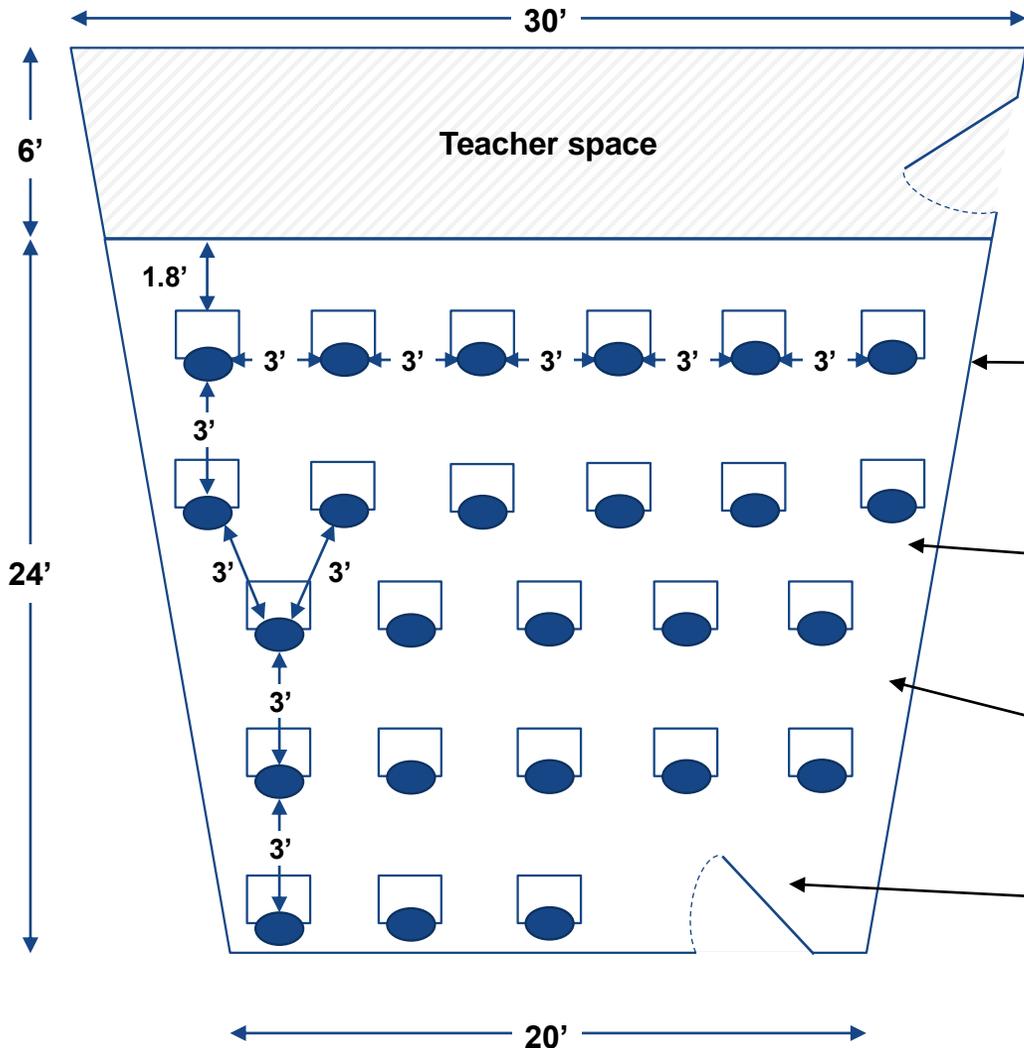


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¹ Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

Example C1: Fits ~25 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 30' at widest / 20' at narrowest x 30')



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Desks spaced no fewer than 3' apart (edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat) and facing the same direction

Isometric desk arrangements may be optimal for non-rectangular classrooms

Could increase desk spacing if desks shifted out to walls

Potential reduction in number of desks if classroom has a door outside of the teacher space

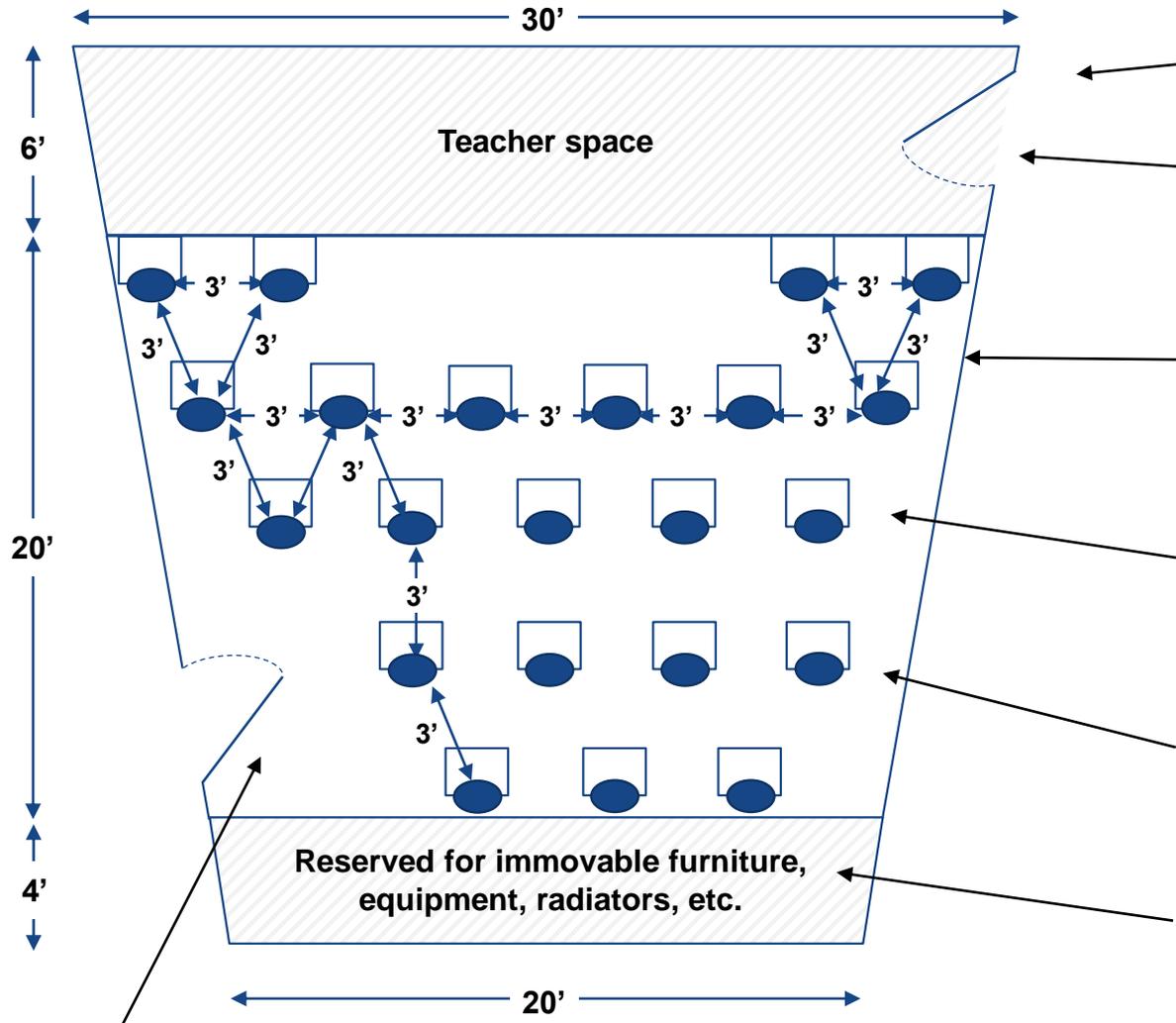


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¹ Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

Example C2: Fits ~22 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 30' at widest / 20' at narrowest x 30')



Ensure set-up meets exit routes standards and health and safety codes

For flexibility/ease of movement, include ~6' of teacher space

Isometric desk arrangements may be optimal for non-rectangular classrooms

Desks spaced no fewer than 3' apart (edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat) and facing the same direction

Could increase desk spacing if desks shifted out to walls

Large furniture ideally removed or relocated to maximize available space for student desks



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Potential reduction in number of desks if classroom has a door outside of the teacher space

Appendix

Example – Common Safety Violations in School Classrooms (2/2)

Common Safety Violations in School Classrooms

- 1 Classroom exits shall remain clear and not blocked by any obstructions, such as cabinets that open into the exit path.
- 2 Classroom emergency exit windows shall not be blocked by items stored under or in front of the windows.
- 3 Classroom fire extinguishers shall be mounted in plain view and not blocked or hidden.
- 4 Exit signs for emergency window exits shall be visible at all times. Illuminated exit signs, when provided, shall be illuminated at all times.
- 5 Classroom exit doors shall not have decorations on the door.
- 6 Decorations or classroom materials that are suspended from ceilings shall be treated to be flame retardant and never impede an exit.
- 7 Suspending or hanging decorative items from fire sprinkler pipes is not allowed.
- 8 Flame retardant classroom wall decorations shall not extend out from the walls or cover exit signs.
- 9 Suspending decorative or instructional items from classroom ceiling lights is not allowed.
- 10 Material stored on top of shelves or cabinets may not be closer than 3 feet to the ceiling. This material shall *also* be secured so that, during an earthquake, it will not fall. Unfastened or unrestrained materials shall be removed.
- 11 Materials stored on top of shelves or cabinets may not be closer than 18" to automatic sprinkler heads.
- 12 Excess paper and other supplies, shall be stored in an orderly manner in approved storage closets and not in open classrooms.
- 13 Hazardous materials, such as cleaning products and chemicals used for instruction, shall be stored in approved secure locations and always kept out of reach of children. Science chemicals and very hazardous materials must be kept in hazardous materials cabinets.
- 14 All bookcases and cabinets shall be secured to walls.
- 15 Approved portable heaters shall be positioned so that they are not close to combustibles.
- 16 Do not plug more than one extension cord and one power strip into an electrical outlet. Extension cords shall be removed and stored at the end of the school day. Extension cords may not be put into permanent use. Extension cords and power strips may not be plugged in series.
- 17 Extension cords may not be extended from one classroom to another or create a tripping hazard.
- 18 All compressed gas cylinders shall be attached with restraints to prevent them from overturning.
- 19 Do not exceed the classroom occupancy load by putting too many students or desks in the room. (20 square feet per student.)

Most classrooms safety violations can be avoided by keeping classrooms clean, neat and well organized. Do not try and store more materials than your room was designed to safely handle. Do not obstruct the existing fire safety systems that are there to protect all occupants. Do not try and exceed the capacity of the room's electrical system with plug strips and extension cords. Always look out for conditions that have the potential to hurt students.

In addition to the illustrated classroom violations, there are some fire/safety violations that occur outside of the classroom. If you notice any of the following, please notify your site administrator.

Do not store items in basements or under stairs unless the entire area is sprinklered.

When storing items in closets or workrooms, maintain a 3 foot (36") clearance around all water heaters, electrical panels, fire alarms and portable fire extinguishers.

Parking of vehicles on campus shall be limited to official parking stalls only. Do not park vehicles on school grounds in such a way as to block paths or egress and access or any fire lanes.