



Active Kids,
Healthy
Community

Opportunities to Share Clean, Safe Spaces at Public Schools

The recreational use of D.C. Public School facilities by community groups and residents is unevenly distributed between wards of the city. The underutilization of facilities at schools in Wards 4, 5, 7, and 8 tracks with the high rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other chronic diseases in these wards. In short, a large percentage (90%) of elementary schools (ES), middle schools (MS), and education campuses (EC) throughout D.C. open their grounds for many educational and social activities, but this level falls to 50% in Ward 8, 36% in Ward 5, and 25% in Wards 4 and 7 when only agreements for recreational use are considered, according to records from the Department of General Services on shared use agreements from June 2013 through June 2015.¹

As the community seeks safe and clean spaces to be physically active, they should be able to readily use the gymnasiums, sports fields, courts, tracks and other facilities at their local public schools. While there are many D.C. schools that do open their doors to community groups, there is a disproportionate number that don't in the communities that need it most. D.C. residents need to encourage all schools to open up to the community. The District needs to ensure residents in all wards have equal access to clean and safe places for recreational activities. Research confirms that the more active children are, the healthier they will be now and when they grow up.² Advocates for Better Children's Diets is reaching out to community groups and residents to encourage children and families to get active after school, on the weekends, and in the summer when schools are often closed.

Data Collection and Analysis

This report summarizes the extensive data on use of public school facility agreements in D.C. from June 2013 through June 2015 from the Department of General Services, Office of Realty. The Office of Realty maintains specific records of who has applied for approval to use District of Columbia Public Schools' (DCPS) recreational facilities outside of school hours. The data were obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request by Advocates for Better Children's Diets.¹ D.C. facility use agreements,³ also known nationally as shared use agreements, describe the formal contracts community organizations or individuals enter into for use of school facilities. As identified on the application, there are insurance requirements and fees associated with these agreements.

¹ Advocates for Better Children's Diets, 2015 FOIA-03469, DC Department of General Services, June 16, 2015.

² Save Routes to School national Partnership. Shared Use, Increasing Access to Physical Activity Opportunities. <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Shared-Use-Increasing-Access-to-Physical-Activity-Opportunities.pdf>. Accessed July 31, 2015.

³ D.C. Department of General Services. District of Columbia Public School Application to Use Facilities, <https://d3jc3ahdjad7x7.cloudfront.net/t3bpL4Ei5oZ54wKBYxUOjlxJouscep69NgBHbmlPg8nBAFOW.pdf>, accessed July 31, 2015.

To ensure schools listed in the DGS records from June 2013-2015 were still operating, the shared use agreement records were compared to school listings gathered from the DC Public School website on July 31, 2015⁴ and schools no longer operating were dropped from the sample analyzed.

Advocates for Better Children’s Diets analyzed the data to determine the distribution of facility use agreements for all activities versus recreational activities by wards in the District. The analysis of the DGS records included: 1) percentage of schools in each of the eight wards utilizing shared use agreements for recreation versus other activities, such as educational, social, civic, and development; and 2) percentage of elementary schools, middle schools, and education campuses in each of the eight wards utilizing shared use agreements for recreation versus other activities, such as educational, social, civic, and development.

Findings

The following tables depict the distribution of documented shared use agreements across public schools for various activities.

Table 1:

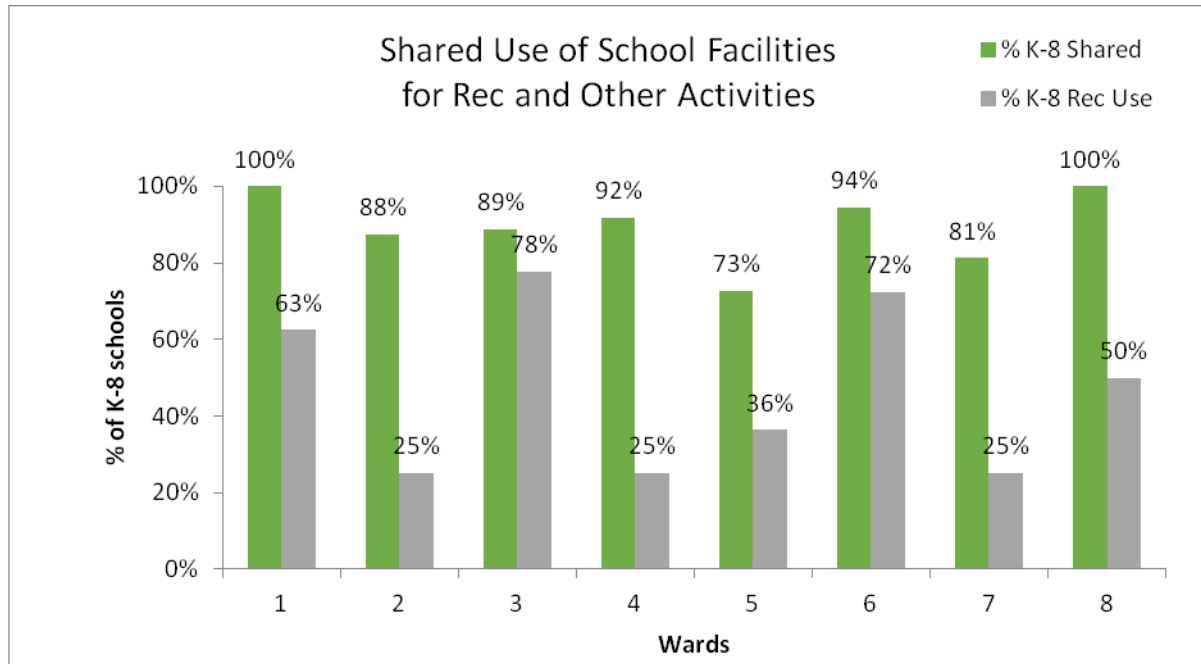


Table 1 summarizes all the shared use agreement activities, both recreational and other activities, such as educational, social, civic, and development in all eight wards. Of the schools in wards 4, 7, and 8, 91% have entered into shared use agreements in the past two years; only 73% of schools in Ward 5 enter into these agreements. However, when looking at the data for only recreation-specific activities, the percentage drops to 50% for Ward 8, 36% for Ward 5, and 25% for Wards 4 and 7.

⁴ DC Public Schools Profiles. <http://profiles.dcps.dc.gov/>, accessed July 31, 2015.

Table 2:

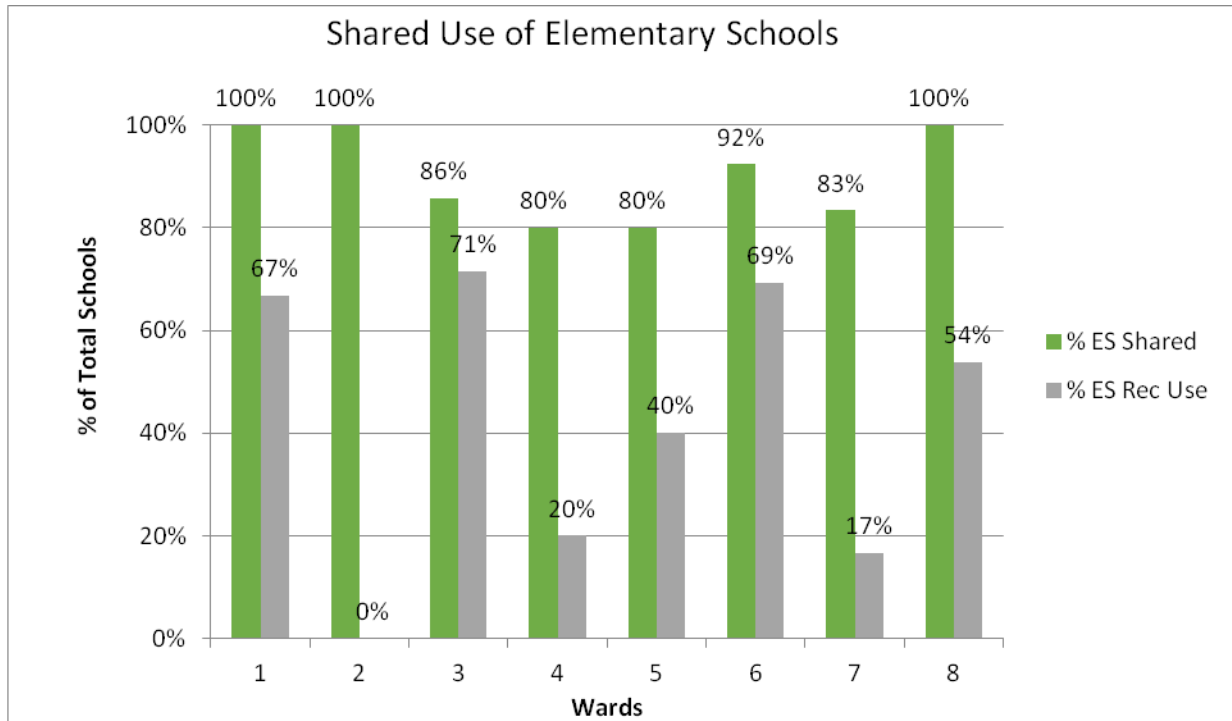


Table 2 depicts a large percentage (91%) of the public elementary schools (ES) throughout D.C. open their facilities for many educational and social activities, though the numbers skew lower for Wards 4, 5, and 7. Shared use for recreation falls to 17% in Ward 7, 20% in Ward 4, 40% in Ward 5, and 54% in Ward 8.

Table 3:

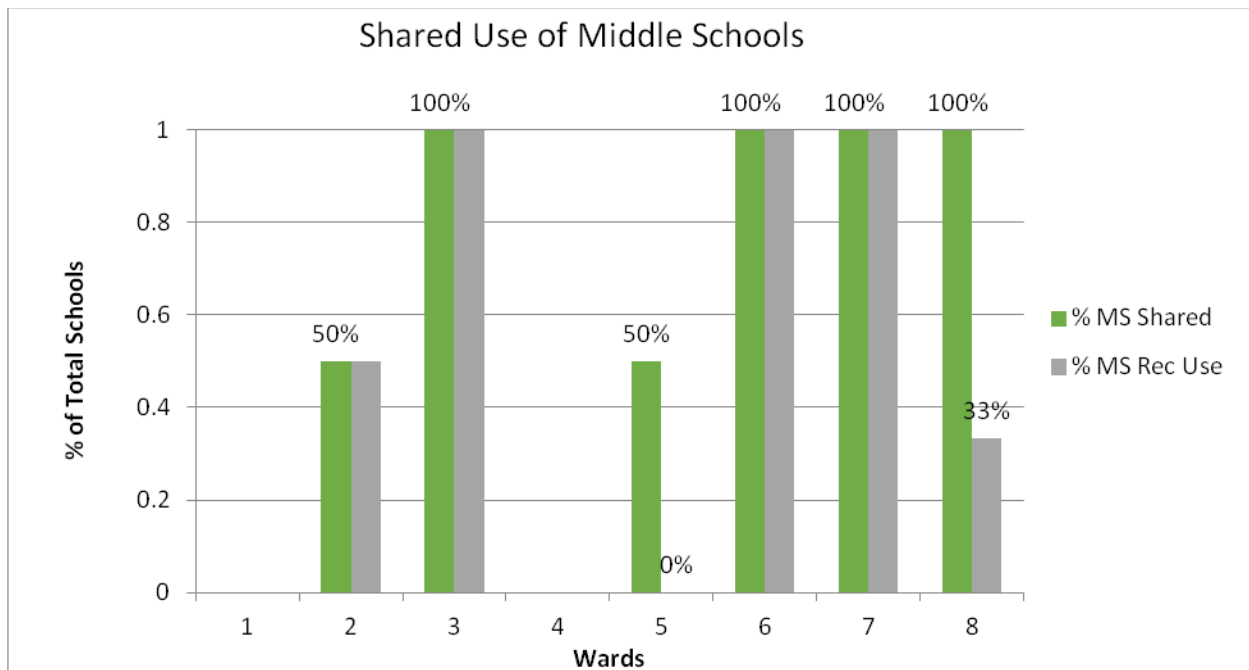


Table 3 shows there are two wards without middle schools, 1 and 4. Three wards, 3, 6, and 7, have 100% of MS entering into both shared agreements for recreational and non-recreational activities – significant

especially in Ward 6 with four middle schools all opening up to the community. In the Ward 5, which has higher rates of chronic disease than some other wards, neither of the two middle schools has shared agreements for recreation, and in Ward 8, only one-third of the schools with shared use agreements have recreational agreements.

Table 4:

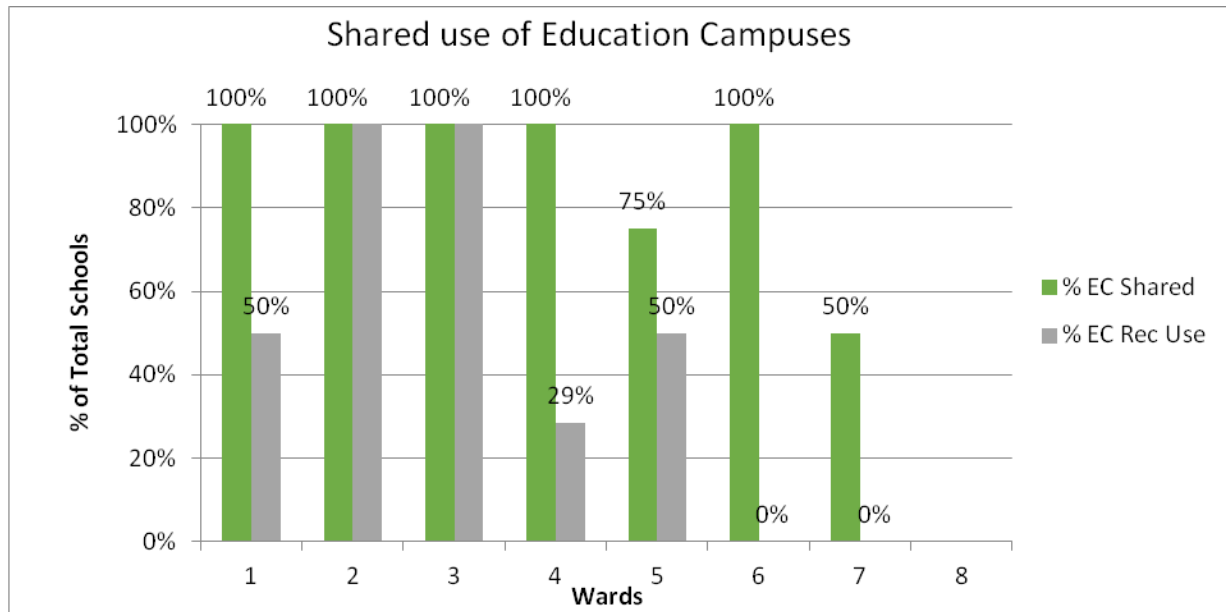


Table 4 shows the distribution of shared use agreements for recreation activities at education campuses (EC) varies greatly across the wards, and is significantly lower concentrated in areas with greater rates of obesity. The discrepancy of recreational use in Ward 4 is the most pronounced, with all of the seven EC in the ward participating in shared use, but only two (29%) opening their facilities for recreational purposes. For the four EC in Ward 5, 75% have shared use agreements and only 50% have recreational use agreements; whereas, of Ward 7's two EC, one has shared use agreements but neither school has recreational use agreements. The single EC in each of wards 2 and 3 participate in recreational agreements. Ward 8 does not have any EC.

Conclusion

D.C. has the ninth highest childhood obesity rate in the United States, according to Child Health Data.⁵ Currently, 35% of the District's youth are overweight or obese.

Attaining equity for residents in all eight of the District's wards to have access to safe and clean places to be physically active is key to improving the health and decreasing rates of obesity and chronic disease. D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser's new health and wellness initiative, FitDC, is working to get residents from wards 1 through 8 moving more and is doing this through targeted events and outreach in each ward equitably. This equity should also include all D.C. Public School facilities – especially in Wards 4, 5, 7, and 8 – being open to entering into shared use agreements for community recreation.

From the data provided by the Department of General Services, Office of Realty, a high percentage of elementary schools, middle schools, and education campuses throughout D.C. open their facilities for

⁵ Child and Adolescence Health Measurement Initiative, 2011 National Survey of Children's Health, <http://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/allstates?q=2415>, accessed July 31, 2015.

many educational and social activities, but especially in priority needs areas these rates plummet for use of recreational facilities. Fifty percent of schools in Ward 8, 36% in Ward 5, and 25% in Wards 4 and 7 have shared use agreements for recreational facilities. These four wards have higher rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic diseases, which are associated with inactive lifestyles.

As residents seek safe and clean spaces to be physically active, they should be able to join their community in utilizing the gymnasiums, courts, and outside recreational facilities at their neighborhood public schools. The District leadership needs to ensure residents in all wards have equal access to public schools for recreational activities after school, on the weekends, and in the summer when schools are often closed.

Next Steps

Further analysis of the community groups that are using the facilities as well as interviews with several school leaders will provide insights on whether the residents of these wards are truly being served with access to the neighborhood recreation facilities and should reveal possible barriers to recreational use. These findings will be shared with D.C. leadership to encourage equity in physical activity access across the city.

For more information on the Active Kids, Healthy Communities initiative, please visit dcactivekids.org or contact Franciel Dawes at franiel@diets.org.

Raw Data:

Table 1: Raw data for all schools K-8 with shared use

Ward	K-8 Schools	K-8 Shared	% K-8 Shared	K-8 Rec Use	% K-8 Rec Use
1	8	8	100%	10	63%
2	8	7	88%	11	25%
3	9	8	89%	11	78%
4	12	11	92%	19	25%
5	11	8	73%	17	36%
6	18	17	94%	23	72%
7	16	13	81%	20	25%
8	16	16	100%	19	50%

Table 2: Raw data for elementary schools with shared use

Ward	Total ES	Shared ES	% ES Shared	Shared Rec ES	% ES Rec Use
1	6	6	100%	4	67%
2	5	5	100%	0	0%
3	7	6	86%	5	71%
4	5	4	80%	1	20%
5	5	4	80%	2	40%
6	13	12	92%	9	69%
7	12	10	83%	2	17%
8	13	13	100%	7	54%

Table 3: Raw data for middle schools with shared use

Ward	Total MS	Shared MS	% MS Shared	Shared Rec MS	% MS Rec Use
1	0	0		0	
2	2	1	50%	1	50%
3	1	1	100%	1	100%
4	0	0		0	
5	2	1	50%	0	0%
6	4	4	100%	4	100%
7	2	2	100%	2	100%
8	3	3	100%	1	33%

Table 4: Raw data for Education Campuses with shared use

Ward	Total EC	Shared EC	% EC Shared	Shared Rec EC	% EC Rec Use
1	2	2	100%	1	50%
2	1	1	100%	1	100%
3	1	1	100%	1	100%
4	7	7	100%	2	29%
5	4	3	75%	2	50%
6	1	1	100%	0	0%
7	2	1	50%	0	0%
8	0	0		0	