

A blog bulletin from *Stewart Acoustical Consultants* green.sacnc.com

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What spaces have to meet the acoustics prerequisite for LEED for schools?

Under the requirements for EQ Prerequisite 3: Minimum Acoustical Performance it states: Design **classrooms and other core learning spaces to meet...** as specified in ANSI Standard S12.60-2002....”

The classroom acoustics standard defines **core learning spaces** as:

“Spaces for educational activities where the primary functions are teaching and learning and where good speech communication is critical to a student’s academic achievement. These spaces include, but are not limited to, classrooms, (enclosed or open plan), instructional pods or activity areas, group instruction rooms, conference rooms, libraries, offices, speech clinics, offices used for educational purposes and music rooms for instruction, practice and performance.

Specifically **NOT** a core learning space (according to the classroom acoustics standard) are:

3.1.1.2 ancillary learning spaces. Spaces where good communication is important to a student’s educational progress but for which the primary educational functions are informal learning, social interaction or similar activity other than formal instruction. These areas include, but are not limited to, corridors, cafeterias, **gymnasia**, and indoor swimming pools.

In the LEED for schools reference Guide (2007) it provides room classifications. Here is the backdrop text:

“**Compliant Space Types for EQ Credits.** The following list identifies school spaces considered to be regularly occupied for applicability to EQ credits. Spaces considered **regularly occupied** are generally those in which daylight, views, thermal comfort and/or acoustics affect the quality of occupants’ regular use of the space. Exceptions to these classifications will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for spaces with non-typical uses or those in which the strategies required for compliance with these credits may compromise the function of the space.”

“Regularly occupied” is a measure used for daylighting and other credits etc., not acoustics prerequisites and credits.

“Classrooms and other core learning spaces’ is language specific to the classroom acoustics requirements in LEED and is the same language found in the classroom acoustics standard. The intent was to clearly require in LEED the same as the classroom acoustics standard for core learning spaces and not to require the ancillary space requirements.

This helps understand the lists provided in the LEED for schools reference guide repeated below:

Regularly Occupied Spaces, Classroom and Core Learning

This category consists of spaces that are used for at least one hour per day for educational activities where the primary functions are teaching and learning.

Classroom, Library, Language Lab/Arts, Instructional Technology, Computer Lab, Media Center, Biology Lab, Physics Lab, Chemistry Lab, Band, Instrument Instruction, Chorus, Observatory, Voice Instruction, Vocational Arts, Art, **Gymnasium**, Physical Education

Regularly Occupied Spaces, Other

This includes all non-learning spaces that are used by occupants for one or more hours per day to perform work-related activities.

Administration Office, Administration Staff, Administration Conference, Counseling Conference Room, Counselor Office, Faculty Office, Faculty Work Rooms, School Nurse Office, School Nurse Treatment, School Security Office, Staff Dining, Staff Lounge, Cafeteria, Cafetorium, Kitchen, Custodial Office and Maintenance Staff.

Spaces Not Regularly Occupied

Spaces considered not regularly occupied are those in which occupants are simply passing through and those that are not regularly used for at least one hour per day.

Administration Waiting, Main Entrance, Secondary Entrance, Corridor, Student Locker Area, Stairs, Receiving, Greenhouse, Auditorium, Natatorium, Stage, Back Stage, Locker Rooms, and Student Activities

Gymnasiums (gymnasia) were included on the list of regularly occupied, classroom and core learning but email correspondence with USGBC has confirmed that the classroom acoustics standard is the intent and thus the standard's definition of a gym as ancillary trumps the error in the LEED for schools reference guide. Thus gyms are NOT core learning spaces.

If the name of a particular space is missing, the litmus test is the classroom acoustics standard definition: "Spaces for educational activities where the primary functions are teaching and learning and where good speech communication is critical to a student's academic achievement."

There really is not a litmus test for it being regularly occupied, but it so happens that all the core learning spaces are regularly occupied.