



## The Public Schools of Brookline

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**Andrew J. Bott**  
Superintendent

TO: Brookline School Committee  
FROM: Andrew J. Bott, Superintendent  
DATE: February 2, 2017  
**Addendum: February 14, 2017**  
RE: Recommendation for 9<sup>th</sup> Elementary School at Baldwin

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### Addendum

At the February 2, 2017 School Committee Workshop, I presented my Space Recommendation for the 9<sup>th</sup> Elementary School at Baldwin. During the meeting the School Committee engaged in rich discussion about the numerous factors influencing the decision on whether a three section, a three section plus, or a four section school should be built including current and future enrollment capacity needs, the impact of school size on existing school communities, the impact on the Baldwin neighborhood, traffic impacts on the neighborhood, costs, and allowing for future expansion. Jonathan Levi of Jonathan Levi Architects (JLA) presented information to the Committee about the cost and massing of a four section versus a three section school at the Baldwin site. Mr. Levi explained that a four section school would require nine more classrooms than a three section school, but that the difference in overall massing would not be noticeably different. Mr. Levi also shared with the Committee that the cost of these additional classrooms would be approximately \$5 million. To build this capacity, the equivalent of a one section K-8 school, would cost significantly more if built elsewhere.

As the School Committee continues its discussion on the size of the school population and the school building, it is prudent for members to consider additional factors not included in my original recommendation from February 2 including placing an English Language Learner town-wide program at the 9<sup>th</sup> elementary school thereby opening space in an existing school.

My recommendation is to assign students as outlined in my February 2, 2017 memo to the Committee with the addition of space for a town-wide ELL program. This would allow the 9<sup>th</sup> Elementary School at Baldwin to have a student assignment zone sized appropriately for three sections with additional capacity used to alleviate stress and district-wide space challenges throughout the system.

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## Original February 2 Memo

In a joint vote held October 13, 2016, the Brookline Board of Selectmen and the Brookline School Committee selected the current Baldwin School site as the location for Brookline's new 9th Elementary School. I recommend the School Committee request a three section school, with three additional BEEP/early childhood classrooms and three additional classrooms for district-wide special education programming, to be built as Brookline's 9th Elementary School. I did not come to this recommendation easily. This recommendation balances the overall space needs of the Public Schools of Brookline with the project that is the right size for the 9th Elementary School at Baldwin site.

The need for a new elementary school results from the unprecedented enrollment growth experienced in Brookline over the past eleven years. In the SY 2005-2006, 3,904 students were enrolled in our elementary schools. For the current year, 5,437 students are enrolled, an increase of 1,533 students over these eleven years.

These increases in enrollment were absorbed into our existing K-8 schools using a strategy of expanding in place. Working closely with the building department, the Public Schools of Brookline added the equivalent of 55 classrooms into our existing infrastructure. These include:

- Six new classrooms built at Heath School
- Four new classrooms built at Lawrence School
- Two modular classrooms leased for Baker School
- Eleven BEEP classrooms moved out of K-8 buildings into rental space, with those eleven classroom being converted into K-8 classroom use
- Four classrooms leased for Pierce School
- Twelve new classrooms currently being built at the new Devotion School (anticipated opening September 2018)
- Sixteen classrooms built by dividing spaces within our existing K-8 schools

For the upcoming school year, an additional four elementary classrooms are needed to accommodate continued enrollment growth. One classroom each at Driscoll, Pierce, Devotion, and Lawrence will be added to Brookline's existing building infrastructure.

### Existing School Space Capacity

The combination of continued enrollment growth and the expand in place strategy has put significant strain on all of Brookline's K-8 schools. In order to understand the extent of this strain, the school department undertook an in-depth space study of each K-8 school (excluding Devotion as it is currently under construction). This study was conducted November 2016 through January 2017. The goals of this assessment were threefold:

1. Physical measurements of all classrooms, instructional spaces, common spaces, offices and conference rooms.
2. A determination of whether these existing spaces are adequate and appropriate for current and future enrollment demands. For the purpose of this analysis, the current MSBA space guidelines were used as the benchmark to determine adequacy.

- An assessment of existing school grounds and open spaces managed by Parks and Open Space and/or the School Department.

Using the current MSBA guidelines, this analysis shows a significant deficit of net space (classroom and instructional) across all Brookline schools.

School	Net Space Deficit (sq. ft.)
Baker	29,705*
Driscoll	20,632
Heath	25,557
Lawrence	22,061
Lincoln	21,731
Pierce	22,642**
Runkle	19,329
<b>Total</b>	<b>161,657</b>

*\*Includes the square footage of leased modular classrooms*

*\*\*Includes square footage of leased classroom space at 62 Harvard St*

Without any additional enrollment growth, the need for a 9th elementary school is clear. The expand in place strategy allowed eleven years of enrollment growth to be absorbed into our existing schools. This strategy, however, resulted in the Public Schools of Brookline having a space deficit larger than the space needed for a five section elementary school. The total net space deficit across the system is 161,657 net square feet while the net square footage of the new Devotion School will be 131,180.

The construction of a new elementary school at the Baldwin School site adds capacity to the Public Schools of Brookline allowing for a portion of this space deficit to be addressed. The capacity of the 9th Elementary School at Baldwin to do this must be considered along with the ongoing Devotion School project and information on the number of students currently living in each of our K-8 districts.

### **Providing Relief to Schools in North and South Brookline**

During SY 2015-2016, the following number of students lived in each of our K-8 districts.

K-8 District	Student Count (PK-8)
Lincoln	605

Pierce	876
Lawrence	572
Devotion	848
Driscoll	504
Runkle	600
Heath	486
Baker	867

These counts of students living in each of our K-8 districts differ from the enrollment in each of our K-8 schools. For example, student enrollment at Lawrence in February 2016 was 688; 116 students greater than the number of students living in the Lawrence District in SY 2015-2016. This difference between students in district and actual enrollment in each school is the result of two factors: each school facility having a specific capacity that is being fully utilized, and the assignment district buffer zones allowing flexibility in student assignment to maintain an average class size of 21 students throughout our school system. The opening of a renovated Devotion School, planned to accommodate 1,050 students including Pre-K, will relieve significant space pressures in North Brookline. A Devotion School that can accommodate all students living in the Devotion district with additional room for buffer assignments and anticipated new housing will provide relief to the Lawrence and Driscoll Schools. By providing relief to Lawrence and Driscoll, we then can address space pressures at Pierce by using buffer assignments in the Pierce/Driscoll and Pierce/Lawrence zones.

The 9th Elementary School at Baldwin will provide similar space relief in South Brookline. In SY 2015-2016, 867 students lived in the Baker District. As a 4+ section school with 762 students enrolled as of February 1, 2017, Baker is operating significantly over its building capacity and still students are being buffered from Baker to other schools. If Baker is operationalized as a four section school, the three classes above the four section total at Baker would be absorbed by the 9th Elementary School at Baldwin. Additionally, all students currently living in the Baker District could be assigned to either Baker or the 9th School at Baldwin. Similar to the Devotion School in North Brookline, the 9th Elementary School at Baldwin would also allow for student buffer zone assignments that could relieve some enrollment and space pressures at Heath, Runkle and Lincoln.

**Additional Enrollment Growth Anticipated**

In addition to the immediate space need resulting from the Town’s expand in place strategy, the enrollment projections for the Public Schools of Brookline show continued enrollment growth in upcoming years. Including known new developments, more than 400 additional K-8 students will enroll by 2020. A significant portion of these students will live in South Brookline, with an anticipated 192 additional students moving into an expanded

Hancock Village. This enrollment growth combined with the number of students currently living in the Baker district, the sections currently at Baker over a four section building capacity of 36 classes, and potential overcrowding relief in neighboring schools/districts provide support for building a three section school at Baldwin.

I recommend a three section 9<sup>th</sup> Elementary School with a total of 27 K-8 classrooms. In addition to these K-8 classrooms I recommend including three classrooms for BEEP/early childhood education in the 9th school. In a PK-8 district, it is educationally sound to program early childhood in our elementary school buildings. This vision guided Brookline's early childhood program from its inception until the unprecedented space constraints forced the Town to lease early childhood classrooms. The 9th School at Baldwin provides an opportunity for Brookline to reintegrate early childhood classrooms in our K-8 schools. With the space pressure relief provided by the 9th Elementary School at Baldwin, it is also possible that BEEP classes could return to Lincoln and remain at Runkle.

I also recommend including three classrooms for district-wide special education classes in the 9th Elementary School at Baldwin. The entire Reaching for Independence through Structured Education (RISE) program for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder is currently located at Runkle School; it serves 48 students in six classrooms. RISE has outgrown its current space at the Runkle School and current enrollment forecasts from BEEP/early childhood grades indicate continued and substantial growth in this program. Building three classrooms for RISE at the 9th School at Baldwin allows the PSB to continue meeting the needs of the growing number of students served by this specialized program. By building space for RISE at the 9th Elementary School at Baldwin and dividing the large RISE program into two sites, a minimum of two classrooms will open at Runkle providing additional space to address enrollment and capacity challenges in the district. By dividing the program into two sites, the district will be able to more fully support inclusive opportunities as the program continues to grow.

Based on current enrollment projections, the current Devotion School project, and the student population in each of our K-8 districts, I recommend the School Committee request a three section school, with additional space for both BEEP and RISE, for the 9th Elementary School at Baldwin. A three section school at this location will allow the Public Schools of Brookline to meet its projected enrollment needs and will allow for overcrowding relief for surrounding schools. While there is a need town-wide for four sections, putting all four at the Baldwin location places a portion of the additional capacity in a part of town where it is not needed. The Devotion School project, designed to enroll all the students currently living in the Devotion district with additional buffer capacity, allows the Public Schools of Brookline to address some of the existing overcrowding in North Brookline.