



THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE
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To: School Committee - Capital Improvement Subcommittee
From: Ben Lummis, Interim Superintendent of Schools
Date: December 11, 2019
RE: Interim Superintendent's Recommendation for Use of Clark Road Facility for FY2021 - FY2023

Recommendation

The use of 2 Clark Road (Leonard Brenner Building on the Maimonides School Campus) addresses multiple district-wide capital needs while maintaining flexibility for other sites. By moving only one grade of students (Kindergarten) from Pierce K-8, we minimize disruption to the community and accommodate most of the needs expressed by parents and staff during multiple meetings this past year. This recommendation provides stability for the Brookline Early Education Program (BEEP) and allows the program to expand while also accommodating all administrative office space needs without any additional leases. This is the most financially prudent approach because it minimizes moving, transportation and staffing costs. My recommendation is summarized as follows:

- Relocate up to five Pierce Kindergarten classrooms to the second floor of 2 Clark Road for the 2020-2023 school years
- Continue using the first floor of 2 Clark Road as a BEEP location with up to five classrooms
- School Department staff who provide essential services to students, families and schools and who are currently occupying both second and third floors of 2 Clark Road will be consolidated to the third floor, including:
 - Student Services staff who provide support and services in the areas of guidance, counseling, special education and out of district placements. (10)
 - Steps to Success staff who promote equitable learning opportunities and provide support for low income students and families in the school district. (5)
 - Food Services staff who oversee and support the district's food service program including the cafeteria operations and staff at each school (3)
 - Facilities & Operations staff who oversee building operations and student transportation (4)
 - METCO staff who provide educational support and programming for Brookline students enrolled through the METCO program (2)
- Relocate School Department staff currently at Clark Road who will relocate to Sperber Education Center:
 - Brookline Adult & Community Education (BACE) staff who provide overall management of courses, registration and enrollment of adult education offerings (7)
- Curriculum Coordinators and Office of Teaching and Learning staff currently at the Sperber Education Center (SEC) will remain at the SEC

Request for Subcommittee Action:

- Motion to approve and recommend to the full School Committee the placement of up to five Kindergarten classrooms from the Pierce School to 2 Clark Road, the continued use of 2 Clark Road for up to five BEEP classrooms, and the continued use of 2 Clark Road for educational support personnel.

Overview and Background for the Request

This recommendation continues the ongoing efforts by the School Committee and the Public Schools of Brookline to address the historic enrollment growth that began in our PK-8 schools in 2005 that has resulted in a 41% increase in students in our elementary schools. In September 2019, the School Committee reaffirmed its long term capital plan to address overcrowding and substandard spaces when it voted again to support the three school plan of rebuilding Driscoll School, partnering with the Massachusetts School Building Authority to renovate or rebuild Pierce School, and opening a new PK-8 school at Old Lincoln School or another location.

In the relative short term the School Committee and PSB also need to address immediate facility concerns and shortages. With their July 2019 votes, the School Committee, Select Board and Advisory Committee enabled the Town to lease the school building at 2 Clark Road from the Maimonides School. The Clark Road facility provides sixteen classrooms, support space, and office space and other school based facilities. All three boards agreed that leasing an entire school building in north Brookline was a rare opportunity that would help immediately address a number of space and facility related needs across multiple buildings including overcrowding, substandard learning spaces for our most vulnerable populations, and the need for administrative office space for staff that provide essential services.

Over the course of numerous public meetings in the spring and fall of this year, the committee and school department have been working to identify the use of the Clark Road facility that would best address a variety of our facility needs, and not necessarily simply benefit a single school. This fall, I have worked with the Pierce School and BEEP leadership, and gotten input and feedback from school committee members and families to develop a recommendation that provides relief in a number of ways across space, programming, operational, and financial considerations. This recommendation seeks to address a variety of competing factors including:

- Create a plan that positively impacts as many schools as possible
- Develop a plan that is the least disruptive for the fewest possible families, and creates the fewest possible transitions for students, families, and staff
- Balance the negative effects of overcrowding with our goals for student achievement and our concerns about the need for stability for students, families, and educators
- Provides stability for BEEP and Pierce as we continue to pursue long term solutions for both communities
- Reduce or eliminate the need for additional leased spaces

We have considered three primary alternatives for the use of Clark Road - moving kindergarten classes from Pierce to Clark, moving K-1 classes from Pierce to Clark, and moving K-2 classes from Pierce to Clark. All three options have advantages and disadvantages for the Pierce School community and the larger school community. Working closely with Pierce and BEEP leadership, and operations and finance staff, we looked at programming, scheduling, staffing, and community impacts for both Pierce and BEEP. We also looked at costs across all three approaches for moving, additional staff needed, transportation, operations, and any additional leases necessary for administrative space.

Ultimately moving Pierce kindergarten to Clark Road has multiple positive impacts while minimizing the negative impacts. First and foremost, this approach creates the least disruption for Pierce students and families and BEEP students and families. Whereas the other approaches require students to be away from the Pierce campus for multiple years, the kindergarten option has students beginning their Brookline K-8 experience at Clark Road for just one year before moving to the School Street site for the remainder of their elementary years. Transportation, community building, extended day, and staffing can be addressed with relatively minor changes as compared to the K-1 and K-2 options which would essentially create a multi-grade school away from Pierce and keep families split for multiple years.

For BEEP, this recommendation prevents yet another move for their program and provides stability for families and staff. Further, it allows BEEP to grow either by adding classes or by moving Heath BEEP classrooms to Clark Road which would provide greater flexibility at Heath to expand special education and/or English learner programs at our only school that does not yet provide a district-wide program. Additionally the collaboration and close connection that can be developed between the BEEP and K classes allow us to create a sizable Early Education Center where families could spend up to three years of their child's beginning years in the same facility.

In relation to operational impact, the kindergarten option minimizes staff changes, provides the simplest and most cost effective approach to student transportation, and solves our need to ensure that as many as 60 staff members have appropriate work space without additional costs. Both the K-1 and K-2 options would require additional moves of classrooms, learning spaces, or office space. Both of the latter options would also require additional office space leases or placing essential services at the Baldwin School building. While the K-2 approach requires the least additional staff, makes available the most space at Pierce, and positively impacts the schedule for grades 3-8, it also has the most significant negative impact to the school community as students and families would be separated and operate independently, essentially creating two separate schools. The K-2 option also requires extensive additional changes including moving BEEP to the Pierce Historic Building, leasing office space for 40+ staff, and the biggest increase in transportation costs.

The table below shows the operational changes and costs associated with each approach.

	BEEP & Kindergarten		BEEP, K-1		BEEP, K-2	
Staffing	1.8 FTE (Nurse, Specials, EL)	\$126,000	3.0 FTE (Nurse, Specials, EL)	\$210,000	1.2 FTE (Nurse, Middle school)	\$98,000
Transportation	No additions	\$ 0	Bus/Vans	\$86,130	Buses/Vans	\$172,260
Moving	Pierce K, BACK to SEC, Admin 2nd to 3rd floor	\$25,000	Pierce K-1, SEC and Admin to leased office space	\$35,000	Move from Pierce K-2; BEEP to Pierce Historic, SEC and Admin to Leased Office Space	\$50,000
Facilities	IT and electrical	\$20,000	IT and electrical	\$25,000	IT and electrical	\$30,000
2 Clark Road Operating Expense		\$300,000		\$300,000		\$300,000
Additional Leases		\$ 0		\$ 350,000		\$400,000
Total		\$471,000		\$1,006,130		\$1,050,260

Further Considerations and Detailed Planning

When the School Committee approves a recommendation for the use of Clark Road, further and much more detailed planning will take place in the areas of:

- Enrollment and registration for BEEP
- Exact start and end times that will allow students to travel between the two sites at the beginning and end of the day

- Bus schedule and routing to minimize or eliminate the cost of transporting Pierce students between the two sites at the beginning and end of the day
- Pierce Extended Day and what programs could be offered at Clark and Pierce
- Exact scheduling and staffing
- Adjustments to Clark Road facility including electrical and IT
- Moving plans and timelines for Pierce, BACE, and staff at Clark moving to 3rd floor

Ongoing Strategic Considerations

Given the number of uncertainties related to capital planning, PSB must remain flexible while working with the properties we have and needs to remain open to the possibility of plans being adjusted as new developments or opportunities arise.

We also must continue to be transparent with all considerations and decisions while encouraging community feedback and discussions. Parents must be reassured that their kindergarten children are still a part of the Pierce School community and that they have every opportunity to integrate them fully into the Pierce community's school-based functions and activities.

Given the difficult circumstances we find ourselves in after more than a decade of explosive enrollment growth that is unparalleled in the Town's recent history, we continue to make difficult choices about how to address our capital needs. There will be challenges along the way, and we must acknowledge that none of these transitions are easy.

Ultimately both Pierce and BEEP have very strong communities. With the proper support and planning, and because of the great work of school leaders and educators, they will both continue to provide excellent learning opportunities for our students.