



THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE
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TO: Andrew Bott, Superintendent
FROM: Mary Ellen Dunn, Deputy Superintendent for Administration and Finance
DATE: October 3, 2016
RE: Enrollment Projections & Reporting, District Boundary Update, Policy Revision Considerations, and Enrollment Projection as of October 1, 2015

Executive Summary:

Attached are three summaries and a review of the 2015/16 Enrollment Projections for consideration when addressing the ongoing projected school enrollment growth. The first is a review of the already started work required to update and establish an Annual Enrollment Projection Report. The second is an overview of the considerations for changing/updating school district boundaries and buffer zones. Third, the process by which the school department will be transparent and inclusive of all constituencies regarding any potential or considered change in policy that impacts the placement of students or services provided to students as a result of enrollment growth. Also included for reference is the last published enrollment projection that is being used for the 9th School Site Study.

Enrollment Projections and Reporting

The school district will be undertaking the establishment of an Annual Enrollment Projection Report to be issued in late November or early December. The Enrollment Report will be a collaborative effort of multiple internal school department staff, Planning Department, Town Clerk, and Assessors/GIS employees. It is anticipated that once the Annual Enrollment Projection Report is built for the first time this year, that annual updates will be available in early November for earlier inclusion and consideration for the annual budget process.

The starting point for the Enrollment Report will be each year's official October 1 student enrollment data provided to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.¹ The report will use this statewide benchmark to establish a one, five, and ten-year enrollment projection detailed by school boundary cohort. While the annual data is initially available on October 1 there is extensive verification work required prior to certification toward the end of that month. Accuracy of student data that is tied to funding is essential. Accuracy of student data based on their residence, at one point in time per year, is equally essential to long term infrastructure planning. A ten-year projection is only used for long-term capital and budgetary planning purposes.

Building on the certified enrollment data, the Enrollment Working Group will establish a methodology for adjusting the projection to consider anticipated residential development based on the known and permitted building projects and an applied analysis of the number of students generated per bedroom under each permit.

¹ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/enroll/>

The one-year enrollment projection will update the placement and (residence) location of students and provide a comparison to prior years. The report and future versions will begin to represent the enrollment projection in table, graph, and GIS map formats. Adding the GIS map format will allow readers to visually understand where students are residing within the community and within school boundaries. Over time, the mapping of students by census block should develop sufficient data and reveal trends in both numeric and geographic shifts in student population that will be useful in forecasting any need for district boundary review.

District Boundary Review

Brookline is divided up geographically into school districts organized around each school building and supplemented by buffer zones that allow for balancing on a school-by-school basis and avoid overcrowding. The impending addition of a 9th elementary school will necessitate the reconsideration of school district boundaries – dividing the town up into nine rather than eight districts will require some boundary adjustment for each and every school district. The following list of criteria provides an overview of the factors that have in the past and will be utilized in formulating revisions in the student assignment policies and district boundaries. These considerations are not presented in rank order:

Student Assignment Considerations

1. Provide targeted relief to schools in relation to space and class size.
2. Maintain class size guidelines across the system with a focus on creating equitable class size across all K-8 elementary schools.
3. Avoid creating socio-economic disproportionality in student assignments.
4. Maximize walkability with a goal of alignment with Brookline's Complete Streets Policy.
5. Maximize geographical continuity by respecting the geographic boundaries of existing neighborhoods.
6. Take into account major roadways and any traffic implications that will have an impact on the safety of students.
7. Take into account hills and other geographic features.
8. Consider impact of assignment on transportation efficiency and costs by minimizing the need for busing. Consider existing bus routes as a starting point.
9. Consider impact of assignment on programming costs (e.g. relocating special education programs).
10. Regain and maintain dedicated classroom space for art, music, special education and English language learner programs.
11. Consider capacity of cores spaces (cafeteria, library, gym, etc.), in addition to the number of classrooms available.
12. Plan with the goal of leaving some room for growth while accounting for known/expected future residential developments.
13. Minimize the impact of any change on current students (i.e. explore options such as the grandfathering of students and families).
14. Establish boundary review process to be addressed periodically – perhaps once every 6-9 years.
15. Evaluate the continued use of buffer zones when enrolling new families as a tool to manage future enrollment growth.

Policy Revision Considerations

All School Committee policy revisions must go through a public review process. The School Committee process is to have a policy recommendation reviewed through the School Committee Policy Sub Committee and then receive up to three readings with the full school committee before approval. Policies that may be impacted by enrollment projections and district boundary review are **J 1 d. Assignment of Students to Schools** (Appendix A), Transportation, or other policy that impacts the assignment or placement of students, and services required.

Enrollment Projection

The district has been experiencing significant enrollment growth since 2005. Over 1500 students have been absorbed into the existing eight Kindergarten through 8th Grade buildings. A total of 55 Classrooms were added through the use of an “Expand-in-Place” strategy since 2008

The report provides a summary, as presented, regarding how the district has addressed enrollment growth for the last ten years and the last projections calculated using the October 1, 2015 enrollment information.

Future enrollment projections anticipate approximately 700 additional students in the next five years as birth trends and enrollment growth continue to be maintained at the same level as the last ten years. Appendix B provides a graphic forecast of the enrollment projection and the impact on class size as the district continues to grow in enrollment but not in physical space.

**Enrollment Projections and Reporting, District Boundary Review,
and Policy Revision Considerations**

Enrollment Projections and Reporting

The school district will be undertaking the establishment of an annual Enrollment Projection Report to be issued in late November or early December this year. The Enrollment Report will be a collaborative effort of multiple internal school department staff, Planning Department, Town Clerk, and Assessors/GIS employees. The enrollment report will be updated by November 1 of each school year with the annual October 1, student enrollment data that will be certified to the DESE at the end of October. Reflecting on the fact that the school district is potentially opening a new school in 2021, the following begins to lay out a plan for populating the new school.

The Enrollment Report will begin with using the official October 1 student enrollment data provided to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.² The report will use the statewide benchmark to establish a one, five, and ten-year enrollment projection by district and school boundary cohort. Generally, this benchmark data is not certified until the middle to end of October. Prior to certification, the district must ensure that all students not enrolled as of October 1 are removed from the count. This can include EDCO students, BEEP students under the age of 3, pre-registration students not yet placed, errors in student placement and coding. Without the proofing of student data, the October 1 number could be off between 50 to 150 students in either direction each year. This data establishes our funding rates for Chapter 70, federal and state entitlement grants, and other state and federal funding sources. There are over 56 data elements required for each student.² Accuracy of student data that is tied to funding is essential. Accuracy of student data based on their residence, at one point in time per year is also essential to long term infrastructure planning.

In addition, the Enrollment Working Group will establish a methodology for adjusting the projection to consider new residential development, if necessary, which will be completed based on the known and permitted building permits and an applied analysis of the number of students generated per bedroom under each permit.

The one-year enrollment projection will also update the placement and location of students and compare them to prior years. This will be completed in GIS map form using the census blocks to reduce the over identification of elementary students by address. This will allow the reader over time to visually see where students are residing within the community and within school boundaries. Over time, the Enrollment Working Group will have enough data in this format to show trends in any movement in residential addresses. Depending on the options chosen for boundary assignments of students, the five-year projection might be able to show a shift in where students reside. But likely it will only show where students who are currently in preK-grade 3 reside. Grade 4-8 in five years will not be at the elementary school. It will not be able to show the reader any historical trends on residential addresses that “traditionally” house students without mapping the data annually and tracking any generational or short-term turnover of residential addresses. The ten-year enrollment projection of students is not reliable as the students in the K-8 system are not yet born and assumptions based on generational turnover of residences or apartments would result in a high margin of error. This aspect of the annual enrollment projection report will be used for long-term capital and budgetary planning purposes.

² <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/enroll/>

The report and future versions will begin to represent the enrollment projection in table, graph, and GIS map formats. Adding the GIS map format will allow readers to visually understand where students are residing within the community and within school boundaries. Over time, the mapping of students by census block should develop sufficient data and reveal trends in both numeric and geographic shifts in student population that will be useful in forecasting any need for district boundary review.

District Boundary Review

Due to the rise in enrollment over the last ten years, the expansion of the buffer zones, and the projected continuation of enrollment growth, the Public Schools of Brookline must commence a review of all district boundary lines. The traditional school district boundary structure restricts attendance by geographic location and proximity of a residence to a specific school.

Each annual Enrollment Projection Report should include a review of any trend data of shifting residences of students and the utilization of buffer zones. These considerations are not listed in rank order:

Student Assignment Considerations:

1. Provide targeted relief to schools in relation to space and class size.
2. Maintain class size guidelines across the system with a focus on creating equitable class size across all K-8 elementary schools.
3. Avoid creating socio-economic disproportionality in student assignments.
4. Maximize walkability with a goal of alignment with Brookline's Complete Streets Policy.
5. Maximize geographical continuity by respecting the geographic boundaries of existing neighborhoods.
6. Take into account major roadways and any traffic implications that will have an impact on the safety of students.
7. Take into account hills and other geographic features.
8. Consider impact of assignment on transportation efficiency and costs by minimizing the need for busing. Consider existing bus routes as a starting point.
9. Consider impact of assignment on programming costs (e.g. relocating special education programs).
10. Regain and maintain dedicated classroom space for art, music, and special education and English Language Learner (ELL) programs.
11. Consider capacity of core spaces (cafeteria, library, gym, etc.), in addition to the number of classroom available.
12. Plan with the goal of leaving some room for growth while accounting for known/expected future residential developments.
13. Minimize the impact of any change on current students (i.e. explore options such as the grandfathering of students and families).
14. Establish boundary review process to be addressed periodically or once every 6-9 years.
15. Evaluate the continued use of buffer zones when enrolling new families as a tool to manage future enrollment growth.

District Boundaries: Attendance areas for the various schools of the town will be drawn up by the Superintendent and approved by the School Committee. The primary considerations that govern the establishment of a school attendance area are school capacity and transportation considerations. Generally, with few exceptions, students will attend the school in the attendance area in which they live.

As part of the enrollment projection and the district boundary review, the Enrollment Working Group will look at the potential impact on district lines for changes in property. Property owners in Brookline may have a "build by right" or new development plans (e.g. 40b) are filed to modify or change the number of residential units on a specific lot. Both increases and decreases in bedrooms will be reviewed annually to monitor any future impact on enrollment.

Maintain Buffer Zone Policy: A “buffer zone” is defined as a specified area between two or more school assignment areas that permits individual addresses to be assigned to two or more schools while keeping siblings assigned to the same school. All other assignment area lines are fixed and students living within these boundaries are assigned to one school based on address.

The buffer zone option potentially increases the need for transportation if residences are over two miles as the “districted school” is not established until the parents have made a request or establishes by policy a “home” district. The district could take the position that placement of students over two miles from their residence would not be considered or allowed to be moved as part of the buffer zone policy. Therefore, the Town would not invoke M.G.L. c.71, s. 68: Duties of towns to maintain schools; transportation of children, school building committee representation. In addition, the district may consider children from the same family are not split and assigned to two different schools.

Transportation: The state requires transportation of a grade K through 6 students who live over two miles from their districted school. The School Department should adopt a revision to current policy that no transportation will be provided unless required by statute.³ Current district policy is 1.5 miles and is based on a now defunct state reimbursement for public school transportation.

“Measurable Distances

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education policy regarding the “measurable distances” provisions set forth in M.G.L. c.71, s. 68, is as follows:

- a. **Measurable Distances**
The distance between a pupil's residence and the school the pupil is entitled to attend or the nearest school bus stop shall be measured from “portal to portal” over a commonly traveled route.
- b. **Portal to portal** shall mean the **sidewalk or public way** in front or nearest to a pupil's home of residence to the entrance way of the school building the public is attending. Where there is more than one entrance way to the school building either entrance way may be used for measuring distances if both of the entrances are ordinarily accessible.
- c. **Commonly traveled route** shall mean a **sidewalk or public way** which, in the ordinary course, is open and accessible to pedestrian traffic.

The above definition of a “commonly traveled route” shall be used to determine and verify numbers of pupils being transported at least 2 miles from school, including instances where a school committee elects to transport pupils, because of hazardous/safety conditions, over a route other than a “commonly traveled route” as defined in our policy on “measurable distances.” A public way is considered not open and accessible when a state (excluding Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) or federal agency has officially excluded school transportation vehicles from using the route. School transportation vehicles are not required to travel over nonpublic ways (c.90). A public way is adopted and registered as such in the city or town (c.81).”⁴

Consideration for Building and Maintaining Positive School Culture

The School Department will plan for and make recommendations to the school committee for appropriate resources in staff and events or activities that will assist in the transition of students from one school to another along with the building and maintaining positive building culture. At any time a new school is opened, the school committee will be requested to hire the new principal and assistant

³ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section68>

⁴ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/transportation/guide.html?section=distance>

principals and principal secretary up to one year in advance to prepare the building for opening and to begin building the school culture.

Legal References

- M.G.L. 71:37C; 71:37D; 71:37I; 71:37J
- Board of Education Regulations Pertaining to Section 8 of Chapter 636 of the Acts of 1974, Regarding Magnet School Facilities and Magnet Educational Programs, adopted 2/25/75
- Board of Education Regulations Pursuant to Chapter 636 of the Acts of 1974, adopted 9/10/74
- Board of Education Regulations Pertaining to the Preparation of Racial Balance Plans which Involve Redistricting, adopted 4/24/73

Policy Revision Considerations

The Enrollment Working Group from time to time may recommend to the Superintendent and the School Committee Policy Sub Committee revisions to the School Committee policy **J 1 d. Assignment of Students to Schools** (Appendix A), Transportation, or other policy that impacts the assignment or placement of students, and services required. The process for any recommended policy change is a public review process through the publicly posted School Committee Policy Sub Committee meetings and then up to three readings at publicly posted School Committee meetings. Also included is publicly posting the proposed policy on the district's website for easy review and access along with instructions for submitting questions or concerns by concerned citizens.

The specific process for changes in boundaries will also include a more informal but transparent process of either the Superintendent's Enrollment Working Group or a Superintendent's Redistricting Committee. The Redistricting process is an eighteen month to three-year process to

1. Assess boundaries,
2. Review potential changes with school leadership,
3. Review potential changes with parent community in open house format or other information gathering methods to collect feedback,
4. Submit recommendation to SC Policy Sub Committee for changes,
5. Up to three readings with the full School Committee, and
6. Time to inform and consult with impacted families and school employees at each stage.

Enrollment Projections

The district has been experiencing significant enrollment growth since 2005. Over 1500 students have been absorbed into the existing eight Kindergarten through 8th Grade buildings. A total of 55 Classrooms were added through the use of an "Expand-in-Place" strategy since 2008 including but not limited to:

- 6 classrooms built at Heath;
- 4 classrooms built at Lawrence;
- 2 modular classrooms added at Baker;
- 11 BEEP classes moved out of K-8 buildings into leased commercial space;
- 4 classrooms in leased commercial space for Pierce;
- 1 brand new school will be built at Devotion to add 12 classrooms; and
- Expanded use of the buffer zones to maintain class size at desired levels.

The "Expand-in-Place" strategy has not addressed:

- A projected shortage of 27 to 30 classrooms across the district at the K-8 level;
- Undersized cafeterias are projected to result in all K-8 schools starting lunch before 10:30 a.m. (2 schools do this now, and 2 more start before 11.);

- Inadequate core facilities such as gymnasiums and libraries will not be addressed;
- Expand the use of expensive, short-term solutions such as modular classes and rental space;
- Class sizes continue to increase; and
- Necessary realignment of district boundaries and buffer zones as students are traveling farther from their districted school.

The “Expand-in-Place” strategy has forced the district and the town to use the following options to mitigate classroom enrollment of over desired levels.

- Relocated administrative offices from school buildings into rental space;
- Created new classrooms by dividing larger ones;
- Converted hallways, locker rooms, and small rooms into substandard classroom spaces and administrative office space;
- Expanded and utilized buffer zones to distribute enrollment increases across all schools to balance overcrowding;
- Reclaimed classrooms dedicated to Extended Day and other programs resulting in a reduction of space available; and
- Spending \$1 million annually for rental space for classroom and administrative offices.

Future enrollment projections anticipate another 700 students in the next five years as birth trends and enrollment growth continue to be maintained at the same level as the last ten years. Appendix B provides a graphic forecast of the enrollment projection and the impact on class size as the district continues to grow in enrollment but not in physical space.

The enrollment projections are based on a cohort survival rate. The cohort survival rate includes in the base the experience of “build-by-right” activity over the last ten years. It also includes a total of 180 Students for known new developments at the time. Below is an update to what the Enrollment Working Group will be reviewing as part of future projections. Also included in Appendix B is an update to the developments that were used and the assumptions about the enrollment growth anticipated by the future occupancy of new residential units. As these newly filed developments come online for occupancy permits, the School, Assessors, and Planning Departments will use the same data set of students to compare methodologies. From time to time the enrollment estimates being used have not come from the same data set. All future projections will be based on the same data set of student enrollment using the certified DESE October 1 enrollment data. This should allow for a snap shot in time comparison of developments and what the yield of new students is year over year at the same time of year.

Appendix A

Public Schools of Brookline

J 1 d. Assignment of Students to Schools: Voted 10/6/81, #81-461; 5/7/84, #84-171; 5/11/93, #93-148; 6/7/01, #01-65, #01-66, #01-67; 6/14/01, #01-77; 2/7/02, #02-14; 3/25/04, #04-23 and #04-25; 3/15/12, #12-18; 2/14/13, #13-13; 3/12/15, #15-16)

1) **Open Enrollment**

Open enrollment is defined as a condition whereby a resident of the Town whose child does not reside in a specific elementary school district, may request admission to a school in that district.

While students have a right to attend the elementary school in the school district where they reside, the Brookline School Committee endorses a policy of open enrollment, subject to certain provisions set forth below which are designed to support the class size policies of the Public Schools of Brookline, to ensure even utilization of individual building resources and staff throughout the system, and to protect the educational wellbeing of the students. If a transfer is approved to one child in a family, there can be no guarantee that a sibling will be granted similar approval. Children of a resident who moves from one school district to another within the Town may be granted permission to remain in the former school district upon request to the Superintendent of Schools or his designee. The transportation of students to out-of-district schools shall be the responsibility of the student's family.

2) **Out of District Transfer Requests**

With respect to out-of-district transfer requests, the following will be considered:

- a) The class size in the school district of the applicant, and that in the school being requested;
- b) The overall crowding conditions and staff/pupil loads in the school district of the applicant and that in the school being requested; 3.
- c) The parents' reason for the request;
- d) The educational well-being of the student, including the opinions of the Principals of both schools and other staff members.

The Superintendent of Schools, based on a recommendation from the Office of Student Affairs, shall have the sole responsibility of deciding out-of-district transfer requests and the assignment of new families residing in buffer zones (see below), in accordance with School Committee policy.

3) **Buffer Zones**

a) **Establishment of Buffer Zones**

In order to help mitigate overcrowding in a grade or school and/or help maintain balanced class sizes across our elementary schools, the School Committee may establish school attendance "buffer zones," i.e. addresses or groups of addresses on or near elementary school district boundaries from which new students may be assigned by the Superintendent or his/her designee to any of the immediate school districts.

While committed to neighborhood elementary schools, the School Committee believes buffer zones are a necessary component of any strategy to manage the impacts of enrollment growth because they provide the Superintendent greater flexibility to assign students to schools where space and resources afford the best possible education for those students.

b) **Family Preference & Sibling Assignment**

With respect to the assignment of new families residing in buffer zones:

- (1) The preference of the family will be considered in making the initial assignment.

- (2) Unless the family requests a different assignment, which will be considered according to the policy on out-of-district transfers, subsequent assignments of siblings in a given family will be made to the same school.

c) Periodic Review, Modification, Expansion, or Reassessment of Buffer Zone Need

In order to underscore the School Committee's objective of maintaining strong neighborhood schools and reducing the uncertainty felt by some families who move into buffer zones, the School Committee shall periodically review the PSB's need for buffer zones based on enrollments as well as the experience of the community with the buffer zones. Based on any such review, the School Committee may modify or expand buffer zones to include additional schools for potential student assignment provided; however, that such review does not guarantee repeal of any given buffer zone.

d) Public Access to Buffer Zone Information

A current map and full list and description of school attendance districts and buffer zones shall be available from the Town's GIS Department online through the Town's website, or in print form upon request.

4) Temporary Relocation of Students and/or Classrooms: (Voted 2/14/13, #13-13)

In response to extraordinary circumstances, including, but not limited to, space constraints from high enrollment or capital renovation/construction, the Superintendent of Schools may, at his or her discretion, in consultation with the School Committee, and in accordance with the goals outlined in the School Committee's policy J 1 e. Assignment of Students to Schools/Buffer Zones, temporarily relocate a classroom or classrooms of students in grades K-12 to spaces outside of the school to which they are assigned. Such temporary relocation may be sited in rental space or other buildings within the PSB or Town, including other elementary schools. Any such relocation shall be temporary, shall terminate when the need for such relocation ends, and shall not exceed 2 years without a vote of the School Committee on or before March 15th of the second year of implementation. Students relocated under this provision shall retain their original school assignment status for all other purposes including, but not limited to, matriculation and calculations of school enrollment.