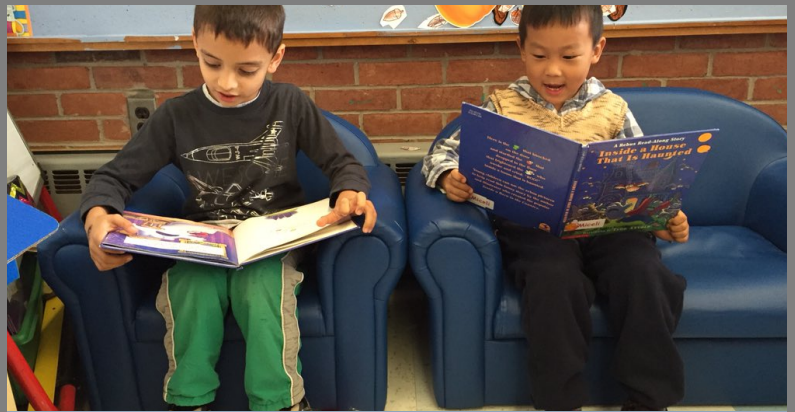


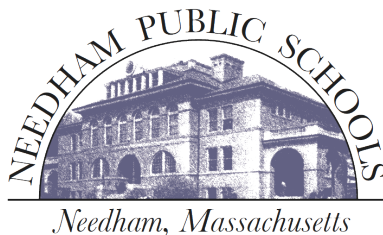


REPORT OF THE FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN STUDY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

APRIL 5, 2016



FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN FOR NEEDHAM



2015 & 2016 Full-Day Kindergarten Study and Planning Committee

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Executive Summary of the April 5, 2016 Report to Needham School Committee

The Full-Day Kindergarten Study and Planning Committee is recommending to the School Committee that our district commits to moving forward without delay on these two fronts:

- Meet the needs of all learners in kindergarten through a full-day program
- Provide a publicly funded full-day kindergarten

About 75 percent of kindergartners nationwide are enrolled in full-day kindergarten, which is three times the rate of a few decades ago. The proportion of Massachusetts' children enrolled in full-day kindergarten classrooms has increased to 92% from 29% in FY2000. In fact, most Massachusetts communities have *tuition-free* full-day kindergarten: 243 districts out of 313 offer district-wide full-day kindergarten, and 234 are *free* full-day programs. (See pages 1-3)

The Committee found a weight of evidence showing the value of full-day kindergarten in the following areas: increases in children's school readiness, higher academic achievement, improved attendance, support for literacy and language development, social and emotional benefits, and cost decreases from reduced retention/remediation rates. (See pages 4-6)

In a survey of Needham parents with kindergarten-aged children, 95% indicate a preference for full-day kindergarten with the primary reasons being child's readiness or academic needs, working parent's needs, and other towns having full-day kindergarten. In a focus group with Needham parents, it is unanimously expressed that the rollout of full-day kindergarten must be fair and equitable, and that a lottery for available slots is not an acceptable solution. (See pages 9-11)

Space for full-day kindergarten can be addressed by the Elementary School Principals through the typical process of generating creative solutions to short-term space needs. Using the most recent demographic data for grades K-5, this process helped clarify that the needed classroom space for full-day kindergarten can be found before the new Hillside School opens. Although redistricting is a potential solution to the elementary school space issues, it is possible to introduce full-day kindergarten without redistricting; however, there may be short-term impacts on other programs (i.e., art, music, world language, etc.). (See pages 11-13)

Costs of rolling out full-day kindergarten can be determined through the budgeting process used by the District each fiscal year. If the School Committee implements *compulsory* full-day kindergarten, the full cost of the program would be paid from the school operating budget using funds raised by local taxpayers and the Town would receive additional Chapter 70 aid. (See pages 14-15)

In summary, there is no longer any confusion about the value of full-day kindergarten as shown in all the research studies conducted over the past twenty years. The Massachusetts DESE standards are implicitly written with full-day kindergarten in mind, and the expectation of mastery of core standards may not be possible without full-day kindergarten. Between 70% to 80% of Needham families choose KASE, the fee-based kindergarten enrichment program offered through Needham Community Education, as a complement to half-day kindergarten. From the FDK Committee's perspective, that is not a fair and equitable approach to a full-day kindergarten, nor is it a full-day program that unifies the best practices already present in the half-day KASE and half-day kindergarten programs (See pages 6-9), and it does not meet the needs of all learners.

1. Background Information

Committee's Purpose

In November of 2014, the Full-Day Kindergarten Study and Planning Committee convened to conduct research and identify a pathway to full-day kindergarten. After collecting and analyzing information, assessing different models of full-day kindergarten offered nationally and locally, and exploring solutions to potential issues, the FDK Committee is prepared to make an informed recommendation to the School Committee about a full-day kindergarten program for the town of Needham. The committee's initial task was to review the 2002 Full-Day Kindergarten Feasibility Study for applicability to current efforts. This report builds upon that effort by clearly defining the steps to implementation and urging support for moving forward without delay.

2002 Full-Day Kindergarten Feasibility Study

Needham Public Schools received a grant in September of 2001 to explore the possibility of transitioning our half-day kindergarten program to a full-day program. At that time, a study committee was formed to investigate the need, develop transition plans, and align community support. That committee strongly supported launching a full-day kindergarten program, providing students with a developmentally appropriate learning environment, and hiring well-trained and enthusiastic kindergarten teachers for each classroom. They lobbied for a less time-stressed kindergarten experience and they identified space within each school for full-day kindergarten classrooms. In a 2002 survey to all homes with children ages 8 months to five years old, the majority of the 1400 respondents (81%) indicated that full-day kindergarten was a top priority; however, efforts to fund the full-day kindergarten were not successful. The Superintendent requested that \$739,600 for implementing full-day kindergarten (projected operational costs for implementation, transportation and maintaining class size) be included in a fall override. At a July 2002 public forum, many citizens opposed paying for full-day kindergarten and the selectmen voted not to include full-day kindergarten on the November 2002 override ballot.

This report from the current Full-Day Kindergarten Study and Planning Committee incorporates the lessons learned from the 2002 Feasibility Study and continues the assessment recognizing how much time has passed. Over the years, Needham families' turned to Needham Community Education's fee-based kindergarten enrichment program known as KASE -- a partial solution that historically accommodated from 70% to 80% of kindergarten families. KASE will be discussed later in this report in the context of fully addressing the town's need for publicly funded full-day kindergarten.

Kindergarten Programs Nationally and Locally

About 75 percent of kindergartners nationwide are enrolled in full-day kindergarten programs, three times the rate of a few decades ago, as many school districts have come to view kindergarten as an academic starting point rather than a practicing ground for the rhythms and routines of school. That leaves about a million students in the U.S. for whom kindergarten still lasts just a few hours per day.

In Massachusetts, districts with kindergarten-age students must provide part-time kindergarten sessions for at least 425 hours per school year (603 CMR 27.03(5)). Districts are encouraged to offer full-day kindergarten programs defined as 5 hours per day and 5 days per week, or a minimum of 850 hours per school year. Districts have the option of offering a full-day program that has the capacity to serve all or some of their kindergarten-

age children, and districts may charge tuition for the hours beyond the mandated part-time program. If a district offers a limited number of full-day classes, it may place children by lottery or parent request, or offer full-day classes in particular neighborhood schools.

The proportion of Massachusetts' children enrolled in full-day kindergarten classrooms has increased to 92% from 29% in FY2000. In fact, most Massachusetts communities have *tuition-free* full-day kindergarten: 243 school districts out of 313 offer district-wide full-day kindergarten -- and 234 are *free* full-day programs. Needham is one of only five communities in Massachusetts not offering full-day kindergarten, except to those requiring full-day services through special education.

Of the 72 Massachusetts school districts that charge tuition for full-day kindergarten, the average annual tuition is \$3,296. A recent analysis by Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center found that a shift to universal, free full-day kindergarten would require an increase in the state foundation budget of \$77.5 million, with \$29.3 million coming from Chapter 70 state aid and the remainder being the local education contribution. This would provide free full-day kindergarten to an additional 8,760 Massachusetts children currently in half-day programs or paying tuition for full-day programs.

Massachusetts Public School Kindergarten	2014-2015 School Year
Kindergarten enrollment	67,670
Number of children enrolled in full-day K	62,055 (92%)
Number of children enrolled in half-day K	5,615 (8%)
Number of districts offering Kindergarten	313
At least one full-day K classroom	308
Half-day K only	5
District-wide full-day K	243
District-wide <i>free</i> full-day K	234
Partial full-day K, not district-wide	65
Districts charging tuition for FDK	72

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2015). SIMS data for 2014-2015 school year.

Needham's neighboring towns are important benchmarks for comparison of kindergarten programs. Holliston, Hopkinton and Wellesley are part of a growing group of districts transitioning to tuition-free, full-day kindergarten programs. The push is driven partially by the need to prepare students to meet the math and English requirements of the Common Core Standards. Brad Jackson, Holliston's Superintendent of Schools was quoted in the April 2014 *Bay State Parent* magazine as saying, "What the state and federal governments are expecting in terms of curriculum today cannot fit into a half day." Holliston currently offers children a traditional full-day or half-day kindergarten program, as well as a French Immersion or Montessori program. In Hopkinton where the town offered partial full-day kindergarten with tuition at \$4000, Superintendent Cathy MacLeod was quoted as saying, "We can't wait...this can't be about convenience or space. This needs to be about instruction perfectly matched for our students." Hopkinton residents approved full-day kindergarten for all in FY2015. And Wellesley residents also voted to approve full-day kindergarten for all in FY15. Principal Stephen Goodwin from Wellesley's Sprague Elementary School explained, "Many parents have their kids in full-day preschool programs, and for many it would be going backward if we did not start (full-day kindergarten) as soon as possible."

The Committee gathered data from the following towns and synthesized the key findings to help us consider potential models for Needham's full-day kindergarten program. (See table below.)

Comparison with Other Communities	Offer full-day, half-day or both?	Charge tuition for full-day?	All year or introduce gradually?	Neighborhood school or centralized?	Program details of interest?
CANTON	Both (full-day by lottery)	\$3500	All year	Neighborhood school	Some full-day classes do not fill up; parents choose half-day for financial reasons
DEDHAM	Both (full-day by lottery)	\$3500	All year	Centralized (bus from home)	Moving toward full-day for all
HOLLISTON	Traditional full-day & half-day plus French Immersion & Montessori	\$3475	All year	Centralized (bus from home with one elementary school for town)	Task Force recommended publicly funded full-day kindergarten for all in December 2014; not funded
HOPKINTON	Full-day for all	No fee	All year	Neighborhood school	Formerly offered both half and full-day with tuition of \$4000
MEDFIELD	Both (full-day by lottery)	\$3500	All year	Centralized (bus from home)	Happy with model of both half-day and full-day; everybody receives what they want; lottery not needed
NEWTON	Combination model	No fee	Model starts in October	Neighborhood school	Combination model is 3 half-days & 2 full-days for all students, with group 1 having full-day on Mon/Wed & group 2 on Tues/Fri; would like all full days but School Committee didn't fund
NORWOOD	Full-day for all	No fee	All year	Centralized (shuttle)	
WAYLAND	Both (first come/first serve)	\$4320	All year	Neighborhood school	3 models to choose from: 1 full-day/1 half-day; 2 full-days/1 half day; or 2 full-days/2 half-days; impossible to make full-day and half-day experience equal; everyone tries to register at the same time and system crashes
WESTWOOD	Both (choice)	\$1800	Full-day starts mid-Sept	Neighborhood school	Children who don't choose full-day go home and classes remain the same
WELLESLEY	Full-day for all	No fee	All year (grades K-5 dismissed at noon every Wed)	Neighborhood school	Formerly used hybrid model: small groups of children stayed 1 full-day and gradually combined groups until everyone attended 4 full-days, but not until April
WESTON	Full-day for all	No fee	Full-day starts in October	Neighborhood school	

2. Value of Full-Day Kindergarten

There is value in having a full-day kindergarten program in terms of potential academic gains, preference by parents and teachers, as well as benefits for children in general and special education.

Overview of Research Findings

The Committee's research included review of major publications from the National Education Association, Education Commission of the States, National Center for Education Statistics, Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, and National Institute for Early Education Research, which drove the Committee's preliminary findings as summarized in the following table:

Academic Gains	Preferred by Parents and Teachers
Students in full-day kindergarten classes demonstrate greater reading and mathematics gains than those in half day classes (National Education Association, 2006)	100% of full-day parents and 72% of half-day parents noted that, if given the opportunity again, they would choose full-day kindergarten for their child (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000)
Full-day kindergarten can produce long-term educational gains, especially for low-income and minority students (Education Commission of the States, 2005)	Teachers have more time to get to know students and identify/address learning challenges early - increasing odds that children will be successful later in school (Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, 2004)
Full-day kindergarten not only boosts students' academic achievement, it also improves their social and emotional skills (National Education Association, 2008)	Full-day offers social, emotional and intellectual benefits, giving kindergarteners more time to focus and reflect on activities, and transition between them (National Institute for Early Education Research, 2005)

Digging deeper, the Committee found a weight of evidence showing that full-day kindergarten benefits children in the following ways:

Contributes to increased school readiness¹

Students in full-day kindergarten tend to be better prepared for primary-grade learning than those in half-day programs. They do better with the transition to first grade, show significant gains in school socialization (i.e., they understand appropriate behavior), and are equipped with stronger learning skills.

Leads to higher academic achievement²

Achievement findings for full-day kindergarten students show a trend toward higher achievement. Achievement differences appear to persist over time and when other factors such as student demographics and classroom factors are taken into account. Findings include higher achievement on standardized tests as well as in classroom grades. Studies also show a relationship between FDK and higher levels of early math skills.

Improves student attendance³

Two of the longitudinal studies show better attendance in kindergarten and through the primary grades, which translates to more learning time.

Supports literacy and language development⁴

Some studies underscore previous findings that full-day kindergarten students show faster gains on literacy and language measures when compared to half-day kindergarten students, a finding of particular importance for the growing numbers of English language learners. Moreover, such gains may last over time. One study, for example,

showed higher reading achievement persisting through third grade and in some cases through seventh grade,⁵ a benefit that bolsters students' overall school performance.

Benefits children socially and emotionally⁶

Full-day kindergarten gives children more time in a structured setting, which enhances their social, emotional, and behavioral development. One study found that full-day students received significantly higher conduct marks (e.g., obeys playground rules, shows self-confidence, puts forth best effort, works well with others), though a self-concept scale the researchers administered showed mixed results over time.⁷ In other studies, parents and/or teachers cited improved school socialization skills⁸ and less stress and frustration for the children.⁹

Decreases costs by reducing retention and remediation rates

Full-day kindergarten may help students remain on grade as they move ahead in school.¹⁰ This result can offset the cost of extending the kindergarten day and even lead to long-term savings for schools and districts. One study, which found full-day students to be more than twice as likely to remain on grade through third grade, showed that this academic benefit helped to offset 19 percent of the first year's cost of extending the kindergarten day.¹¹

¹ Elicker & Mathur (1997); Sheehan, Cryan, Wiechel, & Bandy (1991); Evansville- Vanderburgh School Corporation (1988); Sachs, Mardell, Ramsey (2014).

² Denton, West, & Walston (2003); Weiss & Offenberg (2002); Elicker & Mathur (1997); Hough & Bryde (1996); Sheehan, Cryan, Wiechel, & Bandy (1991); Evansville- Vanderburgh School Corporation (1988); Walston, West, & Rathbun (2002).

³ Weiss & Offenberg (2002); Hough & Bryde (1996).

⁴ Denton, West, & Walston (2003); Weiss & Offenberg (2002); Elicker & Mathur (1997); Hough & Bryde (1996); Walston, West, & Rathbun (2002); Lash, Bae, Barra, Burr & Fong (2008); Hall-Kenyon, Bingham & Korth (2009).

⁵ Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation (1988).

⁶ Elicker & Mathur (1997); Guarino, Hamilton, Lockwood, Rathbun & Germino-Hausken (2006).

⁷ Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation (1988).

⁸ Hough & Bryde (1996).

⁹ Elicker & Mathur (1997).

¹⁰ Weiss & Offenberg (2002); Sheehan, Cryan, Wiechel, & Bandy (1991).

¹¹ Weiss & Offenberg (2002).

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Supporting Special Education in Needham Public Schools

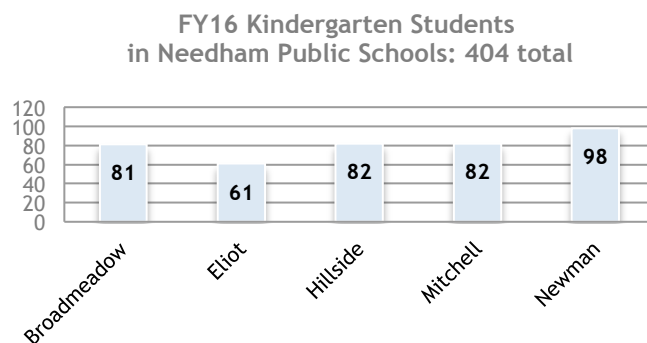
Students with special needs would benefit greatly from a comprehensive full-day kindergarten program. These students would have more time on learning, including increased opportunities for: 1) instructional scaffolding to solidify foundational academic skills and 2) structured learning experiences to focus on social and emotional competencies and school-readiness skills. Additionally, for students requiring special education related services (e.g., speech therapy, physical therapy) delivered outside the general education classroom, the length of a full-day kindergarten school day would allow more time for integration with typically developing peers.

When students with special needs enroll in a kindergarten enrichment program before or after school, they find it particularly challenging because of changes across locations, teaching staff, routines and expectations. These transitions can lead to behavioral issues or a splintered approach to acquisition of skills. A full-day kindergarten program would provide these students with less transitions and a more cohesive full-day school experience.

In the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's *Report to the Legislature-March 2014*, it is stated that research shows how full-day kindergarten programs reduce the need for special education and Title I services, thus contributing to cost savings for some school districts. In Needham, this scenario could be a likely outcome of rolling out full-day kindergarten for all students.

3. Current Status of NPS Kindergarten and KASE Programs

Needham offers half-day kindergarten at each of our five elementary schools with AM Kindergarten running from 8:20am to 11:03am and PM Kindergarten running from 12:02pm to 2:45pm (slightly later schedule at the Newman School to accommodate busing). In compliance with Massachusetts Education Laws and Regulations, all our kindergarten classes are taught by qualified and certified teachers, class sizes do not exceed an average of 25 children, and we meet the requisite 425 annual hours of structured learning time. For FY16, Needham has 404 students enrolled in kindergarten.



KASE, the fee-based kindergarten enrichment program offered through Needham Community Education, has been in existence for 23 years and extends the half-day kindergarten program with a half-day KASE program. KASE's start and end times match those of children's home schools and follow the Needham Public Schools calendar. The Eliot, Mitchell and Newman KASE programs are located in classrooms at those schools. Broadmeadow and Hillside KASE are offered offsite (currently at the Needham Congregational Church) with a supervised shuttle bus service provided as part of the program. For FY16, 324 or 80% of kindergarten students participate in the KASE program. Only about half of the KASE students attend 5-days per week, and another 18% attend 4-days per week. Years ago, we had a more even distribution of students going 2, 3, 4, and 5-days

per week. However, each year, the percentage of students going more days per week is increasing as parents' expectations are changing about the need for a 5-day program.

FY16 KASE Program: 324 Students		
<i>Participation</i>	<i>Percentage of total KASE students</i>	<i>Tuition</i>
2 days/week	10%	\$1,940
3 days/week	23%	\$2,740
4 days/week	18%	\$3,340
5 days/week	49%	\$3,940

Kindergarten Curriculum

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides standards for each core subject area and this Curriculum Framework forms the basis for our instruction. In the table below, Needham Public Schools' kindergarten curriculum is summarized by subject area for the content that our district believes every kindergartner should know and skills every kindergartner should master.

Needham Public Schools: Kindergarten Curriculum Summary		
<p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show an interest in books • Participate in book discussion with partners, small groups, and whole class • Use comprehension strategies when listening to books read aloud or when reading independently • Begin to understand different genres • Read pictures using story language • Demonstrate understanding of basic concepts of print • Begin to identify high frequency words • Identify letters by name and sound when seen in upper and lower case • Rhyme, blend, and segment sounds heard in words 	<p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use stages of the writing process including drafting and publishing • Use oral story telling to plan writing • Use pictures to tell a story • Begin to label pictures and write simple stories • Begin to explore ending punctuation • Use phonetic spelling • Spell identified high frequency words • Begin to write with voice • Begin to add sentences to stories • Experiment with writing in different genres and for different purposes <p>Handwriting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form upper and lowercase letters 	<p>Mathematics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know number names and the count sequence • Count to tell the number of objects • Compare numbers • Understand addition as putting together and adding to, and understanding subtraction as taking apart and taking from • Work with numbers 11-19 to gain foundations for place value • Describe and compare measurable attributes • Classify objects and count the number of objects in each category • Identify and describe shapes (squares, circles, triangles, rectangles, hexagons, cubes, cones, cylinders, and spheres) • Analyze, compare, create, compose shapes
<p>Science</p> <p>Students explore the big ideas of life, physical, and earth science through an inquiry-based, hands on approach. Students study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Table Explorations: Physical Properties of Water (Physical Science) • Water as a Habitat (Life & Earth Science) • Exploring Nature with Children (Life Science) <p>Live animals, outdoor field trips and special programs provided by the Science Center enhance the hands-on experience</p>	<p>Social Studies</p> <p>Students engage in inquiry-based social studies as they study geography and apply thinking skills (comparing/contrasting, observing, classifying) to the following units:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self Awareness/Uniqueness • Rules and Routines • Family and Community • Recognize Similarities & Differences among Various Cultures of the American People 	<p>Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate difference between high and low sounds • Differentiate melody direction - up versus down • Recognize the difference between a speaking and singing voice • Use Echo and simple songs to develop singing skills • Recognize and move to a steady beat • Express music through movement

Physical Education	Media/Technology	Social & Emotional Learning*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate in large and small groups • Demonstrate skills of turning, stretching, curling, and rolling sideways • Understand the directions up/down and forward/backward • Demonstrate relationships with objects and people (over/under, on/off, around) • Care for equipment • Volunteer to demonstrate • Understand the concepts of personal and general space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas of media center • Locate book collections and find books on a specific topic • Use simple features of graphics software to create a picture • Demonstrate good control and use of mouse device • Save and print electronic work with supervision • Work cooperatively with others when using technology • Learn cyber-bullying vocabulary 	<p>The <i>Responsive Classroom</i> program is used in grades K-5 for explicit teaching of social as well as academic skills and the facilitation of positive community membership.</p> <p>Kindergarten students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify feelings of others • Label positive and negative emotions • Generate several solutions to a problem • Seek help when appropriate • Behave cooperatively and considerately in a group

* In June 2015, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education published *Standards for Preschool & Kindergarten: Social and Emotional Learning, and Approaches to Play and Learning*. These new standards are being incorporated into the current curriculum.

Efficacy of Current Half-Day Kindergarten Model

Kindergarten is a critical year for all children - a year of transition from preschool programs or home to formal schooling - and Needham Public Schools is dedicated to providing a welcoming, supportive kindergarten program to nurture overall development of each child. Our curriculum is aligned with the state's framework, developmentally appropriate and comprehensive in its approach.

The Massachusetts DESE standards are implicitly written with full-day kindergarten in mind, as reflected by the time on learning and assessments. The expectation of mastery of core standards may not be possible without full-day kindergarten. The dilemma for our teachers is how to fit time in for Math practice or consistent time on learning for Science. With a half-day schedule and transitions to Specials (Physical Education, Music and Library), there is not a lot of time to cover the academics. Ultimately, kindergarten teachers must balance social and emotional learning with the academics -- and that, too, is difficult within a half-day program model.

KASE Program: Curriculum Designed to Complement Half-Day Kindergarten

KASE uses the Framework for 21st Century Learning with a hands-on, thematic approach that actively engages children in constructive explorations. According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, "A standards-based curriculum that integrates thematic units and projects (long and short term) will allow in-depth investigations of real world topics, deepening children's understanding and intellectual challenge along the continuum of development." The KASE curriculum is aligned with this DESE guidance.

The Rainforest is one of the students' favorite KASE units and reinforces the kindergarten curriculum in a variety of ways. Here are a few examples: For Language and Literacy, the children make a list of what to take in a suitcase based on the temperature and weather and they keep rainforest journals that contain their own traced and labeled pictures of the rainforest animals and vegetation. For Science and Social Studies, the children locate South America on a map, sample different rainforest foods, and conduct a "sloth experiment" using an egg timer and recording their observations. To practice Math, they sort animals using different attributes and after reading *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynne Cherry, the children measure the height of a mahogany tree. For the Arts, they create a 3-D rainforest mural in the classroom using different layers represented with the children's artwork and they explore sounds of the rainforest by making a rainforest stick.

The general flow of a day at KASE starts with a group meeting that sets the stage for guided activities, free play, independent exploration, snack, story and outside play. DESE reinforces this philosophy by stating: “Play is at the heart of an integrated kindergarten curriculum and is the medium through which children learn and develop.” (*Kindergarten Learning Experiences*, published by DESE, 2008)

Efficacy of Current KASE Program

Through an annual survey of KASE parents, we have identified some of the program strengths and opportunities for improvements. One theme that emerges each year validates the way in which KASE is fulfilling a need. Here are representative comments around this theme:

- “I know many families choose neighboring towns because they offer full-day kindergarten. KASE makes it feel like full-day kindergarten.”
- “KASE helped pique their curiosity and was an excellent complement to kindergarten.”

Although KASE allows for a rich, engaging, developmentally appropriate curriculum, the issue is that KASE does not accommodate all kindergartners. Some of our students considered at-risk learners cannot attend two separate programs (half-day Kindergarten and KASE). We do not use KASE to implement IEPs because we know that these students will not fare well with the inconsistency related to transitions, changes in teachers, and differences in instructional approaches.

4. Community Interest in Full-Day Kindergarten

The Full-Day Kindergarten Study and Planning Committee solicited feedback from Needham parents about issues and opportunities with rolling out full-day kindergarten. A postcard was mailed to approximately 500 families from a census list of households with kindergarten-ready children who were registering to start school in September 2015. From this community segment, both a survey and focus group were conducted.

Survey Results

One hundred and twenty-one Needham residents responded to the postcard mailing (a 24.2% response rate) with **95% indicating a preference for full-day kindergarten** or 115 respondents compared with 6 (5%) who did not prefer full-day kindergarten. Open-ended comments helped to identify the reasons for their preferences. Shown below are the key themes and, in parentheses, the number of iterations of each theme. A representative quote is included to clarify each theme.

Child Ready (41):

“My child currently attends preschool for 5.5 hours so he is ready for a longer, not shorter, day.”

Academic Needs of Child (32):

“The current program does not allow for proper levels of reading, math, and many important lessons.”

Working Parent Need (24):

“The current structure is totally untenable for working families!”

Other Towns Have It (23):

“Because every other school district in the state has full day!!! It’s ridiculous that Needham makes us pay KASE for full day.”

One Location (10):

“A consistent day in ONE place is best for kindergartners.”

Expense Burden (5):

“Give all kids opportunity of full day instead of some people paying for KASE.”

Child Too Young (5):

“I love having only half day and getting them all to myself in the afternoon. They are still little and deserve some downtime and rest.”

Flexibility Wanted (2):

“The current structure allows for KASE for those children advanced enough for full day.”

Focus Group Results

From the census list mailing to 500 Needham households, thirty-nine families expressed interest in participating in a focus group; twelve were available to join a ninety-minute focus group held on February 25, 2015. All had children ready to enter kindergarten and some parents had previous kindergarten experience with their older children. The raw data was analyzed with a coding system for classification based on themes of responses. The major findings from the parent perspective are described below.

- **Fair and Equitable Rollout** - With unanimity, the parents express the importance of a fair and equitable rollout of full-day kindergarten, recognizing that “we all pay same taxes and all should benefit.” They note the “inherent unfairness in not offering full day for all kindergarteners” and feel that “the idea of one child getting a better education than the next child is unacceptable in Needham.” The parents held firm to their conviction of “all or nothing,” “not one school before another,” and “blanket offering of full day to all or not at all.” No one supported rolling out the program only to those schools that have space currently. In fact, they cited consequences to that kind of action: “Neighbors will fight if it’s rolled out inequitably;” “It is so divisive to the people in town if only some schools have full-day kindergarten;” and “There is reputational risk (to the town of Needham) if full day is not rolled out to all.”
- **No Lottery** - Again, it was unanimous that a lottery for available spaces is NOT an acceptable solution because “philosophically, fairness and equitable education are paramount.”
- **Make it a Priority** - If the town is committed to full-day kindergarten, these parents believe the town will make it available to all families. In fact, they feel that it is more valuable to implement a full-day kindergarten than support other initiatives. They suggest that the town finds other programs to cut because, from their perspective, everyone wants full-day kindergarten.
- **Space and Transportation Options** - Parents think it’s time that the town gets creative and finds space for full-day kindergarten. They suggest additional modulars, or running the program offsite for one year even if it’s at a shopping center. They hope an effort will be made to group children by home school if full-day kindergarten is at a separate location. They say that they will drive their child to kindergarten or accept “radical busing (to a full-day kindergarten site) as a solution.” They are willing to “trade off convenience to be fair to all families.”

- Community Support - Parents are willing to step up and donate their time, space, resources, whatever is needed, to give momentum to this initiative. They believe that preschool families in particular are willing to lobby for full-day kindergarten.

The parents in this focus group describe their ideal full-day kindergarten program with an emphasis on more instruction, including a curriculum for math, reading and writing -- more specifically, learning the alphabet, counting, science, nature, geography, a second language, and project-based learning. Balanced with academics, the ideal full-day kindergarten program has time for transitions between activities. There are significant opportunities for building a strong relationship between the child and his/her teacher, socializing and playing with other children, self-discovery, and differentiated instruction based on an individual child's needs.

The parents explain that they want what's best for their children, and have high expectations for Needham to provide a kindergarten program that not only compares favorably with other towns, but also accommodates working parents. The bottom line is that they believe Needham families want full day kindergarten, which makes it "a no-brainer for the town to offer it."

5. Space for Full-Day Kindergarten

Process for Solving the Space Issues

Needham Public Schools is accustomed to solving space issues within each of our schools year over year. With assistance from the Elementary School Principals, we repeated the typical process using the most recent (November 2015) McKibben demographic data for grades K-5. We amended the kindergarten projections to the number forecast for grade 1 in the next fiscal year to compensate for the history of more students arriving in first grade due to Needham Public Schools having a half-day kindergarten program. We started with the FY17 class size projections and continued into future years under the assumption of needing classrooms for full-day kindergarten.

Space for Full-Day Kindergarten								
K Classrooms by School	FY17 HALF-DAY kindergartners	# Classrooms currently	Average class size	FY18 FULL-DAY kindergartners	# Classrooms needed	Average class size	# Classrooms Available	+/-
Broadmeadow	80	2	20.0	90	4	22.5	2	-2
Eliot	64	1.5	21.3	69	3	23.0	3	0
Hillside	75	2	18.8	78	4	19.5	2	-2
Mitchell	75	2	18.8	78	4	19.5	3	-1
Newman	96	2.5	19.2	100	5	20.0	7	+2
TOTAL K	390	10	19.5	415	20	20.8	17	-3






Note: FY18 projection based on Grade 1 enrollment in FY19; recommended maximum class size for K is 22 students

Since there is a district-wide shortfall on kindergarten classrooms, we needed to look at K to grade 5 within each school. Creative solutions were generated to address short-term space needs and we considered programs that could be moved to make additional classrooms available within a school.

This process helped us clarify that the *needed classroom space for full-day kindergarten can be found before the opening of the new Hillside School*. When the new Hillside School opens, there will be 4 sections for each grade and the Hillside student population will be accommodated within the recommended maximum class sizes for grades K-3 at 22 students and grades 4-5 at 24 students. Looking at the other elementary schools starting in FY18 through FY22, the number of classrooms needed by grade each year show short-term issues with maximum class sizes at Broadmeadow, Eliot, and Mitchell - only Newman has no space issues through this time horizon. (See Appendices for the projected enrollments by year for each school with class size issues highlighted.)

Space Solutions By School

In the following chart is a summary of the K-5 projected FY18 enrollment for each elementary school and the class size implications with suggested short-term space solutions for School Committee consideration.

 <p>BROADMEADOW</p> <p>Currently 24 classrooms; additional classroom for FY18 by placing Spanish on a cart; also looking into converting Tech Center into a classroom space ¹</p>	 <p>ELIOT</p> <p>18 classrooms available plus Bookroom; could manage class size issues with TAs, put music in Performance Center, or art on a cart ²</p>	 <p>HILLSIDE</p> <p>Currently 21 classrooms and no additional space; need strategy for reducing class size; if FDK classes offsite, space available for additional sections of other grades ³</p>	 <p>MITCHELL</p> <p>23 classrooms available by turning KASE into 1 K class; still short 1 classroom; could manage K class size with TAs; no storage available for music/art to enable on-a-cart model; option for mixed age class ⁴</p>	 <p>NEWMAN</p> <p>Accommodates students in 30 classrooms; has 2 additional classrooms available for another program or classroom use by another school ⁵</p>
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¹ For future years at Broadmeadow, the Tech Center could be converted into an additional classroom with computers distributed into classrooms school wide or moved to the Media Center. This approach aligns with the district direction of bringing mobile devices into the classrooms to support learning and may be applicable for the Tech Centers at Newman and Eliot.

² Some classes at Eliot are slightly above suggested maximum class size: K-3 at 22 students and grades 4-5 at 24 students.

³ Hillside will have 4 sections for each grade when the new Hillside School opens in FY21 or FY22. Until then, it may be feasible to arrange transportation for the FDK classes from Hillside to an offsite location. Historically, this system has been used successfully for Hillside students in the KASE program who bus to the Congregational Church.

⁴ At Mitchell, one mixed age class for grades 3-4 would free up an additional K classroom by accommodating 23.6 students in 7 sections of grade 3 and 4 rather than 8 sections; this one mixed classroom would have the benefit of 2 adults co-teaching, or a salary save on a TA instead of the 2nd teacher, plus push-in rather than pull out for students receiving support services through Special Education.

⁵ Newman may be a prospective site to house the Hillside Full-Day Kindergarten program until the opening of the new Hillside School. Four FDK classrooms are needed as well as specialist support. At Newman, 2 KASE classrooms are readily available and considering potential strategies to free up 2 more classrooms (such as the Motor Room, ELC space, or Tech Center integrated into Media Center).

In summary, each of the elementary school principals is accustomed to generating space solutions like the ones presented above. We recognize that there are issues with some of the solutions, but the quality of education need not be compromised because, with creativity and innovative thinking, we can identify workable scenarios to address the space needs for full-day kindergarten. This includes the impact on common space areas (gym, cafeteria, etc.).

Although redistricting was raised as a potential solution to the elementary school space issues, it is possible to introduce full-day kindergarten for each of the elementary schools before redistricting - and that was the purpose of the FDK Study and Planning Committee's exercise in assessing space needs in collaboration with the elementary school principals.

6. Committee Recommendation

Full-day kindergarten is a missing half step in Needham Public Schools' early learning continuum. Unequal access to publicly funded full-day, high-quality kindergarten means too many young children lose a critical opportunity to develop and strengthen foundational skills necessary for success in school and lifelong learning. All children should be guaranteed access to publicly funded full-day kindergarten if they are to meet the learning and workforce challenges of the 21st century.

With these beliefs firmly realized from our work as the Full-Day Kindergarten Study and Planning Committee, we are recommending to the School Committee that our district commits to moving forward without delay on these two fronts:

- Meet the needs of all learners in kindergarten through a full-day program
- Provide a publicly funded full-day kindergarten

This recommendation echoes the one made in the 2002 Full-Day Kindergarten Feasibility Study but with a sense of urgency and the recognition that the state and the nation are moving toward full-day kindergarten as the best return on investment for our children. There is no longer any confusion about the value of full-day kindergarten as shown in all the research studies conducted over the past twenty years. There is a benefit to Special Education in Needham Public Schools with the addition of a full-day kindergarten program. The current issues and pressures on our kindergarten staff to achieve goals for time on learning and to balance academics with SEL can be addressed by full-day kindergarten. Some Needham families choose to pay tuition, and benefit from the KASE program as a complement to half-day kindergarten -- but that is not perceived as a fair and equitable approach to a full-day kindergarten, nor is it a full-day program that unifies the best practices already present in the half-day KASE and half-day kindergarten programs, and it does not meet the needs of all learners.

The step that remains to rolling out full-day kindergarten is a cost analysis and funding strategy, which can begin in concert with an upcoming budget development process.

7. Considerations Regarding Costs/Funding Strategy

In a preliminary assessment of the fiscal impact of implementing full-day kindergarten, we recognized a number of factors that need to be considered by the School Committee:

- If the School Committee were to implement *compulsory* full-day kindergarten, the full cost of the program would be paid from the school operating budget using funds raised by local taxpayers. The Town would receive additional Chapter 70 aid, starting in the fiscal year following program implementation. The amount of Chapter 70 aid would be dependent on the funding formula then in effect, but could be as much as \$360,500 (based on the FY15 formula). The School Committee would not be able to charge fees to offset program costs, since attendance in the full-day program would be mandatory.
- If the School Committee were to implement a *voluntary* full-day kindergarten, tuition could be collected to recover some or all of the costs of the full day program - but that is the scenario already in place for KASE. Parents who opt out would attend only the half-day kindergarten and the Town would receive no additional Chapter 70 aid. (The Full-Day Kindergarten Study and Planning Committee is not recommending a voluntary, tuition-based program.)
- Children on IEPs must attend FDK free of charge when their IEP specifies a full-day placement. If FDK is not district-wide, space must be reserved for children with IEPs that specify full-day placements.
- As teachers are able to spend more time with their kindergarten students, they are able to detect learning and developmental needs earlier and recommend prevention services, saving the district money in the long run.
- The district can apply for the state-funded Transition to Full-Day Kindergarten Grant (fund code 702) to support the implementation of full-day classrooms with start up costs, professional development, and curriculum development the year prior to implementation of full-day kindergarten. The district also can apply for the Quality Full-Day Kindergarten Grant (fund code 701) that supports increased staff, special needs inclusion, transition planning between preschool and kindergarten, expanded professional development, accreditation support and curriculum development based on the state curriculum frameworks. The caveat is that these are competitive grants given to districts with the greatest need defined as higher percentage of low-income students, higher percentage of students who are English Language Learners, and lower CPI data for the 3rd grade MCAS assessments in ELA and Math.
- A plan is in place in the event that we will be closing out the KASE program and managing down the fund balance. Currently 6 of 8 lead teachers are licensed and available for positions as full-time Kindergarten teachers. In addition, KASE staff can be valuable contributors to the development of a full-day kindergarten curriculum and stipends for this work are an important use of the fund balance. A contracted consultant in the role of Kindergarten curriculum specialist could lead the KASE staff in advancing the KASE curriculum so that it aligns with state standards in preparation for full-day kindergarten. And the advancement of digital learning devices (DLDS) in KASE classrooms is another potential use of these funds, along with any school-specific equipment needs.
- If an operational override is needed to raise the required funds, the timing of a ballot question should be considered in light of the debt exclusion overrides currently planned for school construction projects.

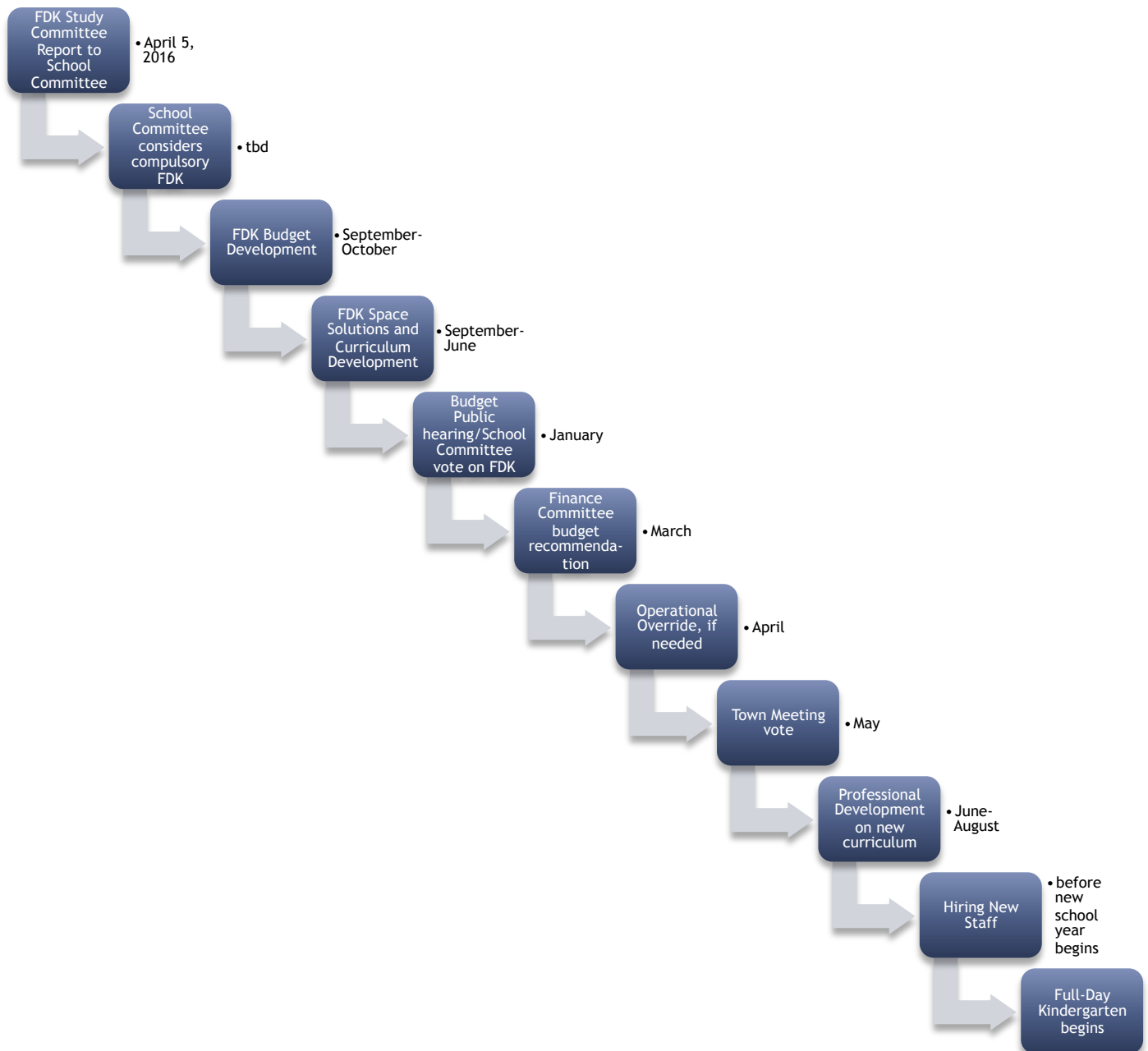
- Costs of rolling out full-day kindergarten can be determined when the year of implementation is set and accurate class size assumptions are factored into the calculations for teachers, teaching assistants, specialists, classroom furniture, educational supplies, technology, and curriculum -- which is the budgeting process typically used by the District each fiscal year. In a preliminary cost analysis that was completed last June based on the elementary enrollment projections developed by McKibben Demographic Research in March 2015, the cost of implementing full-day kindergarten could range from approximately \$1.6 million to \$2.7 million in the first year.
- Additional buses may be needed to implement full-day kindergarten. The busing impact will be assessed during budget development and any additional cost would be included in the operational proposal.

8. Step-by-Step Plan: Implementing Full-Day K in Needham Public Schools

The Full-Day Kindergarten Study and Planning Committee is tasked with finding a pathway to full-day kindergarten. In that role, we are responsible for articulating a step-by-step plan with all the details for implementation. The critical next step is for the School Committee to consider and vote on compulsory kindergarten for Needham, based on the information articulated in the pages of this report.

In anticipation of that decision, this committee has sketched the path (see diagram on next page). Should the School Committee decide to go forward with a plan for full-day kindergarten, this committee is prepared to develop the blueprint to guide implementation of full-day kindergarten in Needham.

CRITICAL STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN IN NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS



If directed by the School Committee, the Full-Day Study and Planning Committee is prepared to continue our work by developing a **detailed plan** with specificity on tasks, who is responsible, budget, and due dates for implementation.

APPENDIX

I. Projected FY18 Enrollment - McKibben data with FDK adjustment: Space Issues at each school and how to make classrooms available at each school

II. Projected FY19 Enrollment - McKibben data with FDK adjustment

III. Projected FY20 Enrollment - McKibben data with FDK adjustment

IV. Projected FY21 Enrollment - McKibben data with FDK adjustment

V. Projected FY22 Enrollment - McKibben data with FDK adjustment

SPACE ISSUES AT EACH SCHOOL

NOTE: Highlighted cells are above maximum class size: K-3 at 22 students and Grades 4-5 at 24 students

Projected FY19 Enrollment- McKibben data with FDK adjustment

(FY19 Kindergarten based on grade 1 enrollment in FY20)

	Broadmeadow		Eliot		Hillside		Mitchell		Newman	
Grade	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class
K	92	23.0	69	23.0	75	25.0	77	19.3	99	19.8
K		23.0		23.0		25.0		19.3		19.8
K		23.0		23.0		25.0		19.3		19.8
K		23.0						19.3		19.8
K										19.8
1	90	22.5	69	23.0	78	26	78	19.5	100	20.0
1		22.5		23.0		26		19.5		20.0
1		22.5		23.0		26		19.5		20.0
1		22.5						19.5		20.0
1										20.0
2	91	22.8	71	23.7	84	21.0	81	20.3	103	20.6
2		22.8		23.7		21.0		20.3		20.6
2		22.8		23.7		21.0		20.3		20.6
2		22.8				21.0		20.3		20.6
2										20.6
3	94	23.5	70	23.3	93	23.3	89	22.3	104	20.8
3		23.5		23.3		23.3		22.3		20.8
3		23.5		23.3		23.3		22.3		20.8
3		23.5				23.3		22.3		20.8
3										20.8
4	87	21.75	66	22.0	67	22.3	84	21.0	100	20.0
4		21.75		22.0		22.3		21.0		20.0
4		21.75		22.0		22.3		21.0		20.0
4		21.75						21.0		20.0
4										20.0
5	107	21.4	76	25.3	92	23.0	81	27.0	122	24.4
5		21.4		25.3		23.0		27.0		24.4
5		21.4		25.3		23.0		27.0		24.4
5		21.4				23.0				24.4
5		21.4								24.4
5										24.4
	561 total in 25 classrooms		421 total in 18 classrooms		489 total in 21 classrooms		490 total in 23 classrooms		628 total in 30 classrooms	

NOTE: Highlighted cells are above maximum class size: K-3 at 22 students and Grades 4-5 at 24 students

Projected FY20 Enrollment- McKibben data with FDK adjustment

(FY20 Kindergarten based on grade 1 enrollment in FY21)

	Broadmeadow		Eliot		Hillside		Mitchell		Newman	
Grade	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class
K	93	18.6	70	23.3	73	24.3	76	19.0	97	19.4
K		18.6		23.3		24.3		19.0		19.4
K		18.6		23.3		24.3		19.0		19.4
K		18.6						19.0		19.4
K		18.6						19.0		19.4
1	92	23.0	69	23.0	75	25.0	77	19.3	99	19.8
1		23.0		23.0		25.0		19.3		19.8
1		23.0		23.0		25.0		19.3		19.8
1		23.0						19.3		19.8
1		23.0						19.3		19.8
2	93	23.3	72	24.0	80	20.0	80	20.0	101	20.2
2		23.3		24.0		20.0		20.0		20.2
2		23.3		24.0		20.0		20.0		20.2
2		23.3				20.0		20.0		20.2
2		23.3				20.0		20.0		20.2
3	94	23.5	72	24.0	85	21.3	83	20.8	102	20.4
3		23.5		24.0		21.3		20.8		20.4
3		23.5		24.0		21.3		20.8		20.4
3		23.5				21.3		20.8		20.4
3		23.5				21.3		20.8		20.4
4	95	23.8	71	23.7	95	23.8	90	22.5	102	20.4
4		23.8		23.7		23.8		22.5		20.4
4		23.8		23.7		23.8		22.5		20.4
4		23.8				23.8		22.5		20.4
4		23.8				23.8		22.5		20.4
5	88	22.0	67	22.3	68	22.7	83	27.7	101	20.2
5		22.0		22.3		22.7		27.7		20.2
5		22.0		22.3		22.7		27.7		20.2
5		22.0								20.2
5		22.0								20.2
	555 total		421 total		476 total		489 total		602 total	
	in 25 classrooms		in 18 classrooms		in 21 classrooms		in 23 classrooms		in 30 classrooms	

NOTE: Highlighted cells are above maximum class size: K-3 at 22 students and Grades 4-5 at 24 students

Projected FY21 Enrollment- McKibben data with FDK adjustment

(FY21 Kindergarten based on grade 1 enrollment in FY22)

	Broadmeadow		Eliot		Hillside		Mitchell		Newman	
Grade	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class
K	92	18.4	69	23.0	72	24.0	75	25.0	96	19.2
K		18.4		23.0		24.0		25.0		19.2
K		18.4		23.0		24.0		25.0		19.2
K		18.4								19.2
K		18.4								19.2
1	93	23.3	70	23.3	73	24.3	76	19.0	97	19.4
1		23.3		23.3		24.3		19.0		19.4
1		23.3		23.3		24.3		19.0		19.4
1								19.0		19.4
1										19.4
2	95	23.8	72	24.0	77	25.7	79	19.8	101	20.2
2		23.8		24.0		25.7		19.8		20.2
2		23.8		24.0		25.7		19.8		20.2
2		23.8						19.8		20.2
2										20.2
3	96	24.0	73	24.3	82	20.5	82	20.5	100	20.0
3		24.0		24.3		20.5		20.5		20.0
3		24.0		24.3		20.5		20.5		20.0
3		24.0				20.5		20.5		20.0
3										20.0
4	95	23.8	73	24.3	87	21.8	84	21.0	100	20.0
4		23.8		24.3		21.8		21.0		20.0
4		23.8		24.3		21.8		21.0		20.0
4		23.8				21.8		21.0		20.0
4										20.0
5	96	24.0	72	24.0	97	24.3	89	22.3	104	20.8
5		24.0		24.0		24.3		22.3		20.8
5		24.0		24.0		24.3		22.3		20.8
5		24.0		24.0		24.3		22.3		20.8
5										20.8
567 total		429 total		488 total		485 total		598 total		
in 25 classrooms		in 18 classrooms		in 21 classrooms		in 23 classrooms		in 30 classrooms		
NOTE: Highlighted cells are above maximum class size: K-3 at 22 students and Grades 4-5 at 24 students										

NOTE: Highlighted cells are above maximum class size: K-3 at 22 students and Grades 4-5 at 24 students

Projected FY22 Enrollment- McKibben data with FDK adjustment

(FY22 Kindergarten based on grade 1 enrollment in FY23)

	Broadmeadow		Eliot		new Hillside		Mitchell		Newman	
Grade	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class	total students by grade	students per class
K	91	18.2	68	22.7	72	18.0	74	24.7	95	19.0
K		18.2		22.7		18.0		24.7		19.0
K		18.2		22.7		18.0		24.7		19.0
K		18.2		22.7		18.0		24.7		19.0
K		18.2		22.7		18.0		24.7		19.0
1	92	23.0	69	23.0	72	18.0	75	18.8	96	19.2
1		23.0		23.0		18.0		18.8		19.2
1		23.0		23.0		18.0		18.8		19.2
1		23.0		23.0		18.0		18.8		19.2
1		23.0		23.0		18.0		18.8		19.2
2	96	24.0	74	24.7	75	18.8	78	19.5	99	19.8
2		24.0		24.7		18.8		19.5		19.8
2		24.0		24.7		18.8		19.5		19.8
2		24.0		24.7		18.8		19.5		19.8
2		24.0		24.7		18.8		19.5		19.8
3	98	24.5	73	24.3	79	19.8	81	20.3	100	20.0
3		24.5		24.3		19.8		20.3		20.0
3		24.5		24.3		19.8		20.3		20.0
3		24.5		24.3		19.8		20.3		20.0
3		24.5		24.3		19.8		20.3		20.0
4	97	24.3	74	24.7	84	21.0	83	20.8	98	19.6
4		24.3		24.7		21.0		20.8		19.6
4		24.3		24.7		21.0		20.8		19.6
4		24.3		24.7		21.0		20.8		19.6
4		24.3		24.7		21.0		20.8		19.6
5	96	24.0	74	24.7	89	22.3	83	20.8	102	20.4
5		24.0		24.7		22.3		20.8		20.4
5		24.0		24.7		22.3		20.8		20.4
5		24.0		24.7		22.3		20.8		20.4
5		24.0		24.7		22.3		20.8		20.4
	570 total		432 total		471 total		474 total		590 total	
	in 25 classrooms		in 18 classrooms		in 24 classrooms		in 23 classrooms*		in 30 classrooms	
NOTE: Highlighted cells are above maximum class size: K-3 at 22 students and Grades 4-5 at 24 students										

NOTE: Highlighted cells are above maximum class size: K-3 at 22 students and Grades 4-5 at 24 students

* Will Mitchell students be housed in the old Hillside School as the swing school during construction of Mitchell?
If so, then there will be only 21 classrooms available for the Mitchell students.