

The Public Schools of
Northborough
(PreK-5)

Grade Configuration Analysis



Northborough School Committee Meeting
Wednesday, June 1, 2022

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Statement of Mission and Vision

The **Mission** of The Public Schools of Northborough is to Educate, Inspire, and Challenge all students

The **Vision** is that Our Students Will Be:

- Collaborators
- Critical and Creative Thinkers
- Communicators
- Socially and Civically Engaged
- Growth-Oriented
- Healthy and Balanced

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Strategic Objectives

- Empowering Learners
- Equity of Opportunity
- Healthy and Balanced Learners
- Educator Learning and Leadership
- Finance and Operations to Support Teaching and Learning

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Strategic Objectives

- Finance and Operations to Support Teaching and Learning

5.2 Engage school community in open dialogue about the qualities of school **facilities that will support the next generation of Northborough students.**

- Partner with the Town of Northborough on long-term capital and master planning.
- Complete a needs assessment of each school facility.
- Research Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) funding opportunities for prioritized school needs (Peaslee).

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Goals

- Evaluate enrollment trends, projections, and current grade-level configurations
- Current model (neighborhood schools)
- Partner School Model (PreK-2)(3-5)
- Identify opportunities to effectively maximize school facilities and resources to improve educational experiences for students
- Present to the Northborough School Committee its recommendations

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Members - Thank You

First Name	Last Name	School	Role
Linda	Broderick	Lincoln Street School	Educator Representative
Alana	Cyr	Proctor School	Principal Representative
JoAnne	Gorham	Zeh School	Educator Representative
Ariella	Greenspan	Peaslee School	Educator Representative
Kelly	Guenette	School Committee	School Committee Representative
Keith	Lavoie	District	Assistant Supt. of Operations
Clare	Kelsey	Peaslee School	Educator Representative
Jennifer	Lipton	Peaslee School	SEL Coordinator
Greg	Martineau	District	Superintendent
Rebecca	Mihopoulos	Zeh School	PTO Representative
Andrea	Pagnozzi	Proctor School	Parent Representative
Rebecca	Pellegrino	District	Director of Finance
Susan	Sartori	Lincoln Street School	Community Representative
Stefanie	Reinhorn	District	Assistant Supt. of Teaching and Learning
Elizabeth	Walsh-Mathews	Lincoln Street School	Educator Representative
Jennifer	Wright	Lincoln Street School	Principal Representative

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Process

- Reviewed research on the impact of grade-level configuration on student programming
- Reviewed New England School Development Council's (NESDEC) 2021-2022 Enrollment Projection Report to evaluate enrollment trends, and projections
- Evaluated the District's current grade-level configurations
- Analyzed programmatic goals and aligned goals with how to best utilize current school facilities and resources
- Reviewed short- and long-term capital projects that impact the configuration options

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Literature Review on Grade Configurations - Key Findings

- Grade-level configurations are **typically driven by available space, not by programmatic design.**
- Grade-level configuration significantly **impacts whether resources are being used efficiently** (time, people, materials, and instructional resources).
- Reducing the number of **transitions between schools in a PreK-5 experience does impact student performance** and a student's/family's sense of community.
- How educators are logically grouped across buildings **impacts the opportunities for teachers to collaborate.**
- Researchers generally find that a **higher number of school transitions may result in decreased student achievement** and “affect instructional continuity and communication across grades.”

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Current Facilities

Lincoln Street Elementary School

Kindergarten through Grade 5

The building was originally opened in 1965

The building was renovated to its current 44,000 square foot design

The renovation was completed in 2015

Marion E. Zeh Elementary School

Kindergarten through Grade 5

The school was constructed in 1950

Renovated and expanded in 1998

The Zeh School is the largest of the four elementary schools at 68,000 square feet

Marguerite E. Peaslee Elementary School

Kindergarten through Grade 5

The Peaslee Elementary School was erected in 1962 and is a 44,000 square foot building

Peaslee Elementary School has been identified as the District's priority for renovation

Fannie E. Proctor Elementary School

Kindergarten through Grade 5

Originally constructed in 1956

Partially renovated and expanded in 1996

The pitched roof was recently replaced in 2015, and the flat portion is considered a top priority for the FY23 Capital Plan.

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Evaluated Enrollment Projections

- NESDEC

Projected Enrollment in Grade Combinations*									
Year	PK-5	K-5	PK-8	K-8	5-8	6-8	7-8	6-12	9-12
2021-22	1068	1024	1597	1553	712	529	337	1301	772
2022-23	1056	1012	1610	1566	720	554	369	1291	737
2023-24	1069	1024	1617	1572	714	548	380	1257	709
2024-25	1085	1040	1609	1564	707	524	356	1229	705
2025-26	1102	1056	1626	1580	713	524	339	1238	714
2026-27	1100	1054	1647	1601	728	547	356	1271	724
2027-28	1104	1057	1666	1619	732	562	379	1281	719
2028-29	1122	1075	1671	1624	727	549	377	1260	711
2029-30	1133	1085	1671	1623	722	538	358	1255	717
2030-31	1138	1090	1679	1631	743	541	355	1273	732
2031-32	1124	1075	1697	1648	759	573	369	1309	736

Based on NESDEC's projections, the four elementary schools can support the space required for the projected enrollment. Enrollment projections must be monitored as it can be difficult to determine enrollment projections in five to ten years.

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Identified and Evaluated Two Models

- Neighborhood School Model (PreK-5)
- Partner Schools Model (PreK-2)(3-5)

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Advantages of Each Model

Advantages of a Partner School Model:	Advantages of a Neighborhood Schools Model:
<p><u>Students:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Increased number of peer-aged students at a grade span.● Greater opportunity for social connections with other age-level peers.● More options for classroom placement would allow for a variety of social experiences across years.● Increased student opportunities to engage in aligned social/emotional curriculum that is developmentally appropriate. This extends to discipline practices and student handbooks.● Reduce the number of students that are placed out of their neighborhood zone--(currently 12%) due to capped class enrollment.● Transitions to middle school may be smoother coming from a larger grade-level cohort.	<p><u>Students:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Greater opportunity for social connections across grades with wider grade spans (PreK-5),● Students have many connections with peers that have come from their neighborhood school.● Students may develop deeper connections with staff members due to stability in school assignments.● Older students have the opportunity to serve as role models for younger students.● Fewer transitions reduce the risk of negative outcomes associated with student transitions.

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Advantages of Each Model

Advantages of a Partner School Model:	Advantages of a Neighborhood Schools Model:
<p><u>Families:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Families and students will have the opportunity to meet other students and families outside of their direct neighborhood. This presents opportunities to build new relationships and connections. There are also greater opportunities for families and the community to work together on behalf of students (i.e., consolidating resources to support a larger group of students).• Opportunities for two placements during elementary years can allow for a fresh start through a natural transition at grade three.	<p><u>Families:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Families and students will have the opportunity to make strong connections with faculty and staff over a six-year period.• Simplified transportation and timing for families with multiple children at the elementary level.• Families feel committed to neighborhood school culture and community.

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Advantages of Each Model

Advantages of a Partner School Model:	Advantages of a Neighborhood Schools Model:
<p><u>Faculty and Staff:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Expanded opportunities to work with a wide range of grade-level colleagues. Grade-level teams would be four to six educators with greater potential to develop and align developmentally appropriate curriculum and teaching strategies and sharing planning tasks.● Fewer grade-level teams across the District (reduced by 50%) increases educators' access to District supports such as ELA and math coordinators.● Scheduling of grade-level team meetings is easier with three per building.● Fewer grade-level teams within each building make it easier to collaborate with specialists, special educators, and English language development teachers.	<p><u>Faculty and Staff:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Continue to work with colleagues K-5 with greater opportunities for vertical alignment within schools.● Opportunities and time to cultivate and maintain the current community of educators, families, and students.● Ease of sharing resources across grade levels to meet the needs of all learners.● Easier to schedule common planning times for grade-level teams because the team is small with 2-3 teachers per grade.● Educators feel committed to their school culture and community.● In specialized programs, students have continuity with the same educators and location for six years.

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Advantages of Each Model

Advantages of a Partner School Model:	Advantages of a Neighborhood Schools Model:
<p><u>Faculty and Staff:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater collaboration among grade-level educators will increase the ability to ensure that staff members are using the vetted, foundational curriculum resources.• Educators will have the ability to align curriculum and teaching practices/methodologies. (E.g., Ability to align school cultures, ability to streamline transitions and plan effectively, share resources and supports across partner schools, and opportunities to align SIP plans)• Target the developmental needs (academically and socially/emotionally) of students through professional development.• Opportunities, and time to cultivate a new culture and community of educators, families, and students.	<p><u>Faculty and Staff:</u></p>

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Advantages of Each Model

Advantages of a Partner School Model:	Advantages of a Neighborhood Schools Model:
<p><u>Faculty and Staff:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• With a larger group of peers per grade level, increased opportunities for flexible grouping of students across classes and for developing appropriate groups for students receiving specialized instruction.• With fewer grade levels per school, specialists would have more focused planning responsibilities.• Coordination with Melican Middle School would involve fewer schools simplifying transition planning and alignment activities.	<p><u>Faculty and Staff:</u></p>

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Next Steps

- The Public Schools of Northborough Grade Level Configuration Study Group acknowledges that making a change to its current grade configuration is a significant change that has the potential to impact all stakeholders in how they work and experience elementary education in the District. A decision of this magnitude should not be made lightly and it is essential that the process moves slowly to ensure that a decision is well-vetted and supported by key stakeholders.

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Next Steps - 2022-2023

Identify key questions that remain unanswered from the report.

- Impact on transportation?
- Timeline for Marguerite E. Peaslee Elementary School building project?
- Which model maximizes resources?

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Next Steps - 2022-2023

Educate all stakeholders on the advantages and disadvantages of each model by:

- Holding community forums
- Holding listening sessions
- Surveying key stakeholders on preferred model

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Next Steps - 2022-2023

If a change in grade configuration is recommended, create a timeline for a change.

Present a formal recommendation to the Northborough School Committee for a vote - February or March 2023.

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Questions