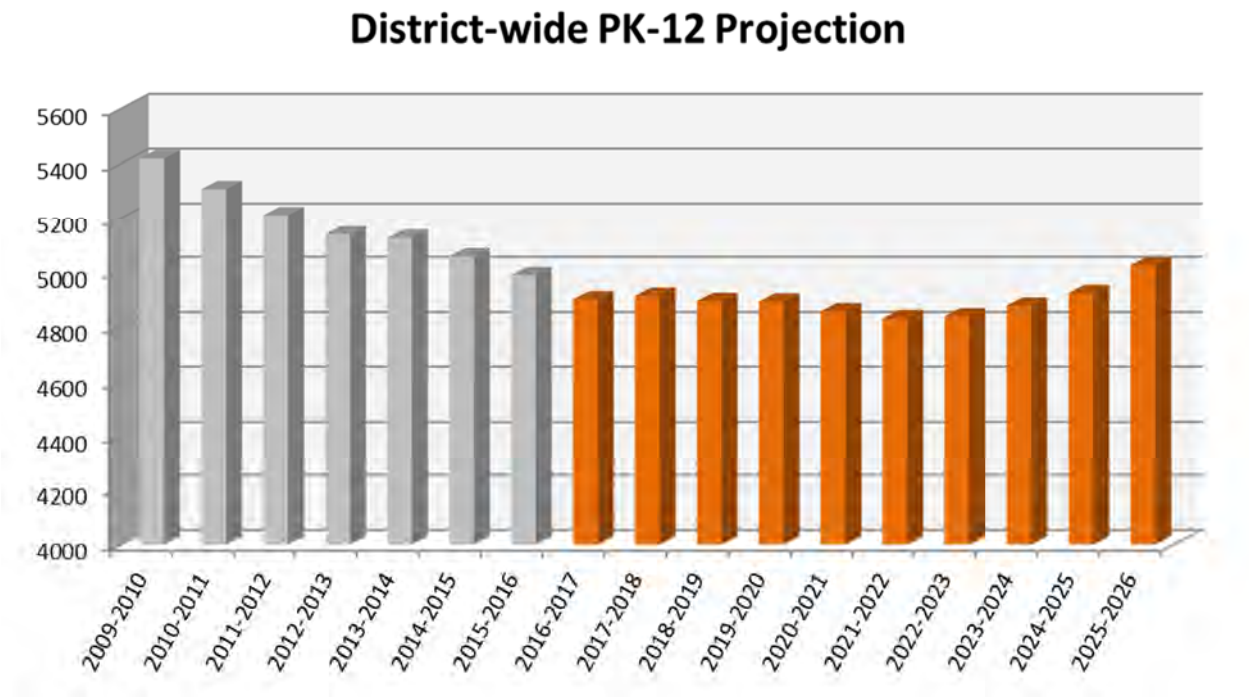
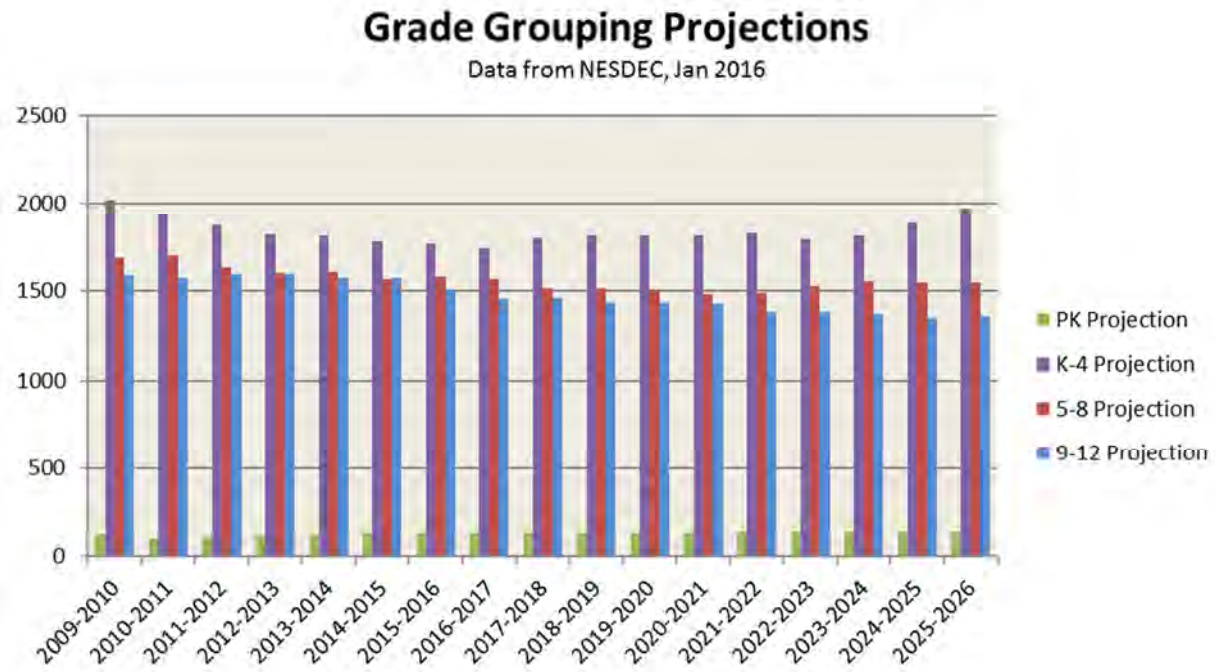
ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS – OVERVIEW & SUMMARY ANALYSIS

NESDEC enrollment projections were analyzed as part of this study. Per the projections, enrollment in Chelmsford is expected to drop slightly, remain relatively level, and then rise over the next 10 years. The influx of students will begin in the elementary grades and then matriculate through the middle schools and high school. The follow chart shows historical district-wide enrollment trends as well as the projected enrollment for the next 10 years. Current enrollment is 4,987 and by 2026, enrollment is expected to reach 5,023



Grade Grouping Projections

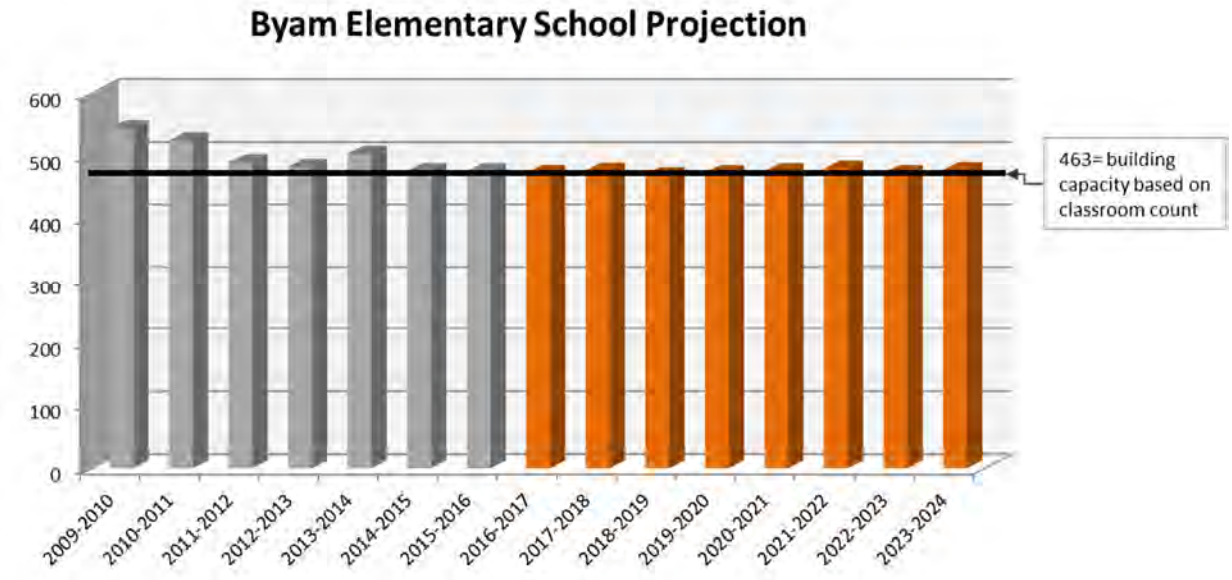
The following chart shows the breakdown of enrollment projections by grade groupings. Over the next 10 years, the projection shows the preschool population remaining level, the K-4th grade enrollment increasing, the 5th-8th grade enrollment increasing, and the high school population decreasing.



Projections by School

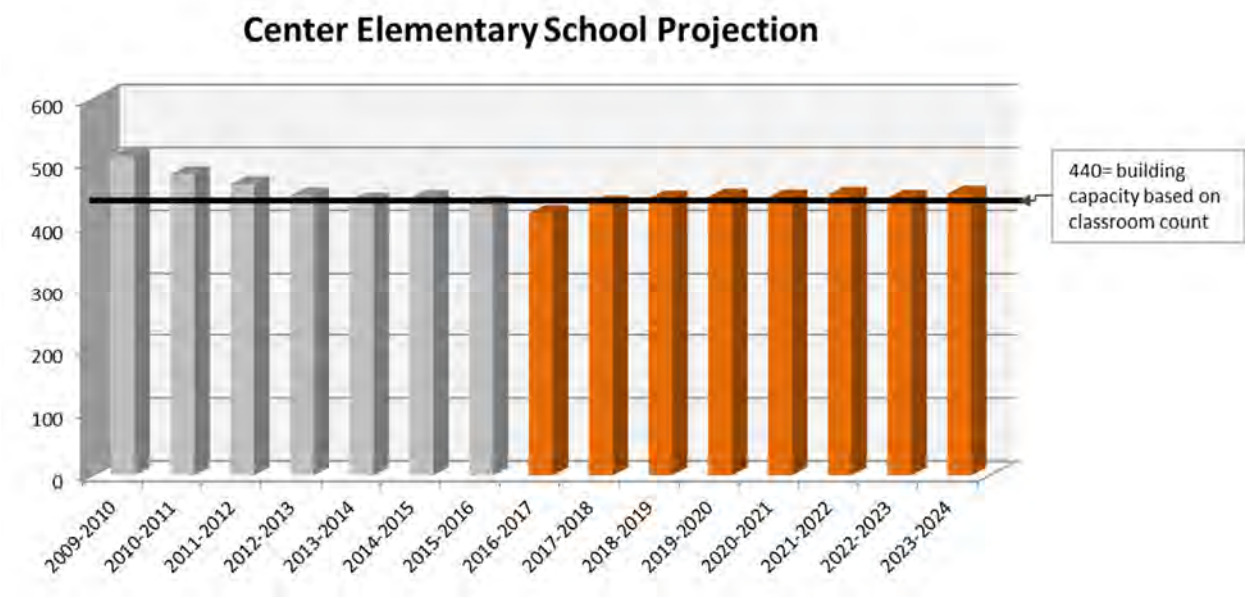
Byam Elementary School

The Byam school's population is expected to remain relatively level. Current enrollment is 476 and the school can expect 478 students in 2024. Based on classroom count, the capacity of Byam is 463 students meaning that Byam will continue to be overcrowded in the next 10 years.



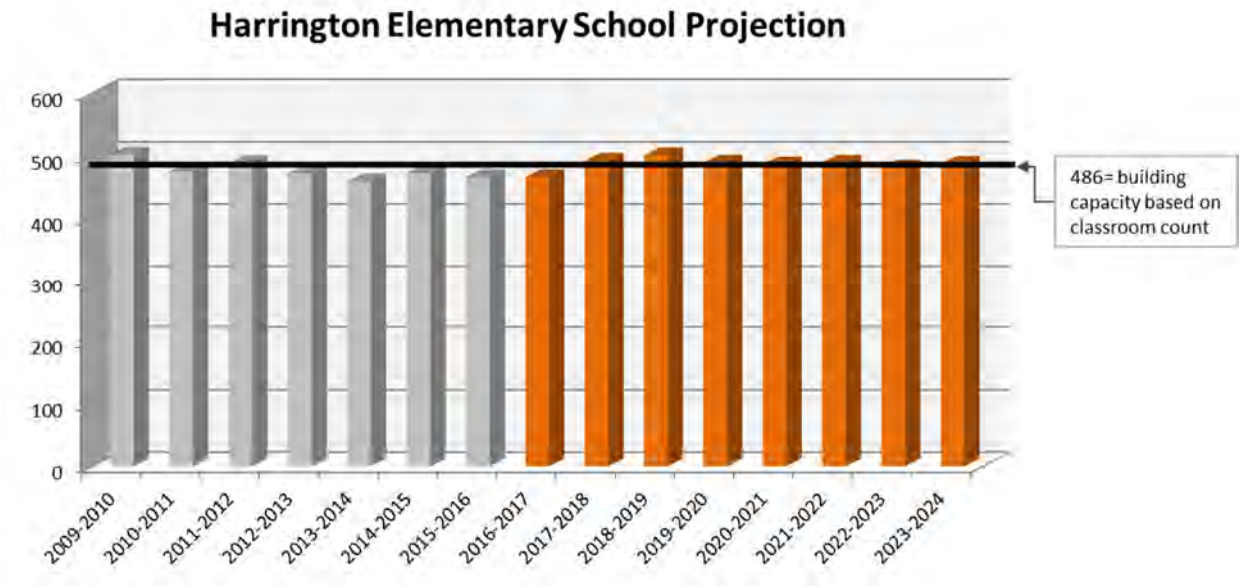
Center Elementary School

The Center School's population is expected increase over the next ten years. Current enrollment is 432 and the school can expect 449 students in 2024. The capacity of the Center School based on classroom count is 440 students, meaning the school will become overcrowded in the next 10 years.



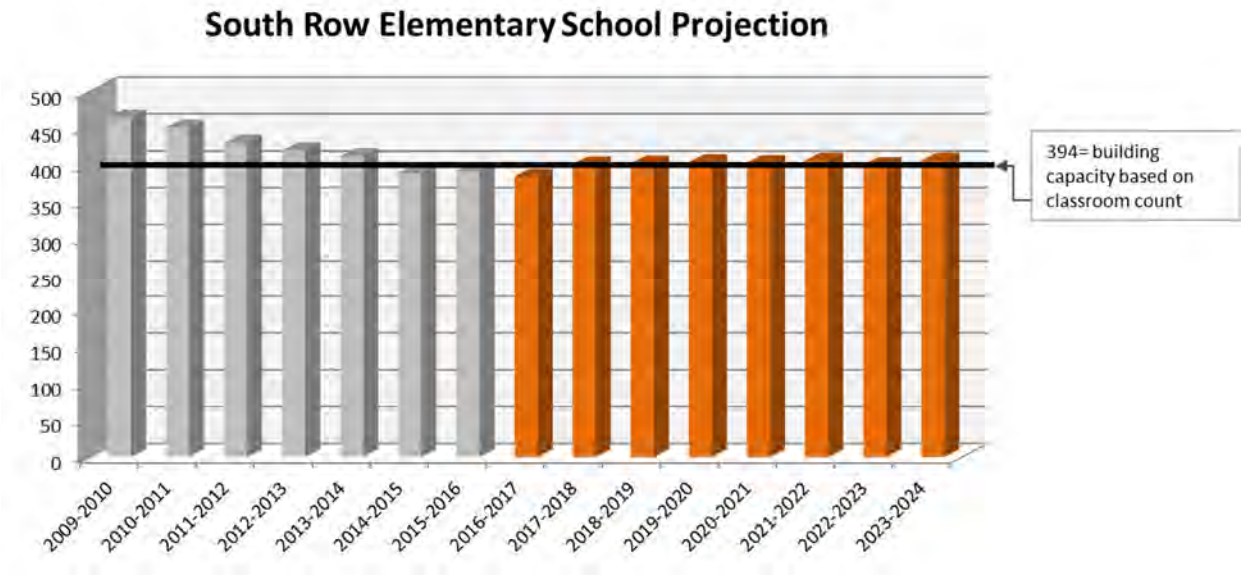
Harrington Elementary School

The Harrington School's population is expected increase over the next ten years. Current enrollment is 466 and the school can expect 487 students in 2024. The capacity of the Harrington School based on classroom count is 486 students, meaning the school will be just over capacity in the next 10 years.



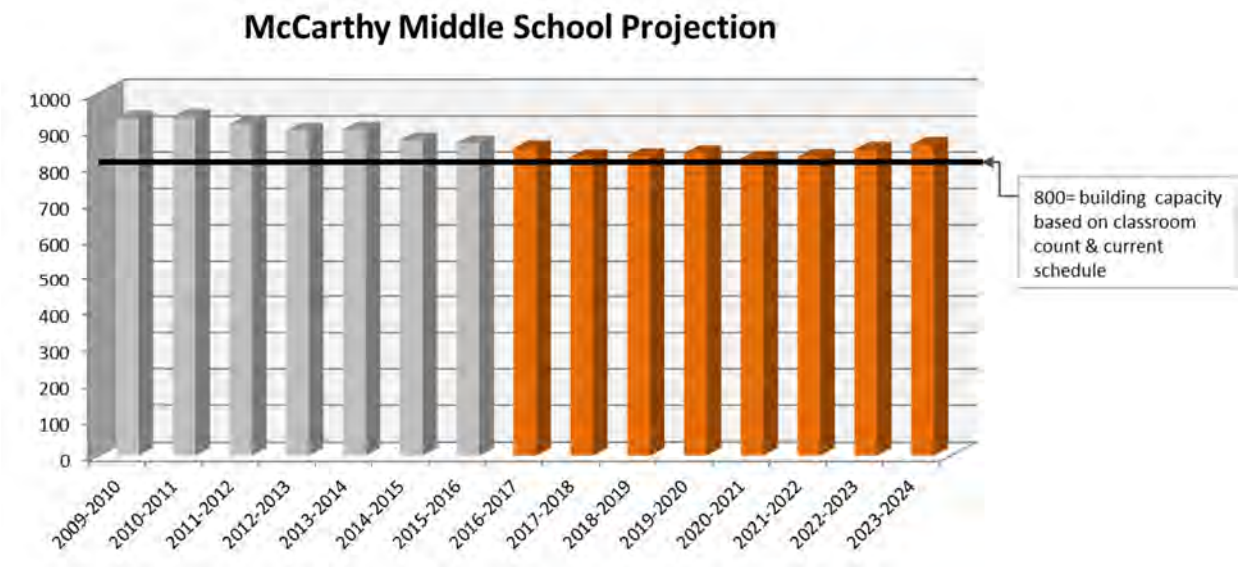
South Row Elementary School

The South Row School's population is expected increase over the next ten years. Current enrollment is 392 and the school can expect 406 students in 2024. The capacity of South Row based on classroom count is 394 students, meaning the school will be overcrowded in the next 10 years.



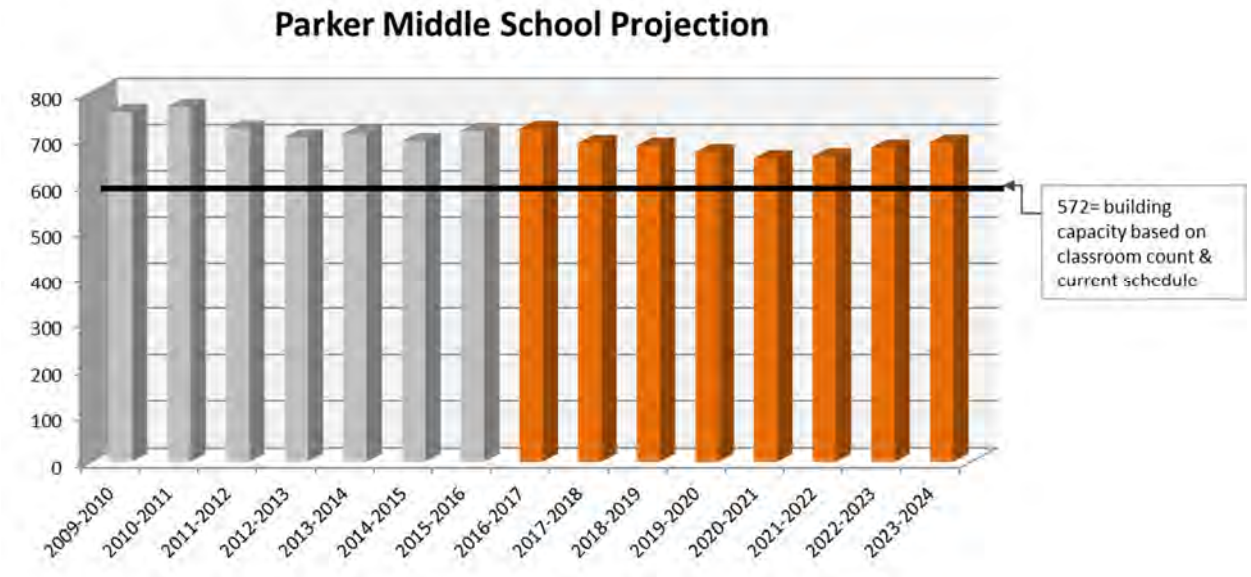
McCarthy Middle School

McCarthy Middle School's population is expected remain relatively level over the next ten years. Current enrollment is 863 and the school can expect 858 students in 2024. The capacity of McCarthy based on classroom count and the current schedule is 800 students, meaning the school will remain overcrowded for the next 10 years.



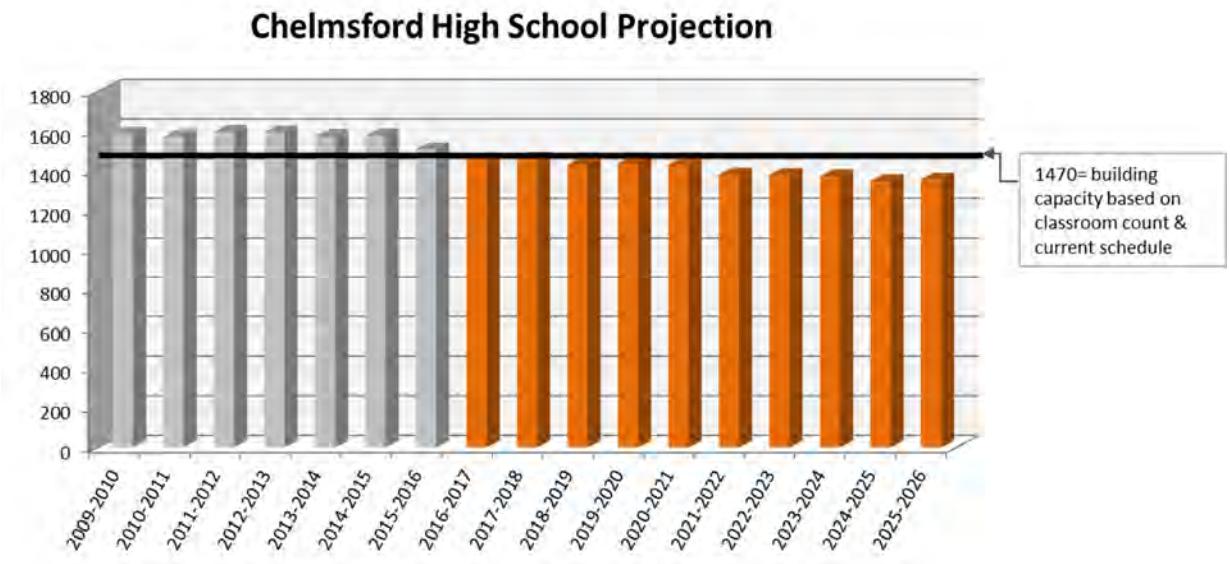
Parker Middle School

Parker Middle School's population is expected drop and then rise again over the next ten years. Current enrollment is 717 and the school can expect 692 students in 2024. The capacity of Parker based on classroom count and the current schedule is 572 students, meaning the school will remain overcrowded for the next 10 years.



Chelmsford High School

Chelmsford High School's population is expected decrease over the next ten years. Current enrollment is 1,509 and the school can expect 1,356 students in 2024. The capacity of the high school based on classroom count and the current schedule is 1,470 students, meaning the school will have additional capacity in the next 10 years.



Enrollment Targets

The District used NESDEC's enrollment projections to choose target enrollments to be used for the options development portion of this study. For planning purposes, the District chose the highest projected enrollment by grade grouping over the next 10 years. The District chose the projections from the 2025-2026 school year for grades pre-kindergarten - 4th grade and chose the 2015-2016 enrollments for 5th-12th grade. Target enrollments are as follows:

- Pre-Kindergarten: **142 students**
- Kindergarten – 4th grade: **1,976 students**
- 5th-8th grade: **1,580 students**
- 9th-12th grade: **1,509 students**

Conclusion

For the next 10 years, overall enrollment in Chelmsford is expected to drop and then rise to about the levels seen today. Enrollment at the elementary schools will increase steadily over the next 10 years. The rise in enrollment will be seen at the middle schools toward the end of the 10-year projection and to be followed at the high school outside of the 10-year window. The District chose to plan for the worst case scenario and therefore options are designed around the highest enrollment projections for each grade grouping.

SPACE USE – OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Project Team used objective data to analyze the educational adequacy, enrollment capacity, and program capacity of the individual schools as well as the District overall. Analyses included enrollment analysis, building capacity by gross square footage, building capacity by classroom count, instructional space comparative analysis related to MSBA guidelines, building utilization by students per class and minutes per school day, and functional use of space. The analyses are exclusive of temporary construction and only consider the permanent school structures. These varied metrics can be used to understand how the buildings are meeting the educational needs of the District.

The analyses show that there are unmet needs district-wide. Overcrowding exists throughout the district at all grade groupings. While district-wide enrollment is expected to decrease and then rise again over the next 10 years, overcrowding will continue to exist at all of the elementary schools and the Parker Middle School for the duration. The enrollment projections suggest that space will become available at the high school and McCarthy Middle School.

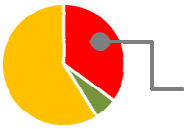
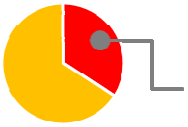
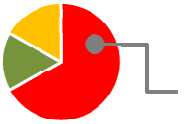
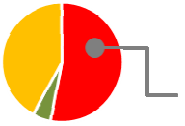
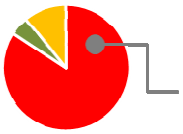
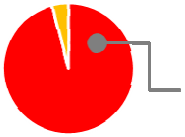
The Westlands School currently houses the Chelmsford Integrated Preschool (CHIPS) program. The program shares the building with community education. Because the Westlands school has been repurposed to serve CHIPS and community education, many spaces do not meet the needs of the program. Classroom spaces are undersized, few classrooms have toilet rooms, there are accessibility issues throughout the school, and administrative offices are in inappropriate spaces.

At the elementary level, overcrowding conditions have led to increased space needs. While all of the elementary schools are overcrowded by gross square footage analysis, Byam elementary school is overcrowded by both capacity metrics leading to increased class sizes. South Row is over or at capacity. Elementary enrollment is expected to increase over the next 10 years which could mean increased class sizes across the District and/ or a loss of dedicated space for specials including art and music. All elementary schools have undersized core spaces including cafeterias, gymnasiums, and libraries. Classroom spaces at South Row are undersized. All elementary schools have space needs related to the functional use of space. The schools have adapted classrooms to serve multiple special education programs simultaneously and are using hallways, converted closets, and stairwell landings for pull-out services, testing, and other special education functions.

The middle schools are also overcrowded and the Parker Middle School is above capacity by both capacity metrics. Currently, both middle schools are using temporary modular classrooms to alleviate some of the overcrowding issues. Approximately half of the instructional spaces at McCarthy are undersized while two thirds of spaces at McCarthy are undersized. Some special education spaces are inadequate for their function. Both schools have inadequate science labs that are not up to current science curriculum standards.

Space needs at the high school include undersized instructional spaces and some overcrowding. Eighty-four percent of learning spaces are sized below state guidelines. The District has adjusted the schedule at the high school to accommodate overcrowding issues however, enrollment at the high school is expected to decrease which should alleviate overcrowding.

The chart below summarizes some of the space needs analyses for the District. The chart lists the current enrollment of each school, capacity by gross square footage, capacity by classroom count, and the relative size of instructional spaces compared to MSBA guidelines. Capacity numbers shown in red signify that the school is over capacity by that metric. For the instructional space comparative analysis, the portion of the red portion of the pie chart represents undersized spaces, yellow represents right-sized spaces, and green represents oversized spaces.

	Existing Enrollment	Capacity by GSF	Capacity by Classroom Count	MSBA Instructional Space Comparative Analysis – Room by Room
Byam ES	473	346	463	 34% are under by 10% or more
Center ES	430	310	440	 35% are under by 10% or more
Harrington ES	465	346	486	 37% are under by 10% or more
South Row ES	392	310	394	 89% are under by 10% or more
McCarthy MS	864	928	800	 67% are under by 10% or more
Parker MS	717	650	572	 53% are under by 10% or more
Chelmsford High School	1508	1785	1470	 84% are under by 10% or more
Westlands School	132* *Pre-K only	206** **Assumes K-4	330** **Assumes K-4	 95% are under by 10% or more

Recommendations

The space needs analyses show that there are educational space needs at all grade level groupings that should be addressed. Because enrollment is expected to increase at the elementary grades, needs will increase at Byam, Center, Harrington, and South Row over the next 10 years. The District should consider adding space or rearranging programs to increase the capacity of elementary school buildings and provide adequate space for special education. The District should also consider addressing programmatic needs for the middle school science labs. As the District looks to improve its building inventory, it should consider enrollment capacity, missing and inadequate spaces, and improving instructional space sizes.

CAPACITY ANALYSES

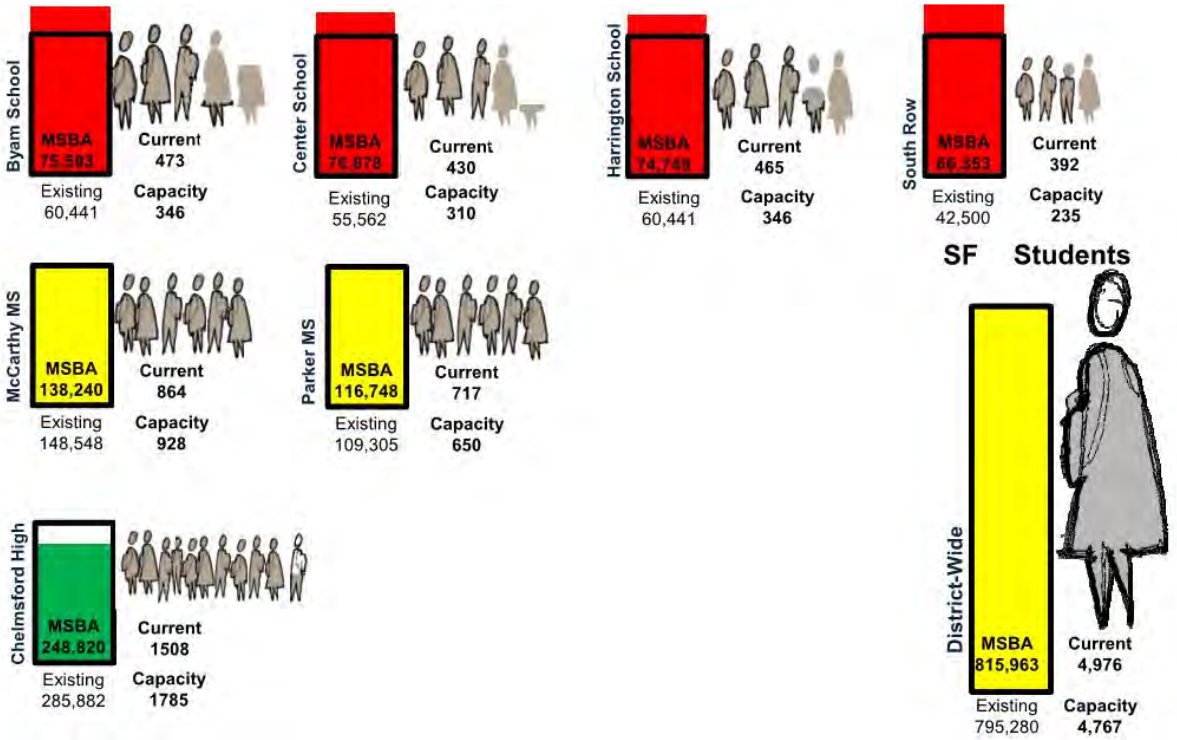
The educational space needs assessment includes a capacity analyses of all the District's educational facilities to help determine whether the buildings are sized appropriately for the populations that they are serving. The Design Team analyzed the buildings using two different methods of determining capacity: capacity based on the gross square footage of the buildings and capacity based on classroom count. Both metrics and associated findings are outlined below.

Capacity by Gross Square Feet

An educational building's gross square footage can determine capacity by comparing the size of the overall building and its population to a building designed using MSBA guidelines for a similar size or population. The gross square footage analysis looks at the building as one container and counts all permanently constructed space. It does not consider interior partitions, missing spaces, or appropriate space use. Temporary or modular construction has been excluded from this analysis.

When looking at the buildings' capacity by gross square feet, all of the elementary schools in the District are over capacity, the middle schools are about right sized, and the high school is under capacity.

The graphic below represents each building's capacity as measured by gross square footage. Buildings whose populations are over capacity are shown in red, those that are at capacity are yellow, and those that are under capacity are green. The school's enrollment and corresponding suggested gross square footage as well as the building's size and corresponding capacity are listed below the graphic for each school building and the District as a whole.



District-Wide Capacity

The total sum of gross square feet across Chelmsford's school building inventory is about right sized for the District's population. Chelmsford's schools have a total of 795,280 gross square feet of permanent construction. Based on MSBA guidelines, the schools' gross square footage could support 4,767 students. Chelmsford has a student population of 4,976 students. Therefore, the overall inventory of building area is 97% of what the MSBA would suggest of a population equal to that in Chelmsford.

Byam Elementary School Capacity

The Byam Elementary School is 60,441 GSF. MSBA guidelines would suggest that the capacity of a building of that size is 346 students. The current enrollment of Byam is 473 students. MSBA guidelines suggest that the building should be roughly 25% larger to support the current population.

Center Elementary School Capacity

The Center Elementary School is 55,562 GSF. MSBA guidelines would suggest that the capacity of a building of that size is 310 students. The current enrollment of Center is 430 students. MSBA guidelines suggest that the building should be roughly 28% larger to support the current population.

Harrington Elementary School Capacity

The Harrington Elementary School is 60,441 GSF. MSBA guidelines would suggest that the capacity of a building of that size is 346 students. The current enrollment of Harrington is 465 students. MSBA guidelines suggest that the building should be roughly 24% larger to support the current population.

South Row Elementary School Capacity

The South Row Elementary School is 42,500 GSF. MSBA guidelines would suggest that the capacity of a middle school of that size is 928 students. The current enrollment of McCarthy is 864 students. MSBA guidelines suggest that the building should be roughly 56% larger to support the current population.

McCarthy Middle School Capacity

The McCarthy Middle School is 148,548 GSF. MSBA guidelines would suggest that the capacity of a building of that size is 928 students. The current enrollment of McCarthy is 864 students. MSBA guidelines suggest that the building should be roughly 7% smaller to support the current population.

Parker Middle School Capacity

The Parker Middle School is 109,305 GSF. MSBA guidelines would suggest that the capacity of a building of that size is 650 students. The current enrollment of Parker is 717 students. MSBA guidelines suggest that the building should be roughly 7% larger to support the current population.

Chelmsford High School Capacity

Chelmsford High School is 285,882 GSF. MSBA guidelines would suggest that the capacity of a building of that size is 1785 students. The current enrollment of the high school is 1508 students. MSBA guidelines suggest that the building should be roughly 13% smaller to support the current population.

Capacity by Classroom Count

The number of classrooms within a school facility will determine how many classes the facility can support. When determining capacity by classroom count, the design team counted all classrooms currently being used for general education. Any classrooms currently being used to serve special education are assumed to remain dedicated to special education. Modular/ temporary construction was excluded from this analysis. The design team assumed the following class sizes:

- Pre-kindergarten – kindergarten = 18 students
- 1^{st} – 12^{th} grade = 23 students

Capacity at the elementary level is determined by multiplying the number of grade level classrooms by the number of students per class. At the middle and high school level, capacity is calculated by multiplying the number of students per classroom by the general education classroom count, which is then multiplied by a utilization factor. The utilization factor corresponds to how many periods per day classrooms are in use based on the school's schedule. In Chelmsford, middle and high school classrooms are used 5/7 periods per day, yielding a 71% utilization factor. There are opportunities for the District to increase capacity at the middle and high school level by changing the schedule in order to deliver instruction in classrooms 85% of the day. This would likely require a major cultural shift. Most teachers would not be able to "own" classrooms and planning periods would have to occur in auxiliary spaces.

Specialty classrooms for art, music, gym, technology instruction, or any other dedicated special are not counted for this analysis. Special education classrooms are also excluded from the capacity analysis. Students enrolled in special education programs are included in the calculation as part of the student count of general education classrooms.

The chart on the following page summarizes the capacity of the school facilities in the District. Under current operating practices, Byam Elementary School, McCarthy Middle School, Parker Middle School, and Chelmsford High School are over capacity. If the District offers full-day kindergarten, all of the elementary schools will be over capacity. If the District were to make major changes to operations and potentially program delivery with a schedule that uses a 85% utilization rate, overcrowding could be alleviated at the McCarthy Middle School and Chelmsford High School.

School	# of Classrooms/ Teaching Stations K	Grades 1-4	Grades 1-4	2015-2016 Enrollment	71% Utilization Rate Grades 5-12	85% Utilization Rate Grades 5-12	Full-Day K
Byam Elementary	2	17	-	473	463	463	427
Center Elementary	2	16	-	430	440	440	404
Harrington Elementary	2	18	-	465	486	486	450
Westlands School	3	12	-	132	348	384	330
South Row Elementary	2	14	-	392	394	394	358
McCarthy Middle School	-	-	49	864	800	958	-
Parker Middle School	-	-	35	717	572	684	-
Chelmsford High School	-	-	90	1508	1470	1760	-

Byam Elementary School Capacity

Byam Elementary School has two kindergarten classrooms and 17 general education classrooms that are serving first through fourth grade. The District currently offers a half day kindergarten program. Under the current model, the capacity at Byam is 463 students. Current enrollment is 473 students, making Byam overcrowded by ten students. Should the District offer full-day kindergarten, the capacity at Byam would be 427 students and would be overcrowded by 43 students.

Center Elementary School Capacity

Center Elementary School has two kindergarten classrooms and 16 general education classrooms that are serving first through fourth grade. The capacity at Center is 440 students. Current enrollment is 430 students which means that Center could absorb an increase in enrollment by 10 students. Should the District offer full-day kindergarten, the capacity at Center would be 404 students and would be overcrowded by 26 students.

Harrington Elementary School Capacity

Harrington Elementary School has two kindergarten classrooms and 18 general education classrooms that are serving first through fourth grade. The capacity at Harrington is 486 students. Current enrollment is 465 students which means that Harrington could absorb an increase in enrollment by 21 students. Should the District offer full-day kindergarten, the capacity at Harrington would be 450 students and would be overcrowded by 15 students.

South Row Elementary School Capacity

South Row Elementary School has two kindergarten classrooms and 14 general education classrooms that are serving first through fourth grade. The capacity at South Row is 394 students. Current enrollment is 392 students which means that South Row could absorb an increase in enrollment by only 2 students. Should the District offer full-day kindergarten, the capacity at South Row would be 358 students and would be overcrowded by 34 students.

McCarthy Middle School

The McCarthy Middle School uses 49 teaching stations to serve grades five through eight. At a 71% utilization factor, the capacity at McCarthy is 800 students. By this metric, McCarthy is over capacity by 64 students. If the District were to implement a schedule change and deliver instruction in classrooms 85% of the school day, McCarthy could accommodate 958 students.

Parker Middle School

The Parker Middle School uses 35 teaching stations to serve grades five through eight. At a 71% utilization factor, the capacity at Parker is 572 students. By this metric, Parker is over capacity by 145 students. If the District were to implement a schedule change and deliver instruction in classrooms 85% of the school day, Parker could accommodate 684 students and would still be over capacity by 33 students.

Chelmsford High School

Chelmsford High School uses 90 teaching stations to serve grades nine through twelve. At a 71% utilization factor, the capacity at the high school is 1,470 students. By this metric, the high school is over capacity by 38 students. If the District were to implement a schedule change and deliver instruction in classrooms 85% of the school day, Parker could accommodate 1,760 students.

INSTRUCTIONAL SPACE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Design Team analyzed the size of instructional spaces within each educational facility against a common benchmark. The MSBA provides guidelines for sizing instructional space for new building projects in Massachusetts. Using these guidelines, the Design Team determined if a given space is undersized, right-sized, or oversized. The Design Team used a threshold within 10% of MSBA guidelines when categorizing spaces. The Instructional Space Comparative Analysis only examines existing spaces. It does not account for missing spaces or spaces that are inappropriate for their function.

Below is a diagram of each school representing undersized spaces in red, right-sized spaces in yellow, and oversized spaces in green. Each diagram is accompanied with a brief synopsis.

Byam Elementary School

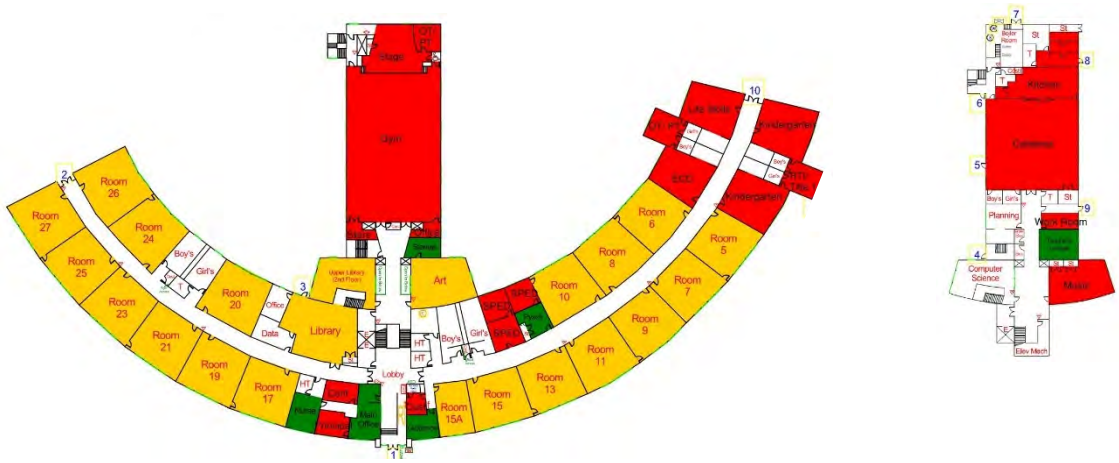
level 1

level 2

Undersized (<90%) **Aligned (90%-110%)** **Oversized (>110%)**

There are a mix of undersized, oversized, and right-sized spaces at Byam Elementary School. In general, the academic instructional spaces are right-sized with the exception of kindergarten classrooms which are larger than MSBA guidelines and the row of classrooms on the second floor which are smaller than MSBA guidelines. Core spaces including the gymnasium, cafeteria, and library are undersized for the school's population.

Center Elementary School



level 1 **Level 2**

Undersized (<90%) **Aligned (90%-110%)** **Oversized (>110%)**

At Center Elementary School, there is a mix of right-sized and undersized spaces. Academic instructional spaces are largely right-sized. Kindergarten classrooms and some special education classrooms are undersized. During the renovation process, space was carved out of these rooms to accommodate toilet rooms. Core spaces including the gymnasium and cafeteria are undersized.

Harrington Elementary School

level 1 **Level 2**

Undersized (<90%) **Aligned (90%-110%)** **Oversized (>110%)**

Similar to Byam, there are a mix of undersized, oversized, and right-sized spaces at Harrington Elementary School. The academic instructional spaces are mostly right-sized with the exception of kindergarten classrooms which are larger than MSBA guidelines and the row of classrooms on the second floor which

are smaller than MSBA guidelines. Core spaces including the gymnasium, cafeteria, and library are undersized for the school's population.

South Row Elementary School

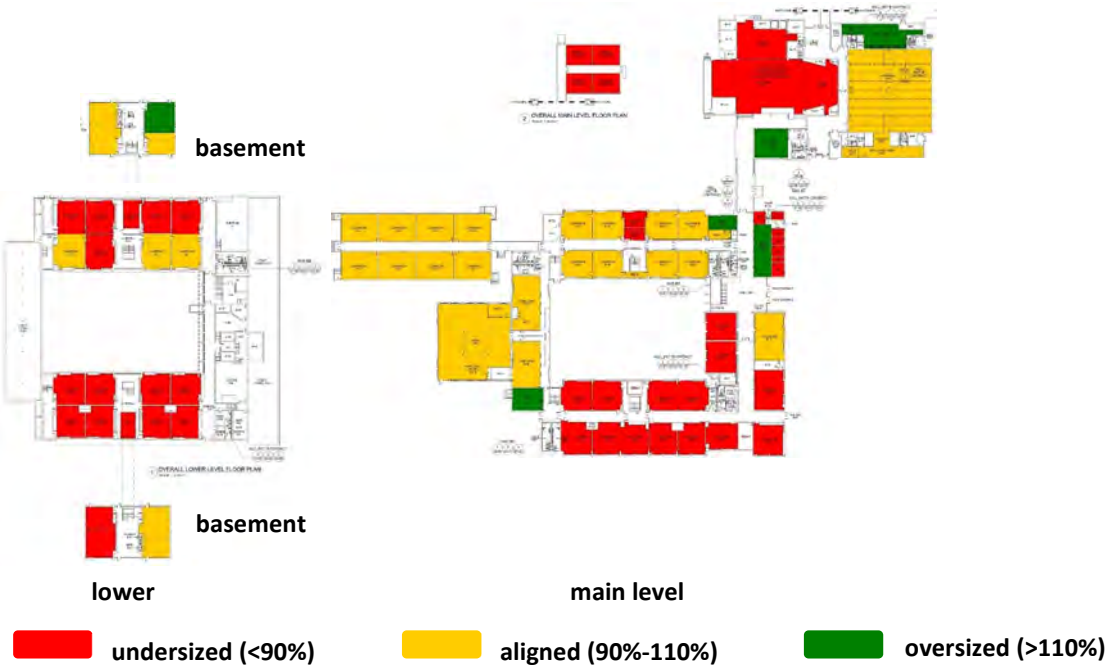
Undersized (<90%) **Aligned (90%-110%)** **Oversized (>110%)**

At South Row Elementary School, nearly all spaces are undersized. All classroom spaces and core spaces including the gym, cafeteria, and library are more than 10% below the MSBA guideline. The only instructional spaces that are oversized are the temporary modular classrooms.

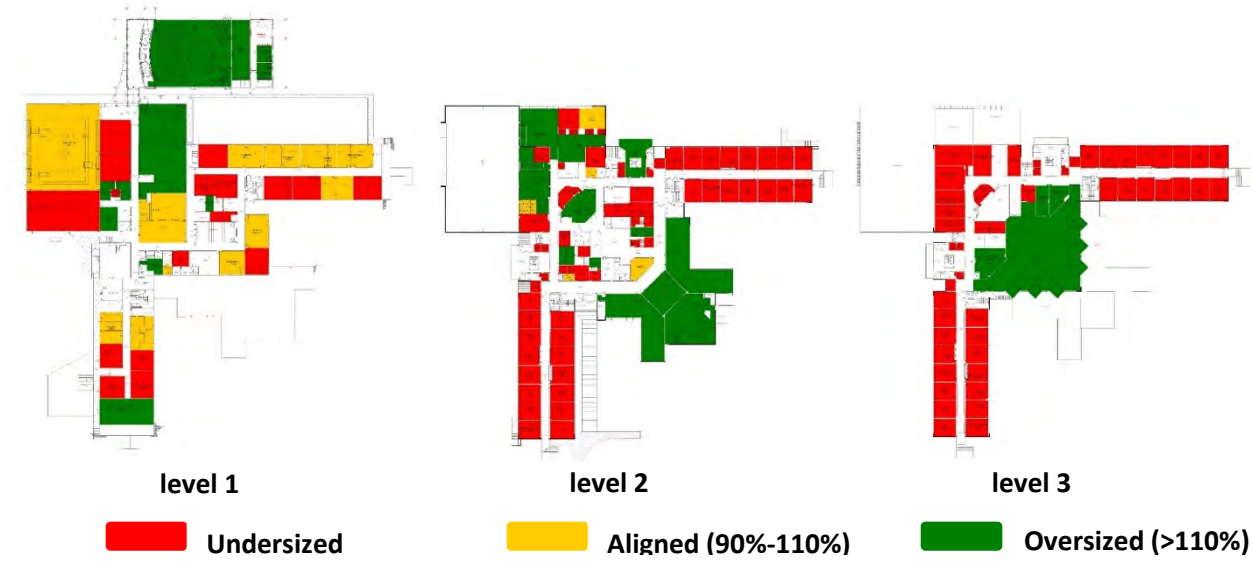
McCarthy Middle School

McCarthy Middle School is also a mix of undersized, right-sized, and oversized spaces. With the exception of a few science rooms, most academic spaces are undersized. Art rooms are undersized, however rooms designated for band, chorus, and orchestra are oversized for their function. The cafeteria and library are also undersized and the gymnasium is larger than necessary for the population. Because this building was the former high school, McCarthy students benefit from an auditorium which is not typically included in a middle school program.

Parker Middle School



Parker Middle School has mostly right sized and undersized spaces. There is an about even mix of right-sized and undersized academic instructional spaces. Similarly with core spaces, the library and gymnasium are right-sized while the cafeteria is undersized for the population. **Chelmsford High School**



Chelmsford High School has a mix of undersized, right-sized, and oversized spaces. In (INSERT YEAR HERE) the District renovated the science classrooms on the first floor. About half of these spaces are in line with current MSBA guidelines. However, elsewhere in the building, nearly all academic spaces are smaller than what the MSBA would recommend. Core spaces including the auxiliary gymnasium, cafeteria, and library are oversized for the population.

UTILIZATION ANALYSIS

Dore & Whittier studied the ways in which the District is using rooms within their educational facilities. The Design Team examined how rooms are programmed, the average number of students occupying each classroom, and the percentage of time during the day when instruction is being delivered in each classroom. Understanding the utilization of a building helps identify inefficiencies and potential reorganization opportunities.

In Chelmsford, elementary schools operate on a 6 block schedule, excluding lunch. Students leave the classroom for one block per day to attend specials which include art, music, technology, library, and gym. Classrooms are used for instruction 83% of the school day which is considered efficient use of the building.

At the middle school level, both Parker and McCarthy run multiple schedules for the four grade levels. In general, students attend two specials per day and teachers "own" their classrooms. Teachers have 2 planning blocks per day and use their classrooms for this activity. Classrooms are being used for instruction between 66% - 72% of the school day. The MSBA guidelines suggest that Districts operate at an 85% utilization rate for new building facilities. Chelmsford could be more efficient with space use if the District were to implement a schedule change. To achieve an 85% utilization rate, rooms would need to be occupied for instruction seven of eight periods per day. This would mean that teachers could not "own" classrooms and teacher planning would have to occur in other classrooms if available, conference rooms, or space repurposed to serve teacher planning areas. Shifting to a more efficient model would be a cultural shift and allow the District to accommodate more students with less space.

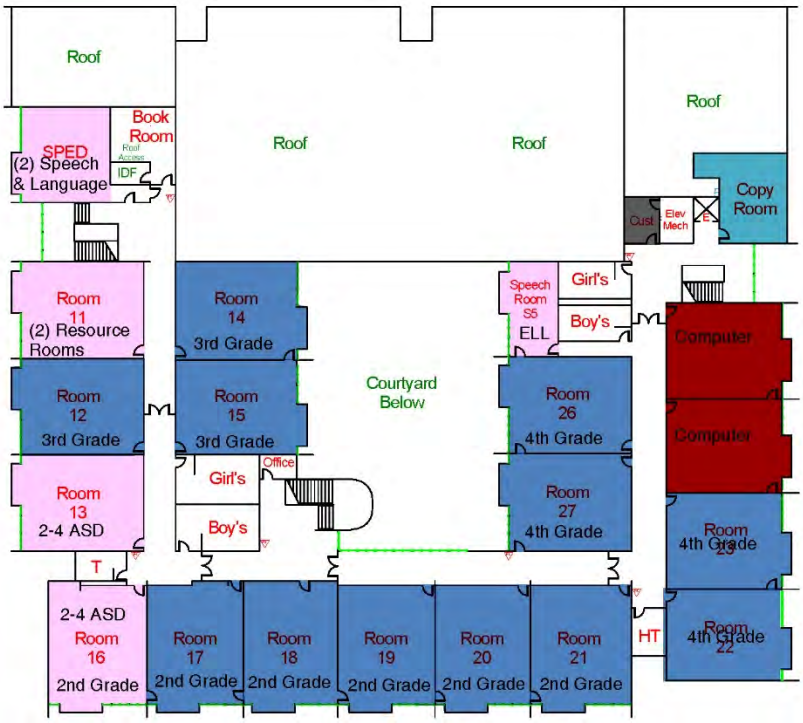
Chelmsford High school also has some opportunities for increased efficiency. The high school operates on a seven block schedule and most classrooms are only in use for instruction five periods per day, yielding a 71% utilization rate. Some classrooms are used more frequently and have a higher utilization rate. The high school is organized into houses and within each house office there are spaces for teacher planning – a feature that allows teachers to share classrooms and make more efficient use of the building should the space be needed.

The following floor plans depict how rooms within the buildings are being used. Refer to the legend below for program departments.

- core academic
- special education
- art / music / drama
- voc. & technology
- health & PE
- dining & food service
- medical
- administration
- custodial
- media center

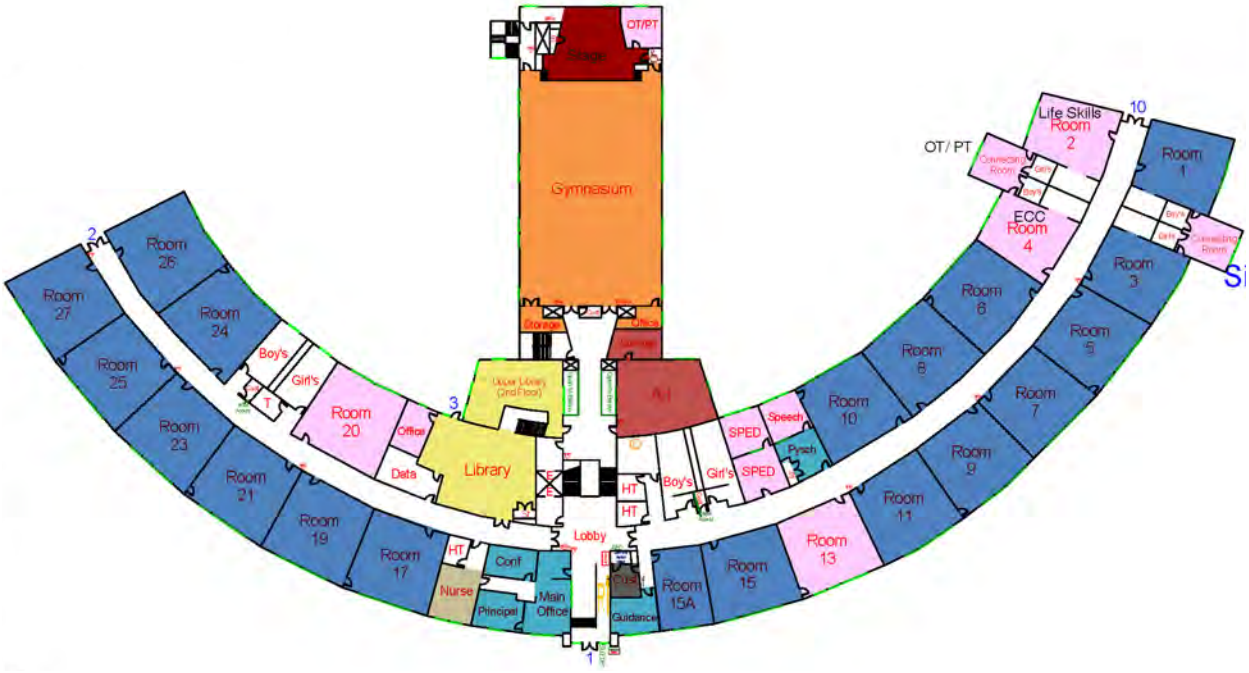
Byam Elementary School

Level 1

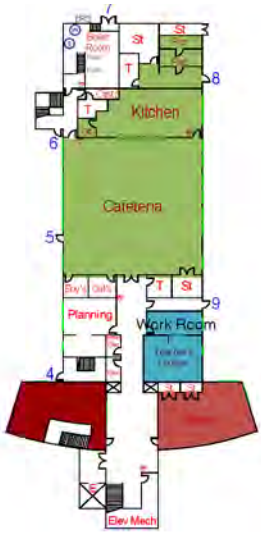


Level 2

Center Elementary School



Level 1



Level 2

Harrington Elementary School

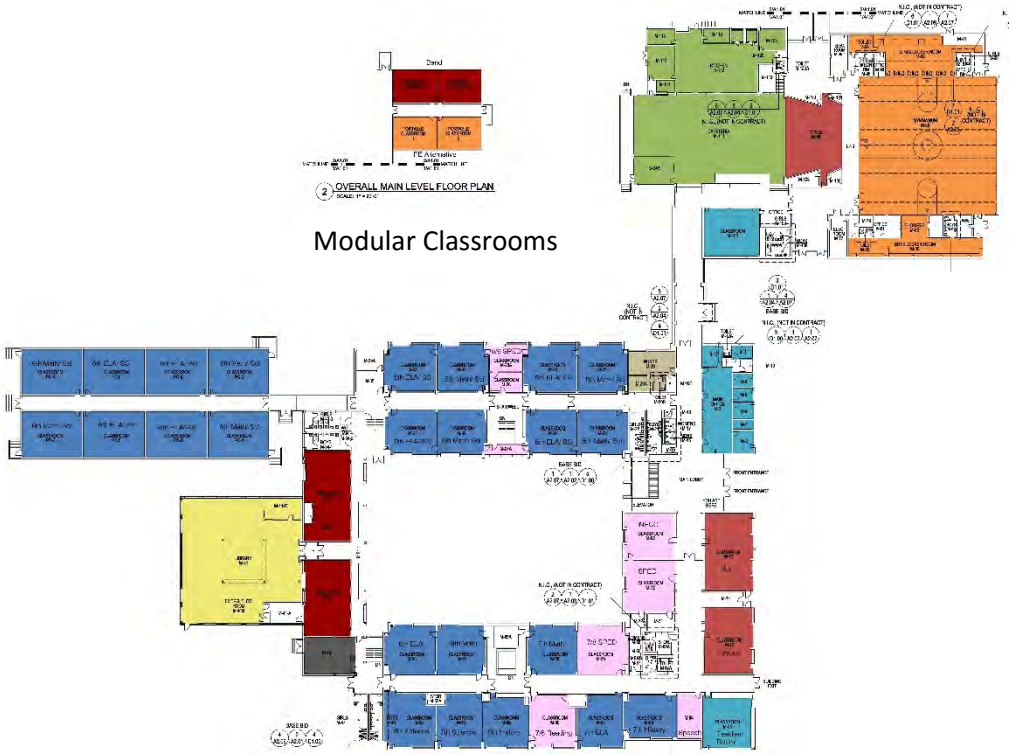
Level 1

Level 2

South Row Elementary School

McCarthy Middle School

Parker Middle School



Level 1

Level 2

Chelmsford High School

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Utilization

.lkm.lk

Subtitle 2

jkhalkjlkh

FUNCTIONAL SPACE USE ANALYSIS

As is typical with older buildings, many spaces within the Chelmsford schools have been repurposed from their original intent. Many special education and specialty programs did not exist at the time some of the buildings were constructed or renovated. The District has had to find space for these programs within the existing buildings. The District has also experienced enrollment growth over the years, adding to the misappropriation of space. Additionally, the age of the buildings and infrastructure limits the delivery of education. This section describes the spaces that are missing, inappropriate for their function, or located in temporary modular construction.

Functional Space Needs

Byam Elementary School

Byam Elementary School is experiencing a space crunch on many levels. Currently there are 19 classrooms being used for kindergarten through fourth grade. Byam houses the District's program for students with autism. The program uses two classrooms on the first floor. In recent past years, Byam has had higher enrollment and needed to use the music and art classrooms for general education. During these years, art and music were taught from a cart. Many closets have been converted into office spaces. Some full-sized classrooms have been repurposed to house multiple special educators who could be meeting with different groups of students simultaneously. The school has set up temporary office dividers and arranged furniture to create zones within these classrooms however, the noise and other activities can still be disruptive to learning. There is no available space for pull out instruction and specialists are delivering services in stair landings and hallways. Lack of space also limits experiential and hands-on learning.

Center Elementary School

The Center School is the most recently renovated school in the District. The school uses 18 classrooms for kindergarten through 4th grade. Although all classrooms are outfitted with a projector and smartboard, there is a desire for more mobile technology that can be used for instruction. The only computer lab in the school is located within the library and is not acoustically separate which limits the use of this space. There is a desire to adopt a model of classroom design that uses centers or zones within the classroom however the existing furniture limits flexibility. There is no space for small group instruction or breakout space for different learning activities. Many specialists work out of converted spaces that are inappropriate for their current use. For example, OTPT, reading intervention, and title I are housed in break-out spaces off an early childhood classroom and the functional academic classroom. None of these spaces are accessible from the hallway and students receiving services are interrupted whenever kindergarten students need to pass through to use the bathroom.

Harrington Elementary School

Like many of the elementary schools in the District, the Harrington School is tight on space. They are using 20 classrooms for kindergarten through 4th grade. Due to lack of space, most special educators are delivering services inside of the general classroom which can be distracting. There is no space for small

group instruction or break out space. Some special education services are being delivered in hallways or the loading dock. Third grade classrooms are the only classrooms with upgraded technology.

South Row Elementary School

South Row is also experiencing space constraints. There are two modular classrooms on site that are nearly 20 years old and house two sections of second grade. Some classrooms share functions including the learning center and ELL space, as well as the early childhood center and OT/PT. Both functions meet with students simultaneously which can be distracting to learning. Other special educators work in converted closet spaces, hallways, vestibules, and off carts. The cafeteria is the only space large enough for large group assemblies which is difficult to schedule. Like the other elementary schools, there is no space for small group instruction or break out learning.

McCarthy Middle School

The McCarthy Middle School was originally designed to be Chelmsford's high school. As a result, there are some spaces supplemental to the middle school curriculum including a full-size auditorium and some spaces inappropriate for a middle school model. Additionally, there are four modular classrooms on site that are used for foreign language and health programming. Special education space is limited and some classrooms are undersized for their function. The science labs are outdated and the infrastructure is negatively affecting education.

Parker Middle School

The Parker Middle school is also experiencing space needs. There are 12 modular classrooms on site serving 6th grade, PE curriculum, and band. Circulation within the building forces students and teachers to travel through learning spaces to access some classrooms. Many special education services share spaces, some of which are inappropriate for their use. For example, the staff lunch room has been converted to house ELL and speech pathology. Some special educators deliver services in converted closet spaces. Infrastructure in the science classrooms is outdated and negatively impacting education. Music spaces need more acoustical treatment to minimize noise transfer. The stage is used for music instruction

Chelmsford High School

Chelmsford high school also has spaces that could function better for educational delivery. There are 15 classrooms with temporary accordion walls. These classrooms have poor acoustics and limited locations for power supply and storage. Special education classrooms are centralized in one location which is counter to best practices advisement from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The art rooms were enclosed as part of a renovation project however, the HVAC system does not heat these rooms properly in winter months which can inhibit learning. The library/ media center/ learning commons was renovated in 2008 and has proven to be a highly valuable space within the building. Both classes and individual students use this space throughout the day for academic and extra-curricular activities. While parts of the high school feel tired, the media center may represent a model for future learning spaces at Chelmsford High School.

VISIONING OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The District held four visioning sessions to engage the community and understand the desired direction for education and educational facilities in Chelmsford. Visioning sessions took a holistic view at solving the District's long-term educational needs. The sessions focused on trends in 21st century learning, education, and educational facilities, key master planning considerations, Chelmsford-specific programmatic needs, and options for long-term solutions. Each session was interactive in nature and invited participants to discuss their opinions, experiences, and provide feedback. Discussions from the visioning sessions were distilled by the working group and influenced the development and evaluation of master plan options.

Visioning Outcomes

The first visioning session introduced national and global trends in 21st century learning and facilities. The imagery, videos, and presentations were meant to raise questions about the direction of education in Chelmsford and what impact that may have on facilities. Participants identified a need for more flexible and varied learning spaces at all grade levels.

During the second visioning session, participants discussed key master planning issues including offering a full-day kindergarten program, the location of pre-kindergarten, grade configuration, school size, and school location. This visioning session revealed a strong and immediate desire to implement full day kindergarten. Discussions also suggested that the community is interested in alternative grade configurations than currently offered.

The third visioning session explored Chelmsford-specific facility considerations uncovered during this study and the ways the District may be able to address them. Considerations included space for full-day kindergarten, the location of the pre-kindergarten program, overcrowding conditions, missing and inappropriate learning spaces, temporary construction, and physical building conditions. The District may look to add new buildings to the District's inventory, place additions on existing buildings, renovate buildings, reconfigure grades, redistrict, change the schools' schedules, and/ or add modular classrooms. Participants engaged in table top exercises to generate possible district-wide solutions and determined that there is not an obvious answer that globally addresses the district needs and that a larger intervention may be necessary in the next 10 years.

The Project Team shared master plan options at the fourth visioning session and invited participants to provide feedback. Major take-aways from this visioning session included the notion that a single upper elementary school is too large, an early childhood center may not get as much town support as a solution that focuses on upper grades, and that the project team should consider a solution that includes a new high school.

Recommendations

The four visioning sessions intended to help the Project Team understand the needs, values, and desires of the community. Through these sessions community members were able to get their hands dirty with the issues affecting the future of education and educational facilities in Chelmsford. When developing

long-term options for the District, the results from the visioning sessions suggest that the District should include space for full day kindergarten, consider alternative grade configurations including an early elementary model, and explore options that could improve conditions at the high school level.

VISIONING SESSION I

Chelmsford Public Schools held the first visioning session of this study on February 10, 2016. Dore & Whittier facilitated the workshop. The District advertised the workshop as an open meeting and invited all community members interested in participating. Approximately 30 stakeholders including administration, teachers of various grade levels, parents, local business leaders, students, and community members attended the visioning workshop. The primary goal of Visioning Session #1 was to introduce the comprehensive facilities assessment to the greater community and raise questions around local, national, and global trends in 21st century education practices and facilities. Participants were invited to react and respond to videos, imagery, and presentations of a variety of ideas to identify aspects that may be appropriate for Chelmsford Public Schools. See Appendix XXXXX for a complete agenda.

The visioning sessions were held at the Chelmsford Senior Center. Participants sat at tables of 6-8 people to encourage table-top discussions.

Overview of Space Needs Analyses

Dore & Whitter began the workshop with an overview of the space needs analyses that had been performed to date. These analyses included the MSBA comparative analysis, capacity analysis by gross square feet, and capacity analysis by classroom count. Please refer to sections B-2 and B-3 of this report for full descriptions.

Key Issues and Considerations

As a large group, visioning participants identified key issues and considerations that they would like to see addressed as part of the master planning effort. The following list summarizes participants' responses:

- Grade configuration
- The Westlands School
- Full-day kindergarten
- Class size
- Parity across schools
- Accessibility
- Special education spaces at all grade levels
- Dedicated art & music classrooms
- Building systems
- Location of pre-kindergarten program

Ed21 Presentation: 21st Century Learning Practices and Facilities

Dore & Whittier presented a series of facts, images, videos and facility examples related to 21st century learning practices and facilities. The videos specifically related to technology, current educational trends, and project-based and experiential learning. Participants were asked to react to the presentation and respond to the following prompts:

- What questions do you have about the video clips?
- What, if anything, about these trends sparked excitement? Why?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of student collaboration and experiential learning?
- How might these student experiences manifest themselves in Chelmsford?

Discussion topics were presented in a series of table top exercises with groups of 6-8 participants. The following questions and observations were raised in response to the 21st century learning practices and facilities presentation:

Questions About Trends in 21st Century Education

- How is special education addressed?
- How do we address each student's individual learning needs?
- How do districts keep up with ever-changing technology?
- How is professional development evolving with trends in education?
- How do districts address class size in facilities with more fluid floor plans and less structured classrooms?
- How do we define success in education? Test scores?
- Will the emerging trends in education last through the lifespan of the buildings?

Ideas that Sparked Excitement

- Hands-on learning
- Collaborative approach to learning and spaces
- Flexible space
- Learning spaces beyond the classroom
- Opportunities to offer learning experiences in multiple ways and environments
- Increased availability of technology
- Multi-age groupings of students

Advantages and Disadvantages of Student Collaboration and Experiential Learning

Advantages	Disadvantages
Prepares students for the workforce	Longer learning process
Develops interpersonal skills	Less structured
Encourages problem solving	Standardized testing is structured and performed independently
Engages multiple learning styles	May not work for all students
Opportunity for deeper learning	Difficult to relate these teaching methods to state standards
Students learn from peer interaction	Traditional assessment methods may not apply

How Might these Ideas Manifest Themselves in Chelmsford?

- Some teaching methods presented are in place in Chelmsford and could be enhanced if the spaces met the needs of staff, students, and parents
- There could be opportunities to collaborate with local businesses
- There could be opportunities for dual enrollment with local higher education institutions

Key Takeaways

- It is difficult to consider long-range possibilities when the district is faced with short-term needs including building infrastructure and available space
- There is some excitement around increasing student and teacher collaboration and experiential learning
- There is some excitement around flexible and differentiated learning spaces

VISIONING SESSION II

Chelmsford Public School held the second visioning session of this study on March 9, 2016. The District advertised the workshop as an open meeting and invited all community members interested in participating. Approximately 35 stakeholders including administration, teachers of various grade levels, parents, local business leaders, students, and community members attended the visioning workshop. D&W presented multiple forms of analysis completed to date. D&W also presented enrollment projections and analysis conducted by NESDEC. Participants explored master planning issues including full day kindergarten, location of pre-kindergarten, grade configuration, school size, school count, neighborhood schools & school location.

The visioning sessions were held at the Chelmsford Senior Center. Participants sat at tables of 6-8 people to encourage table-top discussions.

Overview of Space Needs Analyses

Dore & Whitter began the workshop with an overview of the space needs analyses that had been performed to date. These analyses included the MSBA comparative analysis, capacity analysis by gross square feet, capacity analysis by classroom count, and space utilization analyses. Please refer to sections B-2, B-3, and B-4 of this report for full descriptions.

Key Master Planning Issues

Dore & Whittier presented additional information, considerations, and implications of full-day kindergarten programs, the location of the pre-kindergarten program, grade configuration, school size, school count, school location, and neighborhood schools. Dore & Whittier asked participants to answer guiding questions in small groups of six people. Tables were asked to respond to questions which focused on a designated set of issues. Questions and key discussion topics are listed below.

Full-day Kindergarten

Discussion Prompt:

- Describe the advantages and disadvantages of providing full-day kindergarten.

Discussion Summary:

The discussions at the visioning session revealed that community is interested in shifting toward a full-day kindergarten model. Participants were passionate about the benefits of offering full-day kindergarten for all students however, they recognized that the District does not have space available for this program. The following chart enumerates the advantages and disadvantages discussed at the visioning session.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Attractive program for young families	Longitudinal advantages may be short lived
Increase time on learning	Space is not currently available
State standards are written for a full-day program	Increase costs to the District
Improved curriculum development	District will lose income from KCC program
Increased opportunity to meet social/ emotional needs	Not all parents want their children in a full-day program
Better prepares students for first grade	
Opportunity to provide early intervention for all students	
More accommodating for students who are less developed / more time with peer models for students on IEPs	
Grant money is currently available	
Lowers stress for students and encourages learning through play	

Location of Pre-kindergarten

Discussion Prompt:

- Describe the advantages of a centralized, decentralized, or blended model of pre-kindergarten.
    - Centralized – free standing, district-wide pre-kindergarten
    - De-centralized – pre-kindergarten distributed throughout the district in neighborhood schools
    - Blended model – district-wide pre-kindergarten attached to one or two neighborhood schools

Discussion Summary:

Participants at the visioning session favored a blended model of pre-kindergarten where the pre-kindergarten program would be located in one or two neighborhood schools and would serve all pre-kindergarten students in the district. Participants highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of each model as summarized below.

- Centralized model – A centralized model allows the District to take advantage of having a critical mass of educators and specialists in one location. This model provides an opportunity to provide the greatest expertise and variety of services for the District's most vulnerable student population. This model does not allow pre-kindergarten students to acclimate to their neighborhood schools and creates an additional transition throughout a student's educational career. Additionally, in a centralized model the pre-kindergarten program may feel isolated from the rest of the district's schools.
- Decentralized model – A decentralized model would place students in their neighborhood schools at the start of their educational career, become part of the school community, and eliminate an additional transition. Pre-kindergarten educators could work with kindergarten teachers and

school administration to better understand the expectations for kindergarten and to best place students as they progress through the grades. There would not be a critical mass of educators or specialists available at each neighborhood school and the District may need to hire additional specialists. Participants also recognized that space is not available at the existing elementary schools to absorb the pre-kindergarten program.

- Blended Model – A blending pre-kindergarten model would house all pre-kindergarten students in one or two neighborhood elementary schools. This would allow the District to take advantage of having a critical mass of staff and specialists and would allow pre-kindergarten students to interact with older peer models. The pre-kindergarten program would be able to communicate and collaborate with kindergarten teachers and school administration to better shape pre-kindergarten curriculum. Because all pre-kindergarten students would be at one or two neighborhood elementary schools, some students would need to transition to their neighborhood school for first grade. Some students would remain at the same school which could cause a disparity across the district.

Grade Configuration

Discussion Prompt

- Identify the advantages and disadvantages of different grade configuration.
- Document between which grade levels you think a developmental break occurs.

Discussion Summary:

The grade configuration discussions suggested that the District may want to consider an alternate grade configuration than what is currently offered. There is interest in exploring an early childhood center (pre-kindergarten through kindergarten), a lower and upper elementary school model (PK-2/ 3-5), a conventional middle school (6-8), and/ or a conventional junior high school (7-8). Most participants agreed that a 5-8 middle school is not the most educationally appropriate grade grouping and that fifth-grade students are better served as being the oldest students in an elementary school rather than the youngest students in a middle school. There was also recognition that pre-kindergarten students should be in school with older peer students.

Participants suggested exploring the following grade configurations:

- PK-2/ 3-5/ 6-8/ 9-12
- PK-K/ 1-5/ 6-8/ 9-12
- Pk-2/ 3-4/ 5-6/ 7-8/ 9-12

School Size & School Count

Discussion Prompts

- Should all elementary schools in the District be the same size? If yes, what is the ideal enrollment?
- Should the middle schools in the District be the same size? If yes, what is the ideal enrollment?

Discussion Summary

There were not strong feelings about aligning enrollments across the elementary or middle schools. Participants expressed that district-wide parity in class sizes, building quality, play structures, and

programs is more important than parity of school size. Participants recognized that adjusting school sizes would require redistricting which is an undesirable consequence.

School Location and Neighborhood Schools

Discussion Prompts

- How does the community feel about neighborhood schools at the elementary and middle school level?
- What is community perception about parity at elementary and middle schools?
- Should the District consider other organizational models such as school choice, thematic elementary schools, or sequential middle schools?

Discussion Summary

Participants expressed that neighborhood schools at the elementary level and parity at the middle schools are very important to the community. There is little to no interest in moving away from neighborhood schools to explore a different elementary model. PTOs are very active at each school. However, participants expressed that should the District need to change the districting map or grade configuration, students and parents would develop new loyalty for the student's new school.

At the middle schools, there is a desire to increase programmatic parity. Participants did not feel that student performance varied between the two schools however, because the McCarthy School was originally built to be a high school and the Parker was originally designed to be an elementary school, there are spatial differences between the two schools. The McCarthy school has an auditorium, more physical education space, and more sophisticated science labs.

Key Take-aways

- There is a desire to offer full-day kindergarten district-wide
- Participants recognized that it is important to maintain a critical mass of pre-kindergarten educators and specialists and that the program would benefit from being physically connected to other elementary grades. The discussions suggest that the District may want to consider an early childhood center or attaching the pre-kindergarten program to an elementary school.
- Participants expressed an interest in alternative grade configurations that would remove the transition between pre-kindergarten and kindergarten and bring fifth grade down to the elementary schools. The discussions suggested that the district may want to explore alternate grade configurations further.
- Neighborhood schools are important in Chelmsford and there is not an appetite to explore an alternative organizational model for the elementary schools. However, if neighborhood schools' catchment areas change or grade configurations change, students and parents would adjust to their new school.
- There are perceived programmatic inequalities at the middle schools. Community members expressed a desire to create programmatic parity at the middle schools.

VISIONING SESSION III

Chelmsford Public School held the third visioning session of this study on April 9, 2016. The District advertised the workshop as an open meeting and invited all community members interested in participating. Approximately 35 stakeholders including administration, teachers of various grade levels, parents, local business leaders, students, and community members attended the visioning workshop. D&W presented an overview of the previous workshops and multiple forms of analyses completed to date. The workshop included presentation and table-top exercises crafted to help understand how the key issues uncovered during this study impact the master plan.

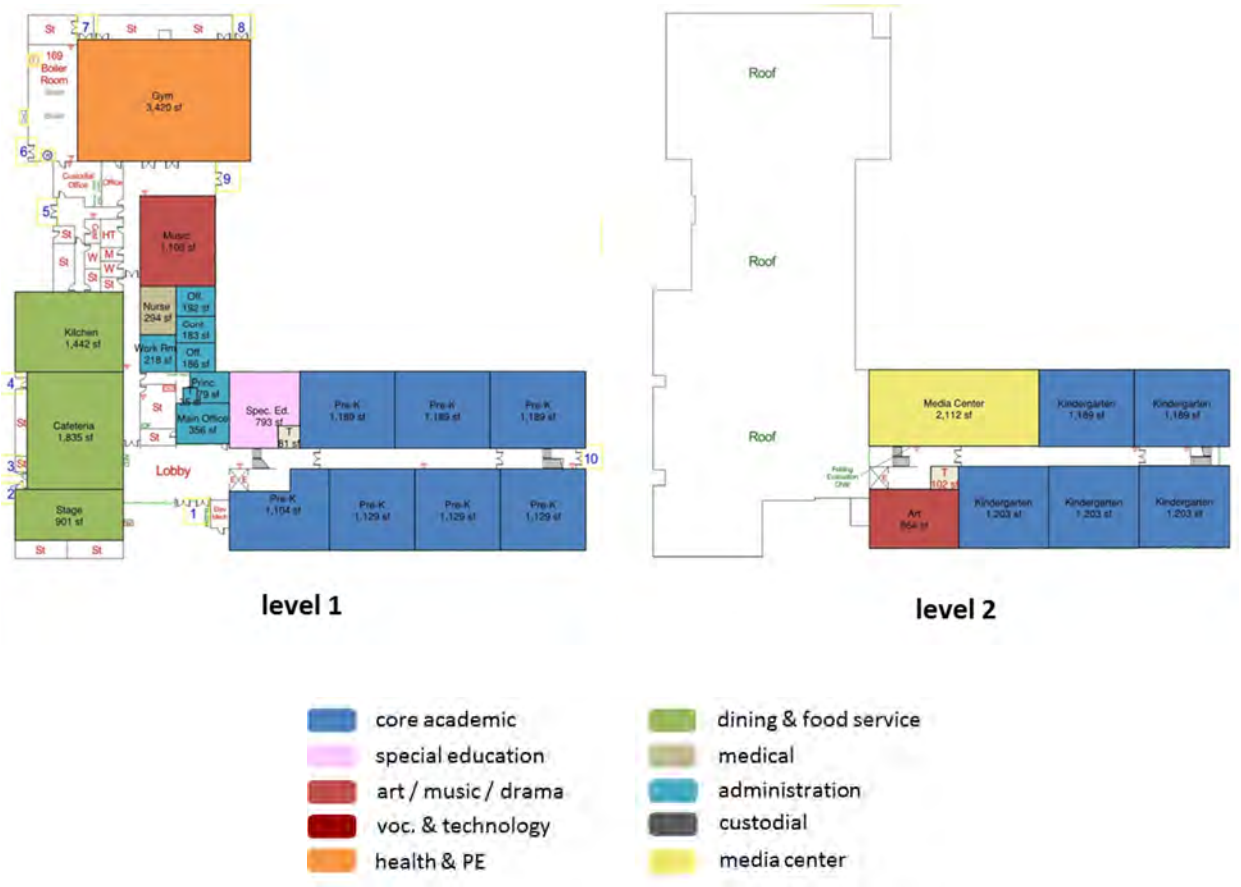
The visioning sessions were held at the Chelmsford Senior Center. Participants sat at tables of 6-8 people to encourage table-top discussions.

Overview of Space Needs Analyses & Facilities Assessments

Dore & Whitter began the workshop with an overview of the facilities assessments. Please refer to sections 2-A through 2-J of this report for full descriptions.

space needs analyses that had been performed to date. These analyses included the MSBA comparative analysis, capacity analysis by gross square feet, capacity analysis by classroom count, and space utilization analyses. Please refer to sections 3-B-2, 3-B-3, and 3-B-4 of this report for full descriptions.

In additions to the previously shared analysis, D&W shared speculative analysis of the viability of converting the Westlands school into an early childhood center. If the Westlands were to be reconfigured to accommodate right-sized classrooms for preschool and kindergarten students, the school may be able to hold 7 sections of pre-k and 5 sections of kindergarten, yielding a capacity of 216 students. Should the District adopt full-day K, the District would need 24 sections of kindergarten to accommodate the 432 pre-kindergarten and kindergarten student target enrollment. The diagram on the next page conceptually shows the Westlands School reconfigured to be an early childhood center. Spaces are color coded to represent program areas.



D&W also presented enrollment targets chosen by the working group for this study. See section 3-A *Enrollment Projections* for a full description of enrollment forecasts.

Key Study Issues

Dore & Whittier presented a summary of the key issues uncovered throughout this study process. The key issues stem from the Visioning Session discussions, facilities assessments, and working group meetings. Master plan options should do the following:

- Accommodate full-day kindergarten
- Consider alternate pre-kindergarten locations
- Address overcrowding conditions at the elementary, middle, and high school
- Address missing or spaces that are inappropriate for their function including special education, dedicated spaces for specials, and middle school science labs.
- Remove the need for temporary construction at South Row, Parker, and McCarthy
- Address physical building conditions

Master Plan Tools to Address Key Study Issues

Dore & Whittier presented a summary of the tools the District can use to address some or all the key issues uncovered through this study. Parts of the solution may include:

- New building construction
- Addition(s)
- Renovation(s)
- Grade Reconfiguration
- Redistricting
- Schedule Change
- Modular Construction

Grade Reconfiguration

At Visioning Session II, participants expressed a desire to change the grade configuration. This exercise was crafted to understand where people felt the natural developmental breaks occur for students. Participants were invited to place dots between the grade levels where they felt natural developmental breaks occur. The following transitions are listed in order by which received the most votes:

- Grades 8 – 9
- Grades 5 – 6
- Grades 6 – 7
- Kindergarten – Grade 1
- Grades 2 – 3

These responses suggest that the District may want to consider the following grade configurations:

- PK-K/ 1-5/ 6-8/ 9-12
- PK-K/ 1-6/ 7-8/ 9-12
- PK-2/ 3-5/ 6-8/ 9-12

Participants then engaged in table-top discussions around the advantages and disadvantages of the different grade configurations, including the current grade configuration. Participants were then asked to choose their preferred grade configuration.

Current Grade Configuration: PK/ K-4/ 5-8/ 9-12

Participants discussed how the current grade configuration allowed students to stay in the same building for many years which minimizes transitions for students and allows teacher and administrators to better get to know each student's needs and learning styles. However, in this model pre-kindergarten is isolated from the other grades. Most tables also noted that the 5-8 middle school is difficult for students and that fifth graders are very developmentally different from eighth grade students.

PK-K/ 1-5/ 6-8/ 9-12

Participants discussed the benefits of this grade configuration including age appropriate transitions, ample time at the elementary level to develop a sense of school community, and middle school alignment with student's curricular and socialization needs. Some participants noted that the span of grades 1-5 is too long.

PK-2/ 3-5/ 6-8/ 9-12

This grade configuration creates an early elementary school, upper elementary school, traditional middle school, and high school. Participants discussed the benefits of an early elementary school including teacher licensure, literacy-focused curriculum, and students do not transition to a new school until they are older and more able to adapt. The upper elementary school would be able to take advantage of the curricular shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" for grades 3-5. Overall, this model creates schools with smaller brackets of age differentiation and grade groupings are developmentally closer together.

When asked to choose their preferred grade configuration, participants overwhelmingly showed preference to the PK-2/ 3-5/ 6-8/ 9-12 model.

District-wide Options Diagramming

Considering the key study issues and master planning tools, attendees were asked to explore potential district-wide organizational models. Participants worked in small groups of 6-8 and create conceptual schools with consideration to current buildings, target enrollment, grade configuration, parity across school buildings, and ideal school size and count. Each table was given a district map with existing facility locations and capacity as well as tiles representing grade level classrooms. Each table was given a tile for each grade level classroom needed in the district to serve Chelmsford's school population. Participants were asked to place what they felt was the appropriate number of grade level classrooms at whichever school location they felt was most appropriate. Participants were not limited to existing school sites should they feel a new school would be the best solution.

Participants found that there are many ways to reorganize the schools, but none are perfect if the District is confined to the existing structures. However, few tables chose to build new schools. Also, most tables modified their preferred grade configuration based on available space. This suggests that the community values reusing the existing school buildings. Participants also found that there is not enough space in the existing schools to execute the educational program without some form of addition or new construction. Participants showed major additions at McCarthy, Parker, or South Row and/ or new building solutions for Pre-kindergarten- kindergarten, 7th grade - 8th grade, and a high school.

Key Take-aways

- PK-2/ 3-5/ 6-8/ 9-12 is the preferred grade configuration
- An easy facilities solution does not exist
- There are many ways to address the district's needs but none are perfect
- A significant intervention may be needed within the next 10 years

VISIONING SESSION IV

Chelmsford Public School held the fourth and final visioning session of this study on May 4, 2016. The District advertised the workshop as an open meeting and invited all community members interested in participating. Approximately 50 stakeholders including administration, teachers of various grade levels, parents, local business leaders, students, and community members attended the visioning workshop. D&W presented the short list of options developed by the design team and working group. The purpose of this session was to provide an opportunity for participants to provide feedback about the options and help the working group understand how the community felt about potential master plan solutions.

The visioning sessions were held at the Chelmsford Senior Center. Participants sat at tables of 6-8 people to encourage table-top discussions.

Identified Issues and Preliminary Options

Dore & Whittier presented the issues to be addressed that were uncovered during this study. Each master plan option was developed to solved these issues over a given timeframe. Master plan options should do the following:

- Accommodate full-day kindergarten
- Consider an alternate location for pre-kindergarten
- Relieve overcrowding issues at all grade levels
- Address missing and inappropriate spaces. These spaces include special education art, music, and middle school science
- Eliminate need for temporary construction
- Address physical building conditions

Dore & Whittier presented the list of nine district-wide planning options developed by the design team and the working group. The Project Team relied on the insights from community members who participated in the first three visioning sessions and the bi-weekly working group sessions when designing the options. For a full description of options please refer to section *IV - Conceptional Options* of this report.

In a café-style discussion, participants were invited to discuss and record the advantages and disadvantages of the district-wide options. Prior to the visioning session, the working group elected to have participants provide feedback for each option that substantially changed the organization of the district. Because options A, B, and C do not change the organization of the district, participants did not provide feedback for these options. Participants responses are listed on the following page.

Option D

In Option D, the District would build an early childhood center for prekindergarten and kindergarten students and the middle schools would shift to a sequential model. In addition to solving the issues uncovered in this study, this option would combine pre-kindergarten with another grade as discussed in the second visioning session. Because one middle school would be 5th-6th grade and the second would be 7th-8th grade, this option would also address programmatic inequalities at the middle schools. This would be a two-project solution and would require the town to invest in a new school building. Participants expressed that the Town may be less likely to support a new building project for early childhood. Additionally, this option does not holistically address physical building needs at the elementary, middle, and high school level.

Option E

In Option E, the District would build a new upper elementary school for all grade 3-5 students in the District. The remaining elementary schools would either be PK-2 or K-2. Parker and McCarthy would become traditional 6-8 middle schools. This option aligns the district with the community's preferred grade configuration and is a one project solution. Alternatively, it creates an upper elementary school that may be too big and does not address programmatic inequalities at Parker and McCarthy. Because pre-kindergarten is only at two of the elementary schools, some pre-kindergarten students would still need to transfer schools for kindergarten.

Option F

In Option F, the District would build additions at the Parker to accommodate all of grades 3-5 and McCarthy for all of grades 6-8. Like Option E, Option F aligns the district with the preferred grade configuration. This option allows all students in the district to be together starting at grade 3. Also like Option E, a single upper elementary school may be too large. This is a two-project solution.

Option G

In Option G, the District would place a major addition at McCarthy to accommodate all the 6th-8th grade students in the district. Pre-kindergarten would remain at Westlands. Harrington, Center, and South Row become K-2 elementary schools and Byam and South Row would become grades 3-5 elementary schools. This option does not connect pre-kindergarten with the other elementary grades, but does move the district closer to the desired grade configuration. There would be enrollment inequity at the upper elementary schools.

Option H

In Option H, the District would build a new 6-8 middle school and reconfigures the grades at the elementary schools to be PK-2 or K-2 and converts the middle schools to be 3-5 upper elementary schools. This option aligns the District with the desired grade configuration and only requires one

building project. This option repurposes existing buildings, however Parker and McCarthy may not be appropriate for elementary students.

Option I

In Option I, the District would build a new 7th-8th grade junior high school, reconfigure the elementary schools to be kindergarten through 3rd grade, and reconfigure the middle schools to be 4th -6th grade. Pre-kindergarten would remain at Westlands. This option does not align with the desired grade configuration or state curriculum guidelines nor address program inequities at Parker and McCarthy.

Considerations for Options Evaluation

Participants were invited to share what they considered to be important when evaluating the options. Participants expressed a desire to consider the following:

- Cost
- Disruption to learning during construction
- Grade configuration
- Number of transitions
- Building size
- Appeal to the community/ community's willingness to support the project
- Appropriateness of educational space
- Time to completion
- Improvement to educational opportunities
- Optimal use of existing resources

Options Straw Poll

After discussing each option, participants were asked to vote on their preferred option. Option H, a new traditional middle school, received the most votes followed by a write-in option for a new high school, followed by Option D for an early childhood center.

Key Take-aways

- The Design Team and working group should consider exploring an option that includes a new high school
- A single upper elementary school for the district may be too big
- An early childhood center may get less support in the community than a building project for the upper grades