

# Capital Sub-Committee of the Brookline School Committee Proposal for School Expansion to Meet Enrollment Growth

## Introduction

### Enrollment Growth

As detailed in the B-SPACE report, the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) has experienced unprecedented enrollment growth in the past seven years.

- Elementary (K-12) student population has increased by approximately 1200 children, a 30% increase, since 2006, leading to an additional 37 class sections in our elementary schools.
- Kindergarten enrollment in FY2013 hit a high of 666 students across the district. Projected enrollment for the incoming class (FY2014) is 632 students (as of 9-4-2013). By contrast, the senior class enrollment of FY2013 at Brookline High School was comprised of 439 students.

### Responding to Growth

In response to the early years of growth (2006-2008), the PSB in 2008 commissioned MGT of America to create a Facilities Master Plan. As a result of MGT's recommendations, the PSB has been pursuing an aggressive schedule of expanding our existing schools (what B-SPACE calls "expand in place"). Most of our elementary schools have been expanded internally well past their intended capacities through creative re-use or subdivision of existing spaces within buildings, resulting in some loss or constraint of specialized program and/or common spaces. During the past four years, in order to continue to accommodate the increase in student population, and in partnership with the Massachusetts School Building Authority, (MSBA), we have substantially renovated and expanded Runkle and Heath Schools.

As a result of these combined efforts, the PSB added room for 37 additional sections at its existing schools between 2008-2013. However, despite all of these efforts, due to the continued acceleration of growth, our current facilities do not offer adequate capacity and therefore, further expansion is required. To meet future capacity needs, a plan to renovate and enlarge Devotion School is in process with the MSBA. But even adding capacity at Devotion will not fully solve the problem, for the following reasons:

- A renovated and enlarged Devotion school, if approved, could not fully absorb the projected system-wide enrollment growth.
- Suboptimal spaces: While the PSB has been successful in meeting the need for classroom space to date, growth has taken its toll in most of our elementary schools with divided classrooms, loss of space for specialists and other student support offices. In addition, in a number of schools there is loss or constraint on common spaces. If PSB does not add space sufficient to allow remediation of some changes, many schools will continue to contend with less than adequate physical environments for the foreseeable future.
- Brookline Early Education: Creating spaces for K-8 classes has required moving three classrooms through FY2013 and three more PreK classrooms for FY2014 to rental spaces away from the elementary schools. Runkle and Heath, each renovated with one dedicated PreK classroom, will continue to house those classrooms.

### Future Growth & School Capacity Needs

Forecasted enrollment growth assumes a school system averaging 630 students per grade, totaling 5670 students (by 2019) in the elementary grades and 2,500 students (by 2022) at the high school.

Although enrollments can never be perfectly predicted, and these calculations are sensitive to unpredictable events (for example, the system experiences periodic consolidations in which two sections combine into one, usually in the higher elementary grades), the School Committee projects the following space needs:

- 1. Between 25-30 additional class sections in the elementary schools between FY2014 and FY2019.**
- 2. Between 11-13 additional elementary spaces to allow remediation of suboptimal conditions.**
- 3. Expansion of high school facilities to accommodate 2,100 students by FY 2019 and 2,500 students by 2022**

## **Recommendations:**

### **Brookline School Committee Proposals for Expansion**

To address the space needs identified above, align with the PSB Strategic Plan and Vision, and preserve Brookline's commitment to excellence and equity, the Capital Subcommittee recommends the School Committee adopt the following plan:

**A.** Accept the B-SPACE recommendation to maintain the present K-8 and 9-12 educational program configuration.

**B.** Accept the B-SPACE recommendations for "Expand in Place" as follows:

- Devotion School renovated and expanded to accommodate 5 sections per grade with class sizes conforming to BSC policy, with target occupancy in September 2017.

*This will require approval by the MSBA; a dialogue has begun, but approval is not guaranteed. This will also require close attention to program, staffing, scheduling, etc. to ensure the community will continue to thrive in a larger school setting. An aggressive timeline would need to be followed in order to achieve this occupancy date.*

- Driscoll School renovated and expanded to accommodate 4 sections per grade, with class sizes conforming to BSC policy, with target occupancy in September 2018.

*This will achieve the first full renovation of the Driscoll School since it was built in 1911, and address its common space shortages. This will require close attention to the operational implications of adding roughly 25-30% new capacity to the building. Again, an aggressive timeline would need to be followed to achieve this occupancy date, including pursuing potential partnership with MSBA.*

- Lawrence School continues a modular addition of 4 classrooms (already planned and funded), to be ready for occupancy Sept. 2014.

*This will allow Lawrence to reclaim two large common areas (Music Room and Auditorium) and accommodate anticipated enrollments until FY 2017. The cafeteria has already been enlarged this summer to provide for more dining space. The BSC anticipates that further relief of pressure on classroom and common space at Lawrence will be accomplished through the expansion of Driscoll and Devotion Schools.*

**C.** Engage in further study regarding the B-SPACE recommendation to maximize the use, whether by efficiency and/or expansion, of Brookline High School. Begin a process immediately of analyzing the pedagogical and administrative implications of optimally serving up to 2,500 high school students in Brookline. This may include new or revamped programs, staffing and administrative structures, and facilities use. The plan and educational program for an expansion of high school capacity should follow a process of engagement and deliberation of options with current BHS faculty and students, the Brookline community, the School Committee, PSB leadership, as well as input from the research on current best

practices in curriculum, instruction, and pedagogy for secondary schools. That process, to be completed during the 2013-2014 school year, will be led by the Superintendent and Headmaster, and will benefit from a consultant to help guide the research and constituent engagement. This process will take into account, but not be limited to, the options presented in the HMFH High School Concept Study.

**D.** Accept the B-SPACE recommendation to renovate/replace and expand the Pierce School after completion of other expansions.

*This will achieve the first full renovation of the Pierce School since it was built in 1975 and upgrade the facility to the same level as the rest of the public schools in Brookline. If enrollments continue at the forecasted rate, expansion of Pierce is a key part of the long-term plan. The Pierce expansion could allow Pre-Ks to move back into the elementary buildings, a core part of our vision. Another goal would be to create sufficient space for dedicated, high-quality extended day space system-wide. Finally, by sequencing this phase after the completion of other expansions, it hedges against the possibility that enrollments grow at a slower rate than projected and maximizes our flexibility and cost-consciousness.*

**Notes & Assumptions:**

1) The elementary school expansions proposed above will require continued use of buffer zones and/or redistricting of current attendance districts in order to take advantage of the increased capacity created.

2) We make no recommendation on Baker at this time because it is unclear what will happen with the proposed development at Hancock Village. We acknowledge the B-SPACE recommendation that Baker and Heath schools have some capacity for future growth should the PSB need additional capacity in south Brookline.

3) Together, proposals A, B, & C will allow Brookline to meet its objective of classroom capacity expansion. However, only with the addition of the Pierce renovation are we confident the PSB can achieve the long-term objectives of returning PreK classes to our buildings and bringing all our schools back up to Brookline's standard of quality.