



Natick Public Schools
CENTRAL OFFICE
13 East Central Street, Natick, MA 01760

Dr. Anna Nolin, Superintendent
Timothy Luff, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Peter Gray, Assistant Superintendent for Finance
Susan Balboni, Director of Teaching, Learning, and Innovation

To: School Committee
From: Anna Nolin, Superintendent of Schools
Date: March 6, 2023
Re: Enrollment projections for 2023-24 school year, staffing truths

At our last meeting a series of claims were made about projected enrollment for next year at the elementary level which I would like to correct at this time. The sharing of inaccurate information made parents at all elementary schools unnecessarily anxious.

Adequate Additional Elementary Staffing

Last year, and before you in the budget this year, we doubled the amount of guidance staff and added a vice principal to every school. This year, our FY 24 budget proposal before you adds a .5 VP to Memorial so they, too, have a full time vice principal in addition to the special education coordinator at each building. We also added an additional social worker to the elementary level, primarily focusing on Lilja Elementary (in addition to our social worker dedicated to homeless students).

These moves were to respond to pandemic needs but also to respond to the transition of the Johnson students to new schools. In addition Laura Loftus, the current JES counselor is assigned to oversee and follow all transitioned JES kids at their new schools and is not being assigned full time to other locations. We know she knows the transitioning kids and we trust her to follow their needs.

We also added additional tutors, interventionists and added elementary learning specialists (3) to the schools receiving additional Johnson students. You approved those positions for this year and, shortly, you will receive a memo from the principals detailing the impact of the additional staff to benefit all children, including the transitioning JES children.

Only if the committee is advocating to NOT continue the formerly grant funded additional support positions added at each level, additional staffing has been sent to each school with your support and authorization and it is currently there. You have already supported the actions to expand staffing for our elementary schools.

JES Student Transitions

For FY 24, as of this memo:

13 JES students are moving to Lilja across three grades,
13 JES students are moving to Memorial across three grades,
only 4 JES students have indicated they are leaving JES early to go to Brown, --all in grade 2. (There were more students in FY23 who transitioned to Brown across three grades but they were already accounted for in FY 23 numbers and beyond).

Natick Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, age, gender identity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, physical and intellectual differences, immigration status, or homeless status.

Unexpected Surge of EL Students

The added 50 students reported at the elementary level were largely (41) ELL students that came to us in October, mostly from the Ukraine and we hired EL staffers to educate those children. The staff will follow the children (please refer to update memos from Erin Miller adding both special education and EL staff across the district to address influxes).

Six of the students who came to Brown for EL services in FY 23 are actually from BH and will return there now that we have trained staff and added staff at BH and now have a critical mass of children to create EL support classes at BH. Before this there was no student cohort with which to make EL classes so we had to consolidate at Brown. It is preferred to transition the students back to Ben Hem, their neighborhood school, as they will eventually transition to Wilson and this spares them a transition to Wilson without any known classmates/not with their feeder school cohorts.

The surge of EL students could happen any time and is not something we can project (case in point: the war in the Ukraine was not something we could have imagined). Any district needs to prepare for such changes.

Actual Class Sizes for FY 24

Class sizes at this time are as follows:

- Ben Hem Class Size Range: 18-22 (one section of 22)
- Brown Class Size Range: 17-22 (two sections of 22)
- Johnson Class Size Range 15-16
- Lilja Class Size Range: 17-23 (one class of 23 is the multi age so it is broken into an 11 and 12 child grouping moving from grade 1 to 2 from last year)
- Memorial Class Size Range: 18-22 (three sections of 22)

These numbers include transitioned JES students, additional 6 METCO students at Ben Hem and EL students in their home schools except for JES (cohort size is too small).

Kindergarten Registration is happening now and we will update you on classes later in the spring.

Space Availability

We have moved the preschool sections out of Lilja and Memorial and added a section at BH, added a section at East and we were able to restore a section back to NHS. Recall, the reschedule of classes at NHS in the fall yielded 12 class spaces back to the building.

In other words, if we have a surge anywhere, we have both space and staff to address it through internal transfers and space at Brown, BH, Lilja and Memorial. Staffing meetings with elementary principals occurred on 2/27/23, middle and HS are pending in the coming two weeks. Furthermore, we are holding an additional teacher to address any K surges at any school. We are also holding an additional teacher in case a surge of JES parents decide in the next two weeks to transition their children and we can add a section at any school if needed.

Nursing Staff

During the pandemic, we added nurses to our rosters and have begun to share nurses across buildings so nurses can get breaks, go to meetings and have redundancy/bench

strength at schools. The nurse department head substitutes in as needed, and we have a sub list for nurses. Every school site has at least one full time nurse with the following exceptions: The Johnson nurse visits ACHIEVE (18-22 year old program) site (in Natick Center) 1 x a day to administer insulin to a student, then she returns to JES. The East preschool has a nurse assistant / paraprofessional and since there are no high-needs nursing needs there, that is appropriate. If IEP needs dictate a change in the future, we can add a full nurse there. The law allows principals and nurses to be shared across facilities under MGL.

The Idea of a 4-5 Class at Kennedy Middle School

The idea of a 4-5 class at Kennedy was proposed to address the worry that in the FY 24-25 SY, the final grade to exit from JES will not be able to finish 4th grade there. Instead of having them transition to a new elementary school and a year later to a new MS, we proposed an option for a multiage class at KMS to eliminate one transition. There is no Brown need for such a class at this time as noted by a parent at last week's meeting, but, if a surge occurred, this could also be a reason for use. The district has had a history of sharing across BH and Wilson sharing students for space issues (early 2000s), and both Brown and Lilja sharing spaces at NHS when renovations created limited space at both schools.

Contingency Resources

In short, between extra space at KMS and elementary schools you have enough reserve space to accommodate students and conditions do not align with what was illustrated in a prior meeting.

With \$1.1 million still available in AARPA funding, the committee has money to address surges relative to both space and staffing but at this time, there is no need.