

Non-Preferred K – 8 Building Options
Needham School Committee
May 2006

From a comprehensive list of criteria, the School Committee used three criteria more heavily than others in identifying some options as either not viable or not educationally in the children's best interests. These criteria are:

- The **lack of an interim school space** available for middle school students beginning in 2008 until a permanent solution is implemented
- The option results in either in **one excessively large middle school or unequal sized middle schools** where one middle school is much larger than the other and the larger middle school enrollment is expected to exceed 1,000 students, educationally larger than desired for a middle school
- Added **transitions between schools** are required due to grade or building configuration.

In addition, as presented to the School Committee, all of the C options, which would convert Newman to a 5-8 middle school, fail to provide sufficient elementary capacity. Additional school space is needed for 200 to 400 elementary (K-4) students to provide equity in program at all facilities. This would mean another elementary school would need to be built or expansions must to be planned for Hillside and/or Mitchell. These costs or space for a new building, since High Rock is already included as an elementary school in the C options, are not included in the cost analyses that have been provided to the School Committee. Without additional elementary school space, class sizes will need to increase to accommodate students in the suggested facilities, KASE will continue off school property, art and/or music will continue on carts. From 2010 to 2020, Needham expects to educate an additional 100-200 children at the K-5 level compared to today's enrollments.

No Interim School Space Available

Pollard is completely full at its current enrollment of 1090, with a range of 360 to 376 students per grade. In the Fall of 2008, the 6th grade class is projected to have 418 students. Because of the jump in enrollment that year, one additional half cluster to support core subjects and each elective will need to be created to educate the students. Every year thereafter, the entering 6th grade class continues to grow reaching a projected peak in excess of 480 students. A half cluster or full cluster will need to be created as necessary. Beginning in 2010, Needham will need space for 200-300 children more than are currently at Pollard.

The interim solution for Pollard is part of the Master Plan. As represented to the School Committee, the only option for an interim solution is High Rock. To the best of our knowledge, there are not alternate school spaces available. In fact, we've received a number of inquiries from other school systems about whether they might use High Rock. The other available alternative is to rent office space and to make tenant improvements to that space so that it is suitable for use by middle school students. Over a three to five year period, we expect those costs to total at least what the High Rock interim expenditure will be. And, at the end of the rental period, those rental and improvement costs are all sunk costs without any other benefit for the Town.

Therefore, the availability of High Rock for use as an interim middle school is the School Committee's highest priority in evaluating all of the options presented. To the extent that High

Rock is not available for interim use, then the option is not educationally viable. Options B1, B2, D1 and D2, therefore, are not educationally viable.

Excessively Large Middle School

It is a goal of the School Committee to implement smaller middle school environments. Several options, including A1 and C1, create middle schools of unequal sizes where one middle school remains at approximately 1100 students or more. All of the B options create a single middle school to house all grade 6-8 students in Needham, projected to be 1369 students in 2012. Having such a large middle school is simply not recommended educationally.

Too Many Transitions

There is a significant body of research on the detrimental impact of school transitions on children, particularly the most vulnerable children. The School Committee would prefer to keep the number of school transitions that we currently have. Options B2, C3, and D2 are, therefore, not preferred by the School Committee.