

**Summary Report of Space and Programming Task Force
November 2004 to January 2005
Needham Public Schools**

March 1, 2005

Executive Summary

Problem

The Broadmeadow, Newman, and Pollard Schools are currently over capacity, and will continue to be severely over capacity for the next 10 years. Neither Pollard nor the elementary schools can continue to accommodate the educational needs of the growing Needham student population.

The Task Force has determined that next year, in 2005-2006, both the elementary schools and Pollard will be able to house their respective student populations, with modest accommodations. The Task Force also anticipates that both the elementary schools and the middle school will be able to continue to accommodate their respective student population for the following year, 2006-2007.

By September 2008, the Pollard enrollment is expected to reach 1154, with a 6th grade of 418 students, requiring the possible creation of a fifth 6th grade cluster, which Pollard cannot house. The common spaces at Pollard will also be excessively strained at that point. The cafeteria cannot hold more than 380 students at any time, nor will the children be able to travel the corridors.

The elementary enrollment in September 2008 is projected to be 2541, 380 students in excess of the ideal number of students in the elementary schools. While the students will be spread out among the five elementary schools, Newman and Broadmeadow will have acute space shortages, with each school predicted to need at least three classrooms more than they have.

Conclusions

The Task Force studied options as summarized in the following Report, and concluded that there is no viable short-term solution within the currently-used elementary and middle school space that would allow for the children's educational needs to be met. The Task Force considered options involving the High Rock, modulars, and other possible new spaces for short-term solutions. Of the options considered for using High Rock, the Task Force considered a small grade 5/6 school especially worth investigating because it would relieve overcrowding at Newman, Broadmeadow and Pollard, and would be educationally sound. Decisions about the short-term uses of the High Rock School should be considered along with plans for the long-term use of the High Rock School and

site, such as a new school. In considering modulars, the Task Force concluded that these would be a possible short-term solution, but they would be needed at both the middle school and one (or two) elementary school, and site feasibility and costs have not been studied.

Long-term, the Task Force prefers the building of a single additional school to solve the shortage of space at both the middle and elementary levels.

In order to simultaneously alleviate the space shortage at both the middle and elementary levels, the Task Force recommends considering a move to a K-4 elementary and 5-8 middle school model. The Task Force determined that a new 5-8 middle school would need to be built to accommodate approximately 900 students. Further study needs to be done to evaluate the educational consequences of such a model, and whether such a model is in the children's best interests.

Step should be taken toward planning for a new school, which will be needed as soon as realistically possible.

Site Considerations and Assumptions

In order to move forward the Task Force had to make some assumptions with regard to use of school buildings and town sites. Acting upon any of these assumptions will require further investigation and discussion with other town boards and agencies. These assumptions were made in order to move forward with the work of the Task Force, and do not represent any decisions on the part of the Needham School Committee. These assumptions include:

1. High Rock School can be used fairly soon (fall of 2007) for school programs. Questions with regard to disabilities accessibility were not addressed, but there was recognition that this would need to be done before any decisions are made.
2. The High Rock School site can accommodate a 600 student middle school, as determined by the Middle School Feasibility Study. It is unlikely a 900 student school can be placed at High Rock.
3. A 900 student school might be built on the Nike Site. A feasibility study would be required.
4. A 900 student school might be built on the Department of Public Works (DPW) site. A feasibility study would be required.
5. Both Hillside and Mitchell School can be expanded to 500-550 students. Feasibility studies would be required.

The Task Force was able to use information obtained from completed studies on town facilities and the High Rock site.

- **High Rock**

High Rock was considered for short term and long term use. The library will be leaving High Rock by fall of 2006. A Middle School Feasibility Study (December 11, 2002) determined that a 600 student Middle School could be built on the site.

- **Nike Site**

The Nike site is under the control of the School Committee. It has recently been tested for soil contamination. Two underground storage fuel tanks were removed, and remediation of the firing range area will be undertaken. Fill from the High School will be placed on the Nike site during both Phase I and Phase II, with plans to return the site to a meadow by 2008. Any use for the Nike site will need to be integrated with the High School project.

- **DPW Site**

The DPW site is not under the control of the School Committee and extensive further discussions will need to take place with the Board of Selectmen, Parks and Recreation, and the School Committee before any decisions on this site can be made.

According to the Comprehensive Townwide Facilities Study, Phase I (CTFS Phase I, May 15, 1998), the Department of Public Works (DPW) site is 6.18 acres. Although national guidelines recommend 15 acres for a middle school, the nearby fields at DeFazio Park allow for a much smaller acreage for building and parking. The current DPW buildings are 33,960 square feet, which includes the building and a 720 sq ft construction trailer. By way of comparison, the Pollard School is 154,000 square feet (excluding modulars) on a 14.15 acre site, and the current High Rock School is 24,800 square feet on an 11 acre site (according to the Middle School Feasibility Study December 11, 2002.)

Consideration of the DPW for a school arose because the Board of Selectmen is currently proposing a feasibility study that includes the future of the DPW building, along with other town buildings, possibly for the 2005 Annual Town Meeting. According to CTFS Phase I, in its evaluation of "Site Expansion/Development Potential" (Tab 16, pg. 1) says: "There is probably some available acreage on this site suitable for another building. There are wetlands along the reservoir and in the woods adjacent to the DPW building which need to be delineated and confirmed prior to planning any type of development of the remaining open space behind the DPW. The DPW is adjacent to the DeFazio Recreational Complex. A project that utilizes some of this land as well as the DPW land may generate enough acreage for a large-scale project, such as a community center." The report goes on to say "...the wetlands issues should be clarified prior to planning." The CTFS report assumed that the DPW building would remain on this site, whereas the feasibility study proposed by the Board of Selectmen will investigate moving the entire DPW operation to the Recycling and Transfer Station.

- **Hillside and Mitchell**

According to CTFS Phase I, both Hillside and Mitchell can be expanded to accommodate 4 sections per grade. The study simply states “small building expansions may be feasible” (Tab 5, pg. 1).

Some next steps

- Depending on which models the School Committee decides to pursue, study the educational impact of configurations such as K-4/5-8/9-12, and a 5/6 small grade school.
- Reach an understanding with the Needham Commission on Disabilities (NCOD) with regard to use of the existing High Rock School for ‘short term’ use.
- Develop a strategic plan and timeline toward submitting a new school grant proposal to MSBA on July 1, 2007. Begin now developing documentation, building community support (boards and citizenry), and having discussions with MSBA.
- Discuss with the Board of Selectmen the possibilities with regard to the DPW site and the current status of the town facility master plan.

Task Force Summary Report

The Space and Programming Task Force was formed following the Superintendent’s K-8 Space and Program Planning report to the School Committee, where he outlined his concern that the Needham public schools lack sufficient classroom space to meet the future educational needs of the growing K-8 student population (see attachment A for K-5 classroom needs). Currently, the elementary schools and Pollard middle school are using all of the classroom space available for the children. Looking at the projected enrollment numbers for the next ten years, Broadmeadow, Newman and Pollard will have substantial space deficits beginning as early as fall 2006.

As you may recall, the issue of future renovation and possible additions to our schools has been a priority of the Needham School Committee for several years. As early as 1999, the School Committee and town commissioned a study to determine its future needs. The report, issued by Kaestle Boos Associates, Inc. affirmed the need for additions/renovations to the Broadmeadow, Eliot, and Newman Schools and Needham High School; a solution to the increasing size of the middle school; a decision on a permanent location for the system-wide administration, as well as renovation and possibly additions to the Mitchell and Hillside Schools.

With respect to the middle school, the Middle School Task Force Report (see attachment) outlined the pressing needs of the Pollard School which have only been temporarily and partially resolved with the addition of the modular classrooms in 2002. Finally, a study by DiNisco Design Partnership commissioned by the School Committee in 2002 also examined the feasibility of constructing a second middle school on several sites within the community.

When examining the potential short- and long-term solutions to the classroom shortages at the K-8 level, the Task Force initially made a list of potential solutions to be examined. The Task Force decided to examine the short-term and long-term solutions separately, since long-term solutions could not be realized for at least four years, and solutions to the space shortages will need to be implemented prior to putting into effect any long-term solution. In its review, the Task Force assumed half-day kindergarten rather than full-day.

Even though the Task Force determined that a long-term solution to the space shortage in the Needham schools must be implemented, long-term solutions all require that at least one new school be built. Because SBA has suspended review and funding of school building projects until July 2007, the realistic time frame for completing a new school is in the next four to five years - if SBA funding is sought. In order to implement a long-term solution, the School Committee will need to investigate some of the proposed solutions more fully and should be ready to propose plans to the SBA in July 2007, when SBA resumes matching some funding for school building projects. In the meantime, some short-term solutions must be implemented.

The purpose of the Task Force, then, was to arrive at some viable solutions for evaluation by the School Committee on how to provide sufficient classroom space in the Needham public schools to meet the educational needs of the Needham public school children next year, in 2005-2006; in the short-term - that is, for the next two to four years (from September 2006 to September 2008); and in the long-term - beyond the next four years (beyond September 2008).

I. School Enrollment projections

In October 2004, the Future School Needs Committee issued its enrollment projections through academic year 2014-2015 (see attachment). Based upon these projections, and the current town census, a shortage of classrooms is expected at the Broadmeadow, Newman, and Mitchell elementary schools beginning next year, in 2005-2006. By 2007-2008, four of the elementary schools are expected to have a shortage of classrooms.

In September 2005, Newman, Mitchell, and Broadmeadow will require at least one additional classroom to provide for the education of the enrolled children; the other elementary schools can accommodate their projected student population. In 2006-2007, Broadmeadow, Newman, and Mitchell are projected to need additional classrooms to serve their student population, and every year thereafter, the shortage of classroom space

will continue to increase. The problem becomes especially acute at Broadmeadow and Newman. While the shortage of classroom space will not be as severe at Hillside, it too is expected to need at least one additional classroom over the next three to four years. In 2006-2007, there will also be the need for an additional kindergarten SPED classroom in one of the elementary schools to meet the educational requirements of the Early Learning Center (ELC) children who are currently in the preschool. Eliot is the only elementary school that appears to be able to meet the classroom needs of its students.

While Pollard is able to serve the children at the middle school at the current enrollment of 1,070, Principal Joe Barnes has stated that he is already using every available classroom space and that common space (cafeteria, corridors, auditorium, etc.) is severely overcrowded (see attachment). Based upon current enrollment at the elementary schools and based upon projected enrollments for the middle school, Pollard will not have adequate classroom space for the projected number of students enrolled beginning as early as 2008-2009. The overcrowding of common space will only worsen during that time period.

II. Solutions to Classroom Shortages from September 2005 to August 2007

A. Pollard

Since the number of students enrolled by grade at Pollard next year is not expected to change significantly, Pollard will be able to continue to meet the classroom needs of the students at the same level as it currently does. The total number of students enrolled, however, will be increasing resulting in continued strain on common areas, especially corridors and cafeteria.

B. Broadmeadow

In 2005-2006, Broadmeadow will need to offer five sections in first grade and second grade. Therefore, an additional classroom is needed at Broadmeadow next year. In order to accommodate its student population in 2005-2006, Broadmeadow plans to use one of its SPED classrooms as a regular classroom. Broadmeadow will provide the SPED services in two smaller office spaces that, while adequate for SPED rooms could not be used as classrooms. By 2006-2007, Broadmeadow is expected to have five sections at the kindergarten, second and third grade levels. Broadmeadow may move KASE off-site in 2006-2007 in order to accommodate the continued needs of its growing student population. While offering KASE on-site to kindergarten families may be convenient, KASE has, in the past, been off-site for some of the elementary schools, resulting in no real adverse impact on children or their families.

C. Newman

In 2005-2006, Newman enrollment is projected to continue growing. Newman utilizes all of its classrooms when it has five sections per grade. Currently, Newman has six sections in both kindergarten and first grade. To accommodate its current enrollment, Newman has converted one of its music rooms to a classroom. One of Newman's music teachers now travels from classroom to classroom so that some of the children receive general music instruction on a cart, in their grade-level classroom. In 2005-2006, Newman is expected to have six sections in kindergarten, first grade and second grade. An additional classroom is, therefore, needed. Beginning in 2006-2007, Newman will have 6 sections in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade, and the Early Childhood Center is expected to need one additional classroom. Newman may have to move KASE off-site to accommodate the growing student population. As discussed in the previous section, moving KASE out of Newman will have few adverse consequences for the children and their families.

D. Mitchell

In 2005-2006, Mitchell will need to have 4 sections in first, third and fifth grade, resulting in the need for one additional classroom. In order to accommodate the number of sections required at all the grade levels, Mitchell will convert its music room to a classroom and will offer general music instruction on a cart, in the children's grade-level classroom. In 2006-2007, Mitchell will need to offer 4 sections in first, second and fourth grade, and will, therefore, continue general music instruction on a cart for another year.

III. Solutions to Classroom Shortages beginning September 2007

The Task Force proposed and performed a preliminary evaluation of both short-term and long-term solutions. A few solutions were rejected because they could not be implemented. These were:

- double sessions at Pollard
- extended day/differentiated day at Pollard
- year round schooling; 6 weeks on, 2 weeks off
- rental space

The short-term solutions were divided into three categories:

(1) those that maintain the status quo on space and require programmatic changes to accommodate the number of children in the schools, namely:

- increase class sizes
- multigrade classrooms

- electives on a cart: art/music at the elementary level, shared classroom space at the middle school level

(2) those that propose building modular classrooms:

- modular classrooms at Pollard
- modular classrooms at Mitchell and/or Hillside
- KASE center

(3) those that propose using High Rock as an additional school:

- preschool at High Rock
- KASE at High Rock
- kindergarten and KASE at High Rock
- move 2 6th grade clusters to High Rock
- satellite Broadmeadow/Newman 5th grade at High Rock
- 5th/6th grade center at High Rock

The long-term solutions discussed can be divided based upon the type of renovation, expansion or building proposed:

- build a new 6-8 middle school at High Rock and renovate and expand Hillside and Mitchell
- build a new 5-8 middle school at Nike site or DPW site
- change Newman to a middle school and Pollard to an elementary school
- build a sixth elementary school at High Rock and change to a K-6 model
- build a K-8 magnet school at High Rock
- make High Rock into an Early Childhood Center (ECC) and a kindergarten center.

A. Solutions That Can Not Be Implemented

1. Double Sessions at Pollard

Pollard does not meet the standards under which Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, section 1, would allow double sessions.

2. Extended Day/Differentiated Day at Pollard

An extended day with differentiated schedule was proposed as a solution to the space shortages at Pollard. Students at Pollard would start and end their school day at different times; for example, one group of children would attend Pollard from 7:30 to 2:00 while another group would attend from 11:00 to 5:30 (the times are solely for illustration). Under this solution, the overcrowding at Pollard would be relieved only during those times of the day when the two student populations did not overlap. Because of the substantial detrimental impact on after-school activities, both at Pollard and elsewhere,

limiting the enrichment, sports, and other activities that children now engage in, and because of contractual issues with staff arising from an extended day, the task force determined that this solution was not a viable solution.

3. Year-Round School

There could be substantial educational advantages to year-round schooling, because the children spend shorter periods of time away from school. The impact on families with more than one child would be significant, since children may not be on similar schedules. The depth of scheduling issues that would have to be resolved, therefore, counsels against this solution in the short-term. Since there are only two climate-controlled buildings in the public school system at Broadmeadow and Eliot, this solution is unrealistic.

4. Rental Space

Rental Space for the short-term could solve the space problems at both the elementary and middle school level. The major problems would be transportation, equity, and finding suitable facilities. Rental space appropriate for use as elementary and middle schools would have to be found that would offer Needham children equivalent facilities to those offered within the Needham public school system. Needham rented space from the town of Dover for a short period of time. The Dover space was used only for five months to house the Broadmeadow students while the Broadmeadow project was finished. Transportation and scheduling are also major problems that argue against the use of rental space. Taken together, transportation, scheduling and the lack of adequate space in close proximity voided the viability of this option.

B. Short-term Solutions Within the Existing Space in Elementary and Middle School

The Task Force concluded that there is no viable short-term solution within the existing elementary and middle school space that would allow for the children's educational needs to be met. All of the solutions proposed in this section have some degree of negative impact on the children, their families, and the morale of their teachers.

1. Combining classroom spaces and electives on a cart

a. elementary schools

The Task Force evaluated whether elementary art and music classrooms could be combined, since music and art account for use of two classrooms at each of the elementary schools (see attachment A). Only three schools could conceivably share the same space for music and art: Hillside, Eliot and Mitchell. Newman and Broadmeadow would need to implement an art or general music on a cart strategy in order to free up classroom space. To move to art or general music on a cart may have some detrimental effect on the value of the programs for the students. Nevertheless, art or general music on a cart may be preferable to eliminating the programs altogether. The real problem

with this solution is its failure to create a sufficient amount of space where needed. Each school could add one classroom space, and possibly two (with the exception of Newman where the music room is not a classroom and cannot be utilized as such). This solution, however, does not address the overcrowding either at Newman or at Broadmeadow, where each of the schools is most likely expected to have a deficit of at least two classrooms in the short-term. This solution also frees classroom space where none is needed, such as at Eliot.

Spot redistricting could solve the imbalance in space. There are two ways in which spot redistricting could be implemented. Under the first model, a class would be taken from Newman, for example, and moved to Eliot. This may entail bussing a class from Newman in the morning over to Eliot, and returning it in the afternoon to Newman. This model would obviously disrupt the education of the class that is being spot redistricted. Another model would take an entire kindergarten class from Newman, for example, and would redistrict it to Eliot, keeping it at Eliot through 5th grade. In addition to solving transportation questions, how the children would be selected and the impact on families from such a redistricting would need to be examined.

b. Middle School

The lack of space and overcrowding at the Middle School are somewhat different in nature from the elementary school problem and the reports from a previous Middle School Task Force are attached for reference (see attachment). The work done by the previous Middle School Task Force still applies.

The Middle School may have to look at shared classroom space in an attempt to free up more classroom space. Under such a scenario, some teachers would provide instruction without the benefit of their own classroom. Instead, they would travel from classroom to classroom to teach the children. Such a solution, however, may be detrimental to instruction provided to the children. Unfortunately it would also do nothing to accommodate the overcrowding that would remain in corridors, cafeteria, etc.

2. Increase class sizes

Another short-term solution to the space problem could be to increase class sizes across the board from kindergarten through 8th grade. The primary question with increased class sizes is at what point can a teacher no longer effectively teach using differentiated instruction. Currently, students are mixed in terms of their levels of knowledge at each grade level from K-8, except for some leveling of teaching in Mathematics in 7th and 8th grade. The School Committee policy concerning class sizes is: 23 or fewer students without an aide in kindergarten, 26 or fewer students without an aide in grades 1-5. Although there is no policy guiding class size at Pollard, classrooms and/or labs are designed to accommodate approximately 24 students. Most cluster classes are at the 24-student limit. Unfortunately, in order to meet the academic needs of some students (most notably at Grade 7 currently), there are classes with 26 or 27 students.

3. Redistricting

Because the enrollment growth at the different elementary schools is uneven, the Task Force also considered whether redistricting could help resolve the overcrowding at some of the schools. General redistricting does not result in equalization of enrollment levels at the different elementary schools. Transferring the children at each grade level in any given neighborhood does not necessarily result in the equitable redistribution of the student population. In addition, there is insufficient room at any elementary school to add another section at each grade level, which is what would be required for redistricting to successfully solve the problems of overcrowding at the elementary level. The space shortages at the elementary level could be met by spot redistricting. Spot redistricting or redistricting of specific grades and classrooms from one school to another, however, result in problems for families with more than one child, since siblings may be assigned to different schools.

4. Multigrade classrooms

Some classrooms may be consolidated or multigrade options may be possible to solve the space shortage at the elementary schools. These options would have to be evaluated on an annual basis by school to determine whether space could be created without adverse impact on the children.

C. Short-term Solutions Using Modular Classrooms

The Task Force reviewed the addition of modular classrooms both for elementary and middle school instruction. The use of modular classrooms would provide the space necessary for classroom instruction in the short-term.

1. Elementary Schools

Adding capacity in the elementary schools through modular classrooms would ease the overcrowding at Broadmeadow and Newman. In evaluating whether modular classrooms could be used to create more classroom capacity at the elementary level, the Task Force determined that the best location for the modulars would be Mitchell and Hillside. Eliot has no space where modulars could be placed. Broadmeadow and Newman are already very large elementary schools, and modulars would only make them bigger. The options considered were to place 3 modular units (6 classrooms at Mitchell), so that Mitchell could accommodate one additional classroom per grade. The issue to be investigated further with this scenario is redistricting. Children would have to be moved both from the Newman and the Broadmeadow districts if the goal of providing adequate classroom space for all the elementary students in the schools is to be achieved. There may be some strain on the common spaces at Mitchell. The other major issue is with the proposed renovation and potential expansion of Mitchell. Does it make sense to build modulars, only to tear them down when the school is renovated. The cost of adding modulars is estimated at \$1.5 to \$2 million. Adding modulars to Mitchell would allow Needham to maintain class sizes at current levels. There may also be some benefit to adding 1

modular (2 classrooms) to Hillside, so that any further overcrowding at Newman could be redistricted to Hillside. The advantages of modular classrooms are that they are new, bright, climate-controlled spaces for the children. It would also allow the retention of art and music as specialized programs with their own spaces.

2. Pollard

In looking at the expected continued enrollment growth at Pollard, the Task Force also proposed that 4-6 additional modulares could be installed at Pollard (8-12 classrooms). The advantages for Pollard would be the ability to retain the clusters within each grade level and to retain separate classrooms for electives, as the projected enrollment progressively grows to 1300 over the next five years. The overcrowding of common areas (i.e., corridors, cafeteria, auditorium, media center, health office), however, would be further aggravated, leading to serious health and safety concerns. A long-term solution must, therefore, be implemented.

D. Short-term Solutions Using High Rock

In looking at short-term solutions that use High Rock as a school, the Task Force assumed that High Rock could be occupied as soon as the fall of 2007 without major renovations. The Task Force did recognize, however, that some space may need to be upgraded within the building, such as the cafeteria, and there may also be ADA compliance costs associated with use of the building. In addition, there will be administrative costs of running another school. Further investigation would have to be completed to determine the actual cost of using High Rock in the short-term. The Task Force concluded that moving the Preschool, kindergarten, some fifth grade classes, and some sixth grade classes to High Rock would not be in the children's best interests. Moving KASE to High Rock may not have negative educational impact on the children. However, moving KASE to High Rock has little impact on overcrowding at the elementary schools and does nothing to alleviate the space problems at Pollard. The only solution using High Rock that was academically sound and in the children's best interest was creating a small fifth and sixth grade school, which would allow some relief of overcrowding at Newman, Broadmeadow and Pollard.

1. Preschool at High Rock

The preschool was recently moved to Newman and classroom space at Newman was built to accommodate the special needs of the preschool children at a cost of approximately \$750,000. Continuity for some of the special needs preschoolers between preschool and the elementary school was one reason the preschool was moved to Newman three years ago. Moving the preschool to High Rock would cancel the enhancements to the program of the last three years.

2. KASE at High Rock

Moving KASE to High Rock from all elementary schools would free 4 and 1/2 classrooms and provide a very minor solution to the space problems at the elementary level. There would have to be some redistricting and spot redistricting to make it a viable part of a solution. Moving KASE to High Rock does not help solve any space problems at Pollard.

3. Kindergarten and KASE to High Rock

Moving Kindergarten and KASE to High Rock would require the building of modular classrooms at High Rock to accommodate all of the children. This solution is not ideal because of the isolation of kindergarteners and because of the need for two transitions for the children, first into kindergarten, and then into first grade.

4. Make High Rock a Fifth Grade Center for Broadmeadow and Newman

High Rock could also be a fifth grade center for Broadmeadow and Newman only, since all the fifth graders in town could not fit in the building. This would, however, create some serious equity questions, including a substandard gym, the lack of an adequate cafeteria and media center. Creating a fifth grade center may also present some scheduling problems, such as how to provide specials - Spanish, art, etc. Finally, this solution may also be detrimental to the children as it requires two transitions, one in fifth grade and one in sixth grade. Making High Rock a fifth grade center also would not address Pollard's overcrowding issues.

5. Move two Sixth Grade Clusters to High Rock

The same reasons why moving part of the sixth grade to High Rock was not a desirable solution as presented in the December 2000 Middle School Task Force Report are still valid today (see attachment). The heart of the problem lies in the lack of equity to those sixth graders who would move to High Rock. In addition to the substandard gym and lack of an adequate cafeteria, media center, or auditorium, the offering of electives may be compromised and the school would be challenged to offer the same after-school activities as Pollard.

6. Make High Rock a Fifth-Sixth Grade Center

Creating a fifth-sixth grade center at High Rock would alleviate the overcrowding at Broadmeadow, Newman, and Pollard. Under this plan, there would be approximately 80-100 students at each grade level. The major issues with a fifth-sixth grade center would be the same equity issues of potentially substandard facilities for those students and the difficulty in scheduling specials as set forth in section 4 above. The advantage over a single grade alternative, however, is the ability to offer the children fewer transitions, since they would remain at High Rock for 2 years. Enrollment at the fifth-sixth grade

center ideally would be voluntary. In order to make this option attractive to parents and students, and encourage enrollment, academic enticements will need to be offered. The desirability of moving a portion of separating sixth graders away from Pollard would require further analysis and review.

D. Long-Term Solutions

The Task Force concluded that a new middle school must be built in the long-term to accommodate the additional 300 students expected to enroll in the next several years. The Task Force also concluded that building a new 6-8 middle school would only solve the overcrowding at Pollard and does not address the growing enrollment at the elementary level. If Needham maintains a 6-8 middle school model, a 6th elementary school would still need to be built in addition to a middle school, or a substantial expansion and renovation to Mitchell and/or Hillside. On the other hand, the Task Force determined that by creating two 5-8 middle schools, the enrollment needs of both the elementary and middle school population could be met with a single building. Of course, a 5-8 middle school model would need further study to evaluate the benefits and/or drawbacks of such a model for the children. The major challenge of a 5-8 model is finding a suitable location for such a school. The High Rock site may not be large enough to hold a 5-8 school of the size needed. In addition, there may be some advantage to the schools in keeping High Rock open for swing space should it become needed in the future. While the Task Force posited two potential locations for a 5-8 school, the suitability and availability of sites needs further investigation.

1. Build a New 6-8 Middle School at High Rock

The previous Middle School Feasibility Study (December 11, 2002) determined that a new middle school could be built at High Rock to accommodate approximately 600 students. The site will be empty next year when the library vacates, if not used for a short-term solution. However, building a 6-8 middle school at High Rock does not address the long-term needs of the elementary schools. Hillside and Mitchell need renovation and would require additions to accommodate enrollment increases. If a new 6-8 middle school is built, one or both of these schools would be expanded to accommodate the growing elementary population. Presumably, 6-7 classrooms could be added to each building, adding one classroom per grade. However, environmental considerations at Hillside may preclude it as an expansion site and require a much more substantial expansion at Mitchell. It is uncertain whether or not the Mitchell school site would be able to accommodate such an expansion.

2. Build a New 5-8 Middle School

In order to solve the elementary and middle school space problems simultaneously, the Task Force proposed that a new 5-8 rather than 6-8 Middle School model could be adopted. The total 5-8 student population for 2008-2009 is expected to be 1569. By 2012-2013, it is expected to reach 1784. A new 5-8 middle school would need to accommodate approximately 900 students.

Using available study data, the Task Force was only able to consider the educational advantages of the Nike, DPW, and High Rock sites. The High Rock site is probably not large enough to accommodate a new 5-8 middle school for 900 students. The Nike site is a wooded site that belongs to the schools. It would allow for two middle schools at two different ends of town and redistricting should be relatively easy. Earlier considerations of the Nike site revealed a lack of adequate town services in this part of town and problems with access to the site. In addition, transportation costs need to be considered since very few children could walk to this location.

The advantages of the DPW site are shared fields with Pollard, a short distance for teacher and student interaction, a flat building site and a central location.

Another advantage of both Nike and DPW is the retention of High Rock for other use by the schools or the town. There is also the possibility that the school administrative offices could be relocated to one of the middle schools or High Rock, so that the Emery Grover site would become available for town usage or, if sold, would allow an offset against construction costs for the new school.

3. Change Newman to a Middle School

The Task Force reviewed whether Newman could be expanded to a new, larger middle school that would accommodate the maximum expected middle school population of 1400 grade 6-8 students. This would require doubling the capacity of the Newman school. The Newman elementary school would be moved to the current Pollard school and expanded to accommodate the growing elementary population. Building a single middle school would save administrative costs over having two middle schools. There may not be MSBA reimbursement for the building, however, since both schools were renovated fairly recently with state financial support. In addition, each school would have to be refit for a different population. The large size of the new elementary school at Pollard would be of great concern, as would the large elementary student population at Pollard.

4. Build a 6th Elementary School at High Rock and Make All Elementary Schools K-6

To restructure the elementary schools to a K-6 model and build a 6th elementary school of approximately 400 students at High Rock would solve the middle school space problems, since Pollard would then only need to accommodate 7th and 8th grade. There would no disruption to the schools while building would occur. However, a K-6 model with a school at High Rock still does not solve the elementary space shortage. The elementary schools need to accommodate approximately 400 more K-5 students in 2009-2010 than they are designed to have. By building a 6th elementary school at High Rock, these additional K-5 students can be served. Shifting the 6th grade population to the elementary schools still requires that space be found for approximately 400 students. In addition, programmatic changes may need to be made to change the schools to K-6. The

method by which 6th grade teachers would be assigned would have to be worked out. In addition, the efficacy of a middle school with only a two-year attachment is not prudent.

5. K-8 Magnet School at High Rock

A K-8 magnet school could be built at High Rock. A K-8 magnet school, however, would not solve either the elementary or the middle school space problems. Another difficulty with a K-8 school would be programmatic, in terms of the differences between its program and the program at the remaining schools in Needham. There may also be SBA funding issues with this solution.

6. Kindergarten and ECC at High Rock

High Rock could be rebuilt as a kindergarten and ECC center. This would allow implementation of full-day kindergarten. This creates some inconvenience for families who may have children at an elementary school as well. This also does not solve the middle school space problems. In addition, the money spent on moving the preschool to Newman would have to be spent again to move the preschool to High Rock.

IV. Other Programs That May Affect Space in the Schools

The Task Force also looked at Needham's METCO policy, given the lack of space and increasing enrollments in the schools. The Task Force suggested that Needham continue its current policy of taking into consideration the number of spaces available in specific classrooms when determining how many new METCO students to admit at the kindergarten and the first grade level.

Another program dependent on school space is Full Day Kindergarten. Long term planning should include space to implement Full Day Kindergarten at all elementary schools.