



Business, Finance and Planning

TO: School Committee

FROM: Liam Hurley, Assistant Superintendent/CFAO
Katy Hogue, Director of Data Analysis and Enrollment Planning
Stephanie Gilman, Director of Planning, Project Management and Sustainability
Sean Mannion, Director of Finance

DATE: October 27, 2022

RE: Short and Long Term Enrollment and Facility Planning Update

This memo is an update to the June 21, 2022 memo titled “Preview: Short and Long Term Enrollment and Facility Planning,” which is attached to this memo for reference. The June 21, 2022 memo outlines short and long term challenges related to enrollment, staffing and building use at Underwood and Ward Elementary Schools, and at Bigelow and Day Middle Schools. These challenges are placed within the context of overall districtwide declining enrollment and demographic trends as well as the recently completed building projects, and projects anticipated to be completed in the next several years. Below is an update on the work that has been done to date to address these issues and the proposed next steps.

UPDATE

Over the summer, the internal working group met as described in the June memo. The internal working group was made up of Liam Hurley, Katy Hogue, Stephanie Gilman, Amy Mistrot, and Sean Mannion, with additional review and input from Ayesha Farag and Toby Romer, and School Committee members. This group met several times to review enrollment data for Underwood, Ward, Bigelow, and Day, and to identify and discuss challenges and opportunities for these schools. The group also discussed the upcoming Student Assignment Working Group (SAWG) process and timeline that is part of planning for the upcoming building projects at Lincoln-Eliot, Horace Mann, Franklin, and Countryside, and how the SAWG process ties into the challenges and opportunities at Underwood, Ward, Bigelow and Day. The SAWG process will review and analyze school district boundaries and buffer zones to determine if shifts are required to be implemented as new building projects come online.

ENROLLMENT REVIEW

As described in the June memo, although overall enrollment is declining districtwide, particular schools are experiencing this decline in a way that directly impacts the educational experience for students in those schools. In order to provide equitable educational services to all students in our district, changes are necessary.

Underwood and Ward Elementary Schools

At Underwood and Ward, current and projected enrollment numbers are presenting challenges, specifically in maintaining desired class sizes and numbers of class sections that are aligned with district elementary schools. This is evident in this year's class arrays at each school, where the fifth grade classes are currently higher (Ward) or lower (Underwood) than is ideal. Additionally, enrollment at Ward has resulted in two grade levels (K and 5) with just one section.

The internal working group met multiple times to brainstorm and discuss possible short and long term options for addressing the declining enrollments at both schools. These discussions included both school principals, Toby Romer, and Ayesha Farag and looked at possible changes through administrative shifts, use of buffer zones, grade reconfiguration, student assignment and districtwide programs. Based on a thoughtful review of the options and how each option impacted enrollment numbers at both schools, it became clear that there was not a viable immediate short term solution and therefore no immediate changes were recommended. We will continue to explore possible near term options that may be viable.

The group did conclude that it would be beneficial to move forward with a Facility and Enrollment Study to develop options and a recommended plan for Underwood and Ward Schools that also ties into the broader Student Assignment Working Group process and timeline.

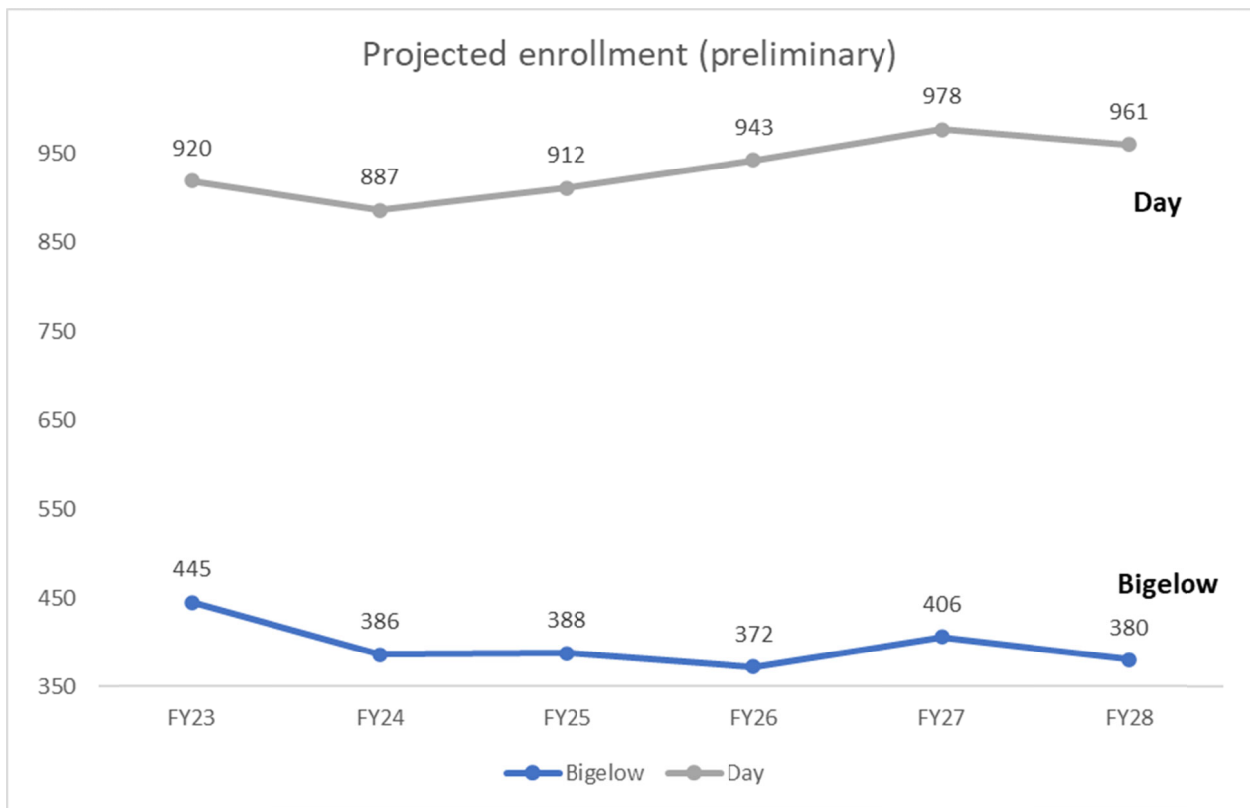
To support this effort, on September 15, 2022, Mayor Fuller announced the allocation of \$100,000 in ARPA funding for the Underwood and Ward Facility and Enrollment Study. The Study will review existing facility conditions and space use at both schools as well as historic and projected enrollment. A draft Scope of Services for a Consultant is being developed and will be shared at the next School Committee meeting on November 7, 2022.

Bigelow and Day Middle Schools

As noted in the June memo, Bigelow's enrollment is projected to continue to decline to under 400 students based on December 2021 projections. The Preliminary Enrollment Report (October 27, 2022) shows that Bigelow's enrollment in October 2022 is very close to projection at 445 students (2 students below projection). Bigelow's feeder schools (Lincoln-Eliot, Underwood, and Ward) as a whole are enrolled slightly over projection (+23 students, or 3%); however, this is mainly due to slightly larger than projected classes in the early elementary grades. Based on the preliminary enrollment, Bigelow is projected to decline to below 400 students starting next

fall and remain around 380 students over the next five years (see graph below). An optimal enrollment for Bigelow is 500-530 students, which yields two full teams per grade.

In addition, based on the preliminary enrollment, Day Middle School's enrollment is projected to be over 950 students over the next five years (see graph below). Day's target enrollment is 900 students, which yields 3.5 teams per grade. Thus, the goal of the internal working group was to look at opportunities to shift the enrollments back into alignment with educational goals. As a result of the current low enrollments at Bigelow, the educational program has been significantly negatively impacted, and given projections for continued decreases, further impacts are expected. Impacts on the educational program include difficulty hiring and retaining staff for specialized positions that become fractionalized, limits to curricular and extra-curricular options available to students, and further disruptions to staffing, including reductions and possible staff teaching in multiple content areas.

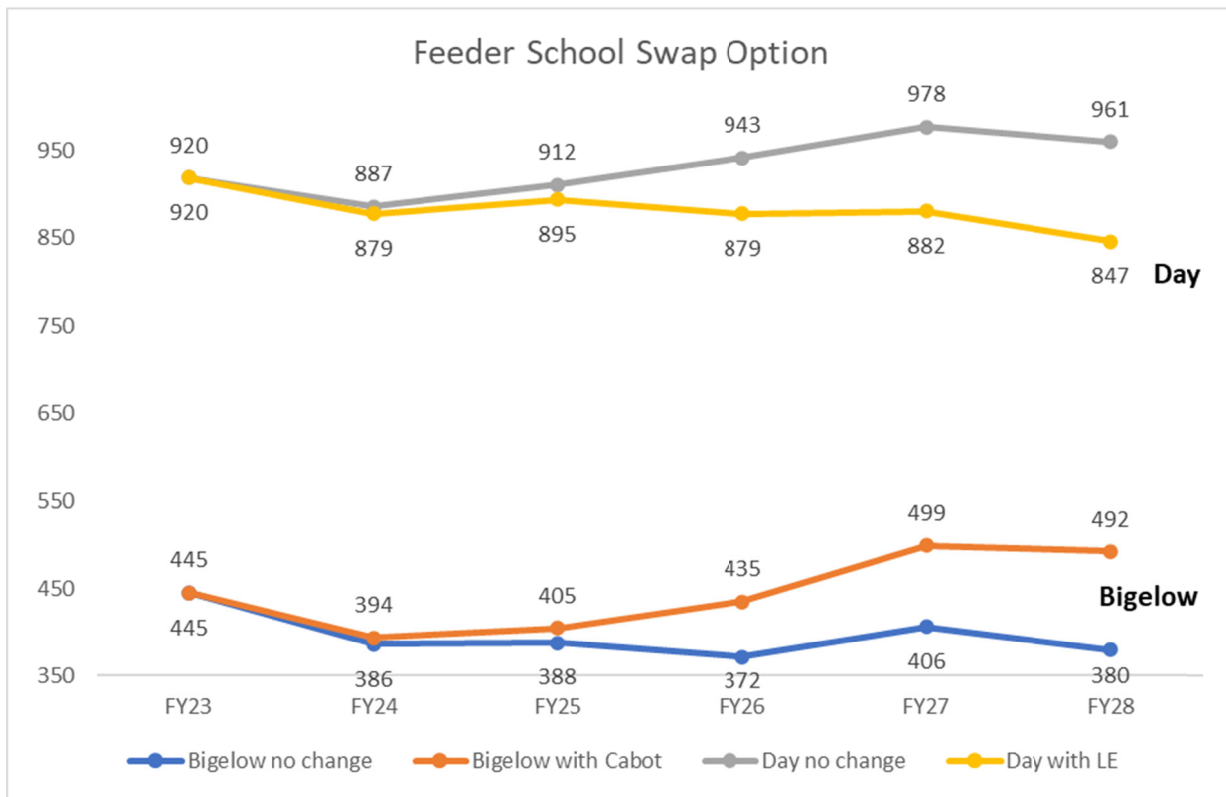


The internal working group identified and discussed a number of possible options to rebalance enrollments at Bigelow and Day, and then finalized the list of options to be further studied and analyzed in terms of the enrollment impact of each possible option. Based on the analysis, two viable options emerged. These options were then reviewed with the school principals and with

the School Committee members of the Long Range Planning Working Group. The two options are presented here for consideration, with the goal of reaching consensus on a recommendation later this fall (see the timeline detailed later in the memo).

Option 1: Feeder school swap

In option one, Lincoln-Eliot and Cabot would swap their middle schools. Lincoln-Eliot currently feeds to Bigelow and Cabot currently feeds to Day. In option one, Lincoln-Eliot would now feed to Day and Cabot would now feed to Bigelow. The graph below shows projected enrollment at Bigelow and Day (based on preliminary enrollment) with no changes and with the feeder school swap. If Lincoln-Eliot feeds to Day and Cabot feeds to Bigelow, Day’s enrollment stays close to 900 students over the next five years and Bigelow’s enrollment stays close to 500 students over the next five years.



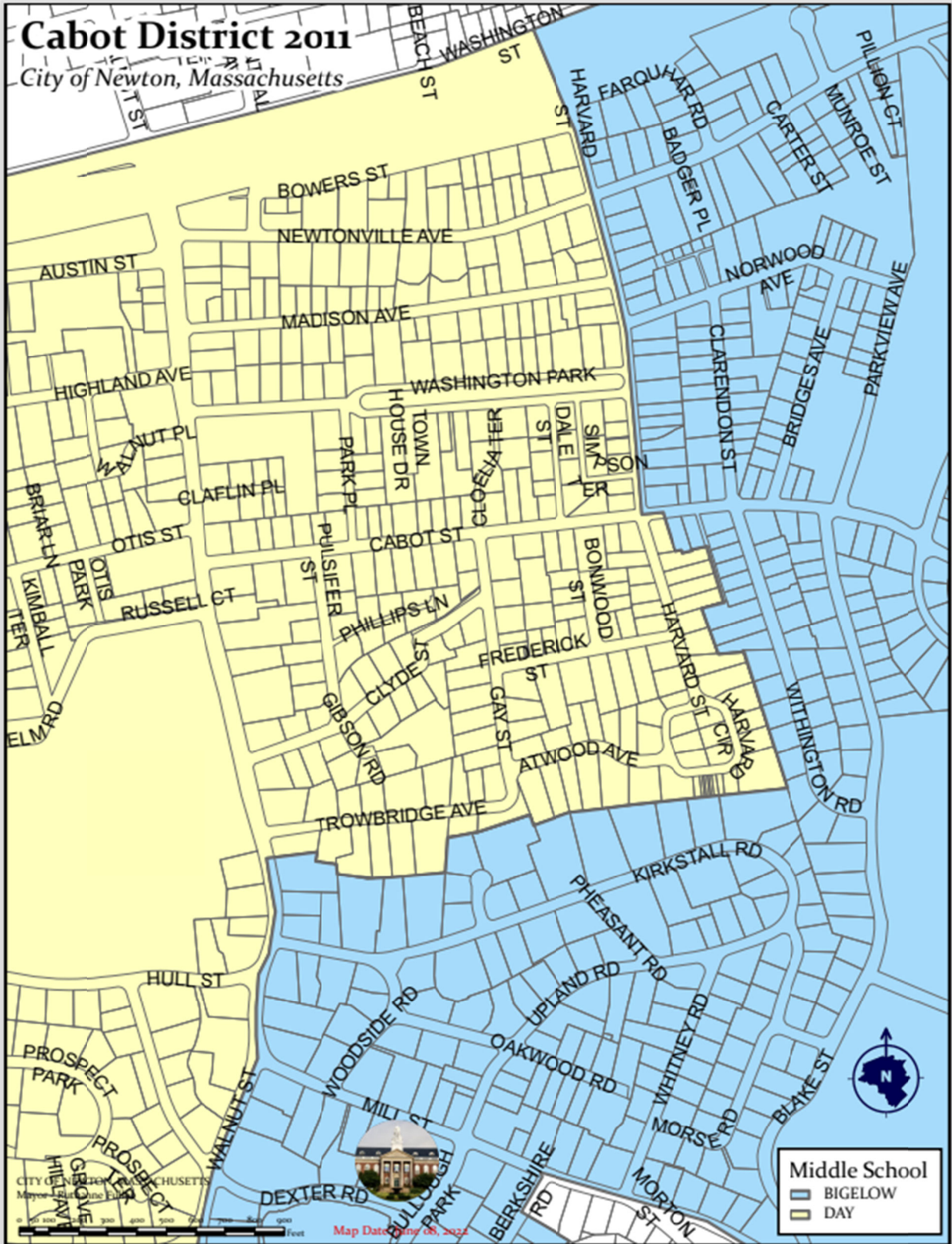
A preliminary analysis of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch in the current school year indicates that with the swap option, Bigelow and Day will have similar percentages of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch over the next five years (approximately 25%). Without any change, Bigelow will have approximately 27% of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch and Day will have approximately 21% of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Please note that this estimate is based on the current year’s enrollment and eligibility at these schools and is subject to change on a year-to-year basis based on student eligibility.

Option 2: Reinstate the Cabot split

In option two, the old Cabot split would be reinstated. Lincoln-Eliot would continue to feed to Bigelow (no changes). The Cabot split was last utilized in school year 2012-2013, and split the Cabot district on a predefined line where students in one section went to Bigelow for middle school and students in the other section went to Day for middle school. The split is displayed in the map below; students living east of Harvard Street (including the east side of Harvard Street) down to Kirkstall Road and Walnut Street went to Bigelow (with a small section of the east side of Harvard Street ending in Harvard Circle attending Day).

Cabot District 2011

City of Newton, Massachusetts

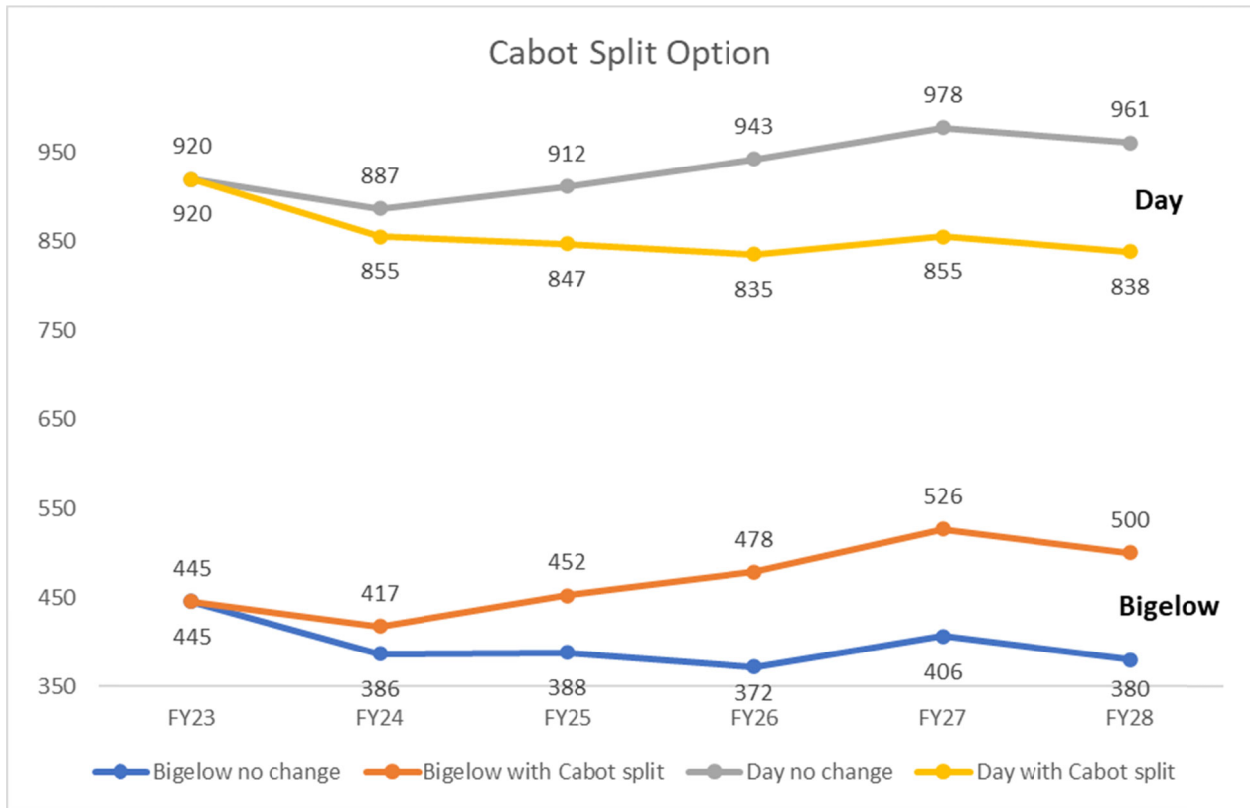


CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS
Mayor: Richard D. Egan



Map Date: 08/08/2022

In 2012-2013, 48% of Cabot went to Bigelow and 52% went to Day. The graph below displays projected enrollment for Bigelow and Day assuming 48% of Cabot feeds to Bigelow and 52% feeds to Day. In this option, Bigelow enrollment increases to slightly over 500 students over the next five years and Day enrollment decreases to around 840 students over the next five years.



A preliminary analysis of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch in the current school year indicates that with the Cabot split option, neither Bigelow nor Day will have much change in the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch over the next five years. Bigelow will continue to have approximately 26-27% of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch and Day will continue to have approximately 21% of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Please note that this estimate is based on the current year's enrollment and eligibility at these schools and is subject to change on a year-to-year basis based on student eligibility.

With either option, the recommendation is for the change to begin in fall 2023 (FY24), meaning that this change would apply to this year's fifth graders in the feeder school(s). Current fifth graders who have a sibling who will be enrolled in a middle school next fall would be eligible to follow their sibling instead of the new feeder pattern if desired.

Benefits and challenges identified for both options, as well as more detailed information on transportation, English Languages Learners, and Student Services impacts, will be provided on November 17th after stakeholder and community meetings are held (please see timeline for next steps below).

Proposed next steps:

1. Meet with the school communities to present the information and gather feedback
2. Based on feedback, make a recommendation to the School Committee for discussion in November
3. Vote on the recommendation in December

NEXT STEPS - DAY / BIGELOW FEEDER PATTERN

Below is a detailed schedule of meetings that includes staff and community meetings that offer opportunities for discussion and feedback on the proposed feeder pattern options.

October 25, 2022	- Lincoln-Eliot Staff Meeting
October 26, 2022	- Bigelow Staff Meeting - Day Staff Meeting
October 27, 2022	- Cabot Staff Meeting - Preliminary Enrollment Report to School Committee - Enrollment & Facility Planning Update to School Committee
October 28, 2022	- Day Parent Coffee, 8:15AM
October 31, 2022	- Bigelow Parent Coffee, 8:30AM
November 1, 2022	- Lincoln-Eliot Virtual Community Meeting, 7:00PM
November 3, 2022	- Cabot Virtual Community Meeting, 7:00PM
November 7, 2022	- Community Forum at School Committee Meeting
November 17, 2022	- Feeder Pattern Recommendation to School Committee
December 5, 2022	- School Committee Vote on Bigelow/Day Feeder Pattern
December 19, 2022	- Enrollment Analysis & Class Size Report (incorporates voted change)
September, 2023	- First academic year of new feeder pattern

NEXT STEPS - CONSULTANT FOR UNDERWOOD and WARD

Below is the proposed timeline to bring a Consultant on board and to conduct the Ward and Underwood facilities and enrollment study. The timing of the study is intended to align with and roll into the Student Assignment Working Group (SAWG) process that will be getting started as the Underwood and Ward study is completed so that the results of the study can be incorporated into the SAWG process. The Consultant Scope of Services and the stakeholder engagement process will be shared at the next School Committee meeting.

December 2022	- Consultant selection
April 2023	- Preliminary Existing Conditions and Enrollment Analysis Report
June 2023	- Presentation of Options to School Committee

- Fall 2023 - Community Meetings to Gather Feedback on Options
- November 2023 - Community Forum at School Committee
- December 2023 - Final Report and Recommendations to School Committee
- December 2023 - School Committee Vote on Recommendations

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT WORKING GROUP PROCESS (SAWG)

Each time a new school building project is completed, the district reviews school catchment areas to determine if shifts or buffer zones are needed to balance enrollments at each school. As noted in the June 2022 memo, a number of new school building projects are anticipated to be completed over the next several years. This will require a holistic review of districtwide enrollments and catchment areas for our schools. The results of the Underwood and Ward Facility and Enrollment Study will be incorporated into the SAWG process so that we are able to optimize and balance enrollments.

Proposed Timeline:

- Summer 2023 - Begin Internal Analysis - Coordinated with Underwood/Ward Analysis
- Spring 2024 - Present Options that incorporate Results of Underwood/Ward Study
- Fall 2024 - Community Meetings to Gather Feedback and Input
- December 2024 - Recommendations and School Committee vote on Recommendations
- January 2025 - K Registration for new Lincoln-Eliot (with any changes implemented)
- September 2025 - New Lincoln-Eliot Opens

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION - BIGELOW START / END TIME

In beginning to review the potential impact to transportation of the two proposed feeder pattern change options, it became clear that there is a need to adjust the start and end times for Bigelow Middle School to align with the start and end times for Day. We recommend that Bigelow’s school day shifts to 7:55 am - 2:25 pm to align with Day’s school day. Bigelow’s school day is currently 8:05 am - 2:35 pm. This recommendation is separate from any feeder pattern shift as it will allow buses more time between tiers (school levels) especially in the afternoon. This slight shift would allow the buses doing afternoon drop off from Bigelow enough time to arrive at elementary schools at dismissal time.