

2012

Keene School District

Keene Elementary
Restructuring Steering
Committee
October 2012

KEENE ELEMENTARY RESTRUCTURING STEERING COMMITTEE: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Accepted by the KBE: October 9, 2012

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OBJECTIVE

The Keene Board of Education charged the Keene Elementary Restructuring Committee to determine an effective instructional configuration for the Keene elementary schools while considering cost efficiencies.

OVERVIEW AND GOALS

Historical summary:

March 2010: The Elementary Ad Hoc Advisory Committee began the study of Keene's elementary school system for the purpose of preserving high quality education while reducing costs. The committee researched elementary school models and identified community priorities that included: equity among schools and students, maintain equitable class sizes, establish strong core curriculum including the arts and wellness, and develop and mentor great teachers. During this time, Marinace Architects conducted a comprehensive study of the five elementary schools. The school district sponsored eight community forums.

June 2011: The Elementary Ad Hoc Advisory Committee unanimously recommended to the Keene Board of Education that the district move from a five-school model to a four-school model (K-1, 2-5) which is now more commonly known as the narrow grade span model. The committee based its recommendation on fifteen months of work with community input. The committee felt there was no perfect solution- but the educational and financial advantages of a narrow grade span model outweighed the disadvantages.

January 2012: The Keene Board of Education formed the Keene Elementary Restructuring Steering Committee to study the repurposing of Jonathan Daniels School by September 2014 and further study grade span options in the four remaining elementary schools.

March 2012: Administration met with Keene Elementary staff at a district wide meeting. Elementary personnel continue to endorse the K-5 configuration. The Keene Elementary Restructuring Steering Committee voted to continue to pursue two options: K-5 in four elementary schools, and the narrow grade span K-1, 2-5. The vote for these two options stood at 11-0 with two abstentions.

May 2012: Several members of the restructuring committee visited two elementary schools in Concord, NH as this district recently reduced the number of elementary schools from ten to five. Concord has a variety of grade span configurations including a K-5 structure and a K-2/3-5 configuration. The members reported that the staff enthusiastically endorsed both configurations.

At the Keene Board of Education's May 8, 2012 Superintendent Wayne Woolridge asked for guidance from the board on two issues: Would the Board support having the preschool moved to Jonathan Daniels School, a recommendation by Marinace Architects and supported by the Steering Committee? Did the Board want the Committee to recommend which grade span option it favored? The Board supported both requests.

September 2012: The Keene Elementary Restructuring Committee recommended to the Keene Board of Education by a vote of 9-4 that the district pursue the narrow grade span option. The four dissenting voters will provide a written summary outlining the reasoning behind their dissent and will attach it to the overall committee report.

MEMBERS

The members of the Keene Elementary Restructuring Steering Committee included: Superintendent Wayne Woolridge – Chair, Kristin Blais, Neil Donegan, Carl Panza, Susan Hay, Chris Coates, Gwen Mitchell, Bill Harris, Patty Yoerger, Richard Cate, Paul Huggins, Cathy Doane, Celia Slason, Rand Lounsbury, Amy Strong, Jennifer DeCoste, Maureen Meyer, Misty Martinez-Bohannon, Meredith Cargill, Becky Russell, Bill Gurney, and Reuben Duncan.

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Keene Elementary Restructuring Steering Committee formed the following six subcommittees:

Enrollment/Redistricting/Transportation: Bill Harris (Former Chair), Bill Gurney (Current Chair), Kristin Blais, Misty Martinez-Bohannon, Carl Panza, Matt Carey, and Linda Rubin.

Facilities & Building Repurposing: Gwen Mitchell (Chair), Chris Coates, Neil Donegan, Rich Beard, Tom Remillard, Bill Gurney, Mikki Stitham, and Kathy Blair.

Special Education: Rand Lounsbury (Chair), Cathy Woods, Patty Yoerger, Cathy Doane, Christine Mousseau, and Joanne Mulligan.

Staffing/Scheduling: Richard Cate (Chair), Maureen Meyer, Paul Cooper, Paul Huggins, Patty Yoerger, Brenda Haenchen, and Peg Hartz.

Transitions: Celia Slason (Chair), Amy Pierce, Mari Fauth, Amy Strong, and Cathy Doane.

Curriculum: Meredith Cargill (Former Chair), Reuben Duncan (Current Chair), Joanne Mulligan, Lauren Hannum, Cindi Bunn, Peter Siegel, Forrest Bencievenga, and Maureen Meyer.

INTRODUCTION

Steering Committee Votes to Move Keene to Four Schools/Narrow Grade Spans

On September 10, 2012, the Keene Elementary Restructuring Steering Committee voted 9-4 to move Keene's elementary school system from its current five school, K-5 wide grade span model, to a four school, K-1, 2-5 narrow grade span model. This decision came after nine months of work by the committee and its subcommittees, which were charged by the Keene Board of Education in January 2012 to examine three educational configurations.

- **Narrow Grade Span 1:** Grades K & 1 at Franklin paired with Grades 2-5 at Fuller and K & 1 at Wheelock paired with grades 2-5 at Symonds, Preschool at Jonathan Daniels.
- **Narrow Grade Span 2:** Grades K-3 at Fuller School paired with 4 & 5 at Franklin and grades K-3 at Symonds paired with grades 4 & 5 at Wheelock, Preschool at Jonathan Daniels.
- **Status quo:** Keep the five schools, K-5 model.

The Board asked that, as the committee examined these different configurations, that consideration be given to the advantages and disadvantages as well as the educational and logistical ramifications of each option, while keeping the ultimate goal of providing a quality education to all students. Additionally, the committee would study cost cutting measures to counteract the impact of reduced state funding.

After obtaining detailed information from Marinace Architects as to which option was most feasible, the Restructuring Committee voted to eliminate Narrow Grade Span 2 and to concentrate on Narrow Grade Span 1 as well as the original five elementary school configuration.

With further consideration of the recommendation from the original Ad Hoc Advisory Committee that Keene move to a four school K-1, 2-5 grade span, and the Keene Board of Education's recommendation to close Jonathan Daniels School by 2014, the Elementary Restructuring Committee changed the model from K-5 in five schools to K-5 in four schools. Marinace Architects predicted an estimated annual savings of \$1.3 million dollars with the narrow grade span model and a \$570,000 estimated annual savings with the K-5 model in four schools. In addition the Restructuring Committee recommended that Jonathan Daniels be repurposed so that Keene's preschool program could be housed there.

On September 10, 2012, the Keene Elementary Restructuring Steering Committee voted 9-4 to recommend to the Keene Board of Education the narrow grade span configuration. The majority of the committee believed this was the most effective model to address program equity, class size equity, and cost inefficiencies.

Steering Committee Final Report

The Steering Committee will vote at its October 8, 2012 meeting on a final report, one from the majority and one from the minority, which will then be sent on to the Keene Board of Education regarding the structure of Keene's elementary schools starting in 2014. That recommendation and supporting report will be presented at the Keene Board of Education's October 9, 2012 meeting.

Board to Consider Next Move

The Board will then consider the recommendation and vote on how to proceed at a subsequent meeting. Should the Board decide to move forward with restructuring Keene's elementary schools (which would require renovations of elementary school facilities necessitating a bond), wording for such a bond will be drawn up with the help of Marinace Architects in time to be placed on the school ballot in March of 2013. If the bond receives the necessary 60% support, renovation work will begin in the summer of 2013 and be completed in time for the opening of school in the fall of 2014.

ENROLLMENT/REDISTRICTING/TRANSPORTATION

Enrollment/Redistricting/Transportation Subcommittee Members

Bill Harris (Former Chair)

Bill Gurney (Current Chair)

Kristin Blais

Misty Martinez-Bohannon

Carl Panza

Matt Carey

Linda Rubin

KEENE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING COMMITTEE
COMMUNITY QUESTIONS/CONCERNS with RESPONSES
from the
ENROLLMENT, REDISTRICTING and TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE

ENROLLMENT

1. Where are the families with elementary age children located? What exactly are the demographics in Keene?

The maps kindly and skillfully produced for the Steering Committee by Will Schoefmann in City of Keene Planning Department clearly show where the 1,186 students enrolled as of February 2012 reside. These are color coded by the five attendance areas.

The demographics in Keene are interesting. Looking closely at this question was the ERT Committee's highest priority. The December 2009 Administrative Task Force Report noted that in a "January 2009 Teacher's Survey, teachers expressed concern about the differences in enrollment at the elementary schools. The question of redistricting, in fact, generated the greatest number of staff responses, with nearly all feeling that students should be dispersed more equally." Our goal was to try to improve existing imbalances in the current attendance areas through the creation of new attendance areas for both elementary configuration models under consideration. The three areas that we looked at were socio-economic demographics, special education demographics and ethnic demographics.

Socio Economic Data

We first looked at the current percentages of students receiving free or reduced meals. These figures represent the "poverty level" within a given school attendance area and are used by the state and federal government for a variety of funding decisions affecting schools. It is important to note that these numbers change day-to-day and should be looked at in the larger socio-economic context of the attendance areas.

Free and Reduced Meals Percentages as of 3/12/12

School	Enrolled	Free	Reduced	Total	Pct
Jonathan Daniels	176	47	4	51	29%
Franklin	208	117	8	125	60%
Fuller	334	107	20	127	38%
Symonds	331	86	10	96	29%
Wheelock (P-5)	149	64	8	72	48%
Wheelock (PS)	90	77	0	77	86%

There is a wide range of families qualifying for free or reduced meals across the five elementary schools. The largest populations are on the east side of the city at Franklin School and Wheelock School. The two smallest populations are in the west and northwest parts of the city served by Jonathan Daniels School and Symonds School. These two schools have a combined poverty rate that is about half of Franklin and Wheelock combined. Fuller School generally serves the north part of the city where the poverty rate is just below the average for the city of about 41%.

The Committee recognizes that more work needs to be done to ensure that proposed districting boundaries allow for comparable levels of students receiving free and reduced meals at each school. New student data will be used as it becomes available to adjust district lines prior to the October meeting of the Keene Board of Education.

Projected Free and Reduced Meals Percentages

Wide Grade Spans (June 25, 2012 Proposal)

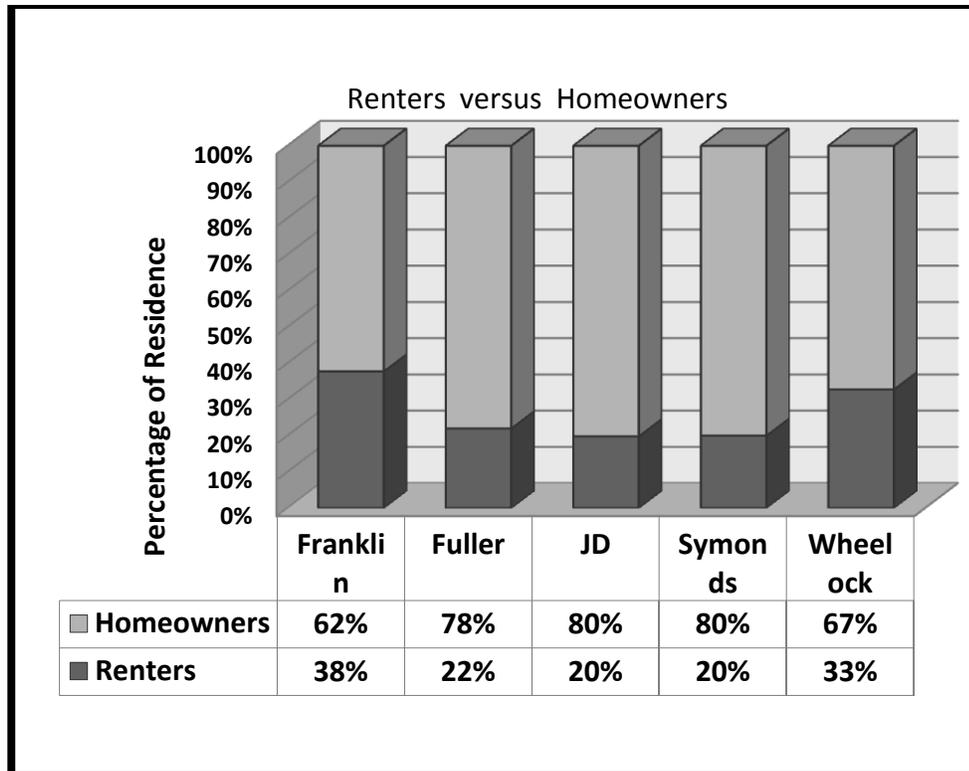
School	Enrolled	Free	Reduced	Total	Pct
Franklin	271	131	18	149	55.0%
Fuller	340	83	14	97	28.5%
Symonds	343	101	9	110	32.0%
Wheelock	226	97	9	106	46.9%

Narrow Grade Spans (June 25, 2012 Proposal)

School	Enrolled	Free	Reduced	Total	Pct
Franklin/Fuller	587	210	33	243	41.4%
Wheelock/Symonds	592	200	17	217	36.6%

(Surry included in above figures)

Further, the committee took a look at the percentage of renter and homeowners in each of the attendance areas. Families who rent are generally more transient than families who own their own homes. Transience is a factor in student achievement. Currently, the proportions of renters to homeowners looks like so:



There is a correlation between homeownership and the degree of transience in a school. The degree of transience between September 12, 2011 and June 8, 2012 looks like so:

<u>School</u>	<u>In or Out</u>	<u>ADM*</u>	<u>%</u>
Daniels	16	174	9.2%
Franklin	30	202	14.9%
Fuller	29	325	8.9%
Symonds	22	315	7.0%
Wheelock	19	146	13.0%

* ADM = Average Daily Membership

Type of Education

Balancing the percentages of students requiring specialized instruction was another important consideration of the ERT Committee. The distribution of students with special needs as of May 2012:

	<u>DAN</u>	<u>FRA</u>	<u>FUL</u>	<u>SYM</u>	<u>WHE</u>	<u>PS</u>
Total Enrollment	175	209	329	327	150	93
Special Education Enrollment	28	51	61	50	29	50
Collaborative Enrollment	11	14	16	20	NA	50
SPED % with Collabs	16.0%	24.4%	18.5%	15.3%	NA	53.7%
SPED % without Collabs	9.7%	17.7%	13.7%	9.8%	19.3%	0.0%

Under the June 25, 2012 Wide-Grade Span proposal the initial numbers look like so:

	FRA	FUL	SYM	WHE	PS
Total Enrollment	271	340	343	226	93
Special Education Enrollment	57	61	55	42	50
Collaborative Enrollment	11	12	20	14	50
SPED % with Collabs	21.1%	17.9%	16.0%	18.6%	53.7%
SPED % without Collabs	17.8%	14.9%	10.8%	13.2%	0.0%

Under the June 25, 2012 Narrow-Grade Span proposal the initial numbers look like so:

	NORTH	SOUTH	PS
	FRA/FUL	WHE/SYM	
Total Enrollment	581	598	93
Special Education Enrollment	117	98	50
Collaborative Enrollment	26	31	50
SPED % with Collabs	20.1%	16.4%	53.7
SPED % without Collabs	16.4%	11.8%	NA

Ethnicity

Balancing the ethnic mix of students was the last consideration of the ERT Committee. The current ethnic distribution of our students looks like so:

	DAN	FRA *	FUL	SYM	WHE	PS
Total Enrollment	175	209	329	327	150	90
White	159	167	294	287	136	83
Non-White	16	42	35	40	14	10
Percent Non-White	9.0%	20.0%	10.6%	12.3%	9.4%	11.1%

* Includes ELL Program

Under the June 25, 2012 Wide-Grade Span proposal the initial numbers will look like so:

	FRA	FUL	SYM	WHE *
Total Enrollment	271	340	343	226
White	243	304	306	185
Non-White	28	36	37	41
Percent Non-White	10.4%	10.6%	10.9%	18.3%

* Includes ELL Program

Under the June 25, 2012 Narrow-Grade Span proposal the initial numbers look like so:

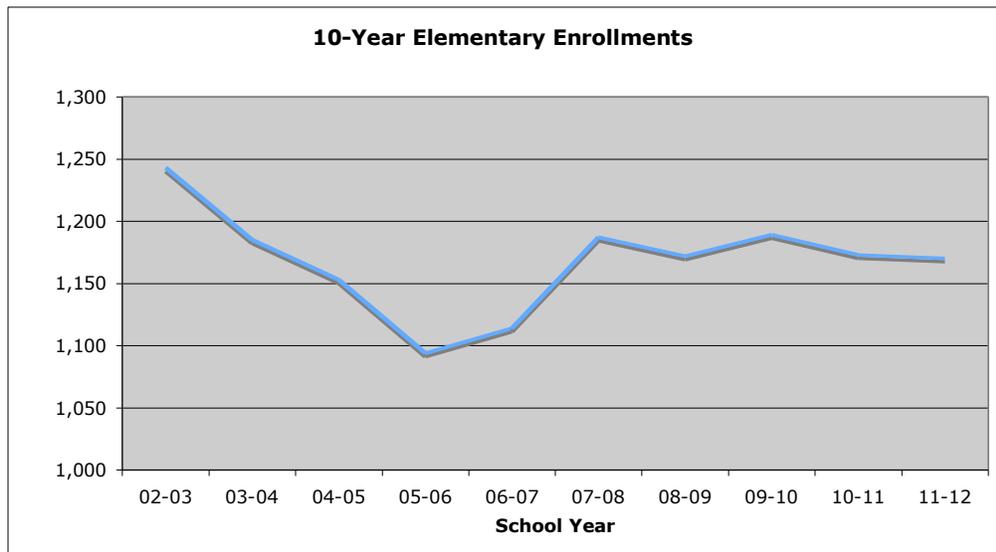
	<u>NORTH</u> <u>FRA/FUL</u>	<u>SOUTH</u> <u>WHE/SYM</u> *
Total Enrollment	581	598
White	518	518
Non-White	63	80
Percent Non-White	10.8%	13.4%

* Includes ELL Program

- 2. At what percent has enrollment increased or declined over the past 10 years? What do statistics show the enrollment will be in the next 20 years? How will we address planning for an increase in enrollment? Is there any evidence that any school would need further expansion in the near future?**

Enrollment Data

The elementary enrollment of Keene’s elementary schools as of October 1, 2011 was 1,170 students, a decrease of three students from 2010-2011. The overall enrollment trend over the last 10 years has shown a decline of 73 students, but this is skewed by larger enrollment declines between 2002-2003 and 2005-2006. The trend since 2006-2007 has shifted with enrollments increasing by 56 students in the last six years.



It is very difficult to accurately predict enrollments out even a few years, much less twenty, but if the trend we have seen over the last five or six years holds steady, we might see overall enrollments increase on average between eleven and thirteen students per year, a very slow rate of growth of about 1% per year. If this growth rate holds true for twenty years, we can expect about 1,200 students during the 2014-2015 school year, 1,300 students by 2022-2023, and 1,400 students by 2031-2032. The architects and the Facilities Committee have planned for future growth setting a theoretical maximum.

<u>Wide Grade Spans</u>		<u>Narrow Grade Spans</u>	
Franklin	414	Franklin	256
Fuller	414	Fuller	460
Symonds	414	Wheelock	240
Wheelock	286	<u>Symonds</u>	460
Total	1,528	Total	1,416

In both scenarios, there will be plenty of room for future elementary enrollment increases for the foreseeable future.

3. If Gilsum, Sullivan and/or Roxbury students were to come to the Keene School District how would planning be affected?

As of April 2, 2012 there are no plans for these children to attend Keene elementary schools. According to Associate Superintendent Bill Gurney, Gilsum has decided to keep their elementary students in town. They may be looking to send students to Keene Middle School and Keene High School in the future. Sullivan recently announced that they would close their school and hope to send their K-6 students to Gilsum and Roxbury is hoping to send their K-8 students to Marlborough.

REDISTRICTING

4. Wouldn't redistricting take care of the enrollment concerns we have now?

In the short run redistricting might help, but redistricting has its shortcomings. Class size inequities and corresponding larger staffing numbers are due to running five schools of varying size. Redistricting does not fundamentally or easily address these realities.

The Elementary Ad Hoc Committee articulated this in their Summary of Frequently Cited Core Beliefs and Educational Priorities from the May 6 (2010) Community Forum. In that document they wrote, "It is important to understand that class size disparities are in large part a function of small K-5 (or preK-5) schools. When schools have a small number of classrooms per grade, it is very difficult to manage year-to-year student fluctuations. Redistricting can be a temporary solution, but is not a practical approach on a frequent basis (students who begin in one school cannot be asked to transfer multiple times to accommodate class size fluctuations, students who have spent five years at one school cannot be reasonably asked to go elsewhere for their fifth grade year)." The Elementary Ad Hoc Committee added to the redistricting discussion in their May 2011 report titled Grade Span and Grade Configurations writing that "wider grade spans may necessitate more frequent re-districting (and if it is not done regularly because redistricting is unpopular, school and class sizes across the district vary greatly)."

When and if redistricting is accomplished as a result of restructuring or not, we recommend that demographics and attendance area boundaries be reviewed and adjusted every six or seven years.

5. How will students be divided?

First, the district’s current class size policy (Policy IIB) reads, “For kindergarten through grade three (K- 3), the District will strive to achieve a class size of no more than 20 students or fewer per teacher. For grades four through five (4-5), the District will strive to achieve a class size of no more than 25 students per teacher.” The 25:1 ratio in grades four and five was passed in hopes of achieving efficiencies, but as we know from years of experience, this policy is not easily implemented and class sizes still vary greatly across the city. The varying size of our schools has always and continues to cause widely inequitable class sizes around the city.

Given the larger numbers of students at a given grade level in the narrow-grade span scenario the policy could be more easily implemented. The architects have also determined that with narrow-grade spans, a uniform class size policy of 20 students per class in grades K-5 will better create the efficiencies that were hoped for when the present policy was implemented a couple of years ago.

The wide-grade span scenario would provide slightly larger numbers per school making the policy easier to implement than the current five-school scenario, but still not as effectively as the narrow-grade span scenario. This reality is visible in the number of sections projected to be needed under the two scenarios under discussion.

Average enrollment per grade level over the last ten years has been 198 students. For planning purposes the Restructuring Steering Committee will use 200 students per grade level multiplied by six grades (K-5) for a total of 1,200 students. As the charts show, this number looks to hold steady for the foreseeable future. Based on this information, there is no reason to expect that any school would need further expansion in the foreseeable future beyond what the Elementary Restructuring Steering Committee is recommending.

The architects and Facilities Committee have provided two “spare” classrooms for “bubble” classes to move through any of the schools should enrollments in one grade spike beyond the anticipated number of sections. Of course, the opposite could be true too and there may be fewer sections required should enrollment in one grade drop below the anticipated number of sections. These scenarios are exactly what the Elementary Ad Hoc Committee sought to mitigate through their recommendation of narrow-grade span schools. Four wide grade spans schools will be less likely to experience these class size variations than five wide grade span schools, but still more likely than narrow grade span schools.

Under the narrow grade span “partner-schools” option we planned for 600 students for each of two balanced attendance areas which would include as close to 100 students as possible per grade level in each partner school arrangement.

<u>School</u>	<u>Sections</u>	<u>Target Enrollment</u>
Franklin (K/1)	10 Sections	200
Fuller (2/5)	20 Sections	400
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Wheelock (K/1)	10 Sections	200
<u>Symonds (2/5)</u>	<u>20 Sections</u>	<u>400</u>
	60 Sections	1,200

Under the wide grade span option we planned for 327 students in each of the three division schools and 219 students at the two-division school.

<u>School</u>	<u>Sections</u>	<u>Target Enrollment</u>
Franklin (K/5)	18 Sections	327
Fuller (K/5)	18 Sections	327
Symonds (K/5)	18 Sections	327
<u>Wheelock (K/5)</u>	<u>12 Sections</u>	<u>219</u>
	66 Sections	1,200

6. Where will the Surry students go?

At this point, the Surry students are considered Jonathan Daniels students. The initial plan for Surry students in the narrow-grade span scenario is for them to be assigned to the North Attendance Area.

The initial plan for the Surry students in the wide-grade span scenario is for them to be assigned to Fuller School.

7. Do we continue to allow variance requests? If yes, under what conditions? If no, do we phase them out to minimize disruptions to families? Will parents have any other options for school choice?

Variance requests have historically been approved on a year-to-year basis subject to available space. The ERT committee is basing its redistricting recommendations on the actual physical addresses of the elementary students and the home school that is designated as serving that address with no provision for students attending any school other than their home school. Once a better balance is struck with new attendance areas, we recommend that variances be viewed in more critical light than they have in the past as continuing the practice may upset that balance.

A “School Choice” option also exists for parents of students attending schools identified as “in-need-of-improvement” (currently Fuller, Franklin and Daniels only). These parents may exercise their right to public school choice under the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. In these cases, the parents can choose to send their child, at district expense, to any other elementary school in Keene not identified as “in-need-of-improvement.” So far, 14 families have exercised the School Choice option and so this federal mandate has not posed any problems. However if significant numbers of parents of one of the schools-in-need-of-improvement were to lose confidence in that school and elect to have their children sent to a qualifying school (currently only Symonds and Wheelock), the district is obligated to honor those requests unless doing so would violate fire codes. This “School Choice” option needs to be closely monitored over the coming months and years.

TRANSPORTATION

Children arrive and depart school by foot, bicycle, automobile or bus. We have endeavored to encourage more students to walk or ride bicycles but the majority of students continue to rely on First Student buses or their families' personal vehicles. It may be difficult for us to predict how proposed changes will impact family decisions about transportation but our district is required to anticipate most students will be conveyed on school buses. While a complex choice for families, it becomes relatively simple to anticipate how a change in school assignment will affect bus routes and costs.

After looking at what the district is required and not required to do under applicable NH law, the subcommittee sees three central themes to the overall issue of transportation. They are cost, ride times and coordination. Further, the opportunity presents itself to look at how children get to and from school and to promote students' physical health through increased physical activity through the "Safe Routes to School" initiative. The committee recommends working with Safe Routes to Schools to develop an increased walkability plan to offset the negative effect of longer bus rides for some students. Walking would also be a good community building activity...the kind of thing that people feel good about for lots of important reasons.

8. What are the applicable NH laws and Keene School District policy regarding transportation of elementary age students?

Keene School District Policy #3546 and EEA stipulate that, "the District shall provide transportation for pupils to schools in the District consistent with provisions of RSA 189:6 ..." and that we will provide "transportation for students in kindergarten through grade 3 who live more than one half mile from the school to which they are assigned... and transportation for students in grade 4 through 5 who live more than one mile from the school to which they are assigned."

The applicable New Hampshire state statutes are...

189:6 Transportation of Pupils. – *The local school district shall furnish transportation to all pupils in grade 1 through grade 8 who live more than 2 miles from the school to which they are assigned. The local school board may furnish transportation to kindergarten pupils, pupils in grades above the eighth or to any pupils residing less than 2 miles from the school to which they are assigned, when it finds that this is appropriate, and shall furnish it when so directed by the commissioner of education.*

189:8 Limitations and Additions. – *Pupils entitled to transportation in accordance with RSA 189:6 may be required to walk a distance not to exceed one mile to a school bus stop established by the local school board. Pupils residing in areas which are inaccessible by a local school district's established mode of transportation may be required to walk a distance not to exceed 1- 1/2 miles to a school bus stop, provided that the vehicle, route and schedule have been approved by the commissioner of education. School districts shall assure that pupils shall not be subject to unsafe conditions while walking the required distance to a school bus stop and that the school bus stop is established in a safe location.*

186-C:2 Definitions. V. (a) (1) – *(the district shall provide) suitable transportation to all children with disabilities whose individualized education program requires such transportation. The school district may board a child as close to the place where instruction is to be furnished as possible, and shall provide transportation, if required by the child's individualized education program, from the place where the child is boarded to the place of instruction.*

9. How much do we currently spend to provide transportation to and from school for our elementary school students?

The Keene School District is budgeted to spend \$294,745 on elementary transportation in 2012-2013. This figure represents a 3% increase over the 2011-2012 cost of \$286,060. Elementary transportation costs in 2010-2011 were \$237,974 and in 2009-2010 were \$230,964. Transportation costs are fixed annual costs negotiated into multi-year contracts with local transportation companies such as First Student, the company that the district currently is contracted with to provide bus transportation to Keene students. The district is under contract with First Student through the 2012-2013 school year. Contracts and costs beyond 2012-2013 have yet to be negotiated. SAU 29 Business Manager John Harper has been asked to take into account possible changes in elementary transportation starting in 2013-2014 when negotiating a new transportation contract.

10. What is the additional busing cost and how is additional busing cost effective? Below are the responses to committee questions from Paula Leslie of First Student:

a. Will additional bus routes be needed for either or both scenarios?

No, I do not feel we would need any additional bus routes for either scenario.

b. If yes, what is the estimated cost of the additional busing?

There would be no additional cost.

c. If no, do you have any suggestions on how to make either scenario more cost effective?

I believe we will definitely need ALL the current buses so I cannot make it more cost effective.

d. Will there be any increases (or decreases) in special education transportation with both scenarios?

There should not be any additional special needs unless you change/add additional sites. I feel we can still cover the city as we currently do.

e. Will bus rides be longer for any students? If so, which ones and how much longer?

Yes, the bus rides will be longer especially for the Daniels area (there are many walkers who would need to ride with the Symonds/Wheelock scenario. Fuller/Franklin are so close there should be no real impact.

f. Will buses be any more or less full with both scenarios?

I would guess the buses would be heavier because your number of walkers would be decreased. There is such an unknown here because many parents transport.

g. Would you sketch out some proposed new bus routes for us to take a look at?

Routes could actually be very similar as they are now, just widened to incorporate Daniels area in the Wide Grade Plan.

The current Daniels bus would be added to the Fuller buses.

In the Narrow Grade Plan the staggered time which is currently in use at Fuller/Franklin would make it simple.

In the Narrow Grade Plan we would need Wheelock/Symonds to just continue to be available to have a 15-minute window to drop and pick.

h. Can you develop narrow grade span routes that would keep families on the same bus as long as possible? For example, dropping off a kindergartener or first grader at one school then continuing on to take an older brother or sister to the partner school, and then reversing the route in the afternoon so you get the older kids on the bus first?

Yes, most definitely we would pick up whole families and drop at one school before we drop at the next. This is the reason for the need of Wheelock/Symonds to have a 15 minute window

This is very doable. We do need some traffic flow help out at Symonds. The mix of buses and parents is currently scary out there and I do feel, especially with the Narrow Grade Span, that we may see an increase in parental transport, especially in the beginning.

**Some people are concerned about children being in two different elementary schools due to narrow-grade span configurations. If Keene adopts a narrow-grade span model, how will these concerns be addressed?
(The Transitions and Schedules Subcommittee are also addressing this question.)**

We don't know all of the concerns but we looked at start and end times as this issue had a direct relationship to transportation.

We looked approximately twenty-five other New Hampshire school districts that use the narrow grade span model and by and large, they stagger their start and end times, though in some cases, when schools are very close to one another, they have the same schedule.

We propose staggered start times between partner schools with the grades K-1 schools starting school earlier than the grades 2-5 schools, and the entire elementary schedule be staggered with KMS and KHS as they currently are. This arrangement should make it possible for buses and parents dropping their children off by car to reasonably get to each school on time. This might look something like so:

<u>Current</u>	<u>Start</u>	<u>End</u>	<u>Proposed</u>	<u>Start</u>	<u>End</u>
KHS	7:20	2:02	KHS	7:20	2:02
KMS	7:50	2:22	KMS	7:50	2:22
ELEM 1	8:20	3:00	ELEM 1	TBD	TBD
ELEM 2	8:30	3:10	ELEM 2	TBD	TBD

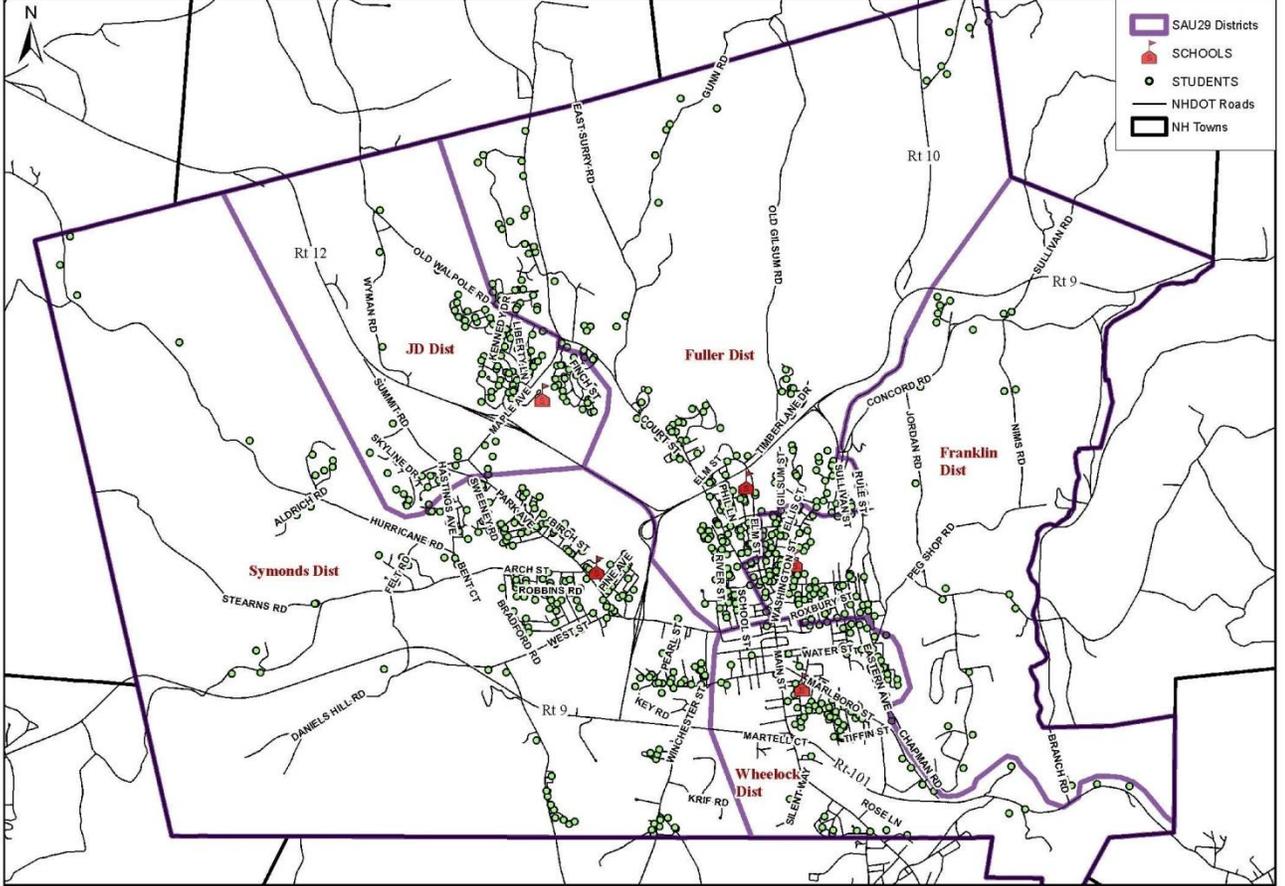
Another consideration is that with the narrow grade span configuration, one child in a family may live close enough to one school or the other to walk while a sibling may require transportation.

What percentages of students currently walk, are transported by parents or ride buses?

These numbers are to determine exactly because parents exercise a great deal of judgment when deciding how their children get to and from school each day. Some of the significant factors affecting these personal decisions are the season, the weather on any given day, access to safe walking routes to and from school, and the family's daily schedule. The Elementary Ad Hoc Committee reviewed the following data.

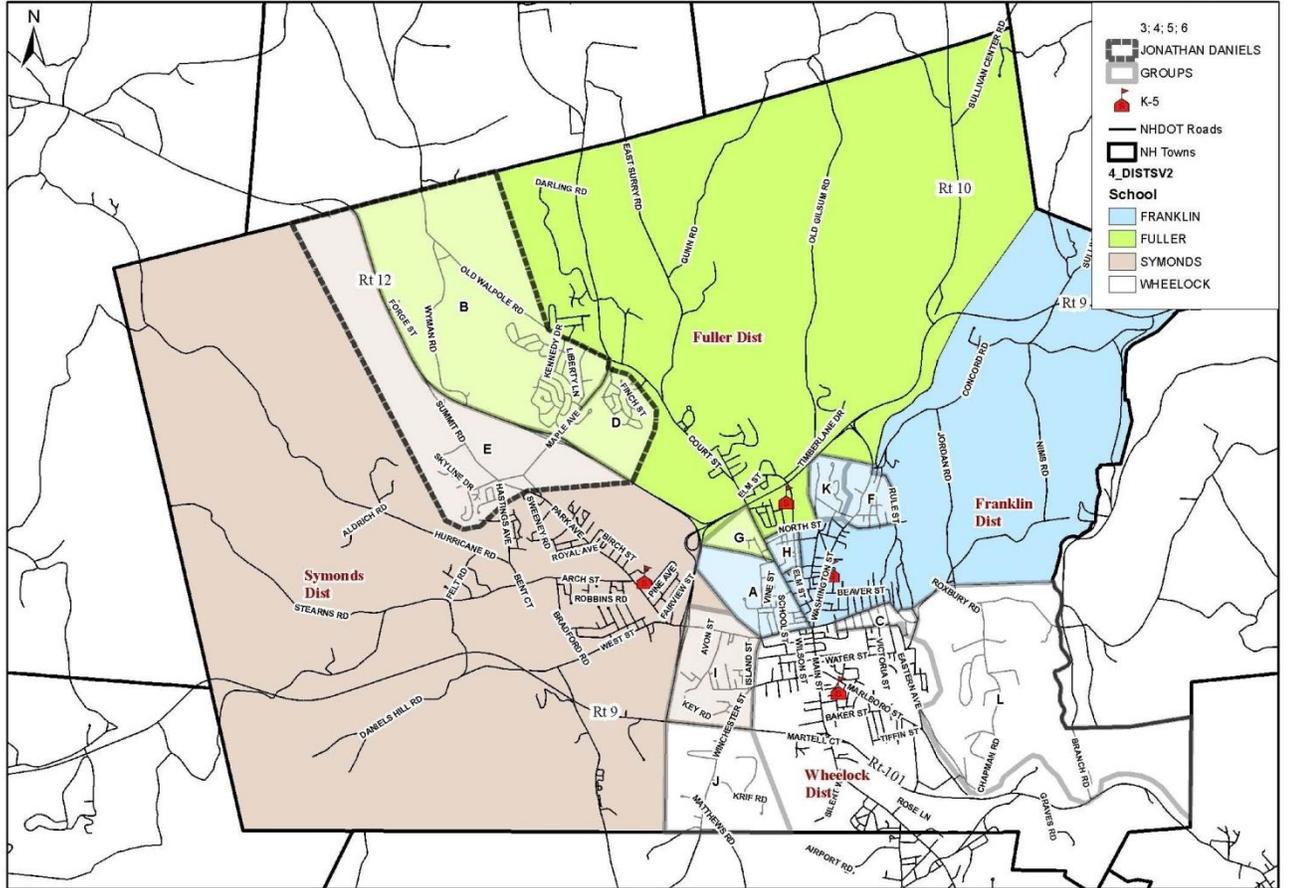
School / Date	Walkers			Transported					
	9/2010	3/2011	2/2012	By Car & Bus	By Car		By Bus		
	9/2010	3/2011	2/2012	9/2010	3/2011	2/2012	9/2010	3/2011	2/2012
Daniels	48	5	6	52	67	64	-	28	30
Franklin	65	67	52	35	10	20	-	24	28
Fuller	27	4	4	73	11	27	-	86	69
Symonds	16	7	7	84	62	50	-	31	43
Wheelock K-5	33	9	10	67	24	25	-	68	65
Wheelock PS			0			67	-		33

The Enrollment, Redistricting and Transportation Committee supports the work of the Safe Routes to School Committee and the goals of Vision 2020. The school district will work closely with the City of Keene and First Student to develop safe opportunities for students to walk or bicycle to and from school. We encourage the development and use of remote drop-off and pick-up sites to promote walking and bicycling to and from school by students and their families.



Four School/Wide Grade Span Scenario

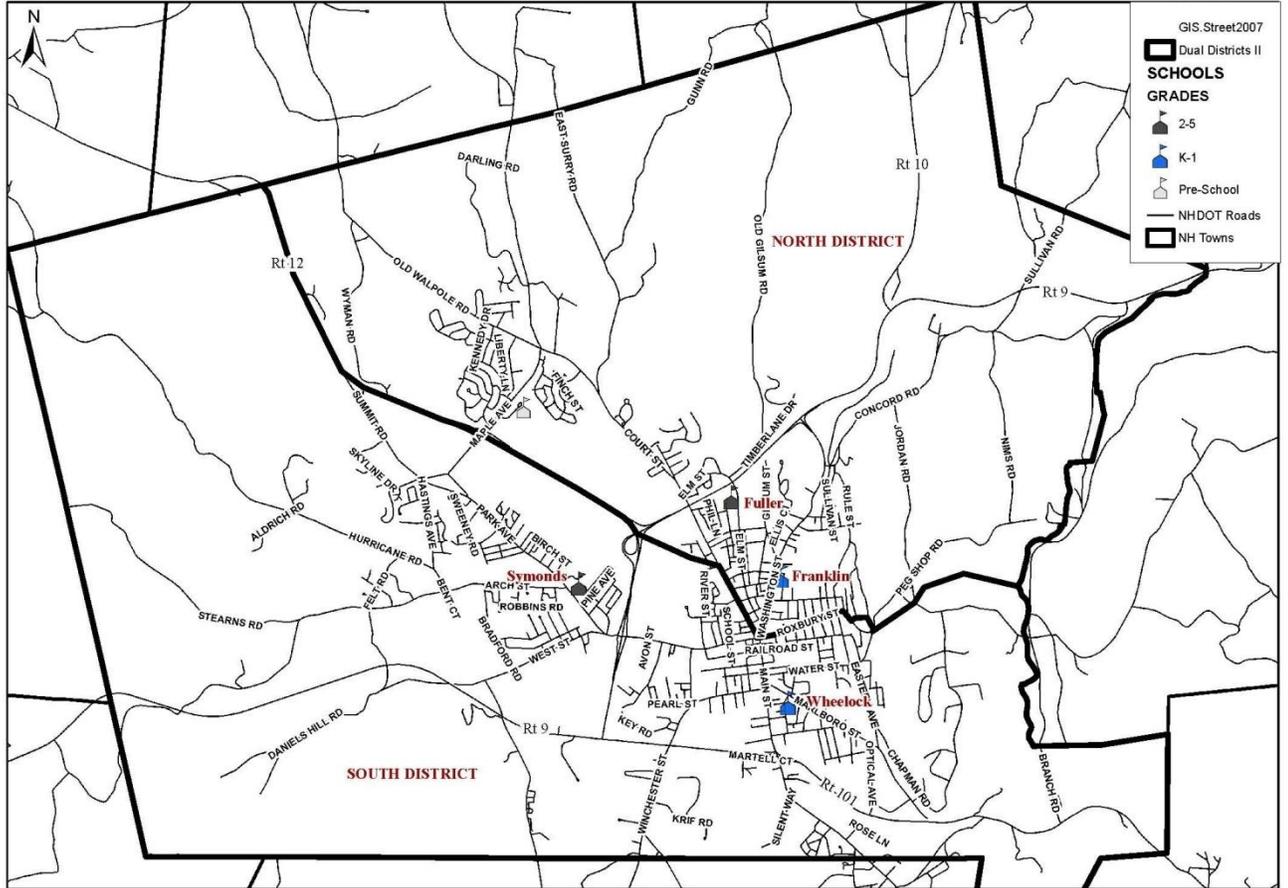
Data as of May 2012



Four School/Narrow Grade Span Scenario

Data as of May 2012

Planning Department



FACILITIES & BUILDING REPURPOSING

Facilities Subcommittee Members

Rich Beard	Parent
Kathy Blair	Wheelock Preschool
Chris Coates	Keene Board of Education
Neil Donegan	Keene Board of Education
William Gurney	Associate Superintendent of Schools
Tom Remillard	Director of Buildings and Grounds
Michelle Stitham	Teacher Symonds School
Gwen Mitchell	Wheelock Principal, Chair

Very special thanks to Tibor Farkas of Marinace Architects for his technical assistance, vision, thoroughness and patience.

Facilities & Building Repurposing Committee Charge

- To thoroughly review architectural/facility studies
- To create a bond that will be eligible for Building Aid
- To explore building repurposing for Jonathan Daniels School
- To determine where Preschool will be located

The Facilities subcommittee was comprised of a hard working group of concerned members of the community as well as school district employees. Each member of the subcommittee brought great expertise as well as passion and commitment to the process of considering the future of our five elementary school buildings and their campuses.

This report will detail responses to three of the four goals identified in the original charge of the subcommittee. The committee was unable to create a bond for work needed, as the Keene Board of Education has not yet chosen the particular grade span configuration they would like to pursue. The groundwork for a bond proposal has been completed, should the Board of Education choose this direction.

The members of the Facilities Committee agreed that our charge was clear, and that as a committee we would not make a recommendation for a particular grade span configuration. Our focus was on ensuring that the facilities plans brought forward ensured that Keene's elementary school facilities would meet life safety codes, have adequate space to carry on existing educational programs, be equitable in class sizes and opportunities, and have space designed to accommodate future enrollment bubbles.

All members of the Facilities Subcommittee personally toured each of the five elementary schools in order to understand their existing strengths and weaknesses. This experience contributed to an improved understanding of renovations and expansions needed to accomplish the goals of having safe school facilities able to accommodate all existing educational programs with equity between schools.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

The capital improvement plan for the five elementary school buildings was carefully reviewed with the Director of Buildings and Grounds. Life Safety improvements in the CIP include installation of automatic sprinklers in each building, heating and energy upgrades, window replacement, ventilation, and roofing. The committee recommended that all items in the Capital Improvement Plan be included in the architect's plans for renovation. At this printing some of the gym lighting upgrades have been completed.

See Appendix: Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) – Keene Elementary Schools (updated 7/5/12)

Repurposing Jonathan Daniels School

The original Ad Hoc Elementary Restructuring Committee recommended in its report of June 14, 2011 that Keene move to a four-school system with a Pre-K-1 and 2-5 grade span. On October 25, 2011, Superintendent of Schools Wayne Woolridge recommended that Jonathan Daniels School be repurposed for office space for a variety of school district employees. The Keene School Board voted at its December 12, 2011 meeting to prepare Jonathan Daniels School for closure in the 2014 school year, and to further study the Pre-K-1, 2-5, and Pre-K-3 and 4-5 grade span configurations. During this period of time members of the community came forward asking the Restructuring Committee to consider a four-school K-5 wide grade span option.

During the life of the Elementary Ad Hoc Committee, all configurations explored included housing Preschool in an elementary school along with grades K-1. This configuration immediately reduced the number of available classrooms in whichever school was being considered by at least four rooms. The document, "Why Not Four Schools, all K-5?" was written with this premise in mind.

Members of the community expressed concern that Jonathan Daniels School was to be closed. The committee evaluated the site along with the architect, and concluded that the sum of money needed to renovate this building as an elementary school was prohibitive. The committee agreed that the Jonathan Daniels site is excellent, and perhaps a future school board might choose to construct a new school upon it at a point in the future.

Keene School District Preschool Program

Overview

The Keene School District Preschool Program, located at Wheelock School is a multi-faceted program designed to meet the needs of 3-5 year old special education students. The program has three components:

1. Evaluation
2. Wheelock Preschool Program
3. Consultation, Related Service and Special Education supports to area preschools

1. Evaluation:

The evaluation team conducts evaluations on students identified through Early Intervention services, just prior to the child's third birthday. Additionally, evaluations are conducted on students who are referred in their preschool years by teachers, parents, and physicians due to developmental, speech/language, or other concerns. Preschool services for identified students are required to begin at their third birthday.

2. Wheelock Preschool Program:

The Wheelock Preschool is a school-based preschool program for 3-5 year old children. The design of the program integrates disabled students with typically developing same-age peers.

This inclusionary model, over time, has proven to be the most successful for service delivery to our population. A peer group, understanding of students' disabilities, is developed naturally. Integration is the expectation, the norm. Typically developing students benefit from outstanding teaching, community building, and a deeper understanding of their disabled peers who will be their grade-mates, neighbors and friends through their school years. A nominal tuition is charged to the families of the typically developing students.

3. Community-based Consultation, Related Services, Special Education Supports:

The Wheelock Community Preschool Team consults regularly with area preschools where many of our students are placed. A teacher consultant serves as case manager of our students' programs and assists in evaluations. Consultation might be around approaches to instruction, social skills, language development, or motor skills. Related services providers deliver special education related services to identified students in up to twelve area preschools. Consultation to area preschools provides a pre-referral intervention model.

Current Preschool Facility Issues

The Preschool is housed in three classrooms at Wheelock School. Two of these classrooms were reduced in size in order to develop two shared office spaces for eight therapists. The 2012-13 school year finds enrollment on the first day of school at 77 students. This number will increase significantly over the course of the school year, as Preschool services for eligible students are required to begin on their third birthday. On average, 75 evaluations are conducted each year, with well over 90% of those children found eligible for special education services. All twenty-six Preschool staff members are based at Wheelock School.

Due to the significant developmental, medical and special educational needs of many of our students, the staff to student ratio must be high. Classrooms are staffed with a teacher and a paraprofessional, and tutors support many students in their programs. Classrooms are overcrowded, and the ability to place students with precision is severely limited

Important related services of Speech/Language Therapy, Occupational or Physical Therapy, or discrete trials often take place in busy hallways, as there is no available therapy space in the school. Confidential parent interviews may be held in hallways, or in rooms where others might be present. There is no playground equipment designed for preschoolers, and no space to add such equipment. For children staying in program all day, lunch becomes a hurdle, as navigating the K-5 lunch line as well as an appropriate location to eat lunch is far more than the students can manage. The Preschool Coordinator is required by statute to have a private office. In order to accomplish this, a windowless storage closet without air conditioning was converted to office space.

Parking for both staff and parents is seriously lacking requiring many staff members to park on the street. Parents attending meetings or dropping off their child for school must often park blocks away. The single on-street handicapped parking space is at the far end of the school without a curb cut for a wheelchair. The designated bus zone is street-side and undersized.

Preschool Facility Needs

In 2010, a committee was formed to consider the facilities needs of the growing preschool population, and recommendations were crafted should the preschool ever become a stand-alone program.

The following facilities requirements were generated:

4 classrooms with bathrooms & diaper changing facility

Secure entrance-Secretary/office/nurse's office

Coordinator's office

Office space for 9 therapists

Evaluation Room

Conference Room

Waiting area for parents

Workroom-copier, laminator

Storage for riding toys, classroom furniture, classroom supplies, student-specific equipment, office supplies and student records

6-Therapy spaces with storage

Occupational Therapy space with suspended equipment and mats

Indoor large motor area

Lunchroom

Playground designed for preschoolers

Adult bathrooms

Adequate parking

Bus drop off area

Locate Preschool at Jonathan Daniels

In touring Jonathan Daniels School the committee took very seriously the community's concerns around the recommendation for its closure. The space needs of the Preschool were well known to the committee, and the single story school building was identified as a potential Preschool location.

The Keene Fire Marshal toured Jonathan Daniels School with the committee chair and the principal of Jonathan Daniels to inform us of Life Safety Code needs. The possibility of a mixed use of the building was discussed. The architects were asked to assist us in further development of renovation plans.

The committee asked the Keene School Board to approve Jonathan Daniels School as a future site for the Keene Community Preschool in the restructuring process, which was affirmed at the board level.

Jonathan Daniels School, with well-designed renovations and life safety code upgrades will provide the Keene Preschool program appropriate and adequate space for this growing program. By placing the Preschool at Jonathan Daniels, the facility will continue its use as a school, drawing students not only from the immediate neighborhood, but also from the Keene community at large.

Architect's Report Jonathan Daniels School - Code Needs

Code requirements LIFE SAFETY

The main Life Safety Code and Building Code compliance deficiencies at Daniels School are as follows:

Currently, Daniels School is an unsprinklered building, of largely heavy timber construction. Therefore, maximum allowable building area (as defined by the Building Code) is 36,000 sq.ft. The actual building area is 34,260 sq.ft. (coinciding with the area of the main floor). Therefore, the building is in compliance with building area requirements, and this criterion by itself does not trigger a need for building-wide sprinklers.

It is possible that because of hidden construction details, the building would have to be reclassified as general wood-framed construction, which has a much lower allowable building area. In that case, the building would require sprinklers to be in compliance with the building area limitations of current Building Code.

In schools that are not sprinklered, emergency egress windows (or "rescue windows") meeting specific dimensional requirements noted in the Life Safety Code are required for all spaces larger than 250 sq.ft. normally occupied by students.

Daniels School has at least 14 spaces either without egress windows or with windows that do not meet maximum sill height requirement. If the whole building were provided with automatic sprinklers, egress windows would not be required.

The Life Safety Code requires that all clothing and other loose combustible content be either removed or that metal lockers be provided. Some of the Daniels School corridors will therefore have to be provided with metal lockers or student clothing be stored in cubbies inside their respective classrooms.

Recent Life Safety Code changes have required major upgrades to corridors. Current code calls for fire rated corridors for non-sprinklered buildings and “smoke partitions” for corridor walls for buildings with sprinklers. Assuming that the building will be sprinklered as required above, the only upgrades that will be required are closers on all doors opening into corridors. If for educational reasons, classroom doors need to be kept open, then electromagnetic hold-open devices, which release doors when the fire alarm is triggered, will also be required on these doors.

The corridor past the Media Center and next to the Nurse’s washroom has excessive dead end length. Since allowable dead end distances for corridors are longer for buildings equipped with automatic sprinklers, this deficiency will disappear when building-wide sprinklers will be installed.

The Media Center needs to be separated from the rest of the corridor with a smoke barrier, and be provided with two exits. Adding a double door in the center of the main corridor will divide the building into two smoke compartments, and inhibit movement of smoke in a fire event.

The small second floor storage near the kitchen does not comply with fire separation or egress requirements of the Life Safety Code.

Possible remedial measures will need to be reviewed with the City Fire Department.

Jonathan Daniels Summary

4 sections preschool am & pm 75-150 students (depending on configuration of individual program)

CIP: Install sprinkler system, enclose Media Center, install energy management system, replace curtain wall panels and repair soffits, install automatic controls for lighting, replace gym lighting

Renovation includes removing walls between three smaller classrooms and erecting one wall to create two larger rooms, adding student bathrooms to the expanded classrooms, upgrade emergency egress, and creation of a security barrier between the Preschool and non-school side.

All Life-Safety code upgrades

The cost of renovating Jonathan Daniels School must be included with either grade the wide or narrow grade span options.

Recommendations for Use of Non-School Side of Jonathan Daniels

The Facilities subcommittee respectfully suggests to the Keene Board of Education the following offices be relocated into the proposed non-school side of Jonathan Daniels:

- The computer technicians, currently housed at Mitchell House on the Keene High School campus,
- The Keene School Lunch offices, currently on the second floor of the Maintenance Barn
- Keene Community Education/Title 1 at the time their current lease expire
 - *See Architect's Design Daniels Elementary School 5/30/12
 - A request for an exhibit space for Jonathan Daniels' artifacts can be found in the letter from Frankie Feola-Mahar

See Appendix: Correspondence from Frankie Feola-Mahar (September 9, 2012)

See Appendix: Correspondence from Gwen Mitchell in response (September 13, 2012)

Narrow Grade Span Option Summary

North Partner Schools Franklin & Fuller (Preschool at Daniels)

Franklin School: **10 sections:** 5 sections Kindergarten, 5 sections Grade 1

200-256 students

Includes Lower Grades Collaborative Learning Center and Lower Grades Communications Disorders Collaborative

CIP: Install sprinkler system, convert steam to hot water and add controls, replace rooftop air handling units, install automatic controls for lighting, replace gym lighting

All Life-Safety code upgrades

No new construction

3 spare classrooms

Fuller School: **20 sections:** 5 sections Grade two, 5 sections Grade three, 5 sections Grade four, 5 sections Grade 5

400-460 students

Includes Upper Grades Collaborative Learning Center and Upper Grades Communications Disorders Collaborative programs

CIP: Install sprinkler system, new water line to service sprinklers, convert steam boilers to hot water and add controls, replace slate roof, fascia and soffit repairs, window replacement, install automatic controls for lighting, replace gym lighting

All Life-Safety code upgrades

New construction includes a 5-classroom addition, 1 small instruction room, and a student washroom/shower. Some minor renovation will also be included.

2 spare classrooms

South Partner Schools

Wheelock and Symonds (Preschool at Daniels)

Wheelock School

10 sections: 5 sections Kindergarten, 5 sections Grade 1

200-256 students

Includes Lower Grades Emotionally Disabled Collaborative and Lower Grades English language Learners programs

CIP: Install sprinkler system, convert steam to hot water and add controls, window replacement, gym floor replacement, install automatic controls for lighting, replace gym lighting

All Life-Safety code upgrades

No new construction

2 spare classrooms

Symonds School

20 sections: 5 sections Grade two, 5 sections Grade three, 5 sections Grade four, 5 sections Grade 5

400-460 students

Includes Upper Grades Emotional Disabilities Collaborative, Learning Disabilities Collaborative, and Upper Grades English Language Learners programs

CIP: Install sprinkler system, stair rebuilding, convert steam to hot water and add controls, window replacement, fascia and soffit repairs, install automatic controls for lighting, replace gym lighting

All Life-Safety code upgrades

New construction includes 4 new classrooms and 4 small instructional spaces. Renovation includes reconfiguration of the office, partitioning of a large classroom to create a small instructional space, and addition of a new corridor to safely access the playground.

2 spare classrooms

Wide Grade Span Option Summary

Four Schools Grades K-5 (Preschool at Daniels)

Franklin School

18 sections: 3 sections Kindergarten, 3 sections Grade One, 3 sections Grade two, 3 sections Grade three, 3 sections Grade four, 3 sections Grade five

324-414 Students

Includes Learning Disabilities Collaborative

CIP: Install sprinkler system, convert steam to hot water and add controls, replace rooftop air handling units, install automatic controls for lighting, replace gym lighting

All Life-Safety code upgrades

New construction includes a 3 classroom addition and 3 small instructional spaces, a partial infill of the courtyard for instructional space, and an expansion of the multi-purpose room to accommodate a larger school population.

1-2 spare classrooms

Fuller School

18 sections: 3 sections Kindergarten, 3 sections Grade One, 3 sections Grade two, 3 sections Grade three, 3 sections Grade four, 3 sections Grade five

324-414 students

CIP: Install sprinkler system, new water line to service sprinklers, convert steam boilers to hot water and add controls, replace slate roof, fascia and soffit repairs, window replacement, install automatic controls for lighting, replace gym lighting

All Life-Safety code upgrades

Includes both Upper and Lower Communications Disorders Collaboratives

New Construction includes a 2-classroom addition, and some minor interior renovation to expand a conference room and create small instructional spaces. There may be a need to expand cafeteria table storage.

2 spare classrooms

Symonds School

18 sections: 3 sections Kindergarten, 3 sections Grade One, 3 sections Grade two, 3 sections Grade three, 3 sections Grade four, 3 sections Grade five

324-414 students

CIP: Install sprinkler system, stair rebuilding, convert steam to hot water and add controls, window replacement, fascia and soffit repairs, install automatic controls for lighting, replace gym lighting

All Life-Safety code upgrades

Includes Upper and Lower Emotional Disabilities Collaboratives

New construction includes a 3-classroom addition with 3 small instructional spaces. Renovation includes reconfiguration of the office and addition of a new corridor to safely access the playground from the center of the building.

3 spare classrooms* need to be reassessed, which might reduce new construction by 1 classroom

Wheelock School

12 sections: 2 sections Kindergarten, 2 sections Grade One, 2 sections Grade two, 2 sections Grade three, 2 sections Grade four, 2 sections Grade five

216-286 students

CIP: Install sprinkler system, convert steam to hot water and add controls, window replacement, gym floor replacement, install automatic controls for lighting, replace gym lighting

All Life-Safety code upgrades

Includes both Upper and Lower Collaborative Learning Center classrooms, and English Language Learners program

No new construction, expand and subdivide one existing classroom. Renovation includes adding a shower to an existing washroom, and adding an additional washroom and shower combination.

1 spare classroom

Cost Summaries 4 School Options

Note: The cost summaries are based on current staffing patterns, and do not reflect recommendations made by the staffing subcommittee.

Cost Summary 4 Schools Narrow Grade Span Option

Total cost of renovations and new construction

\$6,112,500 (including J. Daniels Preschool)

Yearly cost \$484,000

Total staffing cost (using 12-13 staffing costs)

\$14,898,012 (including J. Daniels Preschool)

TOTAL savings \$1,438,091 or 8.05% of operating budget (no State Aid)

Cost Summary 4 Schools Wide Grade Span Option

Total cost of renovations and new construction

\$6,902,500 (including J. Daniels Preschool)

Yearly cost \$546,600

Total staffing cost (using the 12-13 staffing costs)

\$15,628,975 (including J. Daniels Preschool)

TOTAL savings \$632,874 or 3.54% of operating budget (no State Aid)

Cost Summary Jonathan Daniels (Preschool)

Total cost of renovations, new construction and staffing included in models above

\$345,000 for both wide and narrow grade spans (J. Daniels portion only)

Yearly cost \$27,140.

Total staffing cost (using the 12-13 staffing costs)

\$1,361,719 for both wide and narrow grade spans

Conclusion

The two facilities options for restructuring the five Keene School District elementary schools provide the community with upgraded school facilities that meet required current life safety codes. Both options provide for increased energy efficiency, and adequate and appropriate instructional space to maintain current academic programs as well as future enrollment growth. Important instructional spaces such as Computer Labs, dedicated Art and Music rooms, and instrumental music rooms were ensured where appropriate. Equity among schools has been maintained.

Both facilities options will provide completion of all identified major capital projects and energy saving upgrades, allowing the community the knowledge that their elementary schools meet all current standards. This will enable the community and school board a truer vision of 'school maintenance' in the future.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special Education Subcommittee Members

Rand Lounsbury, Chair	Special Education Administrator, Keene Elementary Schools
Patty Yoerger	Principal, Jonathan Daniels Elementary School
Cathy Woods	Director of Special Education
Joanne Mulligan	Special Education Coordinator, Keene Preschool
Cathy Doane	Special Education Teacher, Wheelock
Christine Mousseau	Parent

The Elementary Restructuring Committee charge for the special education subcommittee was to consider what the impact would be, if any, on the delivery of elementary special education services when considering the two options of moving to a narrow grade span (K-1, 2-5) four school configuration, or to a wide grade span (K-5) four school configuration from the five school, wide grade span configuration currently in practice. The special education subcommittee was not asked to engage in any qualitative assessment of elementary or preschool special education services, as this work is being taken up by the Keene Preschool and Elementary Programs Committee.

The special education subcommittee was formed and began meeting in mid-April to review the plans that were presented by Marinace Architects for the proposed elementary school restructuring. In reviewing the plans, physical space requirements for the effective delivery of special education services were assessed, as well as the potential impact the proposed changes might have on existing programming. As a result of the special education subcommittee work, suggested building plan modifications were presented to the facilities subcommittee and Tibor Farkas of Marinace Architects. All of the suggested plan modifications were made, with the final edition of the Marinace plans of late May reflecting these changes.

In addition to considering the facilities requirements associated with the proposed elementary reconfiguration plans, the special education subcommittee evaluated the potential impact the reconfiguration might have on the existing special education programming. Currently, three of the four elementary collaborative programs consist of two sections (the learning disabilities collaborative being one section of grades 3-5); therefore there is some flexibility with collaborative classroom and case management assignments in the current K-5, one building configuration. When considering a narrow grade span configuration there would be a loss of that flexibility, as the upper and lower collaborative sections would be located in separate buildings. The facilities requirement for housing the collaborative program in two buildings was addressed and the needed infrastructure is reflected in the edited plans for both models. Also, the prospect of separating the two section collaborative programs into the two elementary partner school buildings would reduce the concentration of the collaborative students assigned to any one building.

The prospect of having two designated K-1 schools is appealing, as this configuration allows for a school culture that can more easily endorse the prospect of flexible instructional grouping across grades K and 1, minimizing any social stigma. One other benefit of this flexible grouping culture is the prospect of an instructional model that relies on data driven, targeted instruction and early intervention in lieu of engaging in the special education referral process. It is anticipated that this early identification would result in lower referrals for special education.

The special education subcommittee supports the proposed plan of repurposing Jonathan Daniels Elementary School for use as the new preschool site, and the Marinace plans appropriately reflect the necessary changes to the building.

STAFFING/SCHEDULING

Committee Members:

Dick Cate	Principal, Symonds School, Chair
Maureen Meyer	Librarian, Daniels School
Paul Cooper	Human Resources Director, SAU29
Paul Huggins	Principal, Fuller School
Patty Yoerger	Principal, Daniels School
Brenda Haenchen	Librarian, Symonds School
Peg Hartz	Art Teacher, Fuller School

Source Documents:

Study of Keene Elementary Schools: Frank Marinace, August 9, 2011

Keene Elementary Schools Instructional Time Guidelines of 8/4/2011

Keene School Board Policy IIB Class Size

Charge:

On December 13, 2011 the Keene School Board voted “to direct the administration to prepare for the closure of the Jonathan Daniels School and then the grade span options of K-5; K-1 and 2-5; and K-3 and 4-5 will be evaluated.”

In January of 2012 a steering committee was formed and Superintendent Woolridge was elected chair. The steering committee then appointed six subcommittees. This report represents the work of the Staffing and Scheduling Subcommittee.

The committee met beginning in early February 2012 and defined its charge as follows:

1. To make recommendations to the steering committee regarding desirable and equitable staffing levels of specialists to implement the various plans (taking into consideration space requirements.)
2. To make recommendations to the steering committee regarding part time and/or sharing of positions to implement the various plans.
3. To make recommendations to the steering committee about equitable scheduling, which might foster the implementation of the various plans.
4. To make recommendations to the steering committee about the process and or procedures of staff assignments that might foster the equitable implementation of the various plans.

Charge 1 - Guidelines for the establishment of equitable staffing levels of educational specialists.

Assumptions and Common Understandings

1. All elementary school professionals have many responsibilities in addition to direct instruction of students in core subject areas. These additional responsibilities include:
 - A. Supervising students before school, at lunch, recess, during transitions and after school.
 - B. Assisting students with clothing, possessions and organizing their environment.
 - C. Planning instructional activities and coordinating plans with other personnel.
 - D. Preparing instructional materials.
 - E. Contributing to the creation of specialized academic, behavioral and health plans for Special Education and 504 students, as well as implementing and monitoring these plans.
 - F. Serving on committees of the District.
 - G. Communicating with parents and community members.
 - H. Evaluating student work and record keeping.
 - I. Analyzing academic and behavioral data.
 - J. Attending professional development training, reading and research.
 - K. Directing the activities of volunteers, student teachers, paraprofessionals and tutors.
 - L. Supporting the creation and maintenance of a positive learning environment for all through participation in Morning Meeting.
2. The district should strive to maintain overall equity of responsibilities of classroom teachers, instructional specialists and other professional level positions. We are guided in this effort by the document "Instructional Time Guidelines" as well as the job descriptions of the various positions.
3. Elementary classroom teachers are responsible to teach Morning Meeting, Core ELA, Reading, Math and Topic instruction, which totals approximately 260 minutes or 67% of the school day.
4. Instructional specialists often have to change materials, clean and set up between classes because often the grade level and thus the content changes from class to class.
5. Each Instructional **specialty area** has **unique aspects** that require consideration when defining a level of appropriate staffing.

The following guideline for instructional specialists staffing level is based on the number of sections they are responsible to teach and the allocation of time to their curriculum, adjusted through staffing level (F.T.E.), to maintain a contact level between 60% and 70%, except where otherwise noted.

Art

Special Considerations:

In addition to the above responsibilities an art teacher is responsible for the management of more than the usual amount of instructional material and equipment as well as the maintenance of significant displays of student work.

<u>Sections</u>	<u>Instructional</u>		<u>FTE</u>	<u>Percent</u>
	<u>Per Week</u>	<u>Contact</u>		
	<u>Mins</u>	<u>Mins/week</u>		<u>Contact</u>
24	60	1540	1.2	66%
23	60	1480	1.2	63%
22	60	1420	1.1	66%
21	60	1360	1.1	63%
20	60	1300	1	67%
19	60	1240	1	64%
18	60	1180	1	61%
17	60	1120	0.9	64%
16	60	1060	0.9	60%
15	60	1000	0.8	64%
14	60	940	0.8	60%
13	60	880	0.7	64%
12	60	820	0.7	60%
11	60	760	0.6	65%
10	60	700	0.6	60%

Music

Special Considerations:

In addition to the above responsibilities a music teacher is responsible to develop, and implement both whole school and optional performance opportunities for children.

Instructional

<u>Sections</u>	<u>Per Week</u>	<u>Contact</u>		<u>Percent</u>
	<u>Mins</u>	<u>Mins/week</u>	<u>FTE</u>	<u>Contact</u>
24	60	1540	1.2	66%
23	60	1480	1.2	63%
22	60	1420	1.1	66%
21	60	1360	1.1	63%
20	60	1300	1	67%
19	60	1240	1	64%
18	60	1180	1	61%
17	60	1120	0.9	64%
16	60	1060	0.9	60%
15	60	1000	0.8	64%
14	60	940	0.8	60%
13	60	880	0.7	64%
12	60	820	0.7	60%
11	60	760	0.6	65%
10	60	700	0.6	60%

Physical Education

Special Considerations:

In Keene elementary schools, Physical Education instructional space is also used for a lunchroom as well as assembly space. This makes it impossible to schedule Physical Education for more than 90 minutes (23% of the school day) during the middle of the day. This is a severe limitation on effective usage of personnel and efficient use of time for instruction.

<u>Instructional</u>				
<u>Sections</u>	<u>Per Week</u>	<u>Contact</u>		<u>Percent</u>
	<u>Mins</u>	<u>Mins/week</u>	<u>FTE</u>	<u>Contact</u>
24	60	1540	1.2	66%
23	60	1480	1.2	63%
22	60	1420	1.1	66%
21	60	1360	1.1	63%
20	60	1300	1	67%
19	60	1240	1	64%
18	60	1180	1	61%
17	60	1120	0.9	64%
16	60	1060	0.9	60%
15	60	1000	0.8	64%
14	60	940	0.8	60%
13	60	880	0.7	64%
12	60	820	0.7	60%
11	60	760	0.6	65%
10	60	700	0.6	60%

Library and Technology

Special Considerations:

In addition to the above responsibilities Librarians are responsible for:

- A. Collection development, cataloging, circulation (including inventory) of the media collection (12,000-16,000 items) as well as the media equipment for the school.
- B. Teaching the library skills curriculum.
- C. Technology instruction as well as the integration of technology into other areas of the curriculum (Information and Communication Technologies Literacy Standards).

In total these represent a significant burden, therefore, instructional contact should be adjusted to the 45%-55% range and the librarian supported by a paraprofessional. The paraprofessional assists the librarian in all aspects of her responsibilities including providing direct instruction under the librarian's supervision.

<u>Sections</u>	<u>Instructional</u>				
	<u>Per Week</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Librarian</u>	<u>Para</u>	<u>Percent</u>
	<u>Mins</u>	<u>Mins/week</u>	<u>FTE</u>	<u>FTE</u>	<u>Contact</u>
24	90	2260	2	0.2	53%
23	90	2170	2	0.2	51%
22	90	2080	1	1.0	53%
21	90	1990	1	1.0	51%
20	90	1900	1	0.8	54%
19	90	1810	1	0.8	52%
18	90	1720	1	0.8	49%
17	90	1630	1	0.5	56%
16	90	1540	1	0.5	53%
15	90	1450	1	0.5	50%
14	90	1360	1	0.4	50%
13	90	1270	1	0.3	50%
12	90	1180	1	0.2	50%
11	90	1090	1		56%
10	90	1000	1		51%

School Counselor

Special Considerations:

School Counselors are responsible for providing a developmental guidance program to all students and to provide coordination and governance to the educational, social, emotional and developmental needs of all of the children of the school.

15 to 20 sections 275-400 students 1 FTE

10 to 14 sections 150-280 students .8 FTE

Reading Specialist

Special Considerations:

Reading Specialists foster the development of Reading for all children by monitoring, coordinating and developing reading instructional practice and curriculum, as well as providing direct remedial and enrichment instruction in reading to children.

15 to 20 sections 275-400 students 1 FTE

10 to 14 sections 150-280 students .8 FTE

Instituting the Guidelines under the restructuring scenarios under consideration.

Scenario Narrow Grade Span:

Fuller would house grades 2-5. There would be 5 sections of each grade and two extra classrooms to accommodate any enrollment bubble. Total 20 Sections.

Franklin would house grades K-1. There would be 5 sections of each grade and two extra classrooms to accommodate any enrollment bubble. Total 10 Sections.

Symonds would house grades 2-5. There would be 5 sections of each grade and two extra classrooms to accommodate any enrollment bubble. Total 20 Sections.

Wheelock would house grades K-1. There would be 5 sections of each grade and two extra classrooms to accommodate any enrollment bubble. Total 10 Sections.

Total 60 Sections

Narrow Grade Span	<u>Fuller</u>	<u>Franklin</u>	<u>Symonds</u>	<u>Wheelock</u>
Art	1	0.6	1	0.6
Music	1	0.6	1	0.6
Physical Education	1	0.6	1	0.6
Library and Technology	1.8	1	1.8	1
School Counselor	1	0.8	1	0.8
Reading Specialist	1	0.8	1	0.8

Scenario Wide Grade Span:

Fuller would house grades K-5. There would be 3 sections of each grade. Total 18 Sections.

Franklin would house grades K-5. There would be 3 sections of each grade. Total 18 Sections.

Symonds would house grades K-5. There would be 3 sections of each grade. Total 18 Sections.

Wheelock would house grades K-5. There would be 2 sections of each grade. Total 12 Sections.

Total 66 Sections

Wide Grade Span	<u>Fuller</u>	<u>Franklin</u>	<u>Symonds</u>	<u>Wheelock</u>
Art	1	1	1	0.7
Music	1	1	1	0.7
Physical Education	1	1	1	0.7
Library and Technology	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.2
School Counselor	1	1	1	0.8
Reading Specialist	1	1	1	0.8

Overall Educational Specialists Staffing

	Present	Present	Narrow Grade Span	Wide Grade Span
		With Guidelines Adopted	With Guidelines Adopted	With Guidelines Adopted
Art	4.4	3.8	3.6	3.7
Music	4.4	3.8	3.6	3.7
Physical Edu.	4.4	3.8	3.6	3.7
Library & Tech.	7.6	7.2	5.6	6.6
Counselor	5	4.4	3.6	3.8
Reading Spec.	5	4.4	3.6	3.8

Charge 2 - Part time and/or sharing of positions to implement the various plans.

It appears likely that restructuring the elementary schools will result in an increase in part time and/or sharing of positions. The committee discussed some issues regarding the effect of this increase on scheduling, recruitment and staff. The committee recommends further dialogue to clarify and study the issues followed by policy adoption.

Charge 3 - Equitable scheduling, which might foster the implementation of the various plans.

The committee, while supporting the concept that scheduling ought to remain the purview of the individual schools, did create workable draft schedules for the basic narrow and wide grade span options, staffed at the levels suggested by the guidelines, to insure the viability of the guidelines.

Charge 4 - Process and or procedures of staff assignments that might foster the equitable implementation of the various plans.

The committee discussed processes and procedures that might be employed in reassigning staff necessitated by the adoption of the two plans under consideration. The committee recognized a "Reduction in Force" policy and procedure was in the process of development and felt that it could do little until the policy was adopted and the procedures written.

The committee did, however, feel it vital staff have direct input to the process, recognizing that the interests of students and the district had to come first. Should significant reassignments be

required by restructuring, the committee envisions a questionnaire where staff could indicate a preferred assignment as well as second and third choices, and these preferences could become part of the reassignment process.

Recommendations:

1. Because more than one space needs to be dedicated, if more than one person is teaching, it is recommended that the total number of sections per building remain less than 21 unless additional space is provided for the additional staff required.
2. Common planning time among all classroom teachers at each grade level is of the highest priority and ought to be integrated into all building schedules in order to facilitate Professional Learning Communities and Response to Instruction strategies.
3. Develop a School District Policy regarding the employment of part time professional staff.
4. The staffing level for the school should be based on the model established for the school to avoid continuously adjusting staffing levels with its resultant disruptions.
5. During the transition to a new model, cuts to staffing levels of School Counselors and Reading Specialists should be phased in over a two to three year period to insure adequate resources during the critical transition time.

Additional Questions:

From the list of community questions and concerns:

1. Question: It needs to be made clear what programs will be cut if the recommendation does not pass.

Answer: This question is not within the purview of the committee.

2. Question: What will the start/end times be for the school day?

Answer: The committee sees no need to change the start or end time of the school day, however, it is our understanding that the transportation committee will recommend a staggered start of approximately 15 minutes between the “sister” schools if the narrow grade span option is adopted.

3. Question: Exactly how many staff positions will be cut and what will the cost savings breakdown associated with those cuts in relation to what will be spent on construction costs?

Answer: If the staffing level plan contained in this report were adopted, there would be .8 fewer Art, Music and Physical Education teachers in each area, under a narrow grade span scenario and there would be .7 fewer Art, Music and Physical Education teachers, in each area, under a wide grade span scenario.

There would be 2 fewer Library and Technology positions in a narrow grade span scenario and there would be 1 fewer Library and Technology positions in a wide grade span scenario.

There would be 1.4 fewer School Counselors and Reading Specialists in each area, under a narrow grade span scenario and there would be 1.2 fewer School Counselor and Reading Specialist, in each area, under a wide grade span scenario.

From the Keene School Solutions website:

1. Question: How will decisions be made about where staff members may be reassigned?

Answer: Our committee recommends a method be established to gauge staff preferences of assignment and attempts made to honor them, however, what is in the best interests of children and the District must remain paramount in decision making.

2. Question: How will "specials" be handled?

Answer: Our committee recommends reduction and assignment of specialists to be consistent with other professional positions.

3. Question: How will staff understand each plan and be involved/engaged in the process?

Answer: Our committee recommends continuing dialogue between the Board, Administration and the elementary school staffs.

4. Question: Will the current class size policy be affected?

Answer: Our committee does not see a direct connection between class size policy and the restructuring plans under consideration. Class size policy should remain a separate consideration.

5. Question: Will a breakdown of the numbers and costs of each type of employee in each scenario be provided?

Answer: Our committee feels it important that this happen. If the committee's recommendations for staffing levels are to be implemented, savings estimates of the facilities committee will be affected.

6. Question: Will the committee recommend changes to instructional time guidelines?

Answer: No.

7. Question: Will it be necessary to stagger the start and end times of the school day?

Answer: The committee sees no need to change the start or end time of the school day, however, it is our understanding that the transportation committee will recommend a staggered start of approximately 15 minutes if the narrow grade span option is adopted.

Note: The committee submits this report having worked hard to do what was asked, but at the same time recognizing, we were a small group, our time was constrained by both our regular work as well as a determined due date. Our work was shared with elementary professional staff, but, given the above constraints, little staff reaction was quantified and integrated into the report.

TRANSITIONS

Transitions Subcommittee Members

Celia Slason, Chair

Amy Pierce

Mari Fauth

Amy Strong

Cathy Doane

The charge of the Transitions Committee is to identify and plan for transition points within the chosen restructuring plan. The Transitions Committee will also research and develop plans for transferring students into their "new school" while maintaining continuity with curriculum and learning needs.

Fall of 2014 is the identified year to transition into a new grade configuration within four buildings or to reduce to four K-5 buildings. In the K-5 four building configuration the proposed transitions would include assimilating the students from Jonathan Daniels into two other schools, most likely Symonds and Franklin. The K-5 four building model would include the assumption of redistricting among the four schools requiring transition to achieve equity. Some level of change and capacity for transition plans would affect every school, teachers, parents and students.

In the reconfigured grade model there are four buildings. The two K-1 buildings would be Franklin, Wheelock and the two 2-5 buildings would be Symonds and Fuller. This would require the Kindergarten students (2013-2014), from Jonathan Daniels to divide into either Franklin and Wheelock for their First grade year (2014-2015). The remaining students in grades 1-4 from Jonathan Daniels would transfer to either Symonds or Fuller. The attached chart shows the multiple building transitions required for the 2013-2014 cohort under the reconfigured grade plan.

School based Transition Teams will be formed to guide the transition planning suitable for each school community. The Transition Teams will work with existing parent groups, administrators, school counselors and faculty to develop a transition plan that will provide for closure as well as new opportunities. The Transition Teams will also address internal guidelines and plans for the smooth transfer of student records, achievement data, learning plans required for continuity. There is a budget consideration for the Transition Teams that will need to be addressed in the next budget cycle. Money will need to be set aside to implement and support the Transition Teams who will need to form and start work in the school year 2013-2014.

Chart depicts building transitions required: as of 2013-2014 K cohort.

Kindergarten 2013-14	First Grade 2014-15	Second Grade 2015-16	# of building transition
Jonathan Daniels	Franklin	Fuller	3
Franklin	Franklin	Fuller	2
Fuller	Franklin	Fuller	3
Symonds	Wheelock	Symonds	3
Wheelock	Wheelock	Symonds	2

4 th graders 2013-2014	5 th graders 2014-2015	6 th graders 2015-2016	# building transitions
Jonathan Daniels	Symonds/Fuller	KMS	2
Franklin	Fuller	KMS	2
Fuller	Fuller	KMS	1
Symonds	Symonds	KMS	1
Wheelock	Symonds/Fuller	KMS	2

Chart depicts the building transitions made by the 4th grade cohort in a 3 year span. For instance the J.D. Fourth graders will have their 4th grade year at J.D., then transition for a year to either Symonds or Fuller and then transition again for sixth grade to the Keene Middle School.

CURRICULUM

Curriculum Subcommittee Members

Meredith Cargill (former chair)	Former Director of Curriculum
Reuben Duncan (chair)	Assistant Superintendent SAU29
Joanne Mulligan	Preschool Teacher; Wheelock School
Lauren Hannum	Elementary Teacher; Wheelock School
Cynthia Bunn	Elementary Teacher; Fuller School
Peter Siegel	Music Teacher; Symonds School
Forrest Bencievenga	Art Teacher; Franklin School
Maureen Meyer	Library/Media Specialist; Daniels School

Charge:

- To act as a consultancy group to the Steering Committee on issues surrounding curriculum.
- To respond to community and teacher questions that arise in the decision-making process as they relate to curriculum.
- To ensure that curriculum stays strong and on track during any student transitions that may occur during the restructuring period.

Response to the Charge:

The educational benefits of the narrow grade span can be three-fold:

1. Greater opportunity to develop equitable class size and composition
2. Greater ability to meet as PLCs for the purpose of implementation of RtI (both Keene School District goals)
3. Greater opportunity to provide more focused or job-imbedded professional development to a specific grade level cohort

A narrow grade span school consists of more teachers teaching the same grade level. This occurs by design as there is a higher number of the same-grade level classes. With a greater number of the same grade level classes, there exists an increased capacity to create equality relative to the numbers of students in each class as well as to the grouping of the students in a manner that can/may promote both individual student success as well as a healthy school-wide climate. When schools have a larger number of students in a grade level, there exists an increased ability to consider data, solicit feedback from parents and professionals about observable individual student needs, and

make a “best-fit” determination for the classroom placement of each child. When this occurs, all teachers benefit by having balanced classes, a manageable teacher to student ratio, and a common ground for discussion with their same-grade level colleagues. This can be true so as long as Keene School District classroom size limits are kept.

The carefully structured student-focused discussion amongst same grade level colleagues is a significant component of functioning as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Successful RtI implementation is dependent upon efficient and effective PLCs. The narrow grade span model is one means to providing the environment for effective and efficient PLCs to function. In a narrow grade span model, all of the players are present and working together in the same setting with the same population of students.

As we strengthen and expand our instruction and utilization of PLCs and RtI, successful implementation and sustainability will be largely determined by the effectiveness of the professional development provided by the Keene School District for teachers and administrators. The narrow grade span option provides the opportunity to increase the effectiveness of professional development opportunities due to the target audience or participants all being in the same educational setting. Job-embedded professional development is the most effective form of professional development. Since it is also often the most expensive type of training, it is important that many members can benefit from the training when it occurs. The narrow grade span option provides an opportunity for this to occur because the numbers of teachers at a particular grade level will be concentrated into two schools.

No matter which grade span option is chosen, teachers will work to ensure that the Common Core Curriculum Standards (CCCS) are met with fidelity. Teachers should be provided relevant professional development aimed at the use of best practice teaching methods.

Furthermore, a committee should be formed to facilitate discussions concerning and explorations into choosing the best instructional materials for teaching the Common Core. The understanding that both the selection of instructional materials and implementation of best practices needs to aid in a smooth transition with the closing of a school will be paramount.

The proper dispersing of materials across the Keene School District is a concern even if the current model remains. The decision to move from five to four school buildings plus a narrow grade span will complicate the matter significantly. Taking five K-5 schools with all of their staff, materials, equipment, and furnishings and spreading them appropriately across four buildings with different grade levels will be a daunting task. In order to do this effectively and efficiently, time will need to be provided to teachers to take inventory of what currently exists, collect and organize all materials, decide what is needed at each grade level, develop a plan for packaging and transportation, and ensure that in the end all classes have what they need in order to properly begin the following school year.

Appropriate storage space for materials and for supplies for specials (music, art, PE, etc.) is something that needs to be considered. In a nutshell, excellent planning is needed to ensure a smooth transition that will be likened to planning for the opening of four new schools.

Equally important is the potential change in inventory and materials that may need to take place. In the course of the year, especially as the district works to properly implement the Common Core standards, a careful analysis of the appropriateness of instructional materials needs to occur. It is important to analyze material for appropriateness. This analysis would likely slow down the inventory process, which may impact the moving or disposal of curriculum materials. Because moving to narrow grade spans would at the very least simulate the opening of four new buildings, it is of utmost importance to move only the necessary and appropriate materials to the desired locations. Moving unusable or inappropriate materials to the new settings will create a state of confusion and disorganization which may impact the effectiveness of instruction at the start of the next school year.

Summary and Conclusion:

When we look through the lens of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, we find that there are both pros and cons to the proposed restructuring model. Narrow grade span schools provide some benefits – but at a cost. Likewise, the wide grade span model has both strengths and weaknesses.

In the current system, each school has an instructional identity – a family atmosphere where older students are able to connect with younger students providing a mutual benefit. The older students have the opportunity to both practice and demonstrate knowledge and understanding in an authentic way that is closely related to a service learning model. A brief example of this would be when older students read to younger students. Older students work on fluency, expression, communication, etc., and the younger students benefit from individualized attention, the understanding that there is an expectation that they too will learn to read, and an understanding that they are part of something much bigger – a family. All of these students currently benefit from knowing the teachers in their building for several years. Perhaps more importantly, the teachers know the students for multiple years.

The challenges of the current model are largely two-fold. First, grade level PLCs cannot occur easily if the PLCs are to be comprised of all teachers in a specific grade. This can impact the speed and fidelity that curriculum, instruction, and assessment is implemented and improved upon. For example, in the current model, third grade instruction and assessment, for better or for worse, can be quite different from school to school because it is not at all easy for teachers from the five schools to collaborate. Secondly, in the current model, the make-up of the classes (the mix of students) can vary significantly from school to school due to the limited number of classes in each building as well as the demographics of each school's region.

The strengths for the narrow grade span school model address the weaknesses of the current model. Likewise, the weaknesses of the narrow grade span school model are

addressed by the strengths of the current wide grade span model. In a narrow grade span model, there is a greater ability to “even out the classes” as well as provide teachers with the opportunity to meet together in professional learning communities aimed at improving instruction across a particular grade level. Both of these strengths lend themselves to improving instruction and learning.

However, there is likely to be a loss in the “family-culture” if a narrow grade span model is used. This can influence the teaching and learning process as well. The social-emotional well-being that the current model has the ability of providing each student may not be as easily attained in a narrow grade span model. Certainly, if a narrow grade span model is chosen, special emphasis on developing a nurturing culture would be necessary for both teachers and students alike.

In short, the benefit of the narrow grade span model centers around increased collaboration opportunities among “same-grade-level” teachers and in its ability to provide an environment where more equitable classes can be formed. The benefit of keeping the current model lies in the longevity of teacher-student relationships and the learning experiences that can exist when multiple grade levels exist in one building.

One last thought to consider is that, “The most important variable in the development and maintenance of effective schools is not the grade level configuration itself but effective educational programming and pedagogical practices within that structure (Alton-Lee, 2003; Swain, 2003). Research on high achieving schools had made it clear that high academic expectations for *all* students, rigorous and relevant curriculum, and personalized support are the key components of great schools (Anfara, Andrews, Hough, Mertens, Mizelle, & White, 2003; Lee, Smith, Perry, & Smylie, 1999); ultimately, these inputs, not the organization of school facilities will determine whether a new grade span configuration is a best fit for the local education agency. Even the most pressing concerns related to an increase in student transitions, the research shows, can be mitigated with deliberate and systematic curricular and instructional planning (Coladarci & Hancock, 2002; Napier, 2008)...Any proposed reconfiguration, regardless of the motives behind it, must be made with sound empirical evidence, which the current research literature cannot provide.” (ECRA Group, 2010, The Current Status of Grade Level Centers, <http://www.d23.org/PH23/BOARD/currentcuts.pdf>). Research does not favor one model over the other. Thus the Board is faced with a difficult decision. No matter what decision is reached, the educators in the Keene School District will do their utmost to continue to provide a quality education for the students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, both committees appointed by the Keene Board of Education, the Elementary Ad Hoc Committee (2011) and the Elementary Restructuring Steering Committee (2012), have arrived at the same conclusion. Both agree that the educational advantages of moving to a narrow grade span model outweigh its disadvantages. The Elementary Ad Hoc Committee, an eighteen member group comprised of parents, community members, faculty, administrators, and board members, voted unanimously to adopt a narrow grade span model. This 18-0 vote, which took place after receiving input from the community at eight public forums, signified the committee's agreement that moving to a narrow grade span model would best meet the needs of the Keene education community. Similarly, after nine months investigating the impact that a narrow grade span model would have on education in Keene, the Elementary Restructuring Steering Committee voted 9-4 to support the narrow grade span model. This conclusion culminated one of the most comprehensively researched topics tackled by the Keene School District in recent years. We maintain, without question, the integrity of this process. It is now up to you, the Keene Board of Education, to determine the next step. As the representative body of the Keene community, you have been elected to weigh the needs of all Keene citizens, those who have children in the system and those who do not. We are confident that you will consider the issues and choose the appropriate direction for Keene's elementary schools.

DISSENTING OPINION

Knowing that at some point the Steering Committee would be called upon to vote on the issues now facing the School Board, members asked that in case a minority of the group had a dissenting opinion that this opinion could be included as part of the Final Report. The Steering Committee agreed. These are complex issues and although we voted differently from the majority, we understand and respect that people can look at the same information and for legitimate reasons feel differently.

This Dissenting Opinion has been written for the purpose of explication on issues that we feel have not been adequately addressed or just cannot be answered with any degree of certitude. The opinion is just that, opinion. However, it is informed by research and data just as the information provided by the majority has been.

Four members of the Steering Committee; Principals Richard Cate, Patty Yoerger, Gwen Mitchell, and KEA President Maureen Meyer, oppose the proposed narrow grade span restructuring of the Keene Elementary Schools, and support the four school wide grade span K-5 option for the following reasons:

The plan does not align with stated core community values and might create division, dissension, and lack of trust in the community.

A petition warrant article was proposed last year and voted on by members of the Keene Community in March of 2012. The warrant articles asked two questions: “Should Jonathan Daniels Elementary School be closed?” and “Whether Keene should restructure the grade span at the elementary school level?” Both questions held majority votes in the “No” category – meaning that of the voters voting, the majority did not want to close Jonathan Daniels and they did not want to move away from the Community School Model the district currently employs. Even knowing that this vote was advisory, one can still find the voting data useful as Keene community opinion towards this proposal.

An early straw poll of Keene’s elementary teachers did not offer a four-school wide grade span option as a choice, but many teachers wrote this in as their preference. To date the teachers have not, as a group, been asked their opinion of the two choices remaining.

Further, reading through a report issued by the Portsmouth, NH Elementary School Facilities Committee who wrestled with some of the same issues, they saw community input as critical to the decision-making process. Their comprehensive survey asked pointed and targeted questions and helped the committee reach a final decision: to stay with their community school model (*Portsmouth School Department, 2012, Elementary School Facilities Committee Phase I Report*). Believing that community opinion should inform the decision-making process, knowing the result of a petition warrant article should hold some weight.

The plan for narrow grade spans may diminish the strong sense of community existing in each of our schools. There is a strong belief that the development of educational history and family relationships that contribute to improved student outcomes will suffer in the narrow grade span model.

There is a strong sense of community at each of the elementary schools in Keene. It is carefully cultivated and enriched year after year, family after family. Fears have been expressed in the community that this culture will change in a narrow grade span model. There will be very little time (two years) for the K-1 school staff to develop that family relationship. Also, developing a sister school relationship when the schools are separated geographically seems an improbable vision. With staggered start and end times, there will be little opportunity for cross-grade level sharing and dialogue.

It has been claimed that inequities in the population composition of Keene has resulted in inequities in school services and that the skewed population centers create some possible discriminatory factors. The narrow grade span option would create two schools each with a minimum of twenty sections. We believe that even with construction of additional classrooms, the core of the school cannot support this number of classes.

“...new research suggests that the most equitable and cost efficient means of delivering high student achievement is through smaller schools with broader grade spans.” (*Gregg, K., 2003. Elementary School Grade Span Configuration*)

The fear that larger and larger schools will be created is a feasible one as the elimination of teaching staff is seen as one of the benefits of the narrow grade span model. In this scenario, a greater number of students is pooled together and divided into classrooms based on the higher end of the Keene School Board student number limits per grade level. This would create fewer necessary classrooms and fewer teachers. Current research indicates that smaller classroom sizes leads to greater achievement. (*Toppo, G., 2008, Size alone makes small classes better for kids and Education Week, 2004, Class size*)

The increased number of transitions required in the plan could be detrimental to children and their learning. There is evidence that school reassignment of children and families required to initially implement the plan could be detrimental to children, families and negatively impact learning. The belief exists that issues of inequity and high costs can be addressed in other ways.

A body of research indicates strongly that the more transitions a student goes through in their school career, the more detrimental it may be in their capacity to achieve educationally. “School-to-school transitions can disrupt the social structure of a school (Howley, 2002). A sense of belonging is related to school size and grade-span configuration (E. Anderman, 2002). Students achieve more where they are well-known by their teachers (Wasley, 2002). Transitions have a profound impact on students academically, socially and psychologically (Akos, 2006). Assisting students following a school-to-school transition may impede upon instructional time (Sanders et al., 1994). Following each transition, students must adapt to their new school culture, which can be very stressful (Turner, 2007). Wider grade spans provide more stability for students (Wren, 2003).” (*Anderson, P., 2012, Grade-span Configuration and School-to-School Transitions*)

From a report by school administrators: “First, the evidence rather clearly suggests that the tendency to create narrow grade-span configurations reinforces the bad habit of building larger and larger schools. Larger schools damage educational equity for everyone, and they undercut educational excellence in impoverished communities, according to a growing body of evidence.

Second, every transition from one narrowly configured school to another seems to disrupt the social structure in which learning takes place, lowering achievement and participation for many students. Predictably, this damage will be most severe in the cases of students from impoverished backgrounds. Short of providing an adequate living for poor families, we can at least restructure our educational system to mitigate the detrimental effects of poverty. A logical move seems to be smaller, more broadly configured schools--and smaller districts. (*Howley, C., 2002, Grade Span Configurations*)

“...Factors that school districts might want to consider when making decisions about grade configurations of individual schools:

- the cost and length of student travel, particularly in a school district that covers a large area
- a possible increase or decrease in parent involvement, possibly affected by the distance to the school and the number of schools a family's children attend
- the number of students at each grade level, which may affect class groupings and courses offered
- the effect of school setting on achievement, particularly for grades 6-9
- effect on whether the neighborhood schools close or remain open
- the number of school transitions for students
- the opportunities for interaction between age groups
- the influence of older students on younger students
- the building design-is it suitable for only a few or for several grade levels?

Paglin and Fager concluded that designing a school system to use a particular span of grades in individual schools will not in itself guarantee that students will learn well and be well adjusted.” (*McEntire, N., 2002, Grade Configuration in K-12 Schools*)

There is a strong belief in the importance of older students working with and modeling for younger students within the school setting.

There are social and intellectual benefits to a mixed age grouping. Younger students will often change the way they speak when an older student is present. They are also more likely to try a more complex activity if an older student is there to assist. (*Katz, L., 1995, The Benefits of Mixed-Age Grouping*)

Placing restructuring on the plate at this time may divert institutional attention from improving learning opportunities for children, and meeting district goals.

The purpose of the Keene restructuring has been to determine a more optimal use of the district’s money at the elementary level. Research indicates that this is not the best reason to restructure. And, if education reform is the objective, this too can be problematic.

“Third, and most surprising, large, narrowly configured schools also seem like a bad investment if school reform is the objective. Per unit of achievement produced (not a metaphor I like, but one that’s often used), smaller K-8 (300 and fewer students) and 9-12 (600 and fewer students) schools seem like a much better investment. Schools can be profitably much smaller than those

upper limits in impoverished communities. This profitability definitely refers to the efficient and effective use of tax dollars. " (*Howley, C., 2002, Grade Span Configurations*)

..."Our research findings indicate that K-4 and K-5 schools are fairly even in terms of fourth grade CMT test score; whereas, the K-2/3-5 schools score consistently lower in reading, writing, and math than the K-4 and K-5 schools." This research study reported the K-4 and K-5 schools were almost exactly even on terms of CMT test scores, but the K-2 / 3-5 schools were four to five percentage points lower on average in each category. The CMT is the Connecticut state assessment. (*Barber, E., 2006, Grade Span Configuration Research Study*)

Transfer of staff within schools required to implement the plan could impede teacher recruitment.

Anecdotal evidence of this has already been seen in the past year's recruitment efforts. Three of the five elementary principals reported difficulty in recruitment of candidates though all felt they were able to ultimately fill their open positions with highly qualified staff. However, it was acknowledged by all administrators that the current hiring practice is done on a year-by-year basis, which will continue until the restructuring issue has been voted on by the public, and any restructuring takes place. Thus, uncertainty remains high.

Current instructional staff could potentially be placed in positions for which they were not hired and therefore may need extra support in the initial stages of plan implementation.

The necessity for job retraining/professional development to implement a new curriculum is already happening because of our changeover to the Common Core. However, teachers may be moved into grade levels they are not currently teaching and would have to learn an entirely different curriculum. It is to be hoped that those teachers would be provided with the extra support necessary to bring them up to speed quickly. This might necessitate an unexpected or as yet to be quantified expense.

Upcoming changes in leadership at both the district and school levels could make this an inopportune time to restructure as no consistent guiding hand is at the helm during the restructuring process and in its infancy.

While assurances from the current Superintendent state that he believes this initiative has the impetus it needs to move forward despite changes in leadership (see September 10, 2012 Elementary Restructuring Steering Committee minutes) there remain questions about who will be guiding the whole process. Every administrator at the upper levels of Central Office Administration, including Superintendent, Associate Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, one or two Principals, Business Administrator, and Human Resources Manager will be new or relatively new to the district and to the process determined by voters in 2013. No clear outline of a plan of action can even take place until the vote and by that time leadership, including Board Members may have changed. Thus the restructuring will have no clear guiding hand. Added to that will be the transition of the central office administration to new positions and responsibilities making this seem like a truly inopportune time to move to a narrow grade span model.

In conclusion:

There are many reports related to transitioning schools between a narrow and a wide grade span. The current levels of research provide no clear indicators one way or the other but all of the issues discussed by the Steering Committee have also been discussed extensively in other places. One article that clearly lays out the commonly stated pros and cons can be found at: <http://www.d23.org/PH23/BOARD/currentcuts.pdf>. This article contains a side-by-side breakdown of all of the comments their community made regarding restructuring, not surprisingly it matched our own. Basically, no strong evidence can be found to support one model over the other.

If the goal of the restructuring recommendation is to improve instruction, the District should first modify practices in the existing instructional model, to allow teachers the time needed for effective use of Professional Learning Communities. There are so many new initiatives facing teaching staff currently that adding one more may affect some part of the educational program. Fears remain that students will lose too much during the transitions in a narrow grade span model. "...the consistency of grade-span results is noteworthy and generally suggest that achievement in the middle grades is higher in schools having an elementary-wide configuration than a middle-grades configuration. If these results stand up to subsequent research, then the important question is, "Why?" We believe that the answer, in part, may lie in the continuity of experience that wider grade spans afford." (*Coladarci, T., 2003, The (Limited) Evidence Regarding Effects of Grade-Span Configurations on Academic Achievement: What Rural Educators Should Know*)

"In a study using the Michigan Education Assessment Program, test data was collected on the passing rate of students in 232 schools. Research question 1: What is the relation between grade span configuration and student achievement? 'A simple linear correlation was performed to evaluate the relationship between grade span configuration and student achievement. The data revealed a significant positive correlation (.26, $p < .01$) between grade span configuration and achievement.' In other words, as grade spans increases so does achievement.

(*Wren, S., 2003, The Effect of Grade Span Configuration and School-to-School Transition on Student Achievement*)

The dissenters recognize and acknowledge the concerns, diligence and sincerity of those that have contributed to the process of looking at our elementary system and suggesting change. However, after much reflection and careful analysis of the many factors involved, we have come to the conclusion that restructuring at this time and in the manner suggested will cause our schools to be less than they are now, and will disrupt that which we cherish most, the education of the children, families and community we serve.

Resources

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APPENDICIES

Appendix One: Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) – Keene Elementary Schools (updated 7/5/12)

Updated 7/5/2012

Page 1

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) - Keene Elementary Schools

Building data										
	Gross Building	Total # of	Description	unit	unit cost	cost	consultants	total cost	priority	Cost summaries
	Area	students								
Daniels School 178										
Ground floor	34,265		1. Install NFPA 13 sprinkler system	34,711 sf	\$3.50	\$121,489	\$6,000	\$127,000	1	
Second floor	446		2. Enclose media center			\$60,000	\$8,000	\$68,000	1	\$195,000 priority 1
Total	34,711		3. Install energy management system			\$15,000		\$15,000	2	
			4. Replace curtain wall panels & repair soffits	2560 sf	\$50	\$128,000		\$128,000	2	\$143,000 priority 2
			5. Install automatic controls for lighting	40 count	\$300	\$12,000	\$3,000	\$15,000	3	
			6. Replace gym lighting			\$3,000	\$500	\$3,500	3	\$18,500 priority 3
Franklin School 209										
Basement	5,813		1. Install NFPA 13 sprinkler system	42,964 sf	\$3.75	\$161,115	\$6,000	\$167,000	1	\$167,000 priority 1
First	23,656		2. Convert steam boilers to hot water & add controls	42,964 sf	\$4.00	\$171,856	\$10,000	\$182,000	2	
Second	13,495		3. Replace rooftop air handling units			\$62,500		\$62,500	2	\$244,500 priority 2
Total	42,964		4. Install automatic controls for lighting	40 count	\$300	\$12,000	\$3,000	\$15,000	3	
			5. Replace gym lighting			\$2,500	\$500	\$3,000	3	\$18,000 priority 3
Fuller School 302										
Lower level	20,737		1. Install NFPA 13 sprinkler system	51,729 sf	\$3.75	\$193,984	\$6,000	\$200,000	1	
Upper level	30,992		2. New water line to service sprinklers	250 lin.ft.	\$50	\$12,500	\$10,000	\$23,000	1	\$223,000 priority 1
Total	51,729		3. Convert steam boilers to hot water & add controls	51,729 sf	\$5.00	\$258,645	\$10,000	\$269,000	2	
			4. Slate roof replacement			\$42,000		\$42,000	2	
			5. Fascia & soffit repairs			\$33,000		\$33,000	2	
			6. Window replacement			\$90,000	\$10,000	\$100,000	2	\$444,000 priority 2
			7. Install automatic controls for lighting	50 count	\$300	\$15,000	\$3,000	\$18,000	3	
			8. Replace gym lighting			\$3,000	\$500	\$3,500	3	\$21,500 priority 3
Symonds School 326										
Basement	9,005		1. Install NFPA 13 sprinkler system	48,983 sf	\$3.75	\$183,686	\$6,000	\$190,000	1	
First	34,544		2. Stair rebuilding			\$50,000	\$6,000	\$56,000	1	\$246,000 priority 1
Second	5,434		3. Convert steam boilers to hot water & add controls	48,983 sf	\$5.00	\$244,915	\$10,000	\$255,000	2	
Total	48,983		4. Fascia & soffit repairs			\$20,000		\$20,000	2	\$275,000 priority 2
			5. Window replacement			\$80,000	\$10,000	\$90,000	3	
			6. Install automatic controls for lighting	60 count	\$300	\$18,000	\$3,000	\$21,000	3	
			7. Replace gym lighting			\$3,000	\$500	\$3,500	3	\$114,500 priority 3
Wheelock School 174										
Basement	6,078		1. Install NFPA 13 sprinkler system	43,775 sf	\$3.75	\$164,156	\$6,000	\$170,000	1	\$170,000 priority 1
First	25,816		2. Convert steam boilers to hot water & add controls	37,697 sf	\$5.00	\$188,485	\$10,000	\$198,000	2	
			3. Window replacement			\$130,000	\$10,000	\$140,000	2	\$338,000 priority 2
Second	11,881		4. Gym floor replacement			\$74,000		\$74,000	3	
Total	43,775		5. Install automatic controls for lighting	40 count	\$300	\$12,000	\$3,000	\$15,000	3	
			6. Replace gym lighting			\$2,500	\$500	\$3,000	3	\$92,000 priority 3

Appendix Two: Frankie Feola-Mahar Correspondence (September 9, 2012)

Jonathan Daniels School

MAPLE AVENUE
KEENE, NH 03431
(603) 352-8012
FAX (603) 357-3329



September 9th, 2012

Dear Mr. Woolridge and Mrs. Mitchell;

I am a member of the Jonathan Daniels School 5th grade class of 2012-2013. In the event that Daniels Elementary School does close in a couple of years I would like to set in motion a plan to reserve a portion of the school's space to be used as a civil rights museum honoring Jonathan Daniels and other members of the movement.

My parents; Alison & Melinda Feola-Mahar, Mrs. Yoerger, Ms. Meyer, Mrs. Abohatab, Mrs. Mastronardi, and the Jonathan Daniels Parent/Teacher Association have given me verbal support for the project.

Together we hope to write a grant to help pay for the project and plan for its future as a resource for the kids of Keene and other towns. Please consider my request. I have concerns about what will happen to the memory and legacy of Mr. Daniels if and when this elementary school closes.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Frankie Feola-Mahar

Benjamin Franklin Feola-Mahar "Frankie"
Jonathan Daniels graduating class of 2013
39 Pine Avenue
Keene, NH 03431

Cc: Becky Russell, President JDA, Mrs. Yoerger, Mrs. Mastronardi

Appendix Three: Gwen Mitchell's Correspondence to Frankie Feola-Mahar (September 13, 2012)

September 13, 2012

Dear Frankie,

I am thrilled with your suggestion to reserve space in Jonathan Daniels School for a civil rights museum honoring Jonathan Daniels and other important figures, should Jonathan Daniels School close or be repurposed. As you said, it is very important to preserve the memory and legacy of Jonathan Daniels for the students in Keene.

Utilizing some of the space at Jonathan Daniels School for this purpose is a great idea. Although I have completed the bulk of my Facilities report for Mr. Woolridge, I plan to add your letter and suggestion to the final copy. Perhaps you could let me know about some of the artifacts that you'd like to see included in such a collection. Having a bit more information would help me work with the architect on designing appropriate space if the Keene School Board agrees with your idea.

Please keep your wonderful mind engaged in developing great creative ideas. Your idea is very exciting to me, and I hope that others share in my enthusiasm.

Very truly yours,

Gwen S. Mitchell