

Delivering Grade Six Instruction in Westport's Five Elementary Schools  
A Capacity and Programmatic Assessment

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In the development of nine Facility Utilization Options for the 2019-20 school year and potentially beyond necessitated by the closing of the Coleytown Middle School building, Options 1, 2, and 3 envision delivering instruction in various scenarios to grade six students in all or some of the district's elementary schools. This document contains an assessment of each elementary school's capacity to house its current grade five population in grade six classes during the 2019-2020 school year, effectively creating K-6 schools that deliver the current elementary curriculum and the current grade six middle school curriculum. Permutations of the basic premise that all grade six students will remain in their current elementary schools, such as all Long Lots Elementary School grade six students attending Coleytown Elementary School, will require additional analysis not included in this report. However, that analysis can be done readily if one or more of the permutations garners support.

Based upon a 90-minute conversation with each of the elementary principals, the Stepping Stones Preschool director, and a building walk-through at each site, the following school-by-school information describes each elementary building's capacity to house the grade six classes. Elementary class breakpoints in effect for 2018-2019 have been used to anticipate the number of K-5 classes at each site in 2019-2020. Student enrollment projections done by the New England School Development Council, Donald G. Kennedy, Ed.D., dated November 17, 2018 were utilized. Also, this document describes adjustments to the school's current use of space required to achieve a K-6 configuration and notes the potential need for modular classroom space as necessary to accommodate the K-6 configuration.

I commend each of the elementary principals and the director of Stepping Stones Preschool for their proactive, constructive forethought about these options. While this report presents an allocation of space that was discussed and demonstrates that the K-6 option is viable, with caveats, at each site, it will be productive to re-engage these individuals to "fine tune" the implementation should any of these options move to an implementation phase.

### **Coleytown Elementary School**

CES presents a special situation as the Stepping Stones Preschool occupies a portion of the building footprint. This assessment presumes that Stepping Stones remains in its current location and that CES will provide grade six classrooms for its current grade five cohort of 71 students. However, significant planning has been done in anticipation of the possibility that Stepping Stones is relocated and either Option 2 or Option 3 moves forward.

The projection for 2019-2020 K-5 CES enrollment supports the need for the current number of K-5 classrooms with the possibility of an increase of one section at first grade.

The CES grade five cohort is smaller than that which a typical grade six middle school four-teacher team serves. Thought will need to be given to either a hybrid grade six

three-teacher team model or creating four classes of 18 students and employing the typical four-teacher team.

**In either approach classroom space is available at CES to employ these models.**

To accommodate three or four grade six classrooms, programs currently occupying full size classrooms such as general music, art, and Spanish may be subject to delivery in a modified approach. The science classroom that has been created in each elementary school will not be used as a grade level classroom space and will serve both the K-5 students and the grade six students/teacher of science on a schedule to be determined if this option moves forward. Delivery of the physical education program presents a challenging scheduling exercise as CES has a single gymnasium that also serves as a school assembly venue. Additionally, either scheduling an additional lunch shift or rethinking the grade level lunch shift model presents another challenge. Finally, reconsidering the use of the modular classroom at CES, which is currently used for storage, could mitigate the need to significantly modify the delivery of an encore curriculum.

### **Greens Farms School**

GFS has a grade five cohort of 82 students, which translates well into a grade six four-teacher team model that could be located in contiguous rooms.

Currently the K-5 enrollment generates 20 classroom sections. Interestingly, the 2019-2020 projections could support as few as 18 sections or as many as 21 classroom sections as grades 1, 2, and 3 are near district breakpoints.

**In any of the anticipated K-5 classroom configurations space is available at GFS to accommodate a four-teacher grade six team.**

Dependent upon the number of K-5 classrooms needed in 2019-2020, programs currently occupying full size classrooms such as general music, art, workshop, and Spanish may be subject to delivery in a modified approach.

The science classroom that has been created in each elementary school will not be used as a grade level classroom space and will serve both the K-5 students and the grade six students/teacher of science on a schedule to be determined if this option moves forward. The GFS gymnasium will accommodate the anticipated increased number of sections. However, either scheduling an additional lunch shift or rethinking the grade level lunch shift cafeteria model will present a challenge.

### **Kings Highway School**

KHS has a grade five cohort of 83 students, which translates well into a grade six four-teacher team model. The projection for the total number of K-5 classrooms for 2019-2020 is unchanged from the number currently in use.

### **Space is available at KHS to accommodate a four-teacher grade six team.**

To accommodate the four grade six classrooms, programs currently occupying full size classrooms such as general music, art, and Spanish may be subject to delivery in a modified approach. The science classroom that has been created in each elementary school will not be used as a grade level classroom space and will serve both the K-5 students and the grade six students/teacher of science on a schedule to be determined if this option moves forward. The KHS gymnasium will accommodate the anticipated increased number of sections. However, either scheduling an additional lunch shift or rethinking the grade level lunch shift cafeteria model will present a challenge.

Reconsidering the use of the two modular classrooms at KHS, which are currently used for storage, could mitigate the need to significantly modify the delivery of an encore curriculum.

### **Long Lots School**

LLS has a grade five cohort of 104 students in five sections, which may necessitate a modification of the grade six four-teacher team model, depending on the number of students who will transition into grade six. Projections for the total number of K-5 classrooms for 2019-2020 range from unchanged to a loss of one section from the number currently in use.

**It would be challenging to accommodate a four-teacher grade six team or a hybrid arrangement that may require a fifth grade six teacher. There are currently no modular classrooms, and further reallocation of existing space and at least one modular classroom would be required to schedule the grade 6 in this school facility.**

To accommodate either four or five grade six classrooms, programs currently occupying full size classrooms such as general music, art, and Spanish may be subject to delivery in a modified approach. The science classroom that has been created in each elementary school will not be used as a grade level classroom space and will serve both the K-5 students and the grade six students/teacher of science on a schedule to be determined if this option moves forward. The LLS gymnasium will accommodate the anticipated increased number of sections. However, either scheduling an additional lunch shift or rethinking the grade level lunch shift cafeteria model will present a challenge.

### **Saugatuck Elementary School**

SES has a grade five cohort of 97 students, which translates well into a grade six four-teacher team model that could be located in contiguous rooms. The projection for the total number of K-5 classrooms for 2019-2020 is unchanged from the number currently in use.

**Space is available at SES to accommodate a four-teacher grade six team.**

To accommodate the four grade six classrooms, programs currently occupying full size classrooms such as general music, art, and Spanish may be subject to delivery in a modified approach. The science classroom that has been created in each elementary school will not be used as a grade level classroom space and will serve both the K-5 students and the grade six students/teacher of science on a schedule to be determined if this option moves forward. The SES gymnasium will accommodate the anticipated increased number of sections. However, either scheduling an additional lunch shift or rethinking the grade level lunch shift cafeteria model will present a challenge.

**SUMMARY**

**In summary, each of the three options that propose delivering the grade six middle school model in the elementary schools are viable from a space perspective, with the caveat expressed regarding the Long Lots School circumstance.** Dedicating elementary space to grade six classrooms will impact, to varying degrees across the five schools, the delivery of encore curriculums and instruction. I recommend that the five elementary principals, the director of the Stepping Stones Preschool, and grade 6-12/K-12 coordinators be engaged in leadership roles to do the detailed work required to deliver both K-5 and grade six curriculum and instruction at a high level in this K-6 model if it is selected to move forward.