District Boundary & Realignment Update

Nov 16, 2026

Dillinger Research & Applied Data

Agenda

Subcommittee Meeting

1. Introductions
2. Work to Date
3. Recommendations & Drafts
4. Next Steps

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Who are we? DillingerRAD is a non-profit group from Connecticut. We help schools and state education groups with challenging problems. We use data to make sure our solutions are fair, lasting, and support the community.

Why are we here? To help Worcester Public Schools realign attendance zones (borders), with a focus on elementary schools & feeder patterns.

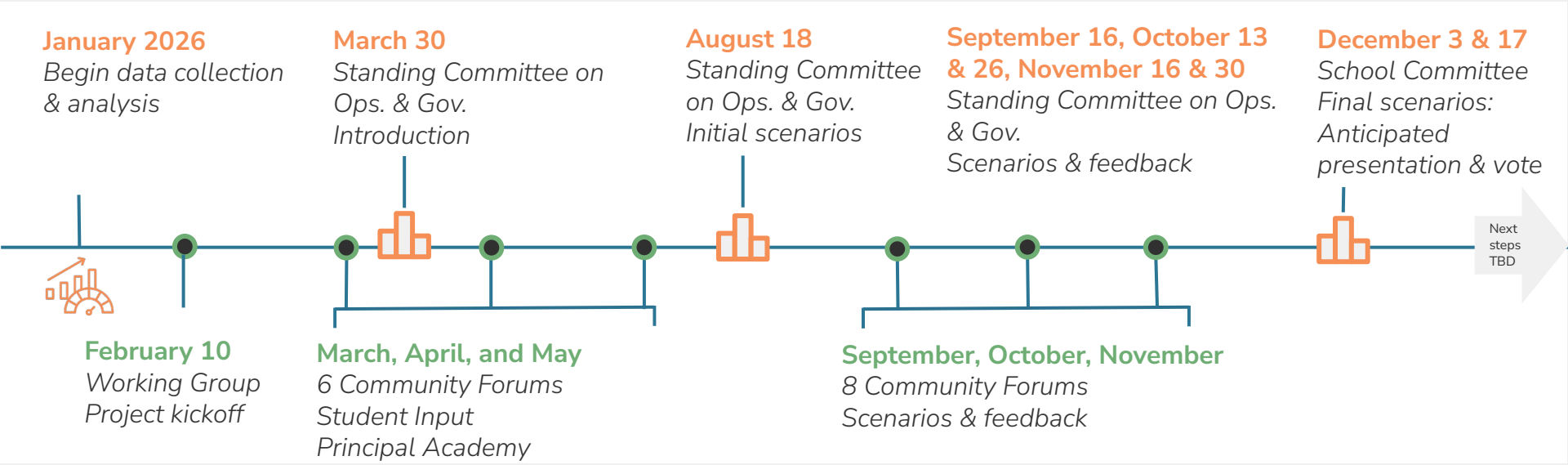
SECTION 02

Work to Date

WPS OG Subcommittee Meeting

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WPS School Boundary Realignment Key Milestones



Continued throughout project:

- Realignment Working Group meetings
- Qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, including:
  - Geographic Analysis
  - Capacity & Utilization Analysis
  - Demographic Trends

Project Timeline Aligned to O.gb 6-72 - Boundary Realignment School Committee June 25, 2026

Ideas Tested and Not Included

Overview of non-viable concepts tested during the planning process that did not advance core priorities or were deemed infeasible.

Forest Grove Extension	Explored adding capacity at Forest Grove to avoid splitting feeder pathways for Doherty High.
Relocate WAMs to South Quad	Tested moving WAMs to South Quadrant to open up capacity in Burncoat.
Burncoat Arts Restructuring	Evaluated splitting middle and high school programs to open up capacity in Burncoat.
Citywide High School Lottery	Removing all quad boundaries was feasible on paper, but logistics and transportation proved impractical.
Elementary Boundary Iterations	Tested a wide range of boundary adjustments and carried forward only those that balanced cleanly, ripple effects into neighboring zones ruled the rest out.
Rightsizing District Programs	Evaluated adjusting CTE program size and placement to maintain neighborhood middle and high schools.
Opening Schools in Other Facilities	Assessed various city- and district-owned facilities for potential new school openings.

Drafts #1-5 are Published - Next steps are with Ops & Gov and School Committee

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Date	Day	Forum Type	Location	Quadrant	Time
~~09/02/26~~	~~Wednesday~~	~~Community Forum~~	~~Belmont Tower Apts~~	~~North / Burncoat~~	COMPLETE
~~09/03/26~~	~~Thursday~~	~~School Committee~~	~~City Hall~~	~~Citywide~~	COMPLETE
~~09/16/26~~	~~Wednesday~~	~~Ops & Gov Meeting~~	~~Worcester Technical High~~	~~North / Burncoat~~	COMPLETE
~~09/29/26~~	~~Tuesday~~	~~Community Forum~~	~~Quinsigamond Elem~~	~~South~~	COMPLETE
~~10/13/26~~	~~Tuesday~~	~~Ops & Gov Meeting~~	~~Vernon Hill Auditorium~~	~~North / South~~	COMPLETE
~~10/19/26~~	~~Monday~~	~~Community Forum~~	~~Chandler Elementary~~	~~Doherty~~	COMPLETE
~~10/26/26~~	~~Monday~~	~~Ops & Gov Meeting~~	~~Forest Grove Cafeteria~~	~~Burncoat / Doherty~~	COMPLETE
~~11/07/26~~	~~Saturday~~	~~Community Forum~~	~~Goddard Elementary~~	~~South~~	COMPLETE
11/16/26	Monday	**Ops & Gov Meeting**	**South High School Auditorium**	South	6:00 PM
11/30/26	Monday	**Ops & Gov Meeting**	**Durkin Administration, Room 410**	Citywide	6:00 PM
12/3/26	Thursday	**School Committee**	*Esther Howland Chamber - City Hall*	Citywide	5:30 PM
12/17/26	Thursday	**School Committee**	*Esther Howland Chamber - City Hall*	Citywide	5:30 PM

Decision Points: Priorities

Measure	Current Baseline	What Makes This Hard
% of elementary schools with a Pre-K classroom	40 classrooms / Unequal access	Several smaller schools have no open classroom. Pre-K competes with substantially separate (special ed) classrooms for the same space.
Proportional distribution of Pre-K seats across quadrants	Highly unequal across district	The mix of half-day and full-day programs, and where classrooms happen to sit, means seats don't match where eligible children live.
# of schools that are over-capacity	5 schools above 95% capacity	Density varies by neighborhood, and older building layouts limit how much space is actually usable.
Middle & High Schools' utilization	Secondary range 62-94%	Fixed building sizes and citywide programs limit how far boundary changes alone can balance enrollment.
Elementary Schools' utilization rates	Elementary range 57-113%	Utilization alone is incomplete. Class size and planned housing (e.g., Curtis Apartments) also shape need.
Elementary to Middle & High pathways split	9 zones split across quadrants	Keeping every elementary zone together through high school would push some secondary schools over or under capacity.
Alignment of secondary boundaries	Fragmented pathways & zones	Middle and high school buildings differ in size, so feeder lines rarely fit cleanly inside one quadrant.
Access to Magnet & Tech schools	Restricted by quadrant boundaries	CTE programs are concentrated in some quadrants, and non-CTE programs use separate, school-by-school applications.
Lottery & decision transparency	Opaque process / Complex policies	There is currently no central application. Each program sets its own rules and timelines, and CTE lotteries must follow DESE Chapter 74 rules.
More Diverse Schools	12 of 30 schools far from the citywide mix (37% of students)	Residential patterns differ across the city, and neighborhoods are not equally dense, so boundary changes can only partly change school demographics.

SECTION 03

Recommendations & Drafts

WPS OG Subcommittee Meeting

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Recommendations

For consideration by the school committee

Data File

Draft 4/5 Metrics

File Name

Data Table

Last Updated

Nov 11th, 2026

1. Implementation

Begin partial implementation in SY2027–28 and complete full realignment by SY2030–31, guided by a district implementation plan developed January–March 2027

2. PreK

Over three years, convert half-day Pre-K to full-day and reposition classrooms so each quadrant's seats match its share of Pre-K-eligible children, phased by facility readiness and funding.

3. Program Access

Manage all district-wide program applications through one central, transparent process, with seat allocation designed to give students in every quadrant equitable access, consistent with DESE requirements

4. Voluntary Transfer

Limit voluntary transfers and approve them centrally, based on available capacity at both the sending and receiving school.

5. Bell Schedule / Transportation

Transition to a three-tier bell schedule over the next two years, with clear, consistent, and transparent rules for which students receive transportation, to improve efficiency and reliability across the district.

6. Elementary School Boundaries

Adopt Draft 4 or Draft 5 as the elementary attendance boundaries, effective SY2028–29.

7. Middle / High School Boundaries

Balancing enrollment may require complex, split feeder patterns. With new facilities and CTE expansion ahead, WPS should defer boundary changes and complete a secondary strategic plan during SY2027–28.

PROGRAM UPDATE: Following careful consideration, no adjustments are recommended for the programs at Claremont or UPCS.

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Recommendation #1

Implementation Timeline

THE RECOMMENDATION

Begin partial implementation in SY2027–28 and complete full realignment by SY2030–31, guided by a district implementation plan developed January–March 2027

The Current Challenge

- Feeling rushed with little time for comprehensive transition planning
- Complex coordination needed across lotteries, transportation, bell tiers, and voluntary transfers, district communication
- Anticipated budget shortfalls next year complicate immediate full implementation

What We Heard

- Families want clear transition information and adequate time without feeling rushed
- Staff desire time to properly build internal processes (application timelines, tiers)

Context for the Committee

- Phasing implementation mitigates immediate budget pressures while preparing district infrastructure
- Internal operational alignment (tiers & timelines) establishes a strong baseline prior to full realignment

DECISION POINT

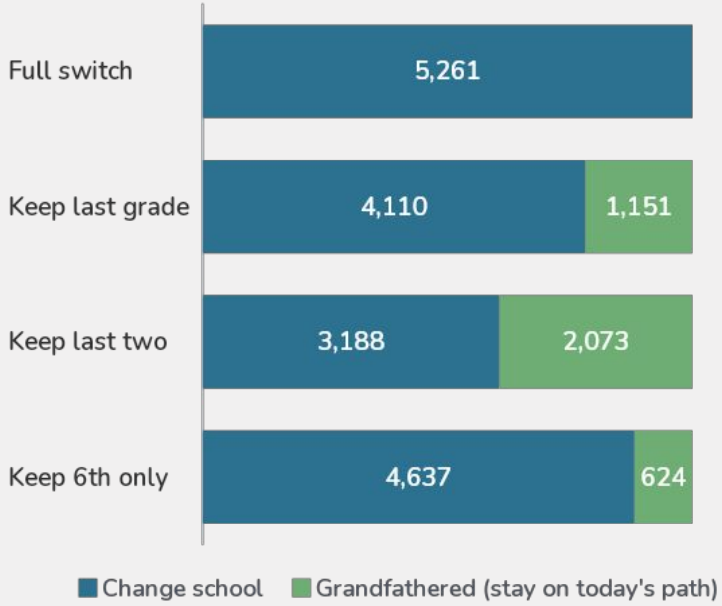
Does the Committee endorse phasing implementation across multiple years (SY2027–31) rather than an immediate full transition?

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION IN SY2027-28 COULD INCLUDE: Adjusting some schools' tier times, revising application processes for district-wide programs, revising voluntary transfer processes, and developing a middle/high school pathway strategic plan.

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Draft Grandfathering Options Compared (SY2526 Data)

Keeping the last two grades moves 39% fewer students and leaves no building over 100%.



Option	Schools with 10%+ change	Buildings over 100%
Full switch	20	North High Arts Magnet Vernon Hill
Keep last grade	18	North High Vernon Hill
Keep last two	15	None
Keep 6th only	19	North High Vernon Hill

Change school: returning students whose next-fall school differs from today's map. 10%+ change: next-fall enrollment differs from today's map by 10% or more.
Assumptions: No voluntary transfers honored; Rice Square at 392 seats, its 6th graders at Worcester East Middle.

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Recommendation #2

Full-day Pre-K Expansion

THE RECOMMENDATION

Over three years, starting in SY2027-28, convert half-day Pre-K to full-day and reposition classrooms so each quadrant's seats match share of Pre-K-eligible children, phased by facility readiness and funding.

The Current Challenge

- Current distribution of full-day Pre-K programs and seats does not align with proportional Pre-K populations
- Given utilization constraints in some elementary buildings, there is currently no space for classrooms until geographical boundaries are updated

What We Heard

- Families want more opportunities for Pre-K programs
- Strong community demand for more Pre-K programs located in local areas
- Strong community demand for full-day Pre-K

Context for the Committee

- 83% of elementary schools have space for at least 1 Pre-K classroom
- Space-constrained buildings require updated geographical boundaries before full placement

DECISION POINT

Does the Committee endorse converting half-day Pre-K to full-day and aligning classroom locations with population density as funding allows?

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Pre-K Implementation & Classroom Distribution

DISTRICT OVERVIEW

42 Total Pre-K Classrooms (Expanded from 40.0)

10 Neighborhood Schools Gaining New Pre-K Classrooms

Only 83% of Elementary Schools will have a Pre-K Classroom

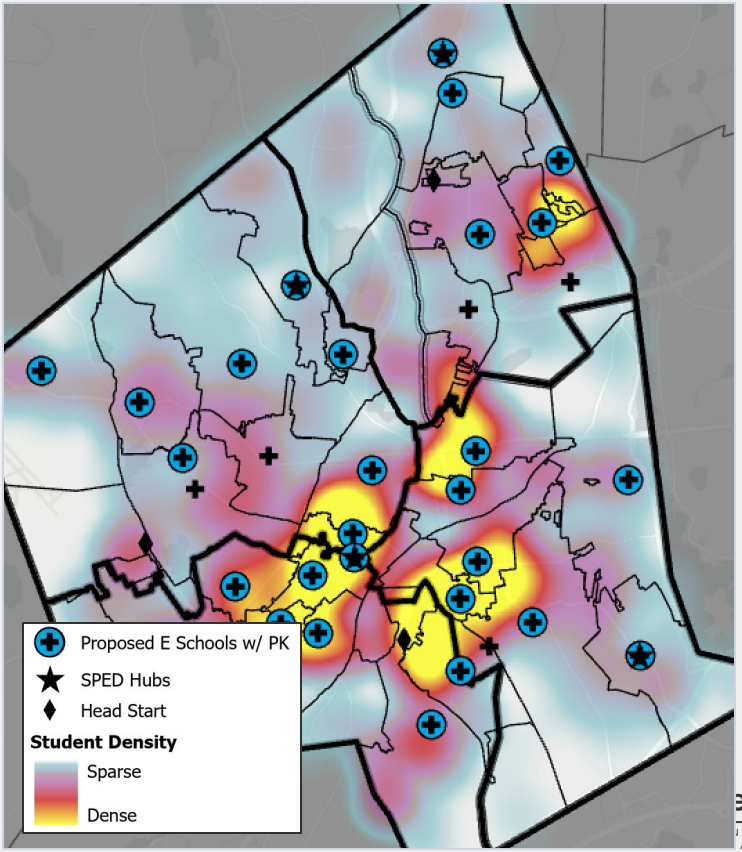
10 Schools Recommended to Add Pre-K Classrooms

- **Burncoat Quad:** Burncoat St, Lincoln St, Thorndyke Rd
- **Doherty Quad:** Chandler Elem, Elm Park, Flagg St
- **North Quad:** Grafton St, Rice Square, Union Hill
- **South Quad:** Woodland Academy

5 Schools Facing Space Limitations (0 PK Rooms)

Granite St, Wawecus Rd, Heard St, May St, Midland St

- **Facility Constraints:** Smaller facilities (1–2 sections/grade) lack available room for PK.
- **Relocation Strategy:** Shift PK classrooms to adjacent schools as funding allows.
- **Phased Rollout:** Prioritized by facility readiness & highest need.



Recommendation #3

District-Wide Program Access

THE RECOMMENDATION

Manage all district-wide program applications through one central, transparent process, with seat allocation designed to give students in every quadrant equitable access, aligned with DESE requirements for CTE programs

The Current Challenge

- Access processes vary (lottery, application, first-come first-served), creating confusion and lack of transparency.
- ~4,800 Worcester students are eligible to participate in district-wide programs (~25% in K-8).
- Families feel left out due to inconsistent program rules and access barriers across quadrants.

What We Heard

- Strong community demand for clear, expanded access to magnet and district-wide programs.
- Principals, staff, and families desire a streamlined, transparent central application system.

Context for the Committee

- Implementation requires a centralized lottery/application platform aligned with DESE CTE rules.
- Standardize district access while accommodating unique program criteria.

DECISION POINT

Does the Committee endorse adopting a single, transparent central application and seat allocation process?

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Recommendation #4

Voluntary Transfers

THE RECOMMENDATION

Limit voluntary transfers and approve them centrally, based on available capacity at both the sending and receiving school.

The Current Challenge

- About 10% of elementary students* attend schools outside their geographical boundary.
- No centralized process currently exists to manage transfer requests.
- Little clarity around decisions or waitlist placement for families.

What We Heard

- Strong demand from families and community for greater clarity and transparency.
- Desire for transparent criteria and visible status positioning on transfer waitlists.

Context for the Committee

- Need to better manage transfers keeping overall enrollment and capacity in mind.
- Balances available capacity between sending and receiving schools centrally.

DECISION POINT

Does the Committee endorse centralized approval of voluntary transfers based on available capacity?

*does not include students in sub-sep classrooms

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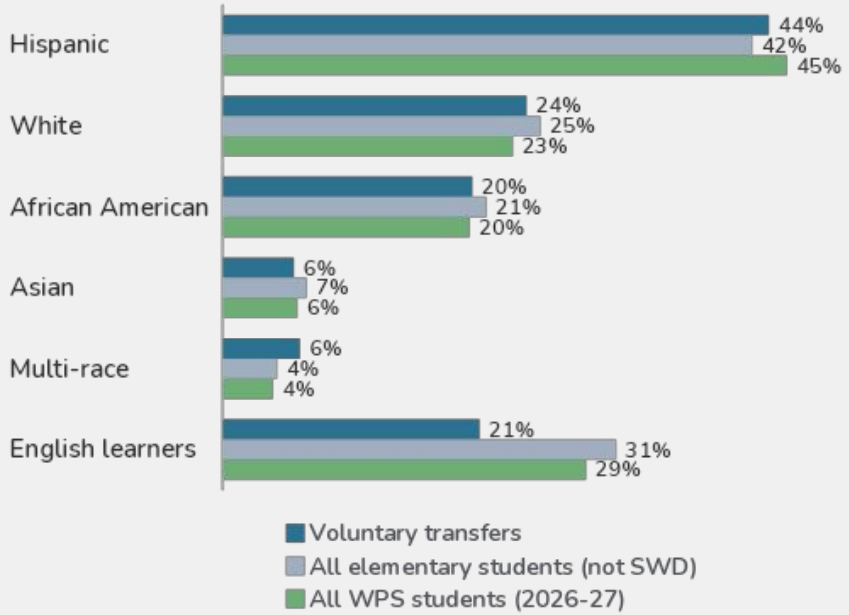
Elementary Voluntary Transfers

Transfers mirror elementary students by race, but English learners transfer at about half the rate of other students.

How 1,039 is counted	Students
Out-of-boundary, not SWD	4,691
Not in 2026-27 SIMS file	-11
Programs and magnets	-2,012
Held in place	-476
Transfers, all grades	**2,192**
Middle and high school	-1,153
Elementary transfers	**1,039**

12%

of eligible elementary students transfer



Voluntary transfer: not SWD, attending an elementary school outside their boundary in 2026-27, not at Worcester Dual Language or Arts Magnet. Comparison: all K-6 students who are not SWD. Includes Jacob Hiatt (210 of 1,039). Source: WPS roster.
"Eligible" means the students who would count as a voluntary transfer if they attended a school outside their boundary.
Programs and magnets: Tech 1,155, Dual Language 377, UPCS 200, Arts Magnet 172, Goddard Scholars 108. Held in place: alternative programs 280, Pre-K and ungraded 195, out of town 1. All WPS students: all grades in the 2026-27 SIMS student file (23,913), including SWD.

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Recommendation #5

Transportation Tiers

THE RECOMMENDATION

Transition to a three-tier bell schedule over the next two years, with clear, consistent, and transparent rules for which students receive transportation, to improve efficiency and reliability across the district.

The Current Challenge

- 12 different start times cause inefficient use of buses.
- Inconsistent walk boundaries and bus rules from past decisions.
- Need reduced walk boundaries and safer walk routes.

What We Heard

- Desire for high schools to start later and elementary to start earlier.
- Concerns over before/ after school care and transportation.
- After school programs need clarity before Jan sign-ups.
- Reduce walk radius

Context for the Committee

- Fixes must be phased over 2 years to support providers.
- Goal of clear, consistent, and transparent busing rules and guidelines for walking radius

DECISION POINTS

Does the Committee endorse a three-tier bell schedule?

How can the district best support families and after-school providers through the transition as schedules undergo major changes?

ESTIMATED IMPACT

104 → 96 Buses: Proposed tier times and bus requirements would reduce the number of buses WPS needs from 104 to 96 to be used for other student services including potential legacy enrollments.

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Three Bell Tiers and After-School Programs

Three tiers would need fewer buses, but schools would let out at 1:38, 2:38 and 3:28, and programs pick up children from all three.

Proposed tier	Elem.	Middle	High	Total
Tier 1 7:15 to 1:38	4	1	5	**10**
Tier 2 8:15 to 2:38	28	0	0	**28**
Tier 3 9:05 to 3:28	1	3	2	**6**

12 start times today → **3** tiers

Elementary schools now start anywhere from 7:45 to 9:05.

What changes for after-school programs?

Pickups split three ways. A van or bus that collects from several schools would wait 50 to 60 minutes between tiers or make extra trips.

Less room on WPS buses. Each bus would run three routes back to back, leaving little slack for the free WPS rides some programs rely on today.

Earlier days for Tier 1. Elm Park, Canterbury, Gates Lane and Goddard would let out at 1:38, an hour before most elementary schools, so programs need staff earlier.

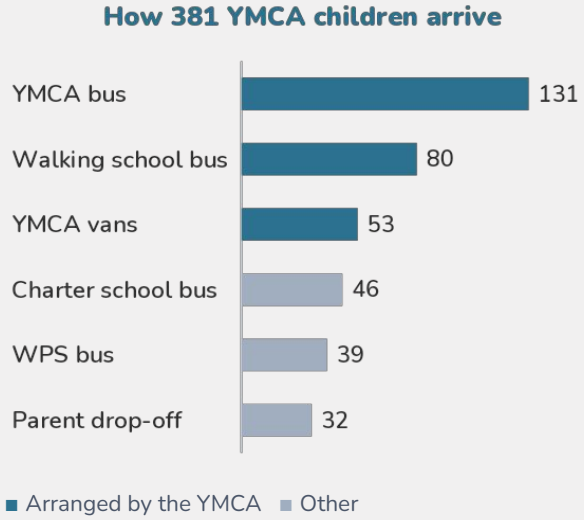
Later days for Tier 3. Nelson Place and three middle schools would let out at 3:28, 50 minutes after most elementary schools.

Source: WPS school list with current start times and proposed tiers. Counts exclude Greendale (no tier listed) and Jacob Hiatt (proposed tier blank). Tier 3 high schools: Claremont and University Park.
Tier 1 high schools: Burncoat, Doherty, North, South and Worcester Tech. Tier 1 middle: Burncoat Middle. Tier 3 middle: Forest Grove, Worcester East and Sullivan.

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After-School Transportation Today

YMCA and Girls Inc. pick up from schools in all three proposed tiers. 264 of 381 YMCA children rely on YMCA vans, buses or staff walking them.



Route	Tier 1 (1:38)	Tier 2 (2:38)	Tier 3 (3:28)
YMCA vans (Central branch)	Canterbury, Goddard	Woodland	Forest Grove
YMCA bus (Greendale branch)	–	Burncoat St., Flagg, Norrback, Thorndyke	Nelson Place
Girls Inc. buses	Burncoat Middle	City View, Quinsig., Rice Sq., Roosevelt, WAMs, Dual Lang.	Sullivan Middle
Girls Inc. walk line	–	Union Hill, Vernon Hill	–

Not yet surveyed: YWCA, Boys & Girls Club, The Guild, Friendly House, Black Excellence, Joy of Music Program, Worcester Youth Center.

Sources: YMCA of Central Massachusetts afterschool enrollment, SY 2026-27 (Central Community and Greendale branches); Girls Inc. of Worcester After-School Transportation 2026-27; WPS proposed tiers.
YMCA vans carry at most 8 children at a time. YMCA bus is an AA Transportation bus the YMCA pays for. Charter school bus: Abby Kelley and Worcester Cultural Academy. Orange cells: pickups outside Tier 2. Jacob Hiatt (Girls Inc. BB2; 35 YMCA walkers) has no proposed tier yet.

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Important Scope & Sequencing Note

Separating Elementary and Secondary Zone Boundary Decisions

Complexity & Context

Given the complex interdependencies of **school capacities**, **enrollment projections**, **building sizes**, **new facility construction**, **magnet program placements**, and **specialized program locations** across the district, boundary decisions are structured into two distinct, focused recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION #6

Elementary School Boundaries

- Establishes attendance zones tailored specifically to elementary school facilities and neighborhood clusters.
- Addresses immediate capacity, magnet program access, and walkability for elementary families.

RECOMMENDATION #7

Middle & High School Boundaries

- Focuses on secondary feeder patterns and long-term facility usage across middle and high schools.
- Accounts for secondary specialized programs, sports facilities, and broader citywide transportation routes.

Key Takeaway for the Committee: Evaluating elementary and secondary boundaries independently ensures each level receives dedicated analysis without over-complicating system-wide implementation.

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Recommendation #6

Elementary School Zones

THE RECOMMENDATION

Adopt Draft 4 or Draft 5 as the elementary attendance boundaries, effective SY2028–29.

The Current Challenge

- 5 elementary schools exceed 95% capacity (utilization ranges 57–113%)
- Unequal Pre-K distribution across quadrants (41 total classrooms)
- High North quadrant density & housing growth near Curtis

What We Heard

- Preserve WAMS and Dual Language as district-wide programs
- Address Jacob Hiatt boundary impacts in high-density areas
- Greendale facility is unsuitable in current configuration for a K–6 elementary model

Context for the Committee

- Review voluntary transfers carefully to balance utilization
- Increase transparency in lottery & assignment decisions

DECISION POINT

Does the Committee endorse Draft 4 or Draft 5 as the approach that best resolves Pre-K access and capacity imbalances at elementaries?

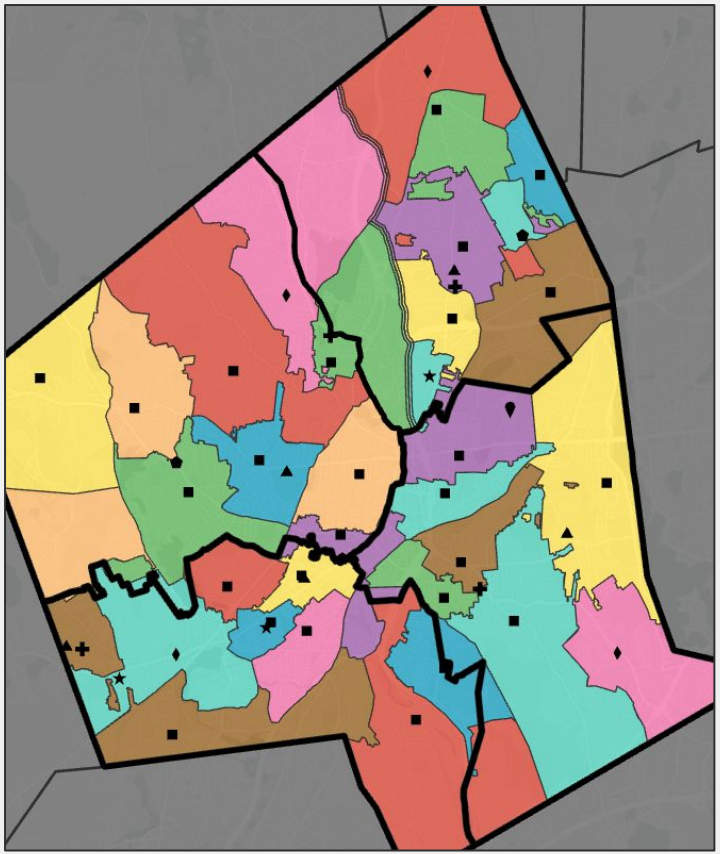
PROJECTED DISTRICT COST

Facility Conversion: Estimated cost is approximately $2.6 million to convert Greendale and/or Granite St to district elementary school. This would include anticipated school-based administration, instructional and support positions, as well as instructional materials and supplies. Potential facility capital upgrades (bathrooms, etc) will be assessed at a later date.

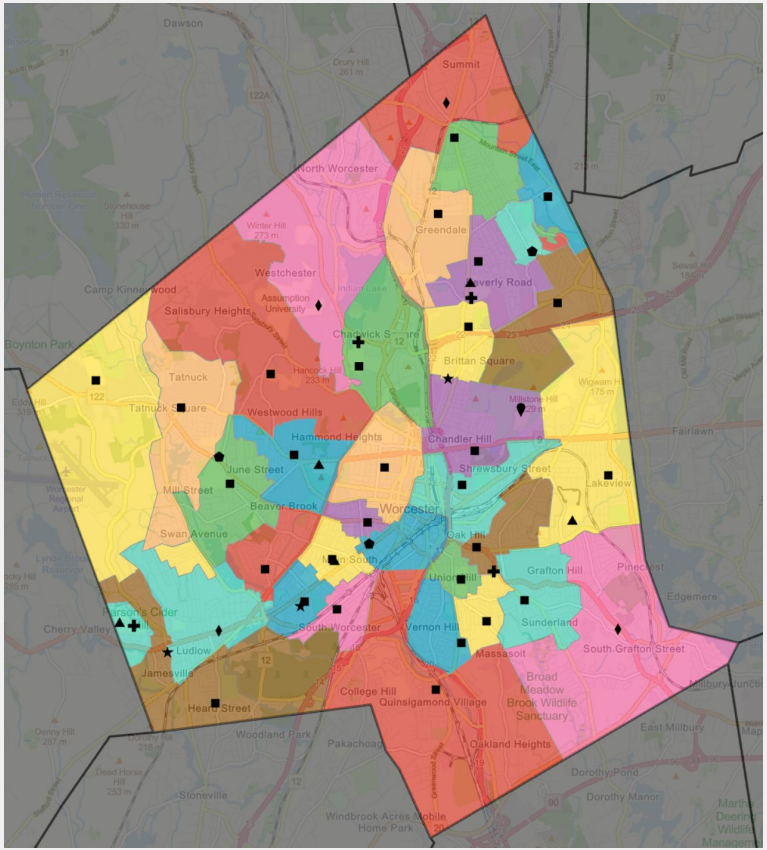
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Draft #4

Current Boundaries



Draft #4



School Type

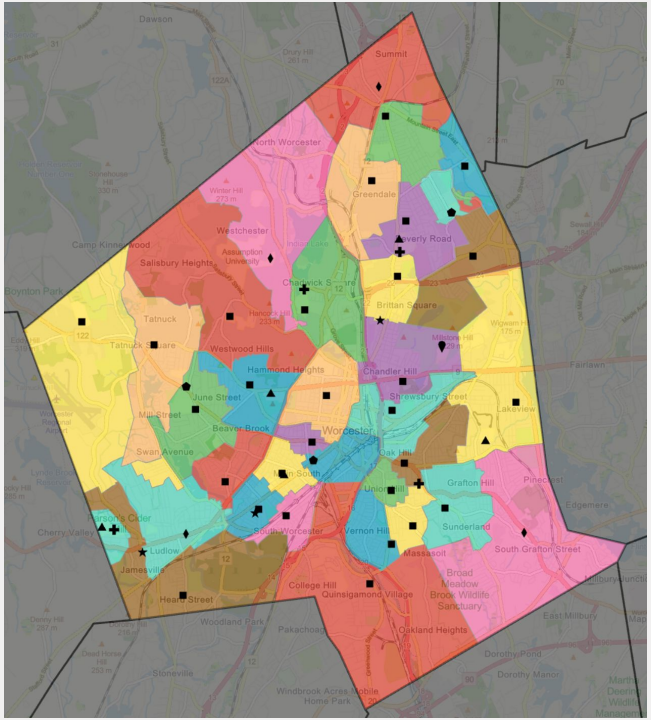
- Alternative
- Elementary
- Elementary- Magnet
- Elementary- SPED Hub
- Middle
- High
- High- Tech
- High Quads
- Middle Quads
- Flex Zones

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Not a Final Solution

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Draft 4 Review: Elementary Changes

Draft 4 brings Pre-K to most schools and ends elementary overcrowding and Burncoat Quadrant relies on Greendale Street opening around 2032.



Quadrant	Key changes for elementary schools
District-wide	• Pre-K in 83% of elementary schools, even across quadrants (±5%) • Building use 57–113% today → 70–92%; none over capacity
Burncoat	• New PK-6 at Greendale Head Start building (~2032) • Satellite zones dissolved; GBV moves from Thorndyke to Norrback, Burncoat St.
Doherty	• Jacob Hiatt: magnet becomes a zoned school • Tatnuck and West Tatnuck boundaries redrawn
North	• New Granite St. zone; all of Plumley Village (~200) to City View
South	• Room left at Columbus Park for ~70 Lakeside students • Quinsigamond boundary expands

Pros

- Pre-K in most elementary school and balanced across quadrants
- No elementary building over capacity
- Simpler, contiguous zones

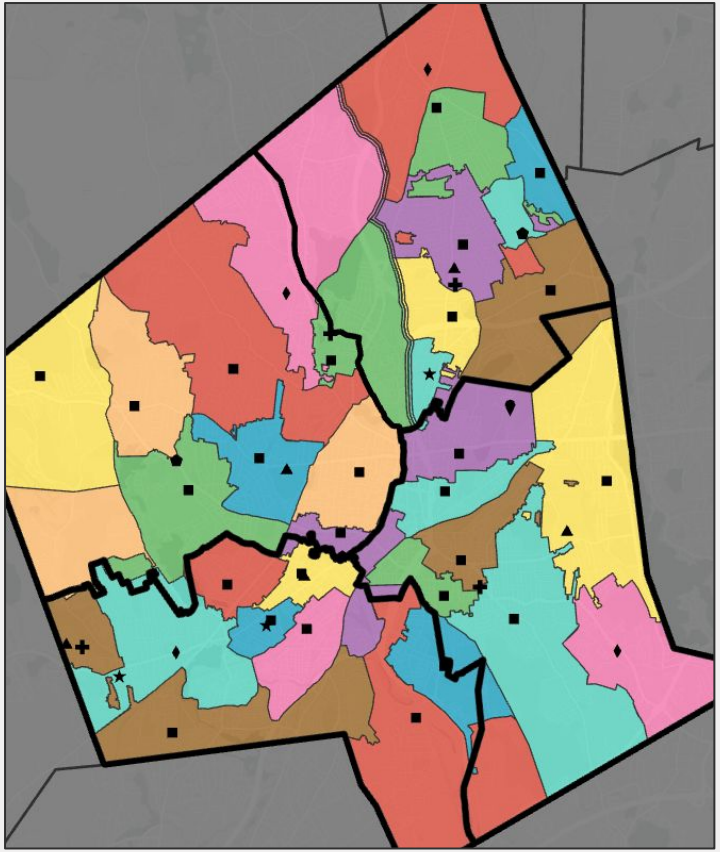
Cons

- Greendale not ideal for PK-6; not ready until ~2032
- 6 small schools have no room for Pre-K
- Big moves for GBV, Plumley, Lincoln Village families

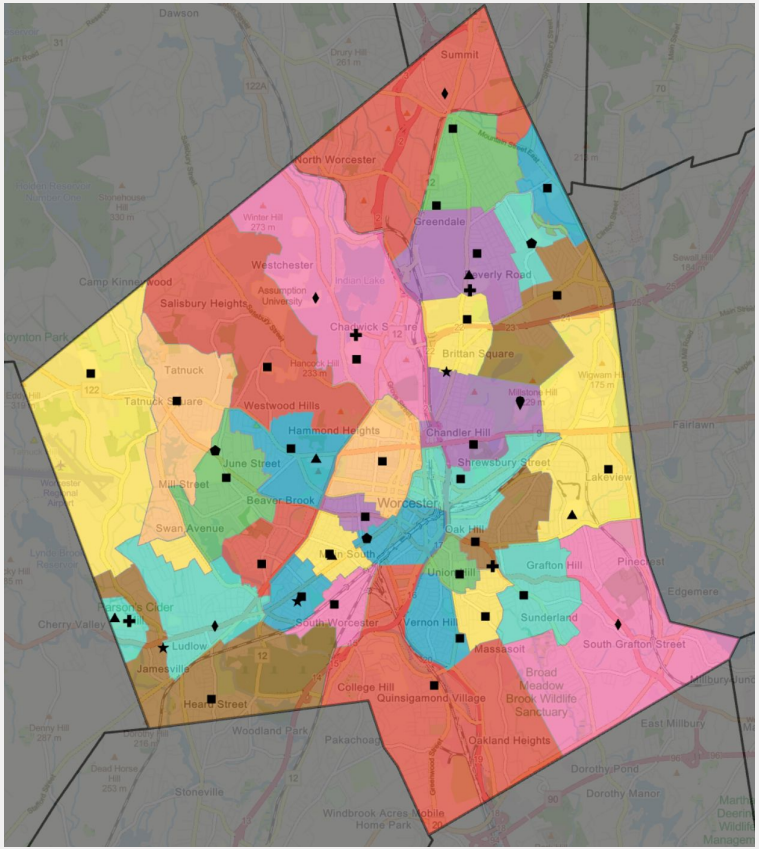
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Draft #5 Overview

Current Boundaries



Draft #5



School Type

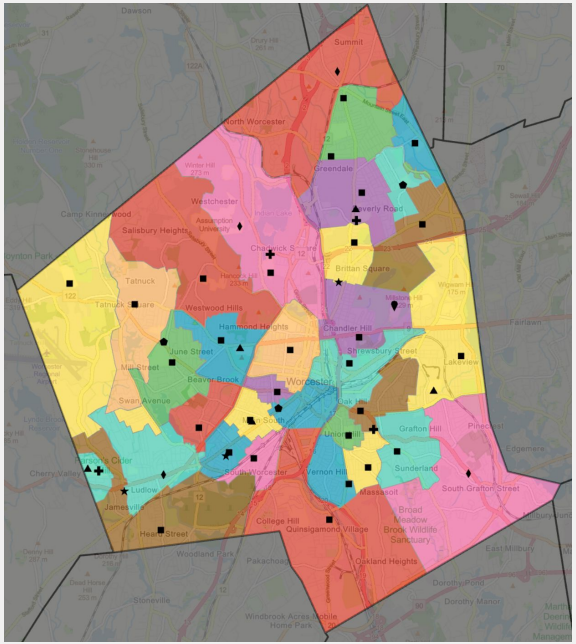
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- Middle
- High
- High- Tech
- High Quads
- Middle Quads
- Flex Zones

DRAFT ONLY
Not a Final Solution

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Draft 5 Review: Elementary Changes

Draft 5 brings Pre-K to most schools and ends elementary overcrowding, Burncoat Quadrant relies on Worcester Arts Magnet transition to neighborhood school opening around 2032 and transitions the McGrath neighborhood school to a Magnet Lottery



Quadrant	Key changes for elementary schools
District-wide	• Pre-K in 83% of elementary schools, even across quadrants (±5%) • Building use 57–113% today → 75–92%; none over capacity
Burncoat	• Worcester Arts Magnet maintains its current build but becomes a neighborhood school • Belmont St. joins Burncoat from North; satellite zones dissolved
Doherty	• McGrath zone dissolved and absorbed by Nelson Place; McGrath becomes a new magnet school with district wide lottery. Magnet program to be decided. • Jacob Hiatt: magnet becomes a zoned school • Tatnuck and West Tatnuck boundaries redrawn
North	• New Granite St. zone; all of Plumley Village (~200) to City View • Rice Square, City View, Grafton 6th graders place at Worcester East Middle
South	• Jacob Hiatt: magnet becomes a zoned school • Room left at Columbus Park for ~70 Lakeside students • Quinsigamond boundary expands

Pros

- Pre-K in most elementary school and balanced across quadrants
- No elementary building over capacity; tight 75–92% range
- Simpler, contiguous zones
- Full citywide lottery for new Magnet Program at McGrath

Cons

- No lottery seats at the Arts Magnet
- 6 small schools have no room for Pre-K
- Big moves for McGrath and Plumley families

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Curtis Apartments and Burncoat Capacity

Lincoln St., Thorndyke, and the Arts Magnet already have more neighborhood students than seats, and the Phoenix at Curtis adds about 244 more students by 2032.

354 → 527
housing units (+173, up 49%)

99 → ~343
elementary students living at Curtis

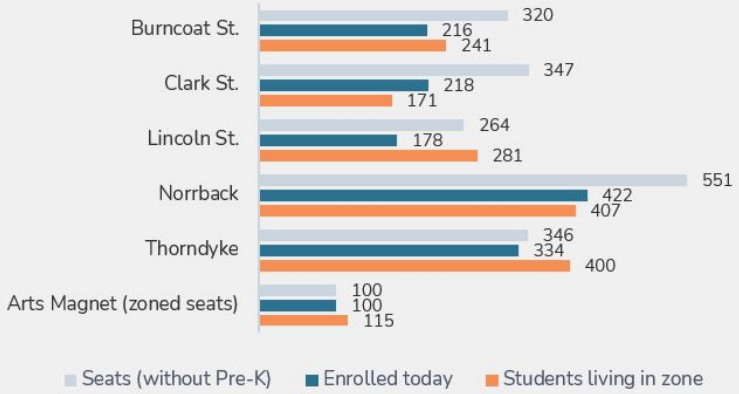
New elementary students as each phase fills

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Oct 2026	Mid 2028	Late 2030	Late 2032
+84	**+98**	**+95**	**+66**
129 units	150 units	146 units	102 units

Why it matters

- **Today's count is a low point.** Only 99 students live there because buildings were demolished in 2024; Curtis housed 200 to 242 elementary students before.
- **96% is functionally full.** Only 69 open seats spread over six schools and seven grades, so there may be no seat in the grade a child needs.
- **No time to wait.** Phase 1 is filling now, and boundary, program and building changes take years to put in place.

Burncoat elementary seats vs. students (SY2526)



Whole quadrant, students living in zone vs. 1,928 seats

84% today → **96%** at full buildout (69 open seats)

Either of these fixes brings it back to **84%**: move the Arts Magnet lottery out and zone the school (+286 seats) or reopen Greendale (+297 seats).

Seats: Burncoat St., Clark St., Lincoln St., Norrback, Thorndyke and 100 Arts Magnet neighborhood seats; excludes Pre-K; Greendale offline. Enrollment and students living in zone are current; living-in-zone total is 1,615. Yield ~0.65 elementary students per unit at full buildout (527 units); full buildout = 1,615 + 244 = 1,859 students. Oriol Drive (~11 more students) not included.

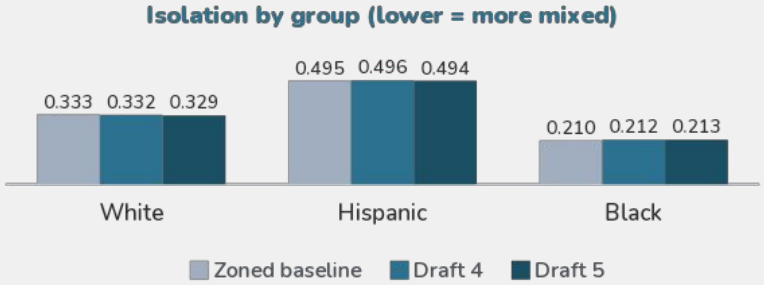
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RESEARCH AND APPLIED DATA

Race/Ethnicity: Drafts 4 and 5

Neither plan balances overall enrollment or closes the gap between the less diverse west side and the city's more diverse neighborhoods.

Overall evenness (Theil's H): 0 = every school mirrors the district

0.060	0.064	0.062
Zoned baseline	Draft 4	Draft 5



Isolation can't fall below a group's citywide share: White 25%, Hispanic 45%, Black 19%.

The citywide split stays. Schools 15+ pts from the citywide White or Hispanic share: **12 of 30** today (37% of students), **13 of 34** in Draft 4 (37%), **13 of 32** in Draft 5 (40%).

Flagg, Midland, West Tatnuck and Tatnuck stay far more White; Woodland, Goddard, Clark St., Canterbury and Union Hill stay far more Hispanic.

Change in each group's share of the school, in percentage points

School	Draft 4 (pts)	Draft 5 (pts)
Norrback	Under 5 pts	Hispanic −15, White +10
Nelson Place	Under 5 pts	Hispanic +12, White −8
Arts Magnet*	Under 5 pts	Hispanic +10, White −12
Chandler	Black −10, Hispanic +5	Same as Draft 4
May St.	White +10, Black −8	Same as Draft 4
West Tatnuck	Black +6, White −6	Same as Draft 4
Thorndyke	White −6	Hispanic −7
Columbus Park	Hispanic −5	Same as Draft 4
Grafton St.	White +5	Same as Draft 4
Lake View	Black +5	Same as Draft 4
Lincoln St.	Black −5	Same as Draft 4

Compared with the zoned baseline; only schools with a 5+ point shift shown. Example: Norrback's Hispanic share goes from 41% to 26% (−15 pts). Shaded: 10+ pts. Norrback and Nelson Place are special education hubs. *Arts Magnet compared with its 115-student neighborhood zone today.

Who lives in each zone (SY25-26), excluding magnet-lottery and sub-separate students; assumes every child attends their zone school. Zoned baseline weighted by students living in each zone; drafts by adjusted zone population. Theil's H across 7 groups (U.S. Census multigroup evenness measure); Draft 4's +0.004 is just beyond the rounding error in the source percentages; Draft 5's +0.002 is within it.

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Recommendation #7

Middle School / High School Pathways

THE RECOMMENDATION

Balancing enrollment would require complex, split feeder patterns. With new facilities and CTE expansion ahead, WPS should defer boundary changes and complete a secondary strategic plan during SY2027–28.

The Current Challenge

- Middle and high school capacities are not aligned to each other nor to quadrant populations
- Program seats are not equally distributed across the district
- Concentrations of CTE and other district programs take up significant space within buildings

What We Heard

- Strong desire for more programs and expanded access citywide
- Need for clear and transparent communication around program availability and applications
- Desire to establish clear pathways from elementary to middle to high school within each quadrant
- Strong desire to not use flex zones

Context for the Committee

- A district strategic vision for program access and availability is essential before meaningful change can happen.
- Capacity solutions will require structural (boundary) and operational (lottery, programming) adjustments.

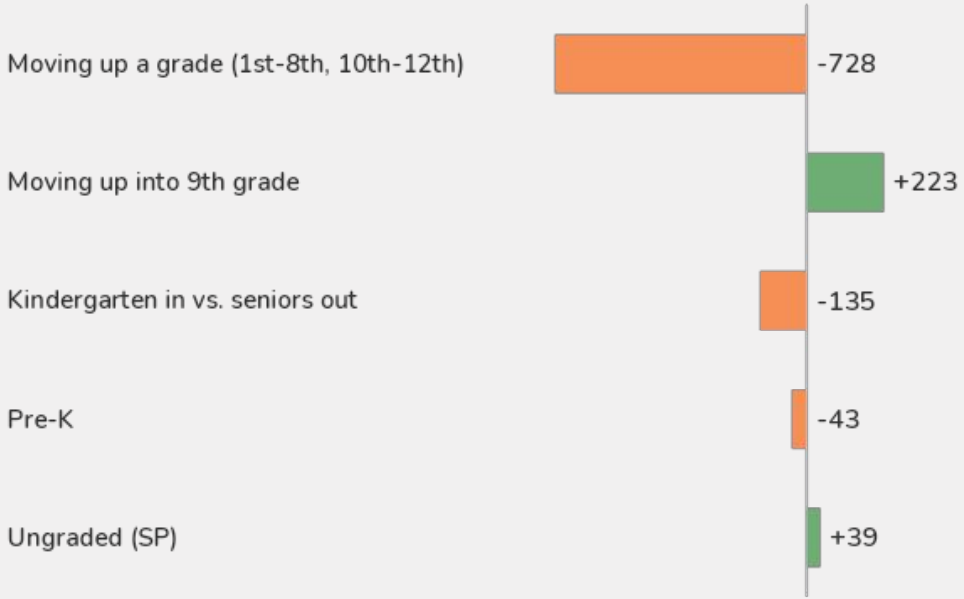
DECISION POINT

Does the Committee endorse deferring secondary boundary changes until completion of a secondary strategic plan?

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Enrollment Change: 2025-26 to 2026-27

October enrollment declined by 644 students (2.6%), from 25,031 to 24,387.



What drove the drop

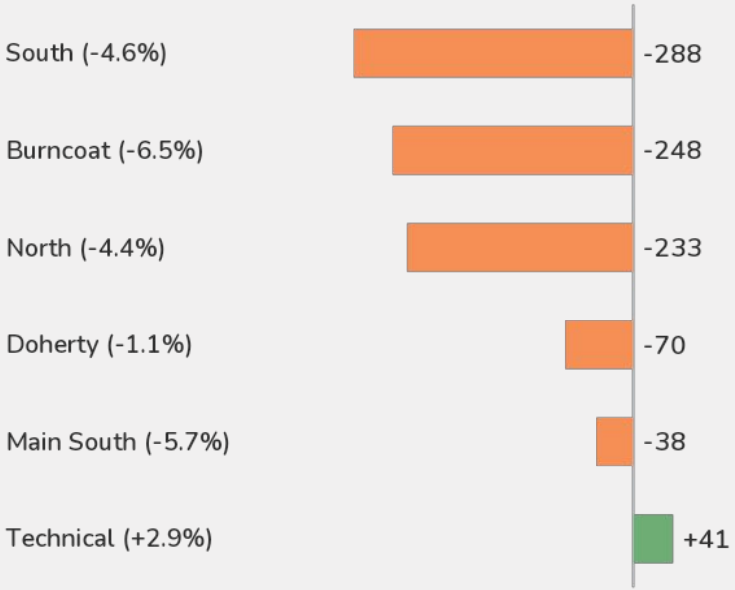
- **Students leaving between grades:** 728 fewer in grades 1-8 and 10-12.
- **9th grade is the exception:** Increased enrollment of +223
- **Smaller kindergarten:** 1,744 entered vs. 1,879 seniors who graduated.

Source: SIMS Report 1, Foundation Enrollment by grade, October 2026-27 (official counts). Each grade vs. the same class a year earlier; bars add to -644.

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Enrollment by Quadrant and School

All four quadrants lost students. 31 of 45 schools declined and 14 increased.



Largest decreases	Change	%
South High Comm.	-174	-10%
North High	-131	-10%
Sullivan Middle	-108	-13%
Burncoat Middle School	-81	-12%
Burncoat Senior High	-66	-7%
Largest increases	**Change**	**%**
Doherty Memorial High	+70	+4%
Vernon Hill School	+51	+10%
Worcester Tech	+41	+3%
Goddard School	+19	+6%
Rice Square	+17	+4%

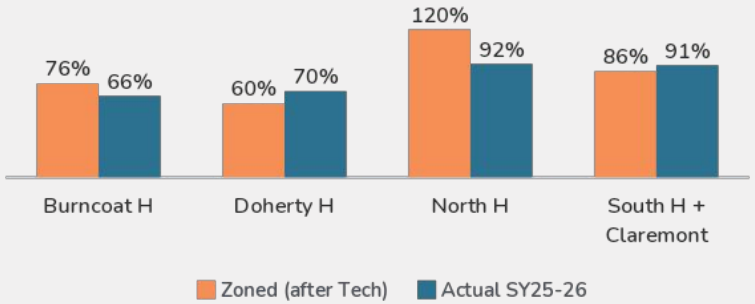
Source: Unofficial enrollment counts - SIMS student files (24,673 students in 2025-26, 23,913 in 2026-27), which count fewer students than the official totals, so changes add to -760.
Head Start and alternative programs not shown.

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Middle/High School Enrollment Challenges

Middle and high school buildings aren't sized to match each other, and today's system works only because students leave their zone and citywide programs pull them across quadrants.

High school seats filled: zoned vs. actual



Citywide programs pull students across quadrants, each under its own rules

Program	SY25-26 students	Admission and effect
CTE (Ch. 74)	Worcester Tech 1,359 + 9 programs in comprehensive highs	Weighted lottery; 15–22% of each quad's 8th graders leave for Tech
Magnet	Arts Magnet / Hanover Arts: ~345 high, ~250 middle	61% of high schoolers from Burncoat
Selective	Goddard Scholars; Advanced Science Academy	Academic admission; newer programs still filling

Buildings don't match their feeders

- **North High is too small for its feeder.** Its zone has 2,053 high schoolers for 1,392 seats; only 1,287 attend because students leave through Tech, transfers and other paths.
- **Doherty High is too big for its feeder.** Forest Grove can't fill the new 2,414-seat building; it sits about 70% full.
- **Middles don't match their highs.** Sullivan, the largest middle (70% full), feeds a smaller South High. Burncoat Middle, slated for 725 seats, is ~177 seats short of matching its 1,400-seat high.

Other complications

- **Separate applications.** Each CTE program runs its own state-timed lottery (open Nov. 1 to at least Jan. 1); placements can run into the fall.
- **Other paths.** Claremont is its own 7–12 zone; ~378 high schoolers attend alternative programs.
- **A fragile balance.** If Tech, transfer or program patterns shift, North High's hidden overcrowding returns.
- **Capacity isn't the target.** Principals' optimal enrollment is below building capacity at most schools (next slide), so real room is smaller than these percentages suggest.

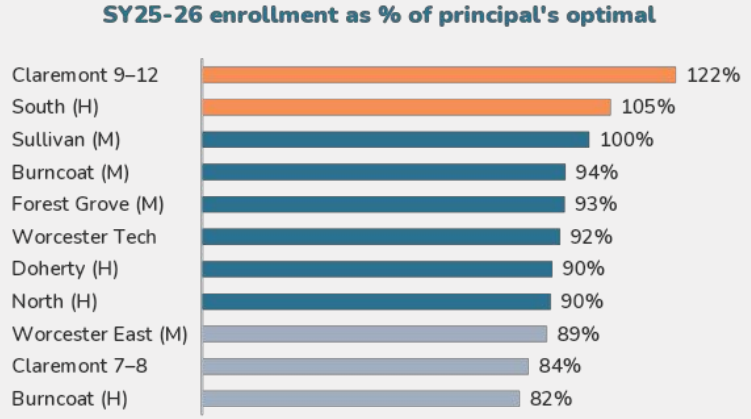
Capacity vs. Principals' Optimal Enrollment

Principals' optimal enrollment sits below building capacity at most schools, so buildings are fuller than capacity numbers suggest.

Building	Capacity	Principal Optimal	Enrolled SY25-26	Enrolled vs. Optimal
Forest Grove (M)	1,086	1,000 (92%)	933	-67
Sullivan (M)	1,359	950 (70%)	946	-4
Worcester East (M)	949	875 (92%)	776	-99
Burncoat (M)	725	725	678	-47
Claremont 7–8	250	200 (80%)	168	-32
Doherty (H)	2,414	1,900 (79%)	1,711	-189
South (H)	1,926	1,600 (83%)	1,681	+81
North (H)	1,392	1,392 (100%)	1,300	-92
Burncoat (H)*	1,400	1,150 (82%)	940	-210
Claremont 9–12	360	360	439	+79
Worcester Tech	1,738	1,500 (86%)	1,381	-119

Optimal (% of capacity) shown where it differs from capacity. Shaded: enrolled above optimal. . *New building (2032); current building holds 1,019.

Principal Optimal Capacity takes into consideration existing classroom counts, course/class scheduling, instructional & support staffing, nutrition lunch schedules and feeding availability, student & staff parking, and arrival & dismissal schedules with neighborhood traffic concerns.



- **Capacity overstates room.** Sullivan Middle can support 950 in a 1,359-seat building; Doherty, 1,900 in 2,414.
- **Over optimal today:** South High (+81) and Claremont high school grades (+79, 122% of its seats).
- **North High is the outlier:** its optimal is 1,392 yet the zone holds 2,053 high schoolers.
- **Most room left:** Burncoat High (210 under optimal), Doherty (189), Worcester Tech (119), Worcester East (99).

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Flex Zones

Analysis indicates operational complexity and family uncertainty outweigh potential enrollment benefits.

FAMILY IMPACT

High Level of Uncertainty

Unpredictable School Assignments: Annual activations create significant instability for incoming 7th and 9th-grade families regarding school placements.

Community Friction: Neighborhood cohesion is disrupted when adjacent households are flexed to different secondary schools.

OPERATIONAL BURDEN

Excessive Administrative Overhead

Annual Management Cycle: Running a recurring volunteer and lottery process every year imposes a heavy recurring burden on district operations.

Transportation & Planning Challenges: Constant yearly shifts complicate bus route planning, staffing allocations, and long-term facility resource projections.



Flex Zones Proposal Shelved

District will explore alternative non-disruptive capacity balancing strategies.

SECTION 04

Next Steps

WPS OG Subcommittee Meeting

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Next Steps

01

Nov 30th

Ops & Gov Sub Committee

OG Meeting Vote identify and submit recommendations to full school committee

02

Dec 3rd

School Committee

Full Committee Meeting
Presentation of Final Options

03

Dec 17th

School Committee

Final Vote

04

Jan – March

Implementation

District implementation plan is established

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