November 30, 2026

Worcester Public Schools

ITEM GB 6-72 • Administration Response to the DillingerRAD Recommendations

School Boundary & Quadrant Alignment Project

Administration Recommendations

PRESENTED BY:

Sara Consalvo

Chief Financial & Operations Officer

VISION TO ACTION

Leading with Purpose, Delivering Results

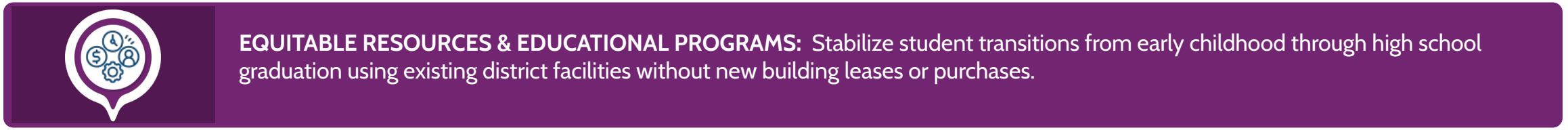
DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT GOAL #3

Grounded in Optimal Utilization, Community Feedback & Educational Equity

Worcester Public Schools is committed to a systematic approach with school boundaries and facility utilization that relieves overcrowding, strengthens under-enrolled campuses, and creates predictable Pre-K–12 pathways.



EQUITABLE RESOURCES & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS: Relieve over-capacity classroom environments to directly facilitate core instruction, optimize class sizes, and maximize quality instructional time.



EQUITABLE RESOURCES & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS: Stabilize student transitions from early childhood through high school graduation using existing district facilities without new building leases or purchases.



FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Use culturally responsive, multi-format outreach to keep communities informed and engaged and integrated ongoing feedback via public forums, working groups, and digital surveys to build shared stakeholder investments.

40+
Outreach Events

500+
Community Submissions

Broad Stakeholder Collaboration: Monthly Advisory Working Group Meetings, Student Advisory, Principal Academies, EAW, Worcester Housing Authority, and City Economic Development.

Summary of Recommendations

Key Targets	DillingerRAD Recommendation	Administration Recommendation
1. Implementation	Plan Jan–Mar 2027, Partial Implementation SY27–28, Complete 2030-31	Plan through Sept 2027; Partial Implementation SY28–29, Complete by 2031–2032
2. Pre-K Alignment	3 year full day conversion & reposition classrooms seats to match quadrant eligible children, phased by readiness & funding	Reposition classrooms so each quadrant seat count aligns with share of Pre-K-eligible children, phased to full day by funding and facilities
3. Program Access	Central, transparent process & quadrant-based proportional seat allocation.	Centralize application for admission-based programs, maintain CTE for state requirements while pursue expansion opportunities
4. Voluntary Transfers	Limit & approve centrally based on capacity	Centralize based on capacity, include parameters for Principal involvement
5. Bell Schedule	2 year transition to 3 tier bells schedule	Pause transition to a 3-tier bell schedule to continue impact discussions
6. Elem. Boundaries	Adopt Draft 4 or 5 in SY28–29	Adopt School Committee Recommendation of Draft 4 or 5 with targeted refinements
7. Secondary Plan	Defer boundary changes and complete secondary strategic plan during SY27–28	Maintain proposed elementary boundary changes and complete secondary strategic plan by SY29-30

Realignment Implementation Timeframe

Consultant Proposal: Begin partial implementation in SY2027–28 and complete realignment by 2030–31, guided by a plan developed January–March 2027.

JAN – SEPT 2027

1

Comprehensive Plan

Extend planning through Sept 2027 to incorporate community engagement, legacy parameters, and operational readiness.

SY 2028–2029

2

Partial Implementation

Launch initial elementary boundary changes with legacy enrollment rules and clear bus eligibility.

SY 2030–2031 & Beyond

3

Full Realignment

Create & complete benchmarks, potential for adjusting enrollment trends, funding impacts, and commitment to community after-school partners.

ONGOING

4

Dedicated Outreach

Multilingual family and staff communication campaigns via ParentSquare, webpages, and language interpretation.

Preschool Expansion

Consultant Proposal: Convert half-day Pre-K to full-day over three years and reposition classrooms so each quadrant seat count matches eligible children.

Quadrant Seat Repositioning

Align Pre-K classroom distribution alongside elementary boundary changes so quadrants seat counts match its share of Pre-K-eligible children.

Protect Total Seat Counts

Phase to full-day programs as funding and space allows, recognizing full-day conversion **doubles classroom space requirements** and that smaller elementary buildings are not feasible due to room/grade configurations.

Expansion Planning

Develop an expansion plan during the FY29 budget planning that prioritizes highest-need neighborhoods with the largest slot deficits, leveraging grants, state and local funding.

Program Access for Students

Consultant Proposal: Manage all districtwide program applications through one central process with quadrant-based proportional seat allocation.

Unified WooEdu Module	Transition admissions-based programs from fragmented school-by-school processes into a centralized WooEdu portal managed by the Parent Information Center.
Family Digital Features	Provide single-portal login, mobile-friendly forms, electronic document uploads, automated alerts, and timestamped lottery and waitlist records.
CTE Platform Continuity	Maintain Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs on existing platform to align seamlessly with state reporting requirements.
Defer Proportional Seat Allocation	District would not transition to proportional seat allocation at this time, will monitor and refine to ensure accessibility and continue to pursue opportunities to expand student program seats and programs, as appropriate.

Voluntary Transfer for Students

Consultant Proposal: Limit voluntary transfers and approve them centrally based on available capacity at both sending and receiving schools.

Centralized Oversight

Preserve Intra-City Choice

Continue voluntary transfers (requests to attend outside a student's assigned residential zone) separate from boundary realignment.

Centralized Capacity Verification

Require central approval managed at the Parent Information Center based on verified capacity at both locations so transfers do not cause overcrowding or under-enrollment.

Receiving-School Principal Input

Grade-Level Seat Availability

Create capacity requirements & allow building principals to participate in determining exact grade-level seat availability at receiving schools.

Structured Selection Criteria

Implement standardized parameters for Principals to be engaged in process.

Standardized Tier & Bell Transportation System

Consultant Proposal: Transition to a three-tier bell schedule over two years with clear, transparent transportation eligibility rules.

Administration Action: Defer transition to a 3-tier bell schedule to continue impact discussions with afterschool providers and district staff.

Analyzed Tier Structure

Tier 1 (7:15 AM–1:38 PM): High Schools & Specialized Programs

Tier 2 (8:15 AM–2:38 PM): Majority of Neighborhood Elementary Schools

Tier 3 (9:05 AM–3:28 PM): Middle Schools, Specialized Elem Hubs & Non-District

Transportation & Legacy Benefits

Reduced Walk Radius: 1.0 mile Elementary, 1.5 miles Middle, 1.75 miles High School.

Bus Reliability: Improves on-time routing and would support legacy grade transportation upon implementation.

Instructional & Operational Synergies

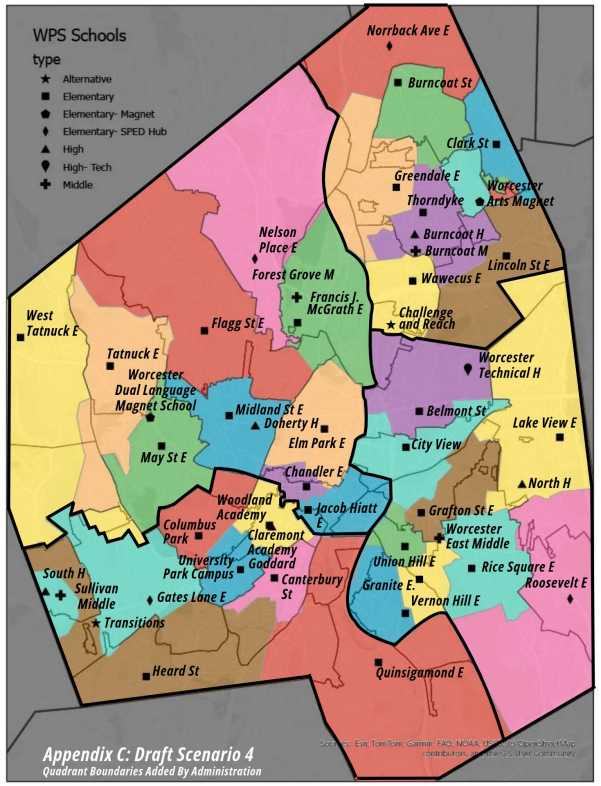
Districtwide PLCs: Uniform schedules enable job-alike educator collaboration for professional learning communities.

Staff Scheduling: Maximizes itinerant staff scheduling.

Elementary School Boundaries with Draft 4 or Draft 5

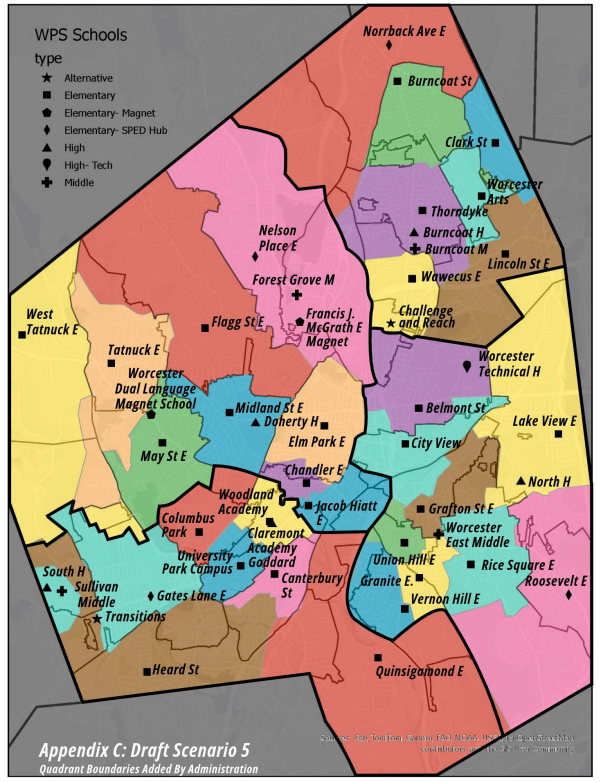
DRAFT #4 OPTION (DELAYED TO SY 2031–32)

Greendale Head Start: Relocate Head Start and convert Greendale into a neighborhood boundary school to absorb Lincoln Village and Great Brook Valley growth.



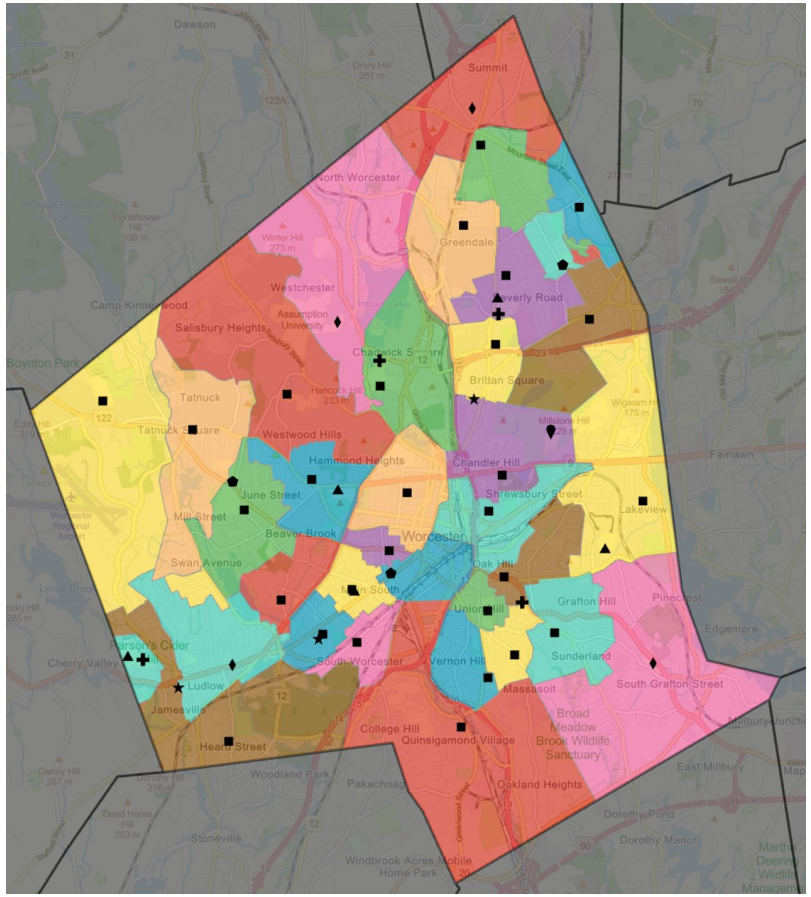
DRAFT #5 OPTION (DELAYED TO SY 2031–32)

Worcester Arts Magnet (WAMS) Transition: Retire the specialized arts magnet program and convert WAMS into a neighborhood boundary school for Lincoln Village and Great Brook Valley growth.



DillingerRAD: 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

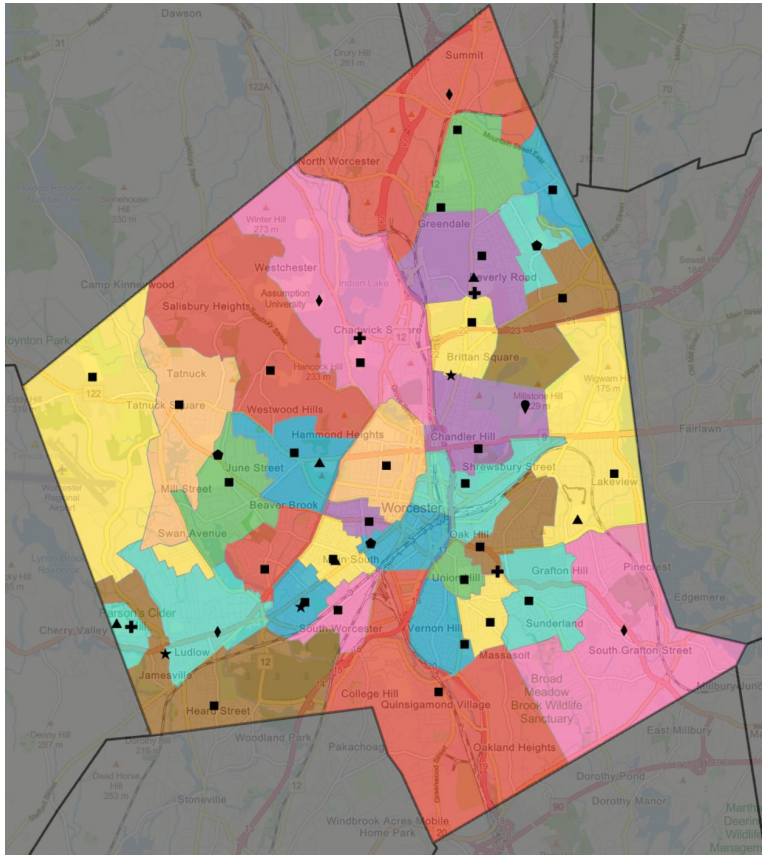
Cons

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

Dillinger RESEARCH AND APPLIED DATA

DillingerRAD: 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
- 5 small schools have no room for Pre-K
- Big moves for McGrath and Plumley families

Dillinger RESEARCH AND APPLIED DATA

Elementary School Boundaries with Draft 4 or Draft 5

Administration Action: Defer & Revisit Burncoat Quadrant impacts of the Curtis Apartments and GBV construction projects, enrollment trends and potential space needed through the conversion of WAMS, Greendale, or McGrath, and other surrounding schools until 2030-31.

Contiguous Feeders: Maps nearly every elementary zone to a single dedicated middle and high school.

Jacob Hiatt Zoning: Becomes a zoned neighborhood school in SY2028–29 to absorb Chandler Street area enrollment growth.

Plumley Village & Belmont St: Move all of Plumley Village to City View to relieve overcrowding at Belmont Street School.

6th Grade & Quadrants: 6th graders from Rice Square, as well as Union Hill, and Grafton Street School to attend Worcester East Middle.

Quadrant Alignment: All elementary schools remain in current quadrants, except Vernon Hill is reassigned to the North Quadrant.

Strategic Deferrals: Plan to use Granite Street School to relieve Rice Square **no sooner than SY2028–29**; defer Curtis Apartments/GBV impacts and WAMS, Greendale, or McGrath discussions until **2030–31**.

Cost Implications: Initial costs of reopening Granite Street or Greendale as an elementary school supporting approximately 250 students is anticipated to cost $2.6 million dollars.

Middle & High School Boundaries

Consultant Proposal: Defer secondary boundary changes and complete a secondary strategic plan during SY2027–28.

Administration Plan (SY 2029–30)

Secondary Boundary Changes: Complete a comprehensive secondary strategic plan by **SY2029–30** of enrollment and educational programming that will align with major capital investments, including the new planned Burncoat High School.

Expand High-Demand Pathways: Integrate increased educational opportunities in the North Quadrant, as well as expansion of the High School Dual Language program.

Near-Term Stability: Safeguard pathways immediately through centralized WooEdu admissions and voluntary transfer oversight.

Secondary Optimal Enrollment Factors

Utilized MSBA guidelines and principal feedback to identify ideal operational capacity of students beyond square footage:

1. **Course Scheduling & Planning:** Teacher planning periods and uneven AP/Elective section caps.
2. **Specialized Lab Spaces:** Safety caps in science labs, art studios & vocational shops.
3. **Lunch Transitions:** Cafeteria seating & serving-line without disrupting breakfast or dismissal.
4. **Traffic & Parking:** Safe bus loops, drop-off lanes, and staff/student/visitor parking limits.
5. **Staffing Resources:** Manageable student-to-counselor, administrative, and interventionist ratios.

Align School Designation Standards & Program Updates

Retire "Community School" Labels:

Remove the designation from Belmont Street, Chandler Elementary, Clark Street, Elm Park, Quinsigamond, and South High.

District funding ended more than 20 years ago for designated community schools. Removing the label ensures every campus embodies a unified, resource-rich community environment.

Align “Magnet” & Naming Standards:

Remove the "Magnet" label from Canterbury Street, Jacob Hiatt, and Tatnuck (under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37I) as they transition to dedicated neighborhood schools.

Standardize "Elementary" naming across K–6 schools, preserving historical/recently signed exceptions listed in Appendix A.

UPCS & Clark University Update:

Per UPCS Administration’s request, the proposal to consider program co-location with Claremont is withdrawn.

District Administration and Clark University will continue discussions to align opportunities benefiting students at both schools.

Conclusion & Next Steps

School Committee Deliberation & Vote:

Final action on Item gb 6-72 recommendations and direction on Draft #4 / Draft #5 conversion options.

December 2026

Implementation Plan & Capacity Refinement:

Develop comprehensive implementation plan, refine elementary capacity using current enrollment data, and finalize WooEdu program access and voluntary transfer guidelines.

January – September 2027

Pre-K Expansion Integration:

Integrate targeted Pre-K classroom expansion locations and facility readiness into FY29 budget recommendations.

FY29 Budget Cycle

Launch & Ongoing Engagement:

Launch North Quadrant programming updates and High School Dual Language placement, continue 3-tier transportation stakeholder discussions, and begin Phase 1 elementary boundary implementation for the start of the SY2028–29.

SY 2027–2028 & Beyond

Thank you

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SUPPORTING REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix A: Naming Consistency Recommendations
Appendix B: District Community Engagement Schedule
Appendix C: District Current & Scenario #4 & #5 Recommended Maps

Project Webpage: Worcester Public Schools School Boundary & Quadrant Realignment Project

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worcesterschools.org

20 Irving Street, Worcester, MA 01609