

**TO: School Committee Members**

**FROM: Emily Parks, Superintendent**

**DATE: February 9, 2018**

**RE: Recommendation to Create University Station Buffer Zone**

---

As you know, while our elementary population overall all is declining, the enrollment at Downey continues to rise. Some, but by no means all, of this increase is related to students who are new to the district and living at University Station. As of February 1, 2018, we have 39 students living at University station, distributed as follows:

**Distribution of Students Residing at University Station (by school)**

Preschool	1
Downey	20
Deerfield	1
Sheehan	1
TMS	10
WHS	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39</b>

**Distribution of Students Residing at University Station (by grade)**

PreK	1
Kindergarten	3
Gr. 1	4
Gr. 2	1
Gr. 3	4
Gr. 4	4
Gr. 5	6
Gr. 6	6
Gr. 7	4
Gr. 8	0
Gr. 9	3
Gr. 10	1
Gr. 11	1
Gr. 12	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39</b>

The units that were completed during phase 1 of the project (apartments) are currently 94% occupied. The number of students currently enrolled (39) is well-below the projection of 49-63 students from the independent fiscal impact study that the SC had conducted in 2013. As we contemplate phase 2 of the project (condos), the Planning Board's peer review fiscal consultant projects that we could see the enrollment of another 12 students. The fact that the current units at University Station are apartments may result in less predictability about when students enter or exit the district.

As we have been discussing during the budget process, our total enrollment at Downey, though lower than it has been at times in the past, is relatively high compared to some other schools in the district. It is currently the only elementary school in the district where the student enrollment is projected to increase. By way of contrast, whereas our class sizes at Downey have little room to grow and remain within guideline (with some classes, in fact, currently slightly above guideline), class sizes at Deerfield have ample room to increase:

**Class Sizes as of February 1, 2018**

	<b>Downey</b>	<b>Variance from guideline</b>	<b>Deerfield</b>	<b>Variance from guideline</b>
Kindergarten	23, 24	+1, +2	19	-3
Gr. 1	22, 23	0, +1	14,15	-8, -7
Gr. 2	21, 22	-1, 0	16, 17	-6, -5
Gr. 3	21, 21	-1, -1	21, 22	-1, 0
Gr. 4	22, 24	-2, 0	14, 15	-8, -7
Gr. 5	18, 18	-6, -6	15, 16, 17	-7, -6, -5

I am recommending that we designate University Station as a "buffer zone" district. Families that newly enroll will be assigned either to Downey or to Deerfield based on our assessment of which school is best able to accommodate additional students at a given grade. We would commit to keeping siblings in the same school going forward. Any student who is currently enrolled at Downey would remain at Downey, and their siblings would also attend Downey. I believe that this "buffer zone" would provide some much-needed flexibility as we attempt to mitigate disparities in class sizes between schools. Clearly, at the moment, and for the foreseeable future, we would probably place new students at Deerfield.

Implementing this recommendation will require a transportation plan. While a bus from University Station would continue to transport students to Downey, additionally, we would add a van (max 8 students) to transport students to Deerfield (which is on an earlier schedule than Downey) at an annual cost of \$18,000. It seems quite possible that one van would accommodate students requiring transportation to Deerfield, but in the event that enrollment exceeded 8 new students, we would add a second van for an additional \$18,000. It is very unlikely based on our experience with enrollment at University Station thus far and the enrollment projections from the fiscal review studies, that our transportation needs would exceed 16 students. We feel confident that we can accommodate the cost of the vans within the proposed transportation budget.