

TO: School Committee
FROM: Emily Parks, Superintendent
DATE: October 4, 2019
RE: Enrollment and Class Size Report

In anticipation of our upcoming budget process, I am providing you with information about current class sizes and enrollment.

Elementary Class Sizes:

As you know from prior discussions, our current elementary class sizes are quite favorable, with virtually all of our class sections either within or below the class size guidelines:

Table 1: Elementary Class Sizes

	17 or fewer students	18-22 students	23 or more students	Total sections
Deerfield	3	6	1	10
Downey	3	10	1	14
Hanlon	7	5	0	12
Martha Jones	7	7	1	15
Sheehan	3	12	1	16
Total	23	40	4	67

Three elementary classrooms are slightly above guideline (Deerfield, grade 2; Downey, grade 3; and Martha Jones, grade 3). Notably, if these sections remain the same size next year, the current grade 3 classrooms will be within the guideline for grade 4.

During the budget process, we make predictions about the incoming kindergarten class by using census data from the town about children who will be age-eligible to enroll in school the following fall. Actual kindergarten enrollment tends to be slightly higher than this data point as families move to Westwood at the start of their child's K-12 education. That proved to be true this year. Though there were 159 age-eligible students at the time of the FY'20 budget development process, there are 171 students enrolled in this year's kindergarten class.

Table 2: Projected¹ to Actual Kindergarten Enrollment

Year	Projected (based on census data)	Actual
2018-2019	186	206
2019-2020	159	171
2020-2021	175	?

Census data indicates that there are 175 children currently living in town who will be age-eligible for kindergarten in 2020-2021.

Middle School Class Sizes:

The enrollment at the middle school decreased by 48 students between last year and this year’s October 1st enrollment report. Given the declining enrollment, in the FY’20 budget, we reduced staffing by a total of 2.0 FTE teachers (i.e. 1.0 FTE ELA, .2 FTE Science, .4 FTE Math, and .4 FTE PE). As illustrated below, even with this reduction, very few core academic classes at TMS currently exceed the SC guideline of “18-24 students, ideally not higher than 28.”

Table 2: TMS Class Sizes

	Fewer than 15 students		15-19 students		20-24 students		25 or more students		Total sections
	# of sections	% of sections	# of sections	% of sections	# of sections	% of sections	# of sections	% of sections	
<i>English</i>	0	0%	12	38%	19	59%	1	3%	32
<i>Foreign Language</i>	2	10%	9	48%	6	32%	2	10%	19
<i>Math</i>	10	25%	11	28%	10	25%	9	22%	40
<i>Science</i>	1	3%	9	26%	24	71%	0	0%	34
<i>Social Studies</i>	2	6%	11	32%	21	62%	0	0%	34
Total	15	9%	52	33%	80	50%	12	8%	159

Across the 159 core academic classes, only 12 sections (8%) currently have 25 or more students, effectively the same as the prior school year. Moreover, only 2 sections of the 159 core academic classes exceed the guideline of “not more than 28.”

¹ For the purpose of this chart, “projected” refers to children currently residing in Westwood who will be age-eligible for kindergarten the following fall

Next year’s enrollment at the middle school is expected to be slightly lower than this year.

High School Class Sizes:

The district enrollment bubble is currently at the high school. Last year’s high school enrollment represented a 10-year high with 1012 students. This year’s enrollment is virtually unchanged with 1006 students as of the October 1 enrollment report. The high school enrollment is projected to remain about the same next year and then begin to decline. By 2024-2025, high school enrollment is projected to dip under 900, which has not been the case since 2010-2011.

Managing class sizes at the high school is more complex than at other schools in the district. Class sizes are driven by a number of factors including overall enrollment, course levels, and an elective program that attempts to provide both a breadth of offerings to support diverse student interests as well as opportunities for students to specialize or study a field in depth over time.

The SC guideline for high school is class sizes of “18-24, ideally not larger than 28.” The table below shows the distribution of class sizes in each department at WHS:

Table 3: WHS Class Sizes

	Fewer than 15 students		15-19 students		20-24 students		25 of more students		Total sections
	# of sections	% of sections	# of sections	% of sections	# of sections	% of sections	# of sections	% of sections	
<i>English</i>	11	18%	21	34%	21	34%	8	13%	61 ²
<i>Foreign Language</i>	16	33%	15	31%	10	20%	8	16%	49
<i>Math</i>	12	22%	15	27%	22	40%	6	11%	55
<i>Science</i>	10	16%	17	27%	22	36%	13	21%	62
<i>Social Studies</i>	13	20%	24	38%	23	36%	4	6%	64
Total	62	21%	92	32%	98	34%	39	13%	291

As displayed in the table above, 21% of core academic classes at the high school are below 15 students (about the same as last year). These small class sizes often occur when running level 3 classes in core academic areas or in response to student elective choices.

Conversely, only 13% of core academic classes have 25 or more students, as compared to 19% in 2018-2019.

We have been able to keep most class sections within guideline during a period of increased enrollment by strategically adding staff. In the FY’20 budget, we addressed the need for additional staffing in English and Social Studies by adding 2.0 FTE teachers, resulting in fewer large classes in the humanities:

² This total does not include Public Speaking classes.

Table 4: Impact of FY'20 Staff Additions

**WHS English Department
Classes with 25 or More Students**

	# of sections	% of sections
2018-2019	13	23%
2019-2020	8	13%

**WHS Social Studies Department
Classes with 25 or More Students**

	# of sections	% of sections
2018-2019	15	29%
2019-2020	4	6%

Given the complexity of the master schedule at the high school, some larger sections will always exist. These larger classes often reflect challenges that arise in a given year resulting in skewed section sizes in a given class. For example, the transition this year to a “Biology first” model necessitated a greater number of Biology sections than usual within current staffing and teacher license areas. As a result, the class sizes in some Biology sections are larger than is typical. In addition, singleton elective choices, such as Latin III, Mandarin I, and AP Government tend to be large.

Guidance Staffing:

Last spring, using anticipated turnover funds and savings realized by restructuring the leadership model at the Preschool, we added guidance staffing at both the high school (.6 FTE) and middle school (1.0 FTE) for FY'20. The chart below displays the impact of increased staffing on guidance counselor caseload:

Table 5: Student to Guidance Counselor Ratios

	TMS	WHS
2018-2019	373:1	233:1
2019-2020	224:1	183:1

Counselor caseload at both schools decreased significantly. In addition, the increase in staffing at the middle school enabled a change in model so that there is one counselor associated with each grade.

Conclusion:

As reflected above, in general, class sizes across the district are quite favorable. The above class size data, enrollment projections, and district program needs and strategic priorities, will be considered throughout the FY'21 budget development process. Though the information above speaks most directly to next year and the FY'21 budget cycle, we will also consider longer-term enrollment trends and staffing needs over the next 3-5 years.