

NEWTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

100 Walnut Street, Newtonville, MA 02460

AREA CODE (617) 559-9025

**** Memorandum ****

TO: David Fleishman, Superintendent
School Committee

FROM: Sandra Guryan, Deputy Superintendent/Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: June 15, 2015

RE: Recommendation of the Student Assignment Working Group

The recommendation for changes to Newton Public Schools student assignment policy will be presented to School Committee on June 15, 2015. This recommendation is the cumulative result of six months of intensive analysis and learning about the possibilities that exist for student assignment changes necessary to relieve some school crowding and utilize expanded capacity at new schools. The recommendation of the Student Assignment Working Group balances Newton Public Schools priorities with the factors that are important to children, family and communities.

Background

The student assignment review process was initiated early in the 2014-15 year. Given the complexity and seriousness of changes of this type, it was anticipated that a thorough review of multiple options for change would need to be conducted. Seven scenarios were researched and tested, with multiple versions of each considered. Four main scenarios advanced through the process while some scenarios that involved the north side of the city or the Cabot School were postponed. Planning and activity around the acquisition of the Aquinas property was the main reason for this deferral, as well as the fact that the Cabot School will be completed in 2019.

Communication

Throughout this process, there has been a commitment to proactive communication to families, community members and other stakeholders – regular updates have been sent out this year. The website has been a key resource to parents and community members seeking information about the process and has received 1,600 visits since March 2015. All communications, presentations, maps, and other resource have been made available on line, and the link has been widely disseminated. Numerous emails from the public have been received and reviewed via communication channels on the web site.

A final communication effort has been made prior to the June 15, 2015 School Committee meeting and the June 22, 2015 public hearing. This effort includes a press release, emails to current and incoming parents, and a letter to residents for whom the recommended policy changes will have a direct impact: residents with children under five years old and residents in potential areas of change.

Recommendation of Scenario G.3

The goal from the outset of the student assignment review process has been to achieve the most favorable results with the fewest negative impacts. Early in this process it was known that factors affecting current families would be the most difficult, especially disrupting students once they have started school. The School Committee and administration were clear that currently enrolled students should not be asked to change schools under a new student assignment policy, and elementary siblings should not be separated. The recommendation of Scenario G.3 achieves enrollment goals for the expanded Angier and Zervas schools, holds family impact to a minimum and has additional benefits for students, schools and communities in Newton.

Main Merits of Scenario G.3

The recommended scenario will shift enrollment to Angier and Zervas from several schools that are experiencing overcrowding and are enrolled beyond their enrollment capacity, and/or have insufficient classrooms available for special education, art or music. Crowding at Mason-Rice, Bowen, Countryside and Burr will be reduced by a significant degree as student assignment changes are phased in. Ward is expected to closely maintain its current enrollment, avoiding some additional growth that was projected.

The recommendation is sensitive to walking and transit needs: the largest area of change is favorable from a walking perspective. The recommendation is friendly to neighborhoods by reducing buffer zones while striving to strike a balance between the district's need for buffer zones as a means of balancing enrollment at schools with the community's goal of neighborhood cohesion.

The Working Group extensively explored relieving crowding on the north side of town and this recommendation achieves some relief at Burr and eventually Day Middle School. The recommendation improves the balance of north and south feeder patterns by a modest but significant degree. Managing the enrollment distribution between Newton North and Newton South, which are facilities that were built for the same size student body, is a district priority, especially as enrollment continues to grow at the high schools.

The maps included at the end of this memo show the series of changes and then the results of those changes to permanent school district boundary lines and buffer zones.

Evaluation of the Scenarios

One of the first tasks of the Working Group was to develop clear criteria by which various options would be evaluated, thus introducing as much objectivity and consistency into the process as possible. Use of the evaluation criteria matrix allowed the Working Group to eliminate the two scenarios that received the lowest ratings: Scenario A which re-assigned students from the north and east, and Scenario C, which re-assigned students primarily from the south. Scenarios F and G took a similar approach by re-assigning students from the east and west and were the most highly rated by the Working Group. The main factors that caused scenarios to receive different ratings, either positive or negative, were:

- Number of students re-assigned for more than one grade level
- Number of students impacted to achieve the target enrollment changes

- Number and location of schools where crowding was eased
- Walkability and distances to school were equal or favorable
- Transportation distance and cost implications

A copy of an aggregated evaluation matrix completed by the Working Group is attached.

Summary of Recommended Student Assignment Changes

A map is included at the end of the memo to clearly illustrate all of the changes that are included as part of this recommendation. The following table summarizes each recommended change and clarifies the type of change, the current status of the area subject to change and the resulting changing of student assignment. Note that several of the recently approved buffer zones coincide with the permanent recommendations, though there are some differences. Three-way buffer zones are eliminated in this recommendation.

SCENARIO G.3

SUMMARY OF STUDENT ASSIGNMENT CHANGES

MAP KEY	TYPE OF CHANGE	CURRENT ASSIGNMENT	DESCRIPTION OF AREA	RECOMMENDED ASSIGNMENT
1	Boundary Change	Angier-Williams buffer zone	Lower Falls	Angier district
3	Boundary Change	Burr-Williams buffer zone	South of Commonwealth, North of Pike	Williams district
7	Boundary Change	Countryside-Zervas buffer zone	Circuit Ave	Zervas district
10	Boundary Change	* Bowen-Mason-Rice-Zervas buffer zone	Between Centre-Clark-Boylston (west)	Zervas district
12	Boundary Change	* Mason-Rice-Zervas buffer zone	West of Walnut Street	Zervas district
13	Boundary Change	* Mason-Rice-Zervas buffer zone	South of Homer Ave by City Hall	Zervas district
14	Boundary Change	Mason-Rice-Ward buffer zone	South of Commonwealth	Mason-Rice district
15	Boundary Change	Bowen-Mason-Rice buffer zone	South of Beacon, around Langley	Mason-Rice district
2	Buffer Zone Addition	Williams district	Lower Falls	Angier-Williams buffer zone
4	Buffer Zone Change	Angier-Countryside buffer zone	North of Eliot Street	Angier-Zervas buffer zone
5	Buffer Zone Change	Angier-Countryside buffer zone	South of Eliot Street	Countryside district
6	Buffer Zone Change	* Angier-Countryside-Zervas buffer zone	89-99 Needham Street	Countryside-Zervas buffer zone
11	Buffer Zone Change	* Bowen-Mason-Rice-Zervas buffer zone	Between Centre-Clark-Boylston (east)	Bowen-Mason-Rice buffer zone

* Approved buffer zone changes for 2015-16

Results of Student Assignment Changes

The chart that follows summarizes the fully phased-in overall enrollment impact projected ten years in the future of recommended boundary changes. The enrollment changes summarized below are fully integrated with Newton Public Schools enrollment projections as of November 2014. A detailed enrollment projection for all elementary schools showing the effects of Scenario G.3 is attached. Detailed enrollment projections for Zervas and Angier, with accompanying before and after graphs are also included. The actual phase-in of enrollment changes will depend upon the use of buffer zones and other student placements at the new schools, and may occur more quickly than is shown on the detailed enrollment tables.

SCENARIO G.3
SUMMARY OF STUDENT ASSIGNMENT CHANGES

2014-15 ENROLLMENT AND PROJECTION					NEW ENROLLMENT PROJECTION*			
Elementary School	OCT 2014	OCT 2014 # Classes/ % Enrolled Capacity		OCT 2024 PROJECTION	NEW OCT 2024 PROJECTION	CHANGE FROM 2014	OCT 2024 # Classes/ % Enrolled Capacity	
<u>North Feeding</u>								
Burr	424	19	108%	437	404	-20	18-20	103%
Ward	304	16	94%	316	300	-4	14-16	93%
<u>South Feeding</u>								
Angier	402	19	103%	439	451	49	22	97%
Bowen	475	24	98%	499	446	-29	21-23	92%
Countryside	466	22	101%	447	430	-36	19-20	93%
Mason-Rice	478	22	104%	497	440	-38	21-22	96%
Williams	292	14	106%	298	285	-7	14-15	103%
Zervas	309	16	103%	318	495	186	24	100%
Middle School	OCT 2014	OCT 2014 # Teams/ Avg. Team Size		OCT 2024 PROJECTION	NEW OCT 2024 PROJECTION	CHANGE FROM 2014	OCT 2024 # Teams/ Avg. Team Size	
<u>North Feeding</u>								
Bigelow	504	6.0	84	559	550	46	6.0	96
Day	932	10.5	89	1,041	1,023	91	10.5	96
<u>South Feeding</u>								
Brown	738	8.0	92	788	749	11	8.0	96
Oak Hill	632	7.5	84	643	709	77	7.5	96

*Ten Year Enrollment Projections through October 2024, as of November 2014 Enrollment Analysis

The sections that follow will provide additional explanation of the effects of student assignment changes relating to:

- Enrollment at elementary, middle and high schools
- North and south feeder patterns
- Community
- Financial implications
- Sustainability

Enrollment at Elementary Schools

The changes that are recommended in Scenario G.3, when fully implemented, are expected to result in a projected enrollment for Angier and Zervas of 451 students and 495 students, respectively. The projected enrollments are very close to the design capacities at Angier and Zervas of 465 and 490 students. Enrolling the new schools at 100% of capacity is acceptable because the building will be fully equipped with classrooms, small learning spaces, other instructional rooms, as well as community spaces for the full educational program.

In this recommendation, both Bowen and Mason-Rice avoid growing to schools of 500 students, and instead are projected as schools of 450 students when the changes are fully implemented. Both of these schools have had extensive internal reconfiguration in order to handle their growing enrollments, and have relied upon modular classrooms. Countryside is already identified on the long-range plan to be a priority in the next five years for renovation due to building condition, insufficient program spaces and reliance on modular classrooms. Countryside enrollment would be reduced to 430 students and a percentage of enrolled capacity of 93%. While Ward will continue to have the

enrollment pressures that are typical of smaller schools with mostly two sections per grade, Ward enrollment stabilizes under this recommendation. Projected enrollment at Williams is maintained in this proposal; the additional Angier-Williams buffer zone is adjacent to the Riverside MBTA station area and could later be expanded to provide the district with flexibility regarding the handling of future potential enrollment in that area.

Middle School Enrollment

As Zervas becomes a larger school, enrollment will eventually shift from Brown to Oak Hill where there is a lower enrollment capacity and limited options for expansion on the site. However, the theoretical arrays on team sizes that were reviewed as part of this process suggest that even though enrollment will grow at Oak Hill, the number of teams can remain stable with team sizes estimated to remain under 96 students. Furthermore, the impact of elementary student assignment changes will not be felt at middle schools for several years since only incoming students will be subject to the policy changes. The recommended changes can be implemented without disruption to middle school feeder patterns. The Working Group briefly considered whether Zervas Elementary School should feed to two middle schools as Cabot did for many years, but this was determined to be an unfavorable option. Another option the Working Group considered was to swap the feeder pattern for Zervas with a smaller elementary school. There is no recommendation for a change to middle school feeder patterns at this time, although this is an area that may require careful management in the future.

North and South Feeder Patterns

The recommendation for student assignment changes will help the enrollment balance between Newton North and South high schools. Scenarios were considered that were more favorable in terms of balancing north and south feeder patterns. These scenarios would have resulted in an estimated 15 students per year moving to south side middle schools and Newton South High School, an addition of 60 students to the total high school cohort. It is estimated that 8 students per year, and a high school cohort of 32, will shift to the south side in the current recommendation. This change would eventually narrow the difference in enrollment between the two high schools by 64 students.

These students will come from the Mason-Rice-Ward buffer zone and the Burr-Williams buffer zone. Both of these buffer zones already have attendance of 51% to 75% to the re-assigned school, and transit is typically by car/bus from these areas to either school because of major street crossings combined with distances of more than half a mile. In the case of the Burr-Williams buffer zone, most students live closer to Williams than to Burr and neither school is considered highly walkable. In sum, the Working Group saw an opportunity to positively impact the north-south balance and that the associated impact on students and families would be reasonable. The chart below shows the current attendance patterns and transit distances currently occurring in these areas:

Burr-Williams	Burr	Williams
Distance From zone mid-point (miles)	1.2	0.6
Major street crossings	Comm Ave	Mass Pike
Current attendance	49%	51%
Significant transit mode	Car/Bus	Car/Bus

Mason-Rice-Ward	Mason-Rice	Ward
Distance From zone mid-point (miles)	0.9	0.6
Major street crossings	Centre St	Comm Ave
Current attendance	75%	25%
Significant transit mode	Walk/Car/Bus	Walk

High School Enrollment

The enrollment capacities of Newton's high schools are equal yet Newton North enrollment in the current year is 2,060 while Newton South's enrollment is 1,804. High school enrollment is projected to grow by more than 300 students in the next five years. Managing the enrollment distribution between the two high schools, designed and built to serve the same size student body, is a high priority which will be modestly addressed by this recommendation.

Community Impact

The geographic context in which student assignment policy is developed in Newton is complex. There are uneven patterns of population density, many schools are very close together, and there are a significant number of major road ways. To the extent possible, the recommendation includes boundary and buffer zone areas that make sense geographically particularly with regard to transit distance to school and safe school routes.

The largest geographic and most populated area of change in the recommendation, which is an area of the Mason-Rice district west of Walnut Street, is favorable in terms of community impact. The approximate center of this area is equidistant to Zervas and Mason-Rice and many in the community currently enjoy walking to school. The walk to school to Zervas is not complicated by major roadway crossings whereas the walk to Mason-Rice involves crossing Walnut and Beacon Street. There are significant numbers of students who ride the bus in this area as well, as evidenced by average daily ridership of more than 35 students, and there are a number of bus stops currently in the area.

Mason-Rice Comp 4 (West of Walnut)	Mason-Rice	Zervas
Distance From zone mid-point (miles)	1.0	0.9
Major street crossings	Walnut/Beacon	None
Current attendance	100%	0%
Safe Route to School	Yes	Likely

There is a map included at the end of this memo with information about distances from school in this area, and two sample walking routes.

Financial Implications

All scenarios, because they involve shifting enrollment to Angier or Zervas from several other schools, are projected to require some additional teachers during implementation. This is simply because enrollment will increase to the point where a new teacher is required at Zervas before sending schools may be able to relinquish a teacher. Thus teacher transfers cannot be expected to exactly track enrollment changes. Draft theoretical elementary arrays have been reviewed and the potential additional need for

teachers is at least one per year for the implementation period. With awareness and planning, the budgetary impact can be anticipated and managed appropriately.

Because the recommendation involves many existing buffer zones where bus transportation is already available, there are not expected to be additional transportation costs due to these recommendations.

Sustainability

As has been stated, buffer zones are necessary in Newton. Buffer zones will also play an important role as the student reassignment recommendation is implemented and provide leeway if enrollment estimates are either high or low. New school buildings may be a draw for families choosing neighborhoods and moving into Newton, so enrollment projection trends will need to be monitored closely going forward. Continued use of buffer zones will help the district achieve equitable class sizes and the most balanced school facility use, especially during the years in which these changes are being implemented.

The district continues to monitor known or probable residential development in Newton and there are new developments in different stages to consider, including but not limited to Riverside. The current recommendation for boundary and buffer zone changes leaves room for additional growth and is anticipated to be sustainable for many years in the future.

Next Phase of Student Assignment Review and Elementary Long-Range Planning

The student assignment review process is intended to address school districts in a sequence that matches the timing of the planned school construction and/or renovation projects. Additional phases will occur as the plan for rebuilding or renovating elementary schools continues for the next 15-20 years. We have learned from this initial phase that the density patterns in Newton, the proximity of many of Newton's school buildings, the number of significant roadways and the culture of Newton's neighborhoods and villages make planning highly complex.

The next phase of student assignment review will focus on Cabot and the north side of the City where these density and school location issues, as well as the Massachusetts Turnpike corridor, will make planning even more challenging.

In addition to the large projects planned in the Cabot and Lincoln-Eliot districts, the long-range plan includes mid-sized school renovations at Peirce, Countryside and Williams. Newton's Capital Investment Plan (C.I.P) for the next five years has incorporated funding for feasibility study and design consistent with these plans but, due to the acquisition of the Aquinas property, this plan will be reviewed and a re-ordering of mid-sized renovation projects will occur. This planning will be done over the summer.

Next Steps

A public hearing designed to receive feedback on the student assignment recommendations is scheduled for June 22, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. at the Education Center, room 210. Further discussion of these recommendations, questions and adjustments based on feedback is anticipated during the remainder of June and in July.

CITY OF NEWTON STUDENT REASSIGNMENT

Recommended Solution: Scenario G3



School: Total Elementary

SCENARIO G.3

Current Projection

School	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
North Feeding											
Burr	424	426	431	436	443	434	436	435	438	438	437
Cabot	418	413	405	401	386	393	394	391	387	388	393
Franklin	413	416	438	441	451	447	443	450	452	455	451
Horace Mann	434	443	446	434	428	428	432	429	426	427	426
Lincoln-Eliot	337	340	341	345	348	348	338	338	339	343	340
Peirce	306	315	317	308	315	321	324	325	324	324	324
Underwood	341	337	340	352	355	357	345	350	349	350	351
Ward	304	309	317	320	320	316	318	320	318	318	316
Subtotal	2,977	2,999	3,035	3,037	3,046	3,034	3,031	3,038	3,033	3,043	3,038
South Feeding											
Angier	402	412	416	430	437	440	437	440	442	441	439
Bowen	475	485	492	507	511	490	502	504	503	500	499
Countryside	466	447	432	429	434	441	443	442	446	447	447
Mason-Rice	478	476	484	505	508	494	491	496	500	498	497
Memorial-Spaulling	434	447	451	463	467	478	471	472	474	477	474
Williams	292	276	288	296	299	310	319	316	311	306	298
Zervas	309	317	307	320	317	314	319	318	320	319	318
Subtotal	2,856	2,860	2,870	2,950	2,973	2,967	2,982	2,988	2,996	2,988	2,972
Total Elem	5,833	5,859	5,905	5,987	6,019	6,001	6,013	6,026	6,029	6,031	6,010

New Projection

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Capacity Projection - Percents

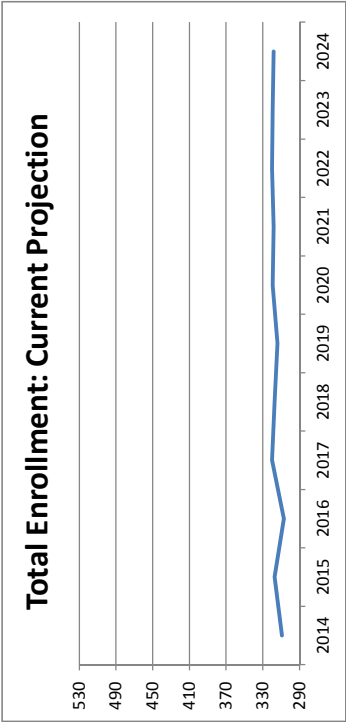
Year		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
North Feeding	Burr	108%	109%	110%	112%	113%	111%	112%	111%	112%	112%	112%
	Cabot	96%	95%	93%	92%	80%	82%	82%	81%	81%	81%	82%
	Franklin	95%	95%	100%	101%	103%	102%	101%	103%	103%	104%	103%
	Horace Mann	126%	128%	129%	126%	124%	124%	126%	124%	123%	124%	123%
	Lincaln-Eliot	98%	99%	99%	100%	101%	98%	98%	98%	98%	99%	99%
	Peirce	111%	114%	115%	112%	114%	116%	117%	118%	117%	117%	117%
	Underwood	93%	92%	92%	96%	96%	97%	94%	95%	95%	95%	95%
	Ward	94%	96%	98%	99%	99%	98%	99%	99%	99%	99%	98%
Subtotal		102%	103%	104%	104%	103%	102%	102%	102%	102%	103%	102%
South Feeding	Angier	97%	89%	89%	92%	94%	95%	94%	95%	95%	95%	94%
	Bowen	98%	100%	102%	105%	106%	101%	104%	104%	104%	104%	103%
	Countryside	101%	97%	94%	93%	94%	96%	96%	96%	97%	97%	97%
	Mason-Rice	104%	103%	105%	110%	110%	107%	107%	108%	109%	108%	108%
	Memorial-Spauldng	90%	93%	93%	96%	97%	99%	98%	98%	98%	99%	98%
	Williams	106%	100%	104%	107%	108%	112%	116%	114%	113%	111%	108%
	Zervas	103%	106%	103%	65%	65%	64%	65%	65%	65%	65%	65%
	Subtotal	99%	98%	98%	95%	95%	95%	96%	96%	96%	96%	95%
Total Elem		101%	100%	101%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%

Capacity Projection - Percents

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Current Projection

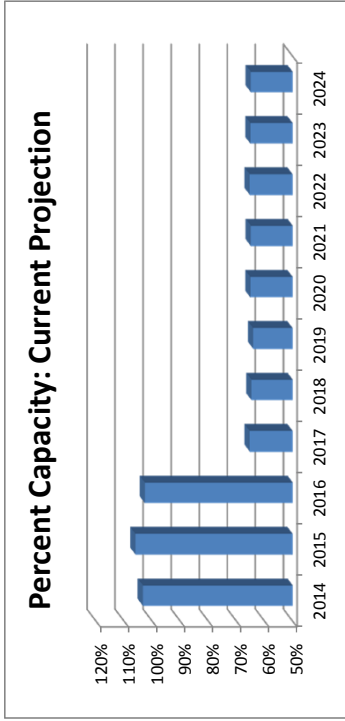
Grade	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
K	53	52	51	52	53	50	53	53	51	52	53
1	54	52	51	50	52	52	52	52	54	51	51
2	55	55	53	53	51	54	54	53	53	55	53
3	43	56	56	55	54	52	56	55	54	55	56
4	59	41	54	54	52	52	50	53	53	52	52
5	45	61	42	56	55	54	54	52	55	54	53
Total	309	317	307	320	317	314	319	318	320	319	318



Capacity Projection

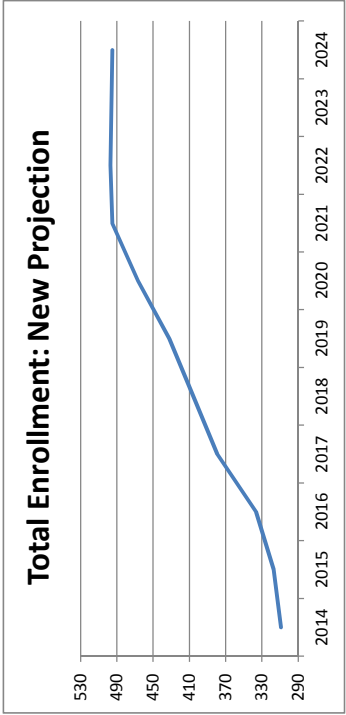
Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Capacity	299	299	299	490	490	490	490	490	490	490	490
% Used	103%	106%	103%	65%	65%	64%	65%	65%	65%	65%	65%

New Capacity 490



New Projection

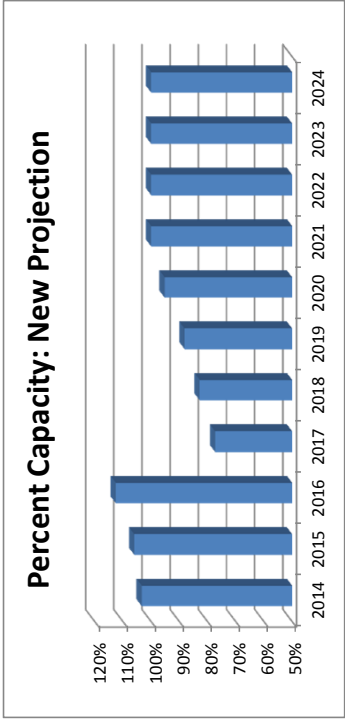
Grade	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
K	53	52	81	82	83	80	83	83	81	82	83
1	54	52	51	80	82	82	82	82	84	81	81
2	55	55	53	53	81	84	84	83	83	85	83
3	43	56	56	55	54	82	86	85	84	85	86
4	59	41	54	54	52	52	80	83	83	82	82
5	45	61	42	56	55	54	54	82	85	84	83
Total	309	317	337	379	406	432	467	495	497	496	495
Diff	0	0	30	59	89	118	148	177	177	177	177



Capacity Projection

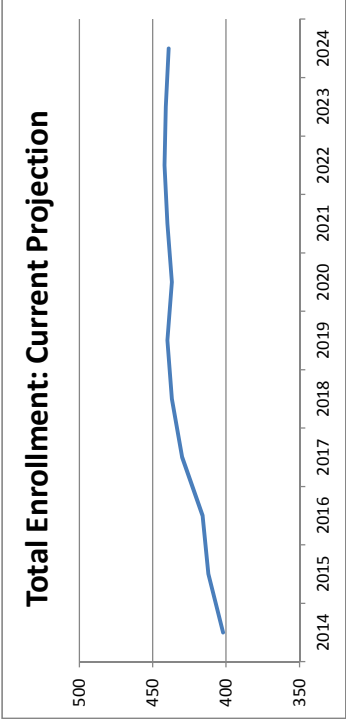
Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Capacity	299	299	299	490	490	490	490	490	490	490	490
% Used	103%	106%	113%	77%	83%	88%	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%

New Capacity 490



Current Projection

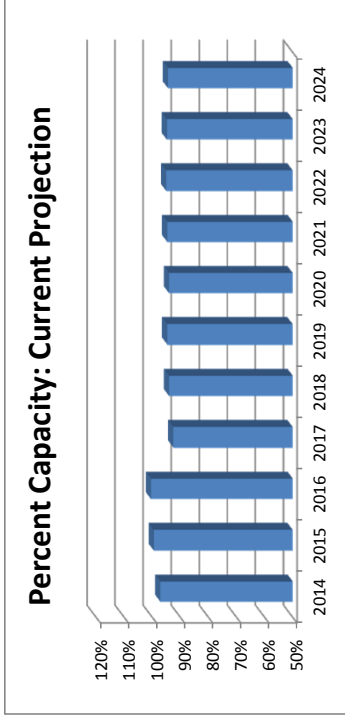
Grade	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
K	65	65	65	67	66	65	67	66	65	65	65
1	67	69	69	69	69	69	68	71	71	69	67
2	65	72	76	75	74	74	73	75	77	75	73
3	65	67	73	78	76	76	76	75	77	79	77
4	75	66	68	75	79	78	77	77	77	78	80
5	65	73	65	66	73	78	76	76	75	75	77
Total	402	412	416	430	437	440	437	440	442	441	439



Capacity Projection

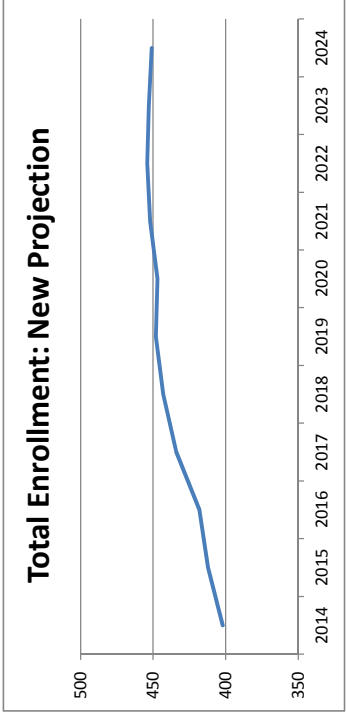
Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Capacity	414	414	414	465	465	465	465	465	465	465	465
% Used	97%	100%	100%	92%	94%	95%	94%	95%	95%	95%	94%

New Capacity 465



New Projection

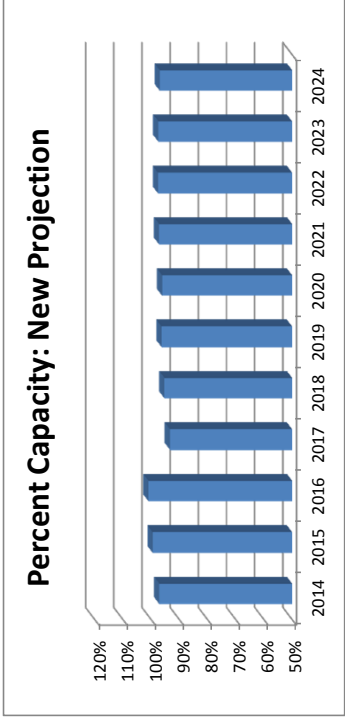
Grade	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
K	65	65	67	69	68	67	69	68	67	67	67
1	67	69	69	71	71	71	70	73	73	71	69
2	65	72	76	75	76	76	75	77	79	77	75
3	65	67	73	78	76	78	78	77	79	81	79
4	75	66	68	75	79	78	79	79	79	80	82
5	65	73	65	66	73	78	76	78	77	77	79
Total	402	412	418	434	443	448	447	452	454	453	451
Diff	0	0	2	4	6	8	10	12	12	12	12



Capacity Projection

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Capacity	414	414	414	465	465	465	465	465	465	465	465
% Used	97%	100%	101%	93%	95%	96%	96%	97%	98%	97%	97%

New Capacity 465



WEST OF WALNUT AREA RECOMMENDED AS ZERVAS DISTRICT IN SCENARIO G.3

