



DAVID FLEISHMAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

January 16, 2020

Dear Underwood and Ward Communities,

As you are aware, Newton is in the process of updating our educational facilities. Over the past several years, we have rebuilt three schools and are in the process of renovating two more. Underwood and Ward are now our two oldest buildings—built in 1924 and 1928 respectively.

Just prior to the holiday break, the most recent enrollment projections were presented to the School Committee. The projections indicate declining enrollments at Underwood and Ward. Within two years, enrollment at Underwood is projected to be 241 and enrollment at Ward is forecast at 218. In other words, our two oldest elementary schools are now our two smallest elementary schools.

Given our commitment to offering a rich menu of program options for students, as well as modern school facilities, we believe it is an opportune time to develop a plan for the future of Underwood and Ward. We are eager to explore the facilities and educational needs of both schools, as well as determine their optimal school community size. It is critical that we have educator and parent/guardian involvement at this important juncture for both schools.

With this goal in mind, we are putting together a task force to jointly address the future of both Underwood and Ward. The task force will be charged with presenting options to the School Committee and me on the future of both school buildings by the end of this school year. The group will be chaired by Eva Thompson, who previously served as interim elementary assistant superintendent in Newton following a long and distinguished career as a principal and teacher. Eva has worked in both buildings and is very familiar with their educational and physical plant needs. Other members of the task force will include:

- (3) Underwood staff
- (3) Ward staff
- (2) Underwood parents/guardians
- (2) Ward parents/guardians
- (2) School Committee members
- (2) City Councilors
- (2) Assistant Superintendents
- Director of Planning NPS
- City of Newton Building Commissioner

I have met with staff members at both schools and look forward to now meeting with parents and guardians. The meeting with the Underwood community will be held on

February 5 at 7:00 p.m. and the meeting with the Ward community will be held on February 12 at 7:30 p.m. I will share more with you on how you can be involved in the task force.

A summary of the meeting as well as regular written updates regarding the task force will be shared via email. Our website will also have a page devoted to this work.

Thank you in advance for working with us and to lending your voice to determine the best path forward for both the Underwood and Ward school communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Fleishman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

David Fleishman
Superintendent