



RSU #21: Balancing Elementary Enrollment

Kennebunkport - 6:00pm, Thursday, February 27th @ Village Fire Station

Kennebunk - 6:30pm, Wednesday, March 4th @ Kennebunk Town Hall

Arundel - 6:00pm, Monday, March 9th @ Arundel Town Office

THE PROBLEM WE FACE:

Imbalances in elementary enrollment are creating inequities.

Tonight's Objectives

- ✓ To **raise awareness and increase understanding** of our district's current enrollment challenges
- ✓ To **share the history and status** of our work to date
- ✓ To **share our committee's pending recommendations** and the data, rationale and thinking behind them
- ✓ To **answer questions** and hear strengths and concerns

RSU 21 Enrollment Task Charge 2019-20

To produce and provide a detailed report that:

- ✓ Identifies the exploration of all possible options related to balancing enrollment across the RSU #21 District, but provides a *recommended approach* by the end of December 2019;
- ✓ Incorporates feedback from community stakeholders;
- ✓ Ensures that the diversity of our communities and towns is considered;
- ✓ Considers evidenced-based research and District documents;

Agenda

✓The current enrollment challenge

Our committee's work to date

Our committee's pending recommendations

The data, rationale and thinking behind our recommendations

Community questions



RSU #21 has 4 elementary schools that offer high quality instruction to 1110 PreK-grade 5.



Kennebunk Elementary School

Grades Pre-Kindergarten – Grade 2

Located in West Kennebunk

Current Enrollment: 396 students



Sea Road School

Grades 3-5

Located in Kennebunk

Current Enrollment: 313 students



Kennebunkport Consolidated School

Grades Kindergarten- Grade 5

Located in Kennebunkport

Current Enrollment: 143 students



Mildred L. Day School

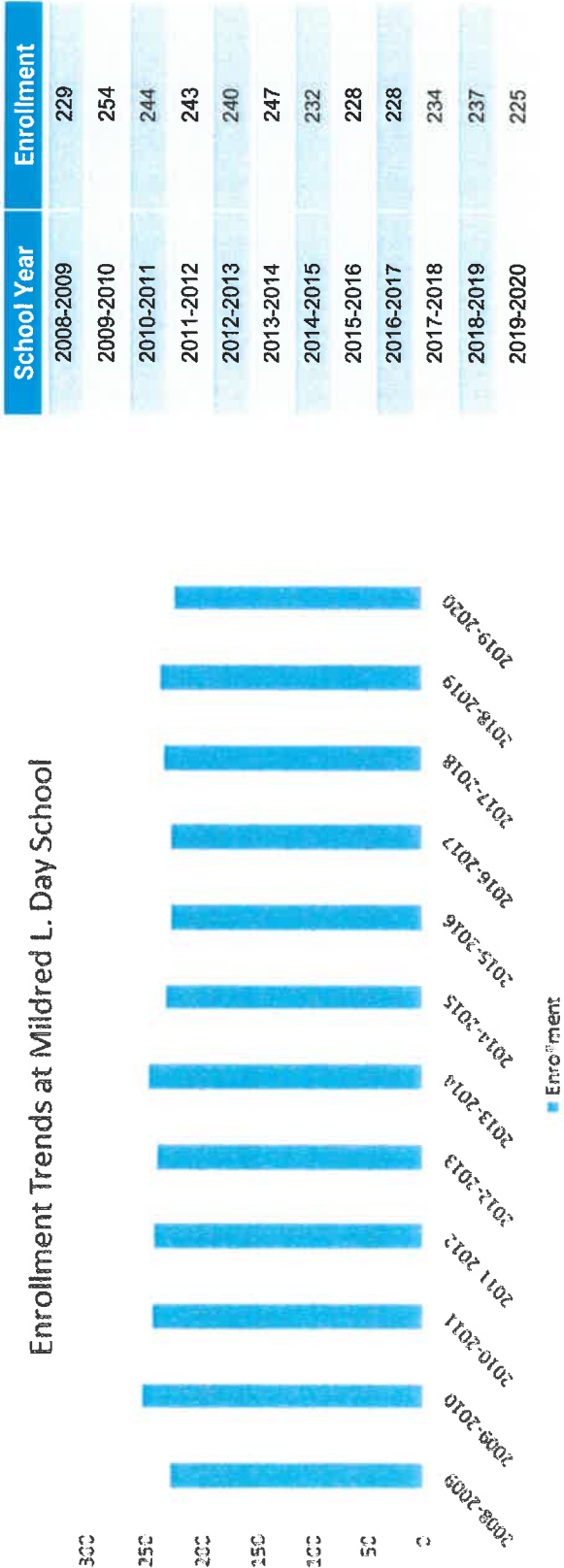
Grades Kindergarten- Grade 5

Located in Arundel

Current Enrollment: 227 students

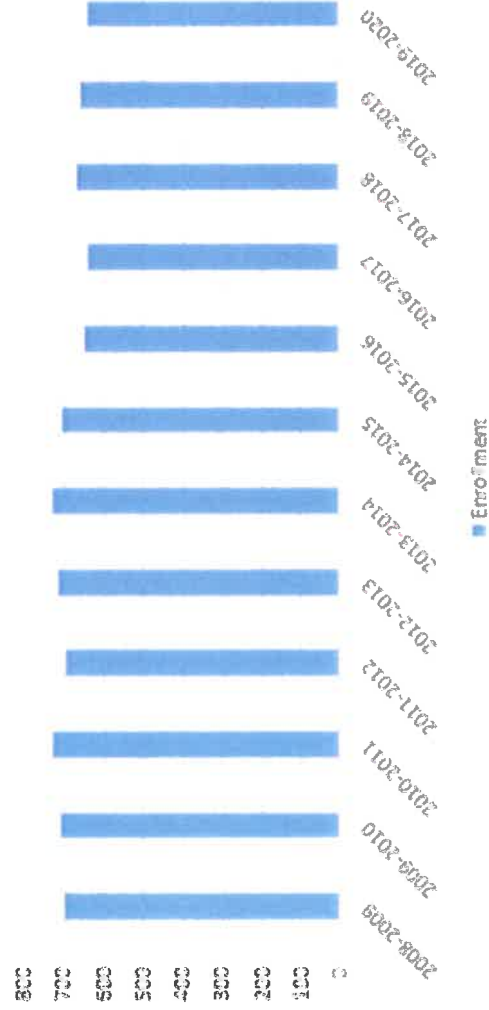


Historical enrollment at Mildred L. Day school shows relatively steady enrollment.



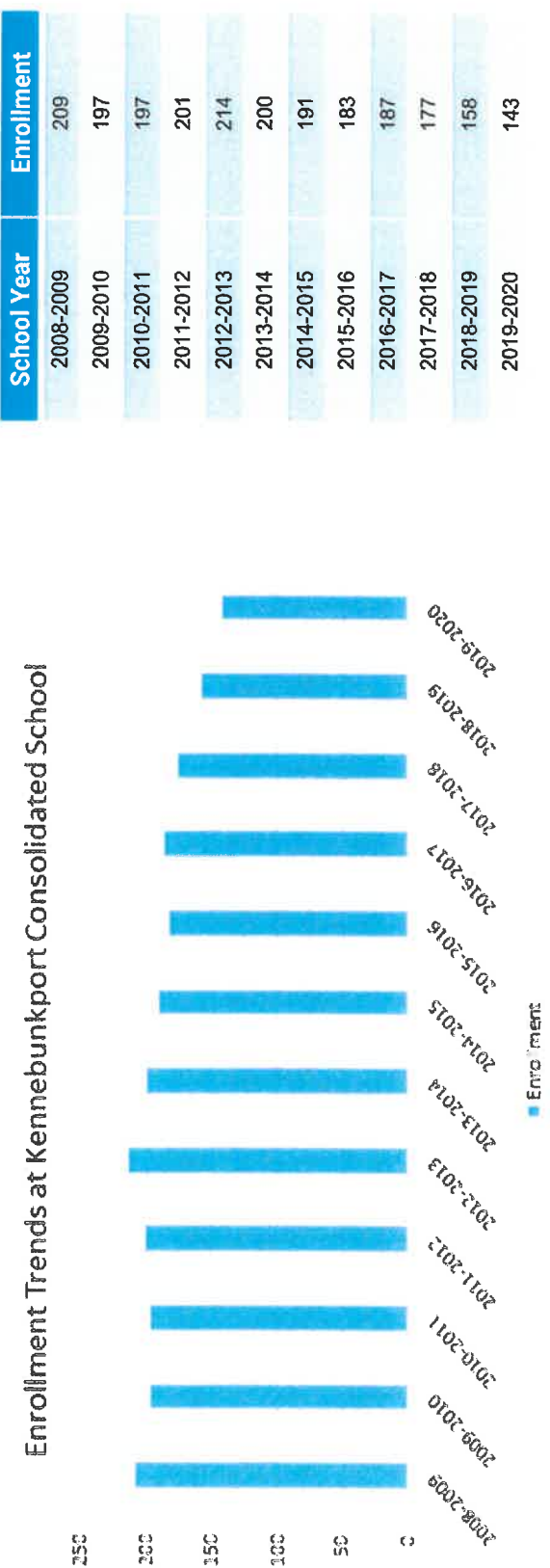
Historical enrollment at Kennebunk Elementary and Sea Road schools show slightly declining enrollment grades K-5.

Enrollment Trends at Kennebunk Elementary School & Sea Road School



*2018 & 2019- addition of Pre-K at KES
With these students, total enrollment numbers would be 783 (2018) and 744 (2019)

Historical enrollment at Kennebunkport Consolidated School shows stark, sustained declines.



Imbalanced enrollment creates a variety of inequities across the District.

Some examples of the impacts of imbalanced enrollment:

- ✓ Impacts teaching and learning by destabilizing or reducing school-based teaching cohorts
- ✓ Raises concerns about the cost effectiveness of running our schools by decreasing or increasing personnel, available resource and operational efficiencies
- ✓ Challenges classroom size consistency as some classrooms are under current RSU 21 class size policy; while others are at the maximum
- ✓ Decreases diversity in educational programming and student population
- ✓ Causes imbalances in class sizes between schools and from year to year (i.e. spikes or dips in enrollment)
- ✓ Impacts the unity of our District by challenging the ability to have strong schools in each town

Imbalanced enrollment creates a variety of school-specific inequities.

Some examples of the impacts of imbalanced enrollment:

AT KES:

- ✓ Large class sizes have resulted in the need to hire additional support staff (cost) and impact teacher ability to provide as much 1:1 instruction as desired (or available at other schools)

AT MLD:

- ✓ Steady population growth in Arundel has resulted in an elementary population that cannot fit in MLD alone- many resident students attend school at KCS or KES.

AT KCS:

- ✓ Since 2012-13, KCS enrollment has steadily dropped from 214 to 143
- ✓ Resident enrollment is currently under 100 students
- ✓ Some grades at KCS are as small as 14 students per grade
- ✓ Families have limited teacher options per grade to address differentiated student fit

Average class sizes vary significantly between our 4 elementary schools.



Kennebunk Elementary School

Grade	Average Class Size
K	18.5
1	19.6
2	19.5
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--	--
--	--



Sea Road School

Grade	Average Class Size
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--	--
--	--
3	21.8
4	21.2
5	20.6



Kennebunkport Consolidated School

Grade	Average Class Size
K	13.3
1	14.7
2	15.3
3	17.3
4	20
5	17.3



Mildred L. Day School

Grade	Average Class Size
K	18
1	18
2	17.5
3	14
4	21
5	24

The numbers in red identify significant differences in average class sizes between the schools.

Current elementary enrollment varies drastically between schools.



Kennebunk Elementary School

SCHOOL TOTAL	432
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Sea Road School

SCHOOL TOTAL	312
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Kennebunkport Consolidated School

SCHOOL TOTAL	143
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Mildred L. Day School

SCHOOL TOTAL	225
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While school size variation can be advantageous to offer a variety of district options, these extreme variations cause inequities.

Our unified district benefits our students and community — and is worth preserving.

Some strengths include:

- ✓ Newly renovated schools
- ✓ Strong MEA Student Achievement Data
- ✓ Access to top-notch technology resources (1 to 1 computing K-12)
- ✓ Cost-sharing and economy of scale (financial savings for all 3 towns)
- ✓ Depth and caliber of curriculum, athletic offerings, the Arts and extracurriculars
- ✓ After-school, rec and club activities encourage and promote early connections
- ✓ Cross-District events and activities encourage early connections between students & shared experiences

Of the 71 community members who responded to surveys (distributed in October 2019):

- 70% agreed or strongly agreed that “Preserving our unified, three-town district benefits our students, our taxpayers and our property values”
- 59% agreed or strongly agreed that “balancing enrollment amongst our elementary schools will strengthen our district”.

All three towns have sacrificed to join our RSU; all three towns have benefited from our RSU.

Agenda

The current enrollment challenge

✓ **Our committee's work to date**

Our committee's pending recommendations

The data, rationale and thinking behind our recommendations

Community questions



We have examined 15 different options in-depth to weigh the benefits and drawbacks of each.

Approaches explored include:

- ✓ 3 approaches initially identified by last year's committee
- ✓ 12 additional approaches proposed by the committee and the public (ideas shared in-person, online and via surveys)
- ✓ Make no changes to elementary school assignments

Our approach has encompassed both breadth and depth.

We have explored multiple factors and possible levers to address the problem.

Factors explored include:

- ✓ Maintaining current school structures and current grade spans
- ✓ Reconfiguring current school structures and current grade spans
- ✓ Decentralizing Pre-K
- ✓ Adjusting school assignment areas by proximity instead of town residence
- ✓ Maintaining school assignment by town of residence
- ✓ Blending all district students in 4th grade instead of 6th grade
- ✓ Creating a district magnet or specialty school
- ✓ Grandfathering and delayed implementation
- ✓ Closing a school (not an available option based on current enrollment)

We have conducted in-depth data analyses of the impacts of various options.

Impacts explored include:

- ✓ Financial (district costs re transportation and structural renovations)
- ✓ Student bus times
- ✓ District-wide enrollment trends and projections
- ✓ Class size
- ✓ School start times
- ✓ Estimated number of students impacted by town, by approach
- ✓ Effects on existing programming, staff teaming options and academic features
- ✓ Student/family disruption
- ✓ Student cohort continuity
- ✓ Research on the impact of grade spans, transitions and school configuration

We conducted three community forums to raise awareness, share progress and seek input.

Highlights include:

- ✓ In-depth discussion of three proposed plans from prior committee
- ✓ Comprehensive presentation of analysis of pros, cons and costs of each plan
- ✓ In person engagement with over 100 community members
- ✓ Participants worked in small groups to actively explore each option
- ✓ Participants shared plan-specific feedback

Additionally, approximately 100 surveys were distributed to community and staff members and 71 were returned.

There are no easy answers; All approaches contain trade-offs.

We valued staged implementation to minimize disruption and ease transitions — while recognizing the downside of staged action.

All potential approaches resulted in a small percentage of students who live in closer proximity to a school than their assigned school (true for current assignments as well) — and we recognized the inconvenience of this necessity.

All potential approaches by necessity included bussing across town lines — and we recognized this will require a change of mindset and expectation.

We feel confident that our recommended approach best balances the many competing tensions and factors.

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Our recommendation proposes...

Beginning in Fall 2020, all new families with students in grades Pre-K through 5 enrolling after June 1, 2020 into the RSU 21 District will be placed in a District elementary school. Placement will be made based on a combination of the following factors:

- ✓ Grade cohort, class size and school capacity
- ✓ Location
- ✓ Preference
- ✓ Programmatic Location
- ✓ Siblings/Family Composition
- ✓ Student Needs

Our recommendation...

- ✓ Improves and ensures equity and a balance of enrollment
- ✓ Minimizes disruption to currently enrolled families
- ✓ Streamlines the location and process of new student enrollment to one location
- ✓ Provides transportation for all elementary students residing within the District to their school of placement
- ✓ Establishes consistent decision making factors for Administration

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Our recommendation is grounded in data- and evidence-based decision-making and offers clear benefits (1 of 2).

Eases maxed classroom sizes: Results in long-term alleviation of oversize classes across all elementary schools and provides decision-making guidance for administration in times of future enrollment “bubbles”

Builds student population where needed: Results in long-term growth for KCS

Minimizes financial impact: Provides the least expensive option regarding required transportation and building renovation costs

Minimizes student impact: Impacts the fewest students of all major plans considered and preserves the vast majority of student cohorts

Minimizes busing impact: Results in shortest bus rides for students

Respects public sentiment:

- 89% said “Minimizing transportation time” was very or somewhat important
- 83% said “Assigning school based on proximity to a building” is very or somewhat important

Our recommendation is grounded in data- and evidence-based decision-making and offers clear benefits (2 of 2).

Provides protection against inconsistent enrollment projections: Since three enrollment projections showed three varying predictions (declining, increasing and flat), we avoided major structural changes to preserve flexibility and stability

Preserves structural continuity: Maintains current school structures and preserves a K-5 option in each town

Preserves varied district options: Maintains diversity of school structures within district (K-5, PK-2, 3-5 schools; large and small schools)

Requires monitoring: Mandates deliberate attention be paid to ongoing district-wide enrollment to minimize risk of future imbalances

Establishes consistency and transparency: Establishes clear enrollment decision-making framework for Administration (for new enrollments, superintendent agreements, in-district transfers, etc.)

We recognize and carefully considered the following impacts of our recommendation.

- ✓ Some students will attend a school other than the one that is geographically closest to their home (true of current assignments as well)
- ✓ Some students will attend a school other than the one that is in their Town of residence (true of current assignments as well)
- ✓ Short-term inequities not immediately solved by this plan; Administrative efforts to mitigate short-term enrollment inequities will be essential

We strongly recommend additional deliberate efforts to mitigate the short-term inequities.

Administrative efforts should include:

- ✓ Reviewing all current Superintendent Agreements and Out-of-District Tuition placements using the identified factors to determine placement for Fall 2020
- ✓ Working collaboratively with current Pre-K families to encourage Kindergarten placement at KCS
- ✓ Working collaboratively with current 2nd grade families transitioning from KES to SRS to encourage placement at KCS
- ✓ Reviewing current bus routes that travel from Kennebunk and Arundel to Kennebunkport and work collaboratively with identified families to encourage placement at KCS
- ✓ Utilizing the new placement factors to inform decision-making for in-district transfer requests

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✓ **Community questions**



Your thoughts?

- ✓ What questions do you have?
- ✓ What strengths do you see?
- ✓ What concerns do you have?



Additional Information & Next Steps

✓ RSU 21 Enrollment Webpage (www.rsu21.net/enrollment-subcommittee)

✓ Next Meetings:

- **Wednesday March 4, 2020**- Kennebunk Selectperson Board 6:30pm- Kennebunk Town Hall
- **Monday March 9, 2020**- Arundel Selectmans Board 6:00pm- Arundel Town Hall
- **Wednesday March 11, 2020**- Task Force Meeting- Kennebunk Elementary School (B135)
- **Wednesday March 25, 2020**- Special Workshop Presentation to RSU 21 School Board 6pm, Kennebunk Elementary School A102

Thank you!