

School Input/Data Regarding Enrollment Trends

Date: March 26, 2019

The Falmouth Schools have been asked by town leaders and several community members to provide school data and input to help clarify some questions that have been raised about student enrollment and any potential impact on class size (current and projected).

Overall enrollment over the past ten plus years has remained steady, from 2135 students in 2008-2009 to a current 2018-19 enrollment of 2127 students. For the Fall of 2019, we are projecting an increase to 2143 students. The 2018 Wandell enrollment study predicted incoming kindergarten classes for the Fall of 2018 and 2019 to be larger due to the number of live births in Falmouth five and six years ago. That two-year increase tapers off in subsequent years. When the school district does experience an occasional enrollment “bubble” in a grade that exceed our class-size ratio guidelines, our first response is to re-allocate an existing teaching position from another grade level if we can still maintain acceptable class size ratios. When that is not an option, the district proposes adding a teacher through the budget process.

Available classrooms are another consideration, but we have been able to accommodate space needs to date through planning and reassignment of non-classroom professional staff and services as needed. Based on current and projected enrollments, which are predicted to level off after 2020, and current approved housing permit ranges, the District has the capacity to meet student needs, barring significant changes in student in-migration or educational programming.

Enrollment information can be accessed online in the Falmouth Schools FY2019-20 budget documents. Enrollment historical data and predictions by grade, the 10-year historical district enrollment data, and the “best-fit” enrollment prediction model from the Wandell study are available. You can also find current and predicted class sizes by grade at the elementary and middle schools by accessing the school “demographics” sheets within each school’s cost center. To access the budget documents, go to www.falmouthschools.org, click the “budget” tab at the bottom, then click “FY19-20 Budget”. Our goal is to provide a transparent budget process, showing as much data as we can to inform our constituents about the school system’s current needs and resources moving forward.

In response to several questions regarding enrollment, responses are below:

- Student/teacher ratios at all grades are within the State and Falmouth Schools’ policy guidelines for class size. Falmouth’s student to teacher maximums are 20:1 for K-2, 24:1 for Gr 3-5, 25:1 for Gr 6-12. Most classes are well within these limits. For Kindergarten, our preferred class size maximum is 17-18 with appropriate student supports.
- The most recent Kindergarten class increased from 123 to 146 students, which required the addition of an eighth teacher. For the Fall 2019, class size for K is expected to be 153 students, which would be 19 students per class. We have planned for an additional

teacher for K in the budget to bring the class size to 17 students (9 classrooms). Both of these large classes can be attributed to the live birth counts referenced above.

- The current large K grade moving to first grade for Fall 2019 will be adding a teacher (eighth) to reduce the projected average class size from 22 to 19-20. We will be reallocating a current fourth grade teaching position to accommodate this class, as fourth grade numbers are projected to be lower, allowing for a reduction in classrooms to seven, while maintaining class sizes at 19-20.
- Looking out to the Fall of 2020 using current projections and class sizes, we will be able to reduce the 5th grade to seven classrooms from eight, and move that position to a larger grade 2. If Wandell projections hold true for live birth rates, we may also be able to reduce the kindergarten by one classroom (from nine to eight teachers).
- The current 6th grade at the Middle School is a “bubble” class, with 194 students presently. Class sizes are at 24 and being assisted with the addition of one grade-level ed tech for classroom support.
- At the high school, our current and projected enrollment of 689 students is well under the designed capacity of 725 students. We have been as high as 735 students in the past and have accommodated. The high school included a smaller cafeteria (250) by design when originally built, as the prior high school social norms included and promoted students eating and mixing socially outside the cafeteria space. A conversion of locker spaces (early 2000’s) into the current “Commons” areas (two floors) now accommodates student lunches in addition to the cafeteria space.