

Report of the Temple School Study Committee

August 22, 2024

The Temple Select Board formed a study committee last May to think about the Temple school situation. In March our town, as well as the District as a whole, overwhelmingly rejected the ConVal proposal to close Temple Elementary School and three others. What should we do? Dublin and Francestown began the withdrawal process. Our mission was to consider what the response of Temple should be. Withdrawal or something else?

Our ConVal taxes historically are 70-72% of our total tax bill. For the coming year, 2024-25, our total is projected to increase 10% from \$3 million to \$3.3 million. Regular increases such as this put a damper on what the town is able to afford on basic services. Indeed the ConVal district budget is up 25% in the last 5 years, a time when enrollment fell by 150 students (7.3%).

	<u>ConVal Complete District Budget</u>	<u>Increase</u>	<u>% Change</u>
2024-25	\$56,849,637	\$3,014,355	6%
2023-24	\$53,835,282	\$3,487,287	7%
2022-23	\$50,347,995	\$2,915,596	6%
2021-22	\$47,432,399	\$2,095,650	5%
2020-21	\$45,336,743		

A public forum raised many questions. Our residents ask: "Why does ConVal cost us so much?" "Enrollment keeps going down and the budget goes up." Accordingly, our committee has chosen to focus on what could be done to reduce or at least control the steady increase in costs. Withdrawal may be a topic in the future and we are watching the efforts by Francestown and Dublin But for now we are focused on district costs. We believe that the study done by Prismatic for the closure of the four elementary schools was flawed in not considering any change to the two middle schools and the high school. We ask the question: how fully are these schools used?

The high school is our largest building, intended for around 1200 students. At present it has 630 students. The most recent enrollment projections from NESDEC indicate that the high school enrollment will continue to shrink, falling to the mid 500's in the next 10 years. The building itself is in excellent condition and with full amenities for teaching, sports, co-curriculars, and food service. It would seem to make the most sense to keep it as close to full capacity as possible.

The two middle schools are projected to have a combined 559 students for the coming year. This illustrates the problem of the high school: in four years those students will be the

projected high school. In addition, both middle schools are underutilized, South Meadow with 67% of capacity and Great Brook with 56%. Combination would seem the solution. This is not a new idea, yet perhaps it is time to revisit it considering the drop in enrollment. The 559 middle school students will not fit comfortably in the larger South Meadow School so it would seem appropriate to consider relocating some middle school grades to the high school.

The current 8th grade students total 129, and the 7th grade totals 153. There is room in the high school to include both 7th and 8th grades. Relocating these students would address the under capacity of the high school as well as being good academically. There would be greater flexibility in scheduling students into classes where they can find the best academic fit or offering accelerated classes to younger students.

Transferring the 7th and 8th grades to the high school would bring enrollment to around 900 to 950, not full capacity, leaving room for future change. See the attached table.

For the record, NESDEC (New England School Development Council) projects that overall ConVal enrollment will continue to fall from the current 1926 to around 1800 in the next 10 years. This decline is not unique to ConVal or to NH.

With grades 5 and 6 combined into South Meadow School, enrollment there would be a comfortable 280, considerably less than the estimated 495 capacity.

This raises another possibility. Peterborough Elementary is one of our oldest buildings with considerable physical needs. Current PES students total 260. Why not transfer PES to the better SMS building? To maintain reasonable numbers, it might be necessary to either move the 150 estimated fifth graders to their elementary schools or move 6th grade (136 students) along with the 7 and 8 grades to the high school building. Closing the current PES building would undoubtedly offer significant savings.

We also have another source of savings, the change possible in Antrim, with the Great Brook students moved to the high or middle school, the current Antrim Elementary building is no longer needed. Similarly to PES, AES is an old building with considerable annual maintenance cost. The current 126 students would move into the better GBS building.

At present there is an agreement with the town of Antrim for the use of the gym for their recreation purposes. Quite possibly the town of Antrim would welcome the entire building for its own use. The number of classrooms currently required by AES is approximately 12, considerably less than the 27 available at GBS. This could provide an expansion of a Pre-K program at AES, or just close down half of the GBS building.

Savings: Two less buildings to maintain, AES and PES.

Cost of administration cut by combining the middle schools.

Economies in the classes offered at high school combined with 7 & 8th, possibly 6th.

Possibly shutter a portion of GBS not in use, saving utilities and basic janitorial costs.

We will be presenting this report to the ConVal School Board and respectfully ask them to do the job not done by Prismatic. We as a town committee do not have access to sufficient budget data to be able to calculate the savings of this reconfiguration. A careful reading of Article 5 of the Articles of Agreement suggests that the School Board can make any or all of these changes without district voting. These are significant changes and could be done in stages, not necessarily all at once. What is important is to change the trajectory of school spending and make ConVal affordable for all of our towns.

Thank you.

Gail Cromwell, Co-Chair
Pam Kingston, Co-Chair
Michelle Cilley Foisy
Carol Mamczak
Vivian Wills

The members appointed to the committee have had a variety of experiences with ConVal, including having children and/or grandchildren currently in ConVal, having a home-schooled child who took some classes at ConVal, working as an employee of ConVal for 10 years, serving on the ConVal School Board for 8 years, and finally, a resident familiar with the Mason-Mascenic breakup of several years ago.

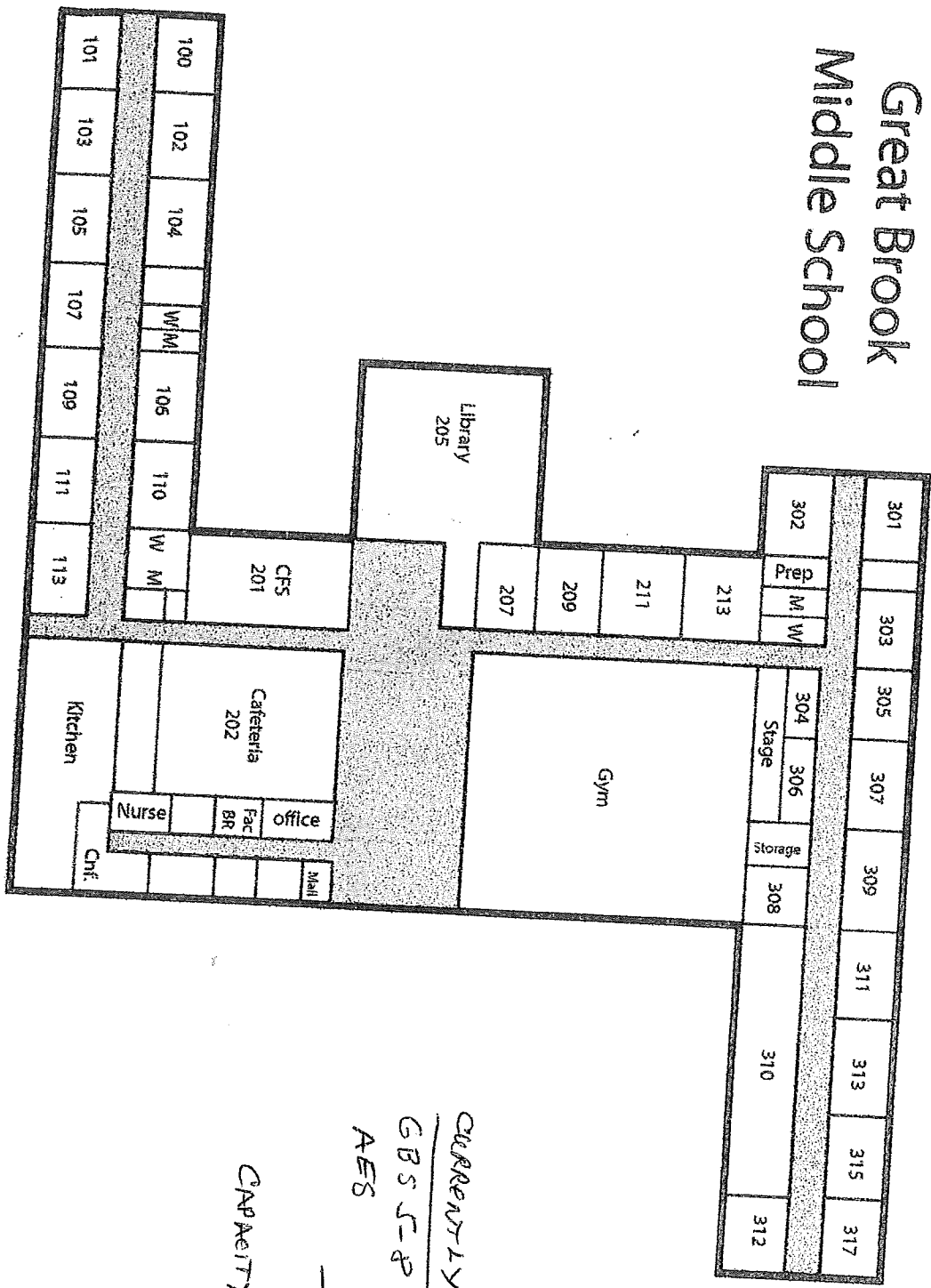
Building Capacity/Current Enrollment 2024-25

	Current	Capacity	Capacity %
AES	126	210	60%
PES	257	360	71%
GBS	225	405	56%
SMS	334	495	67%
CVHS	630	1200	53%
<u>Combinations</u>			
7+8 grades	282		
6+7+8 grades	418		
<u>To SMS</u>			
PES +5th grade	398		
PES+5+6 grades	534		
<u>To CVHS</u>			
add 7+8 grades	912		
add 6+7+8 grades	1048		

Source: ConVal SAU. Lowest capacity figures used.
2024-25 Enrollment Projections.

ANTRIM
 BENVINGSTON
 FRANCES TOWN
 HAWCOCK

Great Brook Middle School



546 GBS TOWNS = 114 STUDENTS

AES 126 STUDENTS

CURRENTLY
 GBS - 225
 AES 126

 351
 CAPACITY 405

Article 5

*5. The Contoocook Valley School District (ConVal) shall be responsible for grades one through twelve (1-12) and Kindergartens. Kindergartens were previously authorized by a vote at an annual Cooperative School District meeting. Grades nine through twelve (9-12) shall be educated at the centrally located Senior High School in Peterborough. Grades five through eight (5-8) may be educated at the Middle Schools in Antrim and Peterborough. Elementary Schools shall be maintained in Antrim, Bennington, Dublin, Frankestown, Greenfield, Hancock, Peterborough, and Temple. As school populations change, students from the Middle Schools may be reassigned to Elementary School locations. Such reassignment needs would be determined by ConVal Administration, but each location change would have to be approved by the School Board.

*NOTE 1: An attempt to amend the paragraph to all consolidation of elementary schools was defeated by a ballot vote of 119 Yes, 549 No at the annual meeting held on May 20, 1987.

*NOTE 2: This paragraph was amended by a ballot vote of 3180 Yes, 1210 No, at the Annual District Meeting Part 2, Voting in all Towns, March 14, 2006.

