



NEW CANAAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS M E M O R A N D U M

To: Board of Education

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Date: November 6, 2023

Subject: **Enrollment Projections**

According to state reporting requirements, October 1 is designated as our official enrollment report date. This data is used for reporting, allocating resources, and analytic purposes. Toward those ends we collect, organize and analyze this information on student enrollment by school, grade, subject, and section. We use the data and analysis both to examine our enrollment and staffing for the current year (2023-24) and to generate projections that will inform our planning for next year (2024-25) and future years.

Over the past several years we have used NESDEC (the New England School Development Council). Using the data we submit, NESDEC updates our enrollment history and forecasts our likely enrollment at every grade level (elementary, middle, and high school) for the next ten years. As noted, these projections provide important information for planning, budgeting, reporting and staffing primarily for the current school year and the next school year. During the period that we have used demographers, their projections have generally been highly accurate, typically not more than a 1- 2 % difference from actual, sometimes as little as a 0.1% difference. This year, enrollment projections from the fall of 2022 came within 25 students of the actual grade K-12 enrollment in 2023, a difference of 0.62%.

Projection Methodology

NESDEC uses the cohort survival technique, the most common method for preparing enrollment forecasts. However, NESDEC modifies it in order to move away from forecasts which are wholly computer or formula driven. Some refinements and modifications required that are specific to our school district include: new housing construction, in-migration, resident New Canaan students not attending the public school system and outplacements. Again, this year, we have asked NESDEC to factor in New Canaan's housing market, which in the past has experienced a large number of move-ins.

With the cohort survival technique, percentages are calculated from historical data to determine reliable percentage increases or decreases between each pair of consecutive grade levels. After factoring in a reasonable set of assumptions based on these data regarding births, migration rates, retention rates, etc., percentages or ratios reflecting the most likely future patterns are applied to present enrollment data for a predetermined number of years.

The closer enrollment projections are to the current year, the more reliable they are likely to be. Long range projections may be considered, but should be used with greater caution.

General Comments for 2023-24

For a decade, the District has been stable in enrollment with a net average decrease of about 9 K-12 students each year. That trend appears to be continuing a trend of enrollment stability within the grades and schools with some possible fluctuations as classes of differing sizes graduate. NESDEC's enrollment projection totals data came within 46 students of the actual Grade 1-12 enrollment total for fall, 2023 (3,811 projected v. 3,765 actual). In Grades 1-4, 1,250 pupils were projected v. 1,246 enrolled. In **Kindergarten**, 257 children were forecast vs. 278 enrolled. In Grades 5-8, 1,278 students were forecast v. 1,261 enrolled. And in Grades 9-12, 1,283 pupils were forecast, v. 1,258 enrolled.

According to our demographer, the two factors now at work which will have the greatest effect upon future enrollments are: a. an increasing number of births to New Canaan residents and, b. an expected increase in new in-migration of families. The students currently in Grades 1-10 were born during a period when New Canaan was averaging 145 births per year. More recently (and expected over the next 5 years) are 168 births annually.

General Comments for 2024-25

For 2024-25, NESDEC projects an enrollment increase in overall K-12 enrollment, from this year's 4,043 to 4,049 an increase of 6 students across the grades. NESDEC is predicting a decrease in elementary, an increase in middle and a decrease in high as shown in the table below.

NESDEC

Level	Current Enrollment 2023-24	Enrollment Projection 2024-25	Difference	Percentage Change
K-4	1,524	1,523	-1	-.07%
5-8	1,261	1,286	+25	+.02%
9-12	1,258	1,240	-18	-.01%
Total	4,043	4,049	+6	+.15%

Attached you will also find a chart which compares the projections of NESDEC at every grade level with current enrollment. You will notice that the differences within each varied by grade, with some grades spiking up by approximately 20 students and some being reduced by a similar number as cohorts move through the grades.

Elementary Projections

The annual enrollment forecast includes projections for each individual elementary school. The chart below indicates the actual enrollment at each elementary school over the last 10 years. The projections reflect a potential increase of +17 pupils across the three elementary schools.

NESDEC

	East	South	West	PK
2014-15 Actuals	566	547	512	33
2015-16 Actuals	543	543	508	43
2016-17 Actuals	547	545	489	43
2017-18 Actuals	537	543	452	41
2018-19 Actuals	536	519	439	46
2019-20 Actuals	555	538	422	39
2020-21 Actuals	549	517	419	46
2021-22 Actuals	525	522	407	50
2022-23 Actuals	550	507	434	49
2023-24 Actuals	570	507	447	52
2024-25 Projections	581	487	456	52

General Comments (3-6 Year Perspective)

Over the next three years, the K-4 enrollments are forecast to increase by a total of 119 students; Grades 5-8 to increase by 9 pupils; and the high school level to decrease by 63 pupils. After that point, these projections show an increase in enrollment in Grades K-4 of 52 students, combined with increasing enrollment of 48 students at Grades 5-8; and a decline of 25 pupils in Grades 9-12, as classes work their way up through the grades. These projections predict a continual increase in enrollment after 2027-2028 due to kindergarten sizes over 300, with elementary enrollment increasing by 64 students in 2033-2034, grades 5-8 increasing by 203 and NCHS increasing by 68 as they await the larger class sizes which would begin to increase in 2036-2037. That said, it is quite possible that real estate turnover will have increased further, bringing in additional new families – see the “Projections” page. Years 1-4 have traditionally had a higher probability of occurring than years out, and the long-term future is better viewed as a possible direction, as variables such as real estate conditions can shift during that time. The longer-term future will also be affected where births in New Canaan are known... it is quite likely that the birth numbers will increase slightly as new families move in. Again, it is important to note that the projection accuracy decreases as the timeline increases. Nonetheless, these projections dictate a need for further study given the inability of our current buildings to accommodate these numbers.

K-12 Enrollment

If we look at projections a few years out we might describe our enrollment as steady with a slight decrease from 4,043 students this year, decreasing to 4,012 students in the 2025-26 school year, a projected decrease of net 31 students.

Elementary School Enrollment

The attached charts from NESDEC suggest that elementary school K-4 enrollment will show a net decrease of 1 student from 1,524 in 2023-24 to 1,523 next year.

It should also be noted that the need for sufficient space to accommodate our students at the elementary level in the short term does not appear to be a focus. Currently we have 30 sections at East, 27 sections at South, and 29 sections at West (**includes PK**). In 2026-2027, however, kindergarten enrollment is projected to jump by 104 students and it is important to begin developing solutions now since that forecast is based on known New Canaan births.

Middle School Enrollment

According to NESDEC, Saxe enrollment will increase by 25 students for next year, moving from this year's 1,261 to 1,286 next year. The projection calls for Saxe enrollment to increase slightly in the coming years, but maintain numbers in the low 1,300's through the 2027-28 school year.

NCHS Enrollment

New Canaan High School's enrollment was 1,294 last year. This year it is 1,258 and is projected to decrease by 18 students to 1,240 next year according to NESDEC. New Canaan High School will then decrease slightly to an anticipated 1,236 during the 2025-26 school year.

Summary Comment 2023-24

- NESDEC's enrollment projection totals from fall of 2023 data came within 25 students of the actual Grade K-12 enrollment total for October, 2023 (4,068 projected v. 4,043 actual, .62% (less than 1%)).
- The factors now at work which will have the greatest effect upon future enrollments are the resumption of in-migration and the increase in the number of future births.
- Elementary school class sizes are within guidelines and programs remain intact and sections are balanced in the short term.
- At Saxe Middle School, enrollment is projected with slight increase over the coming years. The Saxe enrollment is projected to remain the low 1300s for the next 4-5 years.
- Our demographer describes our enrollment from our present 4,043 to 4,049 in the 2024-25 school year, a slight +.15% increase. According to the projections, we are entering a period of stable enrollment for the next 3 years.
- Projections indicate a significant jump in kindergarten enrollment (+104) in 2026-2027, then higher than usual kindergarten through 2033-2034, when the projections end. It is important to begin considering options now in anticipation of the increases since our elementary schools cannot currently accommodate the additional students.