Memorandum

To: Albert Ganem, Interim Superintendent of Schools

From: Jannel Fitzpatrick, PPS Director and Sally Stukuls, Director of Curriculum and Grants, John Campbell, Elementary Curriculum Director, Lisa Sequeira, Tahanto Principal

Date: October 3, 2024

Re: Report to School Committee; Update on District Improvement Plan 2022-2025 2.4 Goal: Restructure current facilities in order to expand the capacity to service preschool students

Item	Description
2.4.1	Execute a preschool study at BES, BMS, and TAH for the purpose of restructuring the location of the preschools and expansion of programming.

History

In the 2023-2024 school year, the administration contracted with ACCEPT Collaborative for a preschool program review. We experienced delays in completing this program review due to the availability of program reviewers and funding for the review.

The admin team has been studying and implementing the review's feedback and recommendations to improve our preschool program and expand our capacity to service preschool students. The work to improve our preschool programs is ongoing.

Next Steps

A primary purpose of the program review was to study the feasibility of moving the Tahanto preschool to Boylston Elementary School. *The admin team favors moving the Tahanto preschool to Boylston Elementary if various considerations can be appropriately addressed.* These considerations, many of which have financial implications, need to be explored further. The admin team will respectfully request time to study these considerations with the School Committee Budget Subcommittee.

The admin team will continue studying the program review feedback and recommendations and provide regular updates to the School Committee as we unpack the topics and next steps.

Preschool Improvement Topics

1. Enrollment Considerations: Demographic Study Summary

The Berlin-Boylston Regional School district does not currently have a demographic study available. In collaboration with the towns of both Boylston and Berlin we were able to gather some information that can contribute to demographic data and information. The town of Boylston referred us to their current census report which can be accessed at: Boylston Census Report and is used when they need demographic information. Although this information does provide data to show that Boylston's current population of people under the age of 18 is approximately 1034 people and 21% of the entire population (versus Berlin at 610 and 18%), it does not offer projections to what the population will be like in the future. The Town of Berlin did share with us a 2023 report on aging in Berlin which can be accessed at: Aging in Berlin Final 7.10.23 which does show that the numbers for people under the age of 18 has decreased from 23% of their total population in 2010, to 20% in 2020, 21% currently, and a projection of 17% slated for 2030.

An enrollment projection from NESDEC was recently received and we are reviewing it as it relates to improving our preschool program.

2. Professional Development

   Our preschool teachers' and staff's professional development needs are unique and often overlooked as we plan for PD opportunities at the other grade levels. As we look at the implementation of the recommendations for our preschool programs, we must identify and make available appropriate professional development opportunities. Among the options we might consider is membership in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This group can provide guidance and support to our district on a wide variety of topics, including excellent professional development.

3. Program Overview and Staffing

The Boylston preschool is the Tahanto preschool. There is not a preschool at Boylston Elementary at this time.

The Berlin Preschool and Tahanto Preschool each have:

1. One classroom
2. One preschool teacher
3. One paraprofessional (.8 FTE) Additional paraprofessional staff is assigned based on individual student needs and in accordance with their IEP.
4. Three 2.5 hours sessions
    a. Monday, Wednesday, Friday morning - 15 “spots”
    b. Monday, Wednesday, Friday afternoon - 15 “spots”
    c. Tuesday, Thursday morning - 15 “spots”
    d. There are ratio requirements for students without and with disabilities: a maximum of 8:7 in each session

2024-2025 Preschool enrollment data for children without disabilities:

Tahanto 3-day program	**Tahanto 2-day program**
15 out of 16 spots	5 out of 8 spots
Berlin 3-day program	**Berlin 2-day program**
13 out of 16 spots	7 out of 8 spots

2024-2025 Preschool enrollment data for children with disabilities:

Tahanto Program	**Berlin Program**
5 out of 21 spots	14 out of 21 spots

There are a number of differences in how efficiently related service providers can provide scheduled service and drop-in support at each preschool classroom.

The admin team agrees with the reviewer's recommendation to restructure the preschool leadership to address inefficiencies in its current design by creating a half time preschool director/coordinator role who can be dedicated to all aspects of preschool and would be able to focus and lead the work needed to improve our preschool programs including potential expansion and relocation of programs.

4. Child Development Program for High School Students

Child Development 1 is an introductory year-long course that provides a foundational study of early childhood development, focusing on the intellectual, physical, and social/emotional growth of children from birth to age five. Students will explore how to create safe, engaging environments and develop age-appropriate activities to support children's development. Additionally, they will have a couple of hands-on opportunities to observe and interact with children in the Tahanto Preschool, under the guidance of the Child Development teacher.

Child Development 2, 3, and 4 are designed for students with a strong interest in careers related to early childhood development, such as teaching, psychology, and healthcare. These courses build on the foundational curriculum from the first year, with academic assignments that delve deeper into topics like growth and development, social play levels, observation techniques, preschool curriculum design, activity planning and assessment, and conflict resolution. Students will gain hands-on experience working with preschoolers in the Tahanto Preschool under the guidance of the Child Development teacher.

Additionally, the Child Development elective program offers students the opportunity to pursue private preschool teacher certification through the Department of Early Education and Care. Those who successfully complete four years of the program and meet graduation requirements will be eligible for preschool teaching positions in the private sector. While certification is available, students may also take Child Development electives without pursuing certification.

Child Development Course Enrollment Information:

Course	2024-2025	2023-2024	2022-2023	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020
Child Development 1 (classroom based, not in preschool)	13	10	20	16	17	10
Child Development 2 (in preschool)	3	5	3	7	6	6
Child Development 3 (in preschool)	4	1	4	6	6	6
Child Development 4 (in preschool)	2	3	5	4	7	7

As the start of a career pathway program, the Child Development program at Tahanto is an important consideration when considering changes to the location of the Boylston preschool program.