

Hamden's Districtwide Efforts to Balance Elementary Schools



**Presentation to the
Connecticut State Board of Education
December 4, 2019**

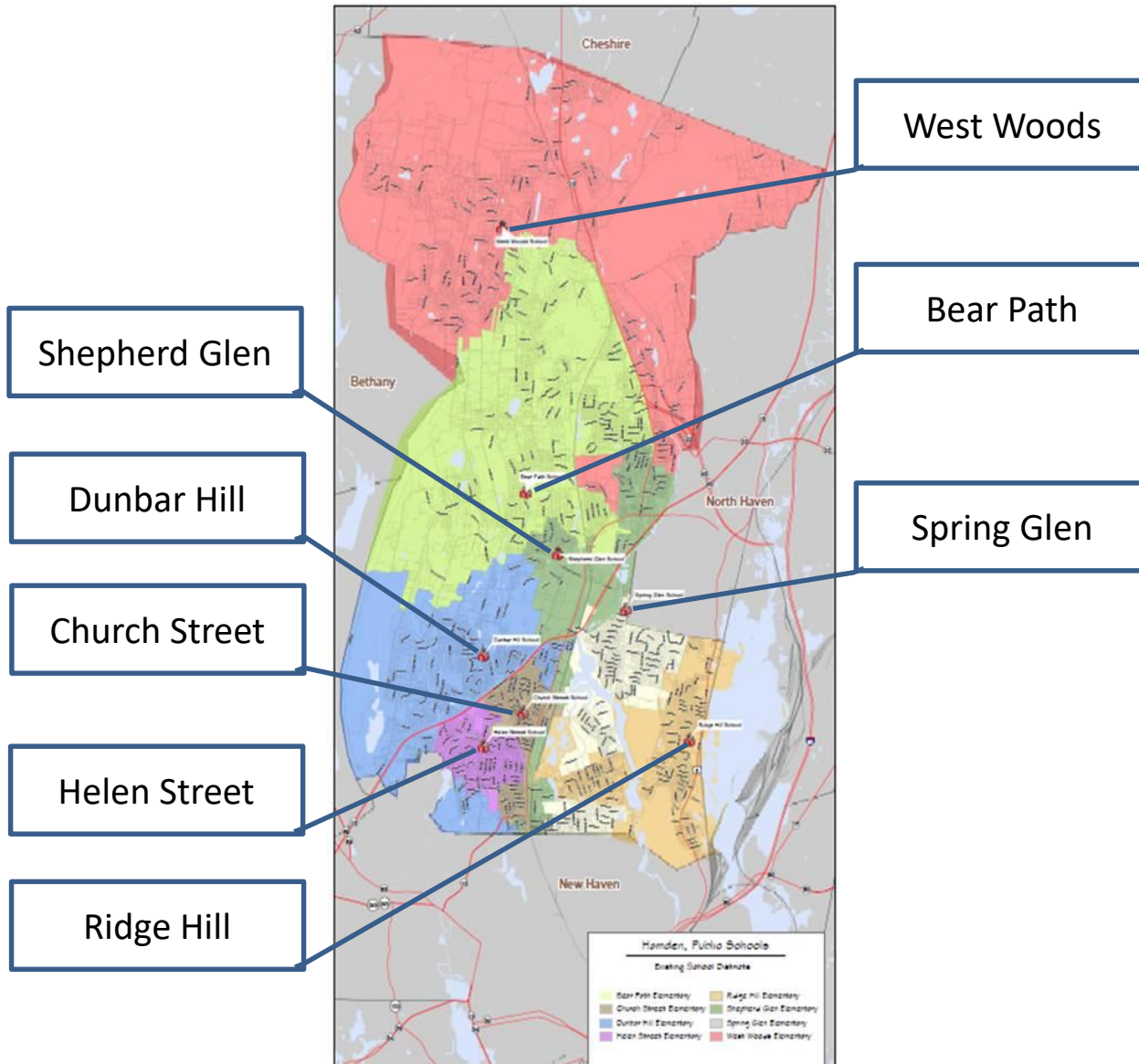
Some Background: District Structure

Hamden has:

- one early learning center (PK and Birth-3)
- eight elementary schools (K-6)
- one middle school (7-8)
- one high school (9-12)
- one alternative high school (9-12)

Compliance with state diversity requirements is only a concern at the elementary level, since secondary students districtwide are educated in one middle and one high school.

Some Background: Hamden's Geography

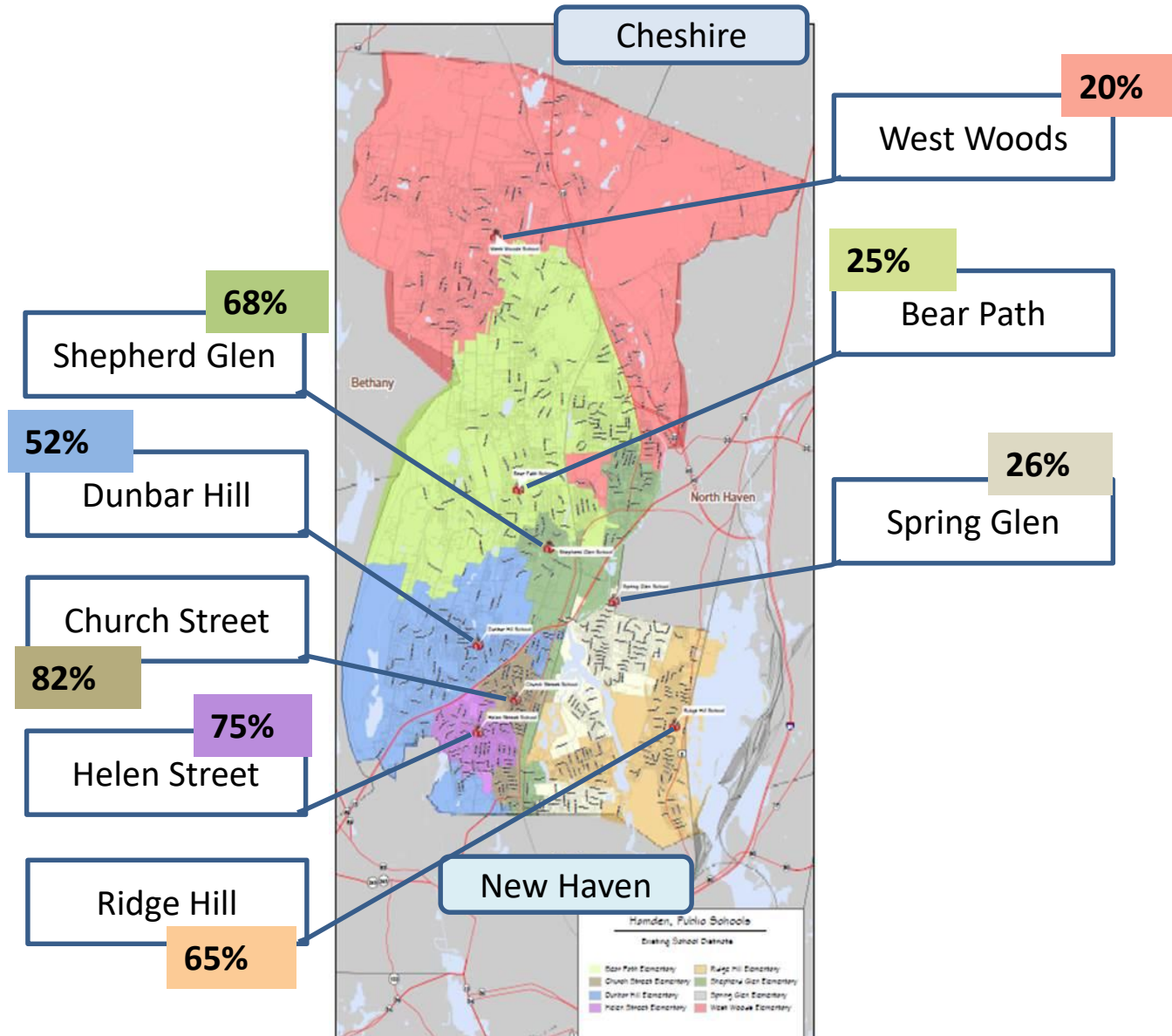


Two major Roads North/South...

It can take 30 minutes to go from Northern to Southern Hamden

Hamden's Economic Layout

As measured by percentage of Free and Reduced Lunch Students



Note that the distribution of wealth in Hamden is clearly divided North/South, with sections nearest New Haven being the most economically disadvantaged

School Distribution

Two schools in Northern third

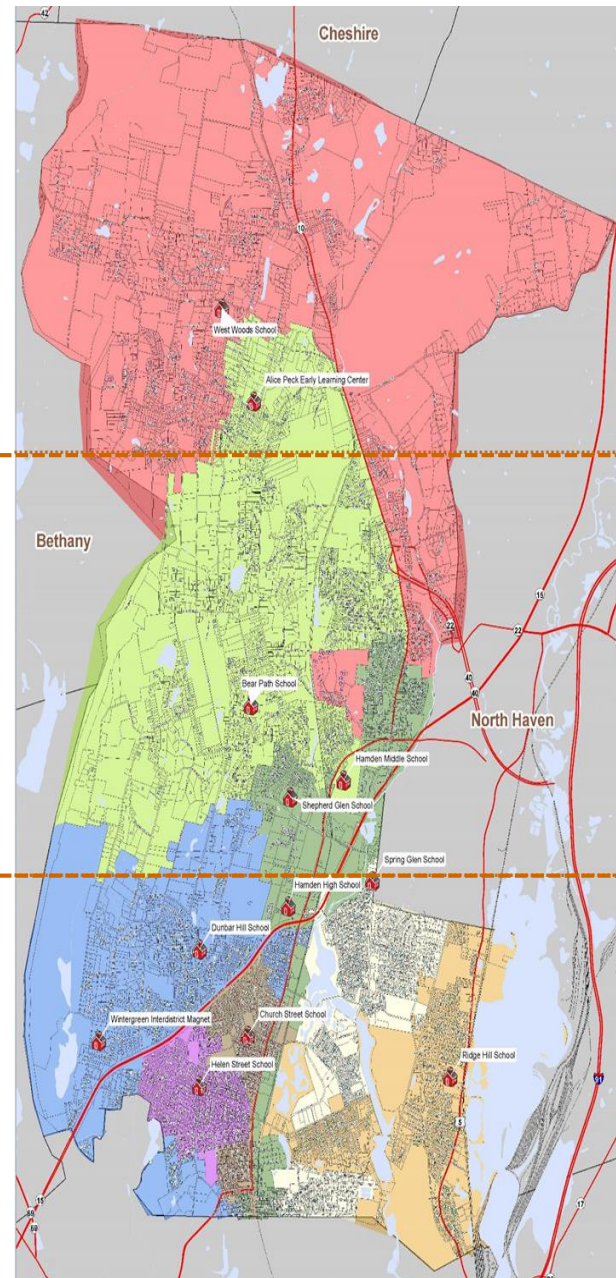
- West Woods
- Alice Peck

Two schools in Central third

- Bear Path
- Shephard Glen

Six schools in Southern third

- Dunbar Hill
- Church Street
- Wintergreen
- Helen Street
- Ridge Hill
- Spring Glen



Free/Reduced Lunch by School

| | June 2019 | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| | # of students | percent |
| Alice Peck (early learning center) | 79 | 43% |
| Bear Path | 110 | 25% |
| Church Street | 253 | 82% |
| Dunbar Hill | 173 | 58% |
| Helen Street | 247 | 75% |
| Ridge Hill | 212 | 65% |
| Shepherd Glen | 206 | 68% |
| Spring Glen | 114 | 26% |
| West Woods | 72 | 20% |
| HMS | 432 | 47% |
| HHS | 664 | 45% |
| HCLC | 39 | 75% |
| District | 2601 | 48% |

Note that 48% districtwide is likely an underestimate.

- 52% of Elementary students have enrolled and qualified for F/RL: Secondary enrollment is lower
- Some families have expressed fear in enrolling

Enrollment by School June 2019

| | Total Students | White Students | Non-White Students | % Non-White Students |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Alice Peck * | 184 | 56 | 128 | 70% |
| Bear Path * | 445 | 240 | 205 | 46% |
| Church St. * | 310 | 32 | 278 | 90% |
| Dunbar Hill * | 298 | 66 | 232 | 78% |
| Helen St. * | 328 | 40 | 288 | 88% |
| Ridge Hill * | 327 | 88 | 239 | 73% |
| Sh. Glen | 302 | 58 | 244 | 81% |
| Spring Glen | 442 | 277 | 165 | 37% |
| West Woods* | 357 | 182 | 175 | 49% |
| HMS | 915 | 322 | 593 | 65% |
| HHS | 1464 | 524 | 940 | 64% |
| HCLC | 52 | 15 | 37 | 71% |
| District | 5424 | 1900 | 3524 | 65% |

Diverse School Status?

*** Includes IIC Classrooms**
 (IIC classes are self-contained Special Education classrooms that are assigned based on need, not attendance zone.)

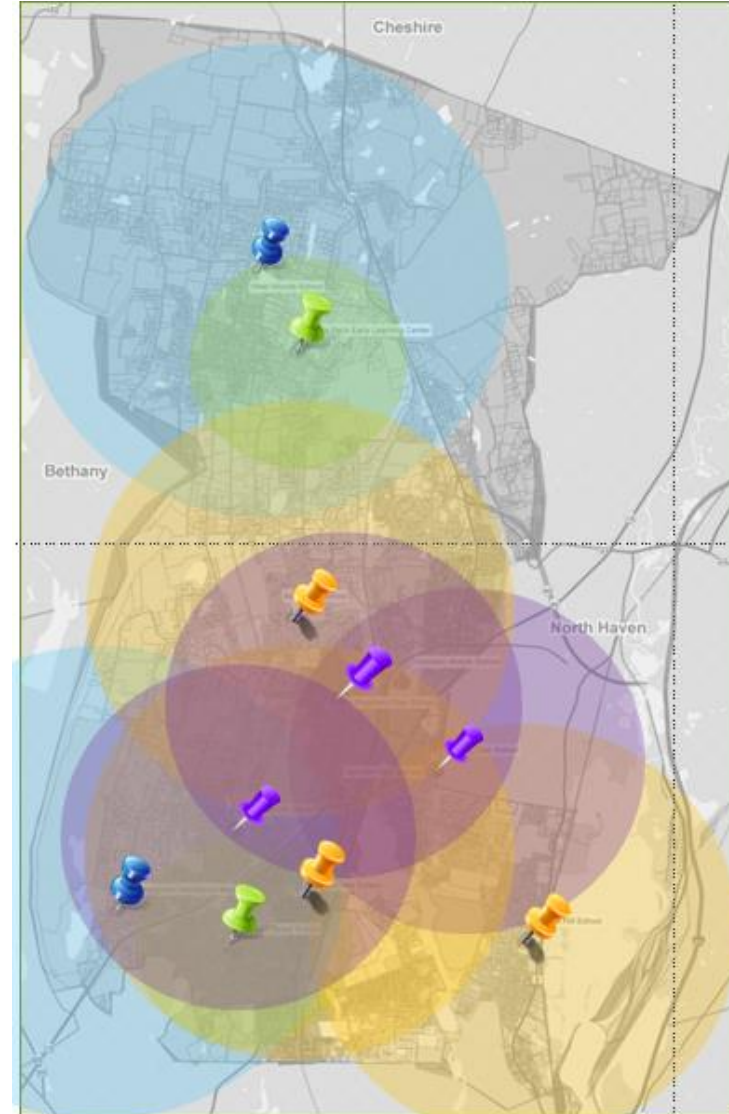
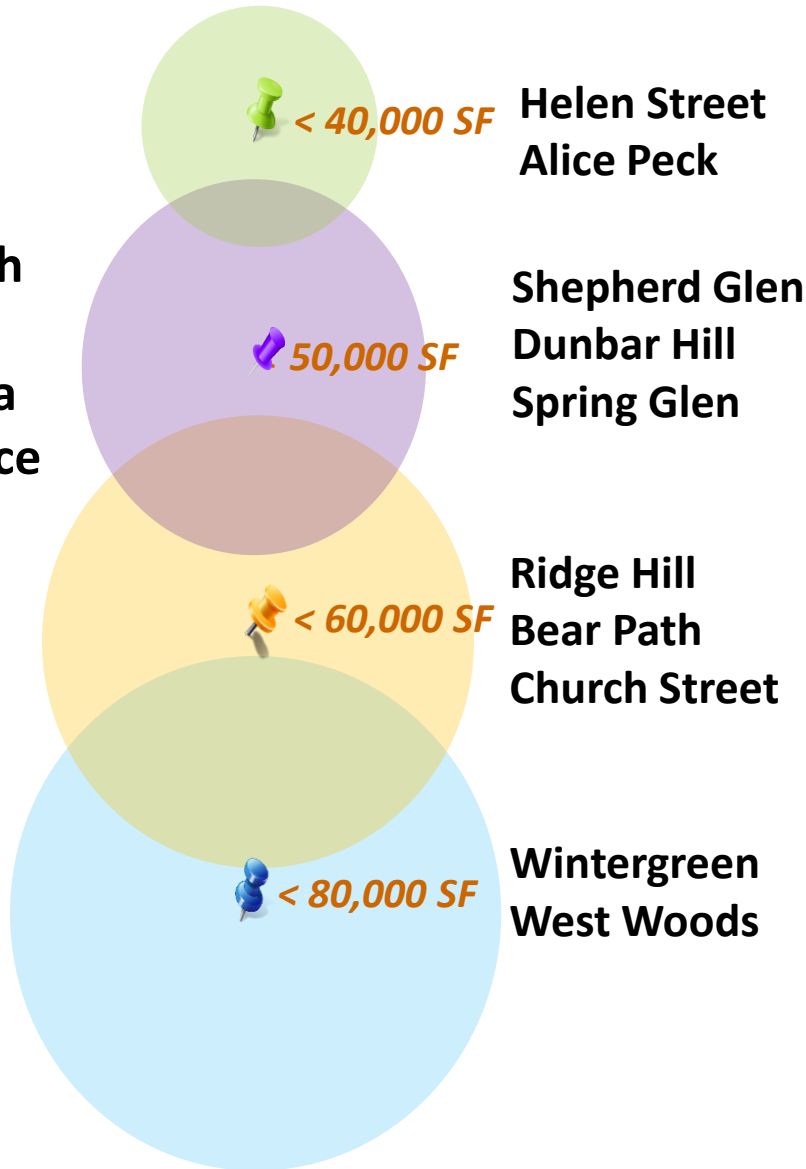
Includes pre-K students at Church Street (33), Dunbar Hill, (18), Helen Street (31) and Alice Peck (148)

District K-6 enrollment – 2845
 District 7-12 enrollment – 2431

District K-6 minority percentage - 65%
 District 7-12 minority percentage – 65%

School Size, Population

Push pin indicates each school. Circle indicates area it could service based on the total SF area.



Hamden's Past Efforts to Comply with CT's Diversity Formula when in "Imbalance"

- **2011-12 SY:** Slightly shifted borders of attendance zones at West Woods and Bear Path to come into compliance with state regulations on diversity
- **2013-14 SY:** Slightly shifted borders of attendance zones at Church Street and Helen Street to come into compliance with state regulations on diversity

Recent Thinking about Achieving Balanced Diversity in Hamden Schools

Rather than addressing an “imbalance” issue at one school, the Board of Education and district administration decided to take a more strategic approach to address needs across the district.

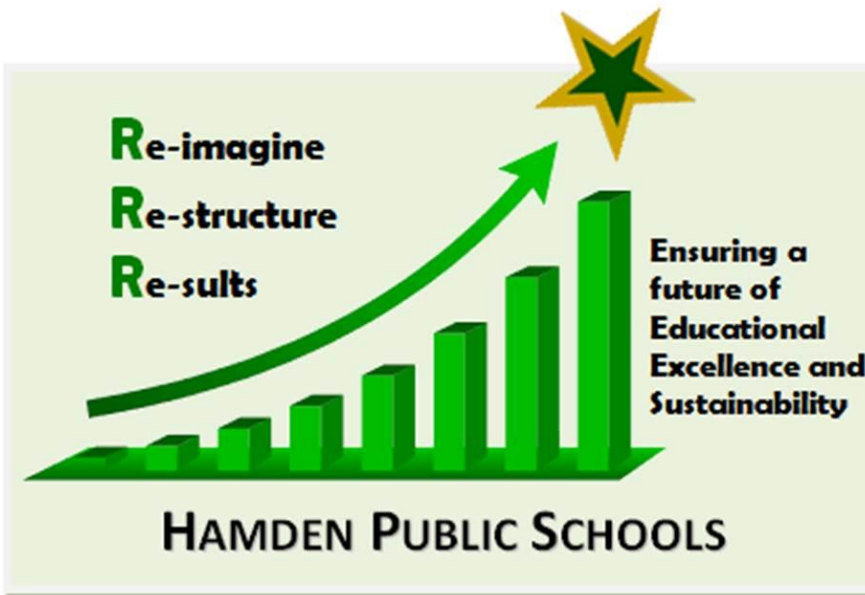
Beginning in 2017 and continuing into the present:

- The district examined/is examining options (Scenarios) for new attendance zones that not only meet state guidelines but also our own benchmarks for diversity.
- Through multiple public sessions and electronic information gathering, we have learned that families:
 - Love Hamden’s diversity
 - Love their neighborhood schools, teachers, principals and staff
 - Want the least number of transitions for their children as possible
 - Don’t want changes to impact one part of our community more than others
 - Think we should make every effort to minimize the number of children who are moved to new attendance zones/schools
- The Board of Education is working to define what we consider our benchmark for school diversity and use that as a basis for decisions around new attendance zones

Hamden's Definition of Diversity

- The BOE and administration are in the process of defining what a diverse school should be in Hamden.
- Although no decision has been made yet, BOE discussions have centered around looking at the feasibility of attendance zones that enable all elementary schools to be +/- ~10% to 15% of the district average in several demographic areas, which could include factors such as:
 - Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch (District average: 52%)
 - Black (District average: 30%)
 - White (District average: 35%)
 - Hispanic (District average: 22%)
 - English Learners (District average: 6%)
 - Asian (District average: 7%)
 - Two or More Races (District average: 5%)

Hamden's 3R Initiative



What is the 3R Initiative?

In 2017, Hamden's 3R Initiative was created to address these important issues:

- Decreasing state funding to towns for education
- Declining enrollment (similar to most other communities in CT)
- Meeting state guidelines for diversity
- Incorporating our own community's values around diversity and inclusiveness.

The Hamden Board of Education and administration began examining how to reorganize our educational system in a way that can be sustained in the future while being mindful of these issues stated above.

We continue to see this important work not as a challenge, but rather as an opportunity to optimize programming and reallocate resources to maximize opportunities for our students, while at the same time creating conditions for a long-term sustainable school system of excellence.

3R Goals



After gathering input from stakeholders electronically and in multiple public sessions, the Hamden BOE established the following goals:

- **Move 6th grade from elementary to middle school –**
To ensure Hamden students receive the broad offerings of a secondary experience, particularly in lab science and world language, our students will be better served by a grades 6-8 middle school, as is the practice in many Connecticut middle schools.
- **Scale use of facilities to address declining enrollment trends; Use resources more efficiently –**
Some of our elementary schools are becoming underutilized resulting in the opportunity to consolidate. Shifting locations and resources will provide a greater chance to allocate existing resources for improved programming and services to students.
- **Incorporate Wintergreen School into Hamden Public Schools –**
This beautiful building and property, owned by the Town of Hamden, could be a great asset for our school system. Some of our existing school buildings are not as modern in their design, which limits our use of them, and others currently require significant and costly structural improvements.
- **Provide opportunities for greater financial sustainability –** The Hamden Board of Education is committed to proactively addressing the impact of declining enrollment, less State and Federal funding, and the higher level of needs of students and families. If we take the necessary steps to address these trends head on, we will be in a position to allocate dollars to improve programs and buildings across the district.
- **Create sensible attendance zones that more closely reflect our demographics and meet state regulations for diversity –**
The current attendance zone map for Hamden elementary schools has not had significant changes in more than twenty years, while populations have shifted over this same period of time. As a result, our attendance zones no longer meet state requirements and our own benchmarks for diversity.

Although the 3R initiative deals with many efforts beyond school diversity, we will focus on this goal for the purpose of this presentation

Considering Redistricting Options



Scenario 10:
Redistricting Scenario 11

Scenario 10:

- A more comprehensive redistricting resulting in less compact neighborhood-based attendance zones would require redistricting approximately 1,040 HPS students (46%)*

* Does not include students who currently attend the Watergreen Magnet Program

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION!

MILONE & MACBROOM

3R Methodology and Commitments for Diversifying Hamden Schools



- Redefine attendance zones to meet state guidelines and our own benchmarks for diversity
- Create more contiguous attendance zones, as much as possible
- Minimize the number of students moved
- Minimize the number of transitions for students
- Impact all sections of the community; not just some
- Provide parent choice through magnet school options at some schools
- Provide parent choice by making “open seats” available to families throughout the town

3R Plan: School Changes, Construction



- Two schools will close (Church Street and Shepherd Glen) to meet declining enrollment
- Acquired Wintergreen School – will be incorporated as an elementary school as well as other programs. Is being used as “swing space” while one building is undergoing construction
- Add 6th grade wing onto middle school
- Attendance zones change (redistrict) after construction has been completed, so that students transition to a new school only once. Most likely timeframe is 2021-22 or 2022-23 SY.

3R Plan: Projected Timeline



- **3R community information and input sessions:** November 2019 – March 2020
- **Redistricting plan finalized by BOE:** April 2020
- **Redistricting plan shared with all HPS families:** April-December 2020
- **“PAT” (Positive Adjustment Team) Efforts:** January – August 2021
- **Middle school construction completed:** August 2021
- **HMS becomes a 6th – 8th grade middle school:** August 2021
- **Elementary attendance zones change (redistricting) districtwide:** August 2021

Note: Elementary attendance zone changes are directly tied to completion of middle school construction. If that is delayed, redistricting will occur one year later, with the 2022-23 SY.

A New Challenge

The Town of Hamden has an offer from a charter school to buy Church Street School (CS) beginning July 1, 2020. This timeline is 1-2 years earlier than the planned closing of CS and districtwide re-zoning was scheduled to occur.

Should the sale occur, plans are being developed that would allow for this change in the next school year, and would provide significant additional supports for the community affected (Church Street students/families). Supports may include before and after school care, preschool and other benefits at no-cost to the families.

Options being discussed for 2020-21 if the sale occurs include:

- I. Provide CS families the option to attend Wintergreen Elementary or go to their “new” attendance zone school (one year early). In 2021-22, some students would remain at Wintergreen (their attendance zone) and some would move to their new schools.
- II. All current CS students will attend school at Wintergreen Elementary and remain there until they move to middle school. New attendance zones are ignored for existing CS students.
- III. Implement all 2021-22 attendance zones districtwide one year earlier, in 2020-21.
- IV. Increase capacity for Wintergreen Elementary by relocating other programs presently there. Similar to Option I, current CS students would move to Wintergreen and remain throughout elementary school. A lottery is held for other students in the district to attend school at Wintergreen (intra-district magnet).

Where Do We Go From Here?

- Continue to hone in on the best “scenario” for realigning attendance zones:
 - To minimize number of students who must move
 - To meet state regulations for diversity
 - To meet our own definition of diversity
- Consider options and plan for smooth transitions in 2020-21 in the likely event of sale of Church Street building
- Work with our Town and State partners to determine feasibility and implementation of construction projects and magnet schools
- Continue to seek input from our stakeholders
- Create systems and structures that help our families/community adjust and achieve the best possible outcomes as we implement changes that will occur to our attendance zones
- Increase parent involvement, input and commitment through intensified outreach and communication vehicles. This will include multiple school-based meetings/sessions/discussions, focus groups, electronic and online information gathering and sharing, telephone calls, community presentations/Q&As and more.