

Optional Attendance Zone Analysis II

Findings from 2008-2009 through 2017-2018 and Future Considerations

Board of Education Presentation, December 6, 2017
Dr. Stephen C. Lando, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education

(You may view the Prezi presentation of the slides included in this presentation at: <https://goo.gl/ugea3k>)

Introduction

Good evening. Let me first thank the Board of Education and Dr. Prendergast for affording me the opportunity to share enrollment and Optional Attendance Zone information this evening. I am confident that it will prove valuable in determining our path forward. I would also like to thank our District Registrar, Ms. Cathy Davidson, for her data assistance with regard to new Optional Zone enrollees.

I am sure you've heard that, to understand where you're going, you need to know where you've been. And this is where we are right now—our schools, with enrollments as of September 30, as major attractions at LIE Exit 33. But absent the knowledge of how we got here, it would be difficult if not impossible to know where we are headed. So let's look at where we've come from for insight into our future.

Attractions - Exit 33

E.M. Baker - 664 John F. Kennedy - 454
Lakeville/Parkville - 875 Saddle Rock - 559
North Middle School - 800
South Middle School - 782
North High School - 1,134
South High School - 1,223
Village School - 38



The District reviews enrollment history and trends on a regular basis to make budgeting and staffing decisions which best serve the needs of our students and community. This includes examining monthly reports to monitor school enrollments and average class size, and generating an annual report which details enrollment history and projects enrollments for the next five years. Enrollment numbers for the past decade reveal moderate growth at all levels, with an overall increase of just over 300 students. These and other data provide relevant information for the Board’s establishment and modification of school attendance zones based on “the operational needs of the school system, demographic data, and the impact upon the educational program of the school system.”

10 Year Enrollment History by Level

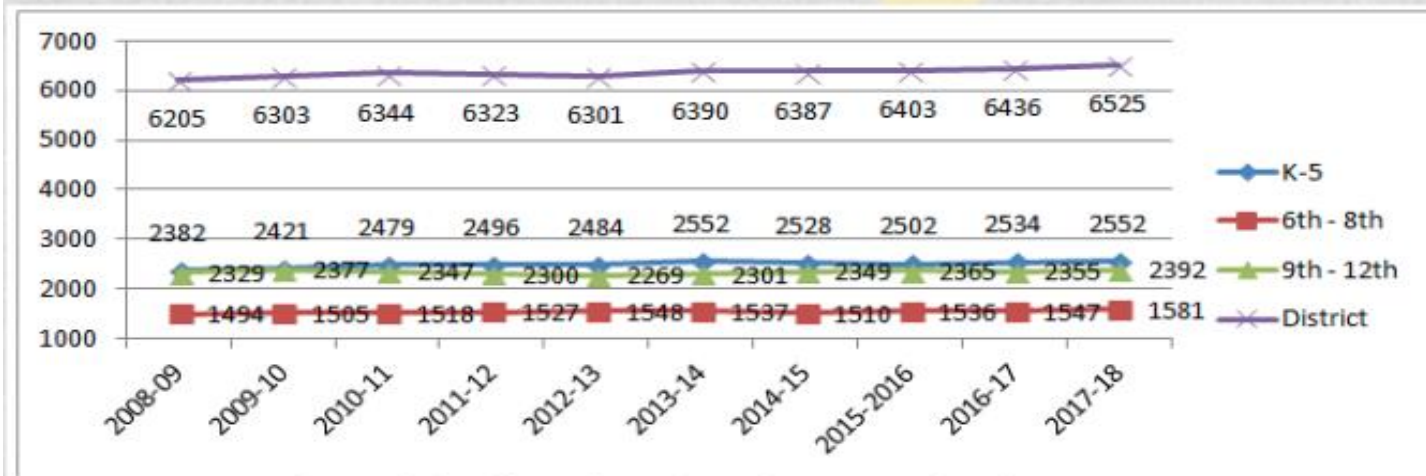


Figure 1: District-wide Enrollments by Level, 2008 - 2009 Through 2017 - 2018

Establishment and Impact of the Optional Zone

Now let's take a closer look at the establishment of the Optional Attendance Zone. Ten years ago enrollment trends became a significant concern. Great Neck South High School had reached its functional capacity. The school's enrollment was expected to peak at over 1400 students in 2010-2011 before "shrinking" to the upper 1300's in 2011-2012. There was also an enrollment imbalance among secondary schools serving the same grade levels. We were about to go off the road with no intention to do so.

Enrollment Trends Leading to the Optional Attendance Zone Solution

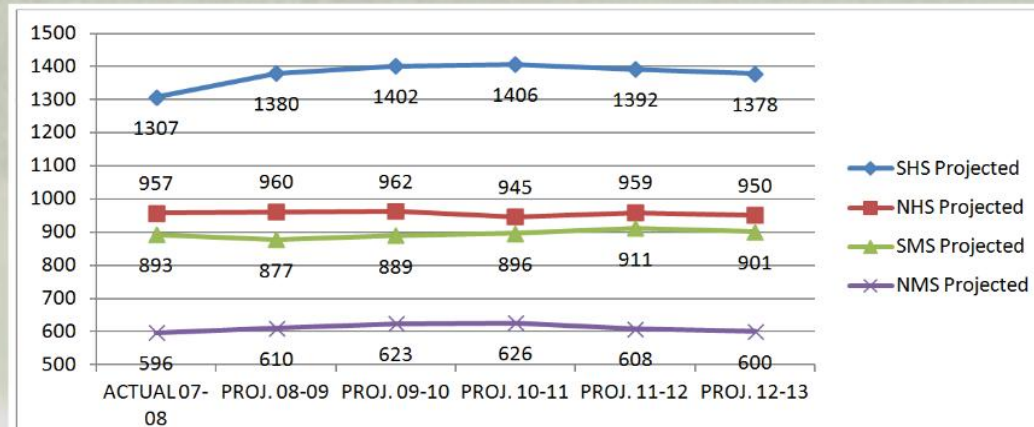


Figure 2: Actual and Projected Secondary School Enrollments Circa 2007

Following significant study, public input, and Board of Education deliberation, an “Optional Attendance Zone” for the secondary schools was implemented beginning with the 2008-2009 school year. This modification allows South High School zoned students from the E. M. Baker and Saddle Rock catchment areas to exercise the option of attending North High School or North Middle School instead.

As reported in 2012 and shown here, the Optional Zone improved enrollment balance and eliminated overcrowding at South High School.

Positive Optional Zone Results

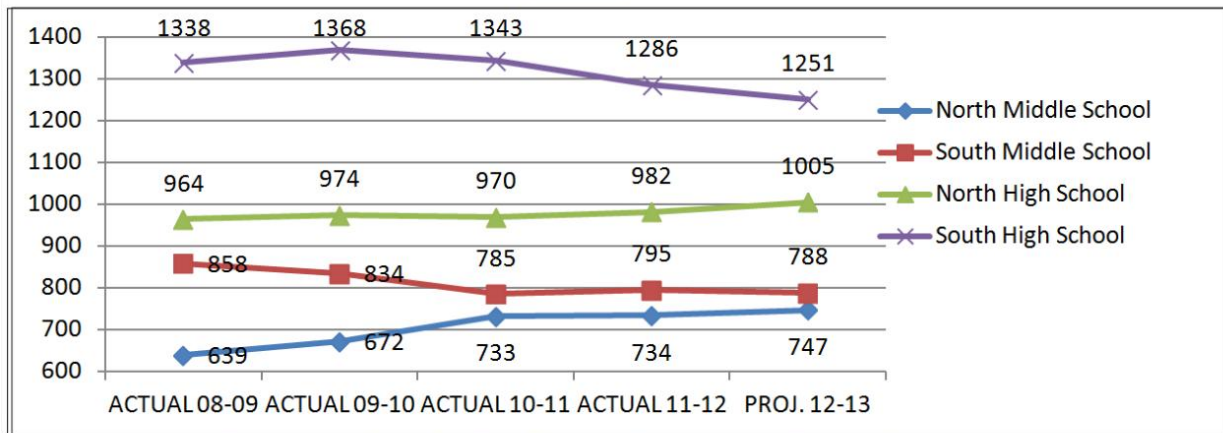


Figure 3: Secondary School Enrollments Following Optional Zone Implementation

The Board of Education's creative implementation of the Optional Zone resulted in immediate and long term relief without significant side effects. Based on its efficacy from 2008-2012, the Board authorized its continuation in each successive year. The 2012 report concluded that, if enrollment trends continued, the Optional Zone would nearly balance enrollments at North and South High School by 2016-2017. That statement has proven to be remarkably accurate.

2011 Enrollment Projections vs. Actual Enrollments

Now let's look at 5-year predictions made in 2011 versus the actual enrollments both in the aggregate and by level. This graph shows that the difference between projected and actual enrollments was fewer than 150 students, about 2.2%.

District-wide Enrollment Projections Have Been Very Accurate...

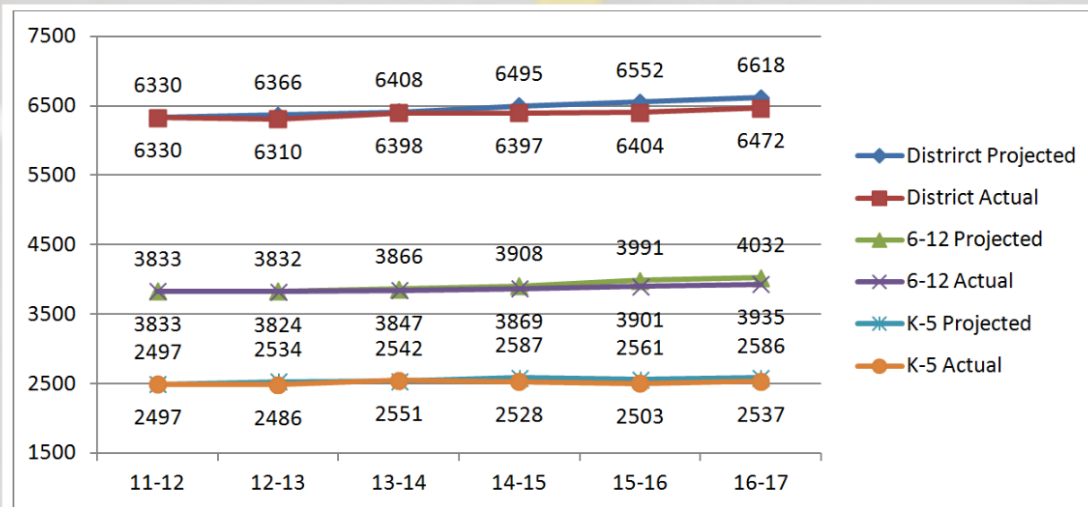
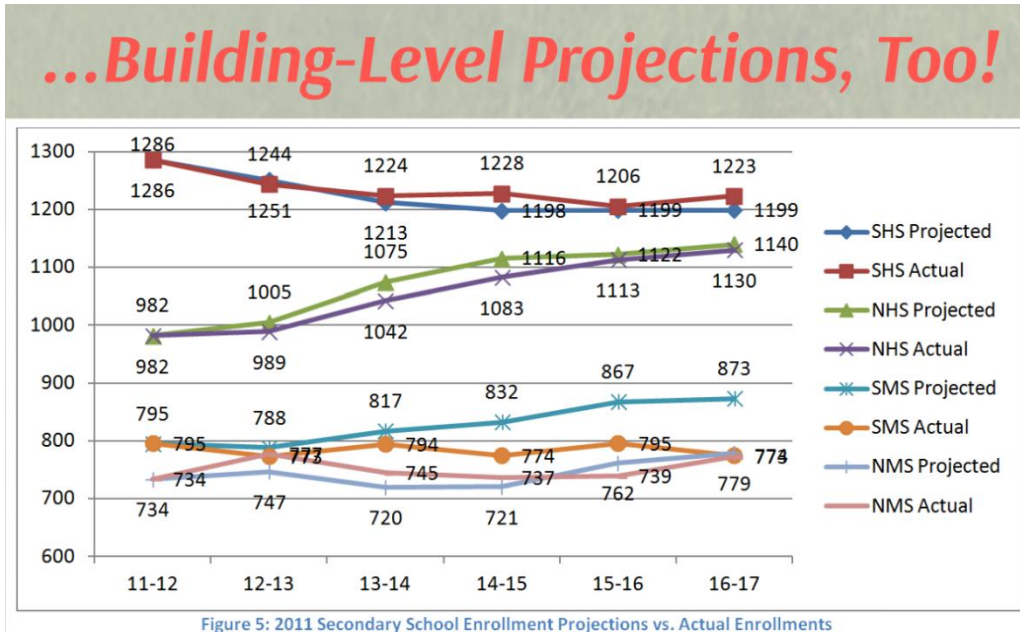


Figure 4: 2011 Five-Year Enrollment Projections vs. Actual Enrollments
(Out of District placements are not included.)

And while elementary enrollments were consistent with estimates, South Middle School enrolled fewer students than predicted. Much of this difference is explained by the fact that more rising 6th graders than predicted, about 9 per year, took advantage of the “Optional Zone” and attended North Middle School instead of South Middle School. Overall predictions have been remarkably accurate. Therefore, the 5-year “cohort survival” model used successfully in the past has also been used to project future enrollments. (A 5-year cohort survival model predicts each grade’s enrollment for the following five years based on that grade’s average annual change over the previous five years.)



2017 Enrollment Projections with Continuation of the Optional Attendance Zone

We now return to “where we are”, and a glimpse into the future reveals expected growth of about 150 students over the next five years.

Projections for the Next Five Years

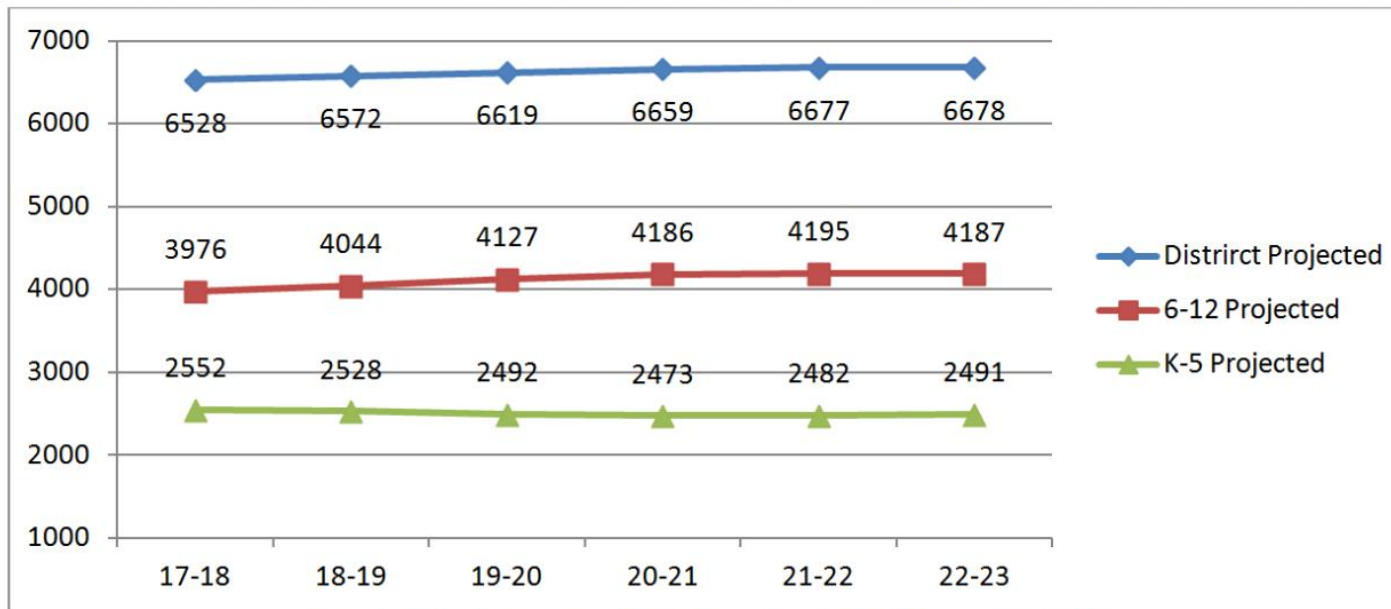


Figure 6: District Enrollment Projections from 2017-18 through 2022-23

But if current Optional Zone practices continue, while elementary enrollments will remain relatively stable, secondary schools will experience an “enrollment bubble” that moves through middle school and then on to the high school level. As shown, North Middle School’s capacity would be strained by its anticipated population in 2020-2021 before balance between the middle schools returned at the end of the five-year period. However, the expected shift in population to North High School by 2022-2023 would bring its enrollment to over 1,300 students and exceed the functional capacity of the building. This likely departure from Optional Attendance Zone success must be addressed.

Impending Enrollment Spikes: Minor Adjustment Required

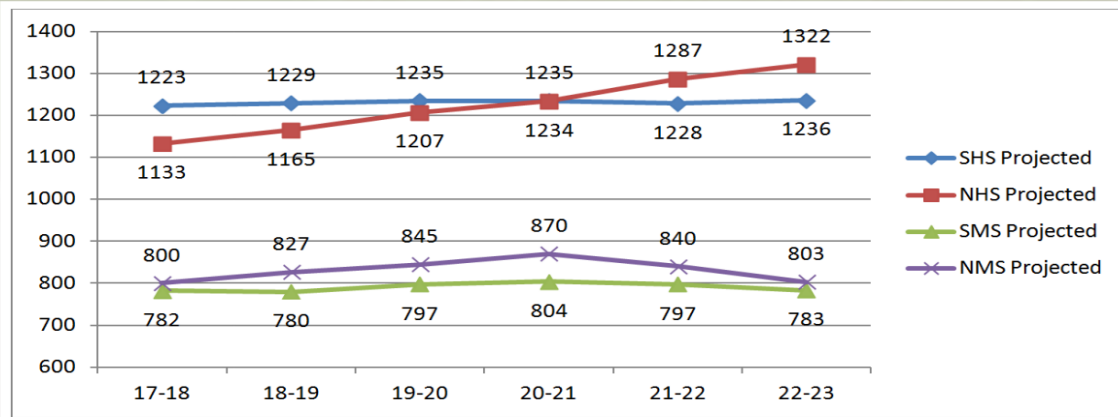
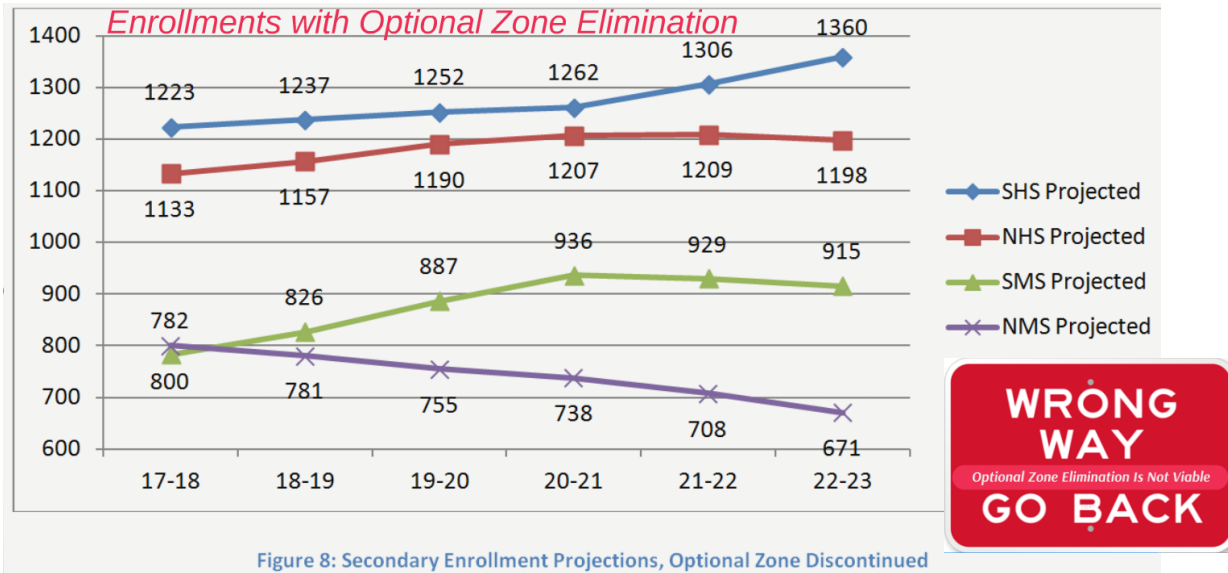


Figure 7: Secondary Enrollment Projections from 2017-18 through 2022-23

2017 Enrollment Projections: Optional Zone Discontinued

As a first consideration, we wondered what would happen if we tried to correct the “over-shift north” by simply discontinuing the Optional Zone. This graph illustrates that this is not a viable alternative. After five years, the cumulative return south for grades 6-12 would be nearly 700 students. Overcrowding at South High School would not only re-emerge, but would become so exacerbated that, with a population of over 1,750 students and rising, the school could not possibly function. North High School’s population would drop below 800, and South Middle would also become overcrowded. Moreover, these unbalanced school populations would significantly impact each school’s academic, co-curricular and athletic programs. We cannot recommend this approach.



Alternative Solutions and Recommendation

Revisiting “the operational needs of the school system, demographic data, and the impact upon the educational program of the school system” required by Board policy, a number of questions were posed related to stakeholder impact, cost, and confidence in an adopted solution. In sum, is there a solution that is not disruptive, is inexpensive, provides for the continuation of the quality programs in each of the secondary settings, and is likely to bring about an appropriate distribution of students?

Guiding Questions





- How will current students be affected?*
- How much will the solution cost?*
- How will residents be affected?*
- How will teachers and administrators be affected?*
- What is the level of confidence that the solution will have the desired impact on enrollments?*

Besides the untenable elimination of the Optional Zone, other solutions were considered and rejected.

Taken in the order presented:

- Moving special programs would be very disruptive to our neediest students. It would incur expenses for facilities renovation in the programs' new locations and require the transfer of teaching and support personnel;
- Converting existing facilities (for example changing large group instructional areas to regular classrooms) would incur expenses and undo recent facilities work and/or capital projects. It would also fail to make use of available rooms in buildings that could reasonably accommodate more students than presently enrolled. Imposing the cost of expanding schools when we have available space is unacceptable.
- Hard redistricting by altering secondary school attendance zones would affect residents who had selected their homes based, at least in part, on the schools which they believed their children would attend. In addition, setting hard redistricting lines would prove challenging in terms of correctly balancing school populations.
- What about reducing the size of the Optional Zone by limiting choice to a smaller catchment area? While not technically "hard redistricting" because students are, in fact, zoned to attend South Middle and South High School and the District has not at any point promised the continuation of choice, current residents have taken advantage of the Optional Zone in numbers greater than first anticipated. Once again, choice of residence may have been predicated on having school choice upon reaching middle or high school, and limiting that option may be perceived as taking away an opportunity.

Alternatives Considered

- Moving special programs from overcrowded settings to those with available space 
- Converting existing facilities and expanding schools in need of additional instructional space 
 - Hard redistricting of secondary school attendance zones 
 - Reduction in the size of the Optional Attendance Zone 

However, limiting the Optional Attendance Zone to rising 6th graders provides positive answers to many if not all of the questions at hand:

- It will have little impact on current Optional Zone residents because their secondary school children have already had the opportunity for school choice and their elementary age children will continue to have choice upon entering 6th grade;
- It will eliminate or minimize costs for facilities renovation;
- Staff reassignments will be reduced because student populations will remain more stable;
- New residents will enjoy the same choice for their children entering grade 6 as do current residents, and we will publicize any change in practice for 7th through 12th grade entrants and educate local real estate agents to minimize misunderstandings and misinformation prior to any purchase, and
- As shown here, adopting this practice will reduce the North Middle School enrollment spike and balance enrollment growth at both North and South High School while keeping their overall populations at levels that can be housed in our current buildings with minimal, if any, facilities work.

Alternatives Considered

- Limiting “Optional Attendance Zone” choice to those students first entering 6th grade



Optional Attendance Zone for Incoming 6th Grader Students Only

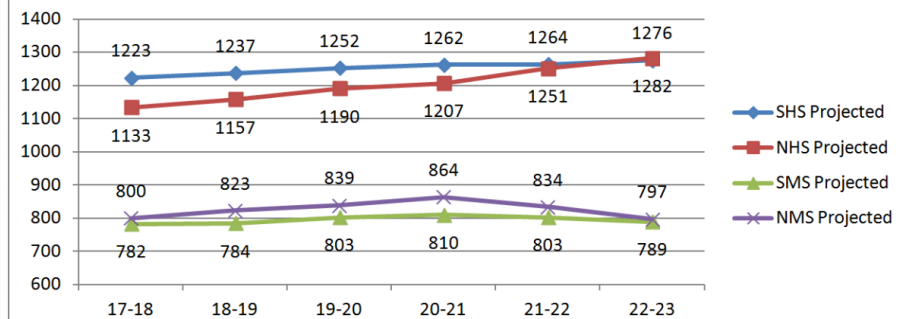


Figure 9: Secondary Enrollment Projections, Optional Zone Students Entering 6th Grade Only

In conclusion, based on a thorough review of past enrollments, the success of the Optional Zone to date, the efficacy of the model used to predict future enrollments, and the District's desire to "provide an innovative and collaborative educational environment that supports academic excellence and the social and emotional growth of all students" while maximizing resources in a cost-efficient manner, we recommend that the Board of Education consider continuation of the Optional Attendance Zone into 2018-2019 for rising 6th graders only.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on a thorough review of past enrollments, the success of the Optional Zone to date, the efficacy of the model used to predict future enrollments, and the District's desire to "provide an innovative and collaborative educational environment that supports academic excellence and the social and emotional growth of all students" while maximizing resources in a cost-efficient manner, we recommend that the Board of Education consider continuation of the Optional Attendance Zone into 2018-2019 for rising 6th graders only.

Destination Ahead

Questions?
(Thank you!)