

The proposed configuration involves a phased implementation: Elementary Consolidation (FY27, 2026-2027 school year) and Grade 6 Transition (FY28, 2027-2028 school year).

Transition Timeline (FY 2026–FY 2028)

Phase 1: Decisions, Leadership, and FY27 Budget Approval

This phase focuses on Board and organizational foundation, culminating in the voter approval of the consolidation plan and the FY27 budget.

Date/Timeframe	Action/Process Step	Key Areas Addressed	Input/Information Needed
December 2025	<p>Board votes on configuration and warns the vote for closure.</p> <p>Develop Roadmap for Transition including Steering Team composition</p>	Configuration Decision, Budget, Leadership	Update transportation based on new state guidelines under Act 73 (expected December 15, 2025).
January 2026	<p>School closure vote according to the Articles of Agreement. Date determined by board</p> <p>Board approves FY 27 Final Budget by January 21.</p>	Governance, Budget	Finalize plan for disposition of facilities
February 2026	<p>Board reviews and approves Board Communication and Outreach Plan for Final FY 27 Budget.</p> <p>Leadership Team reviews staffing and potential reductions in force to inform the Staff Assignment Plan.</p>	Communications, Facilities	Leadership and Association meet to review Staff Assignment Plan

	Conduct building capacity and readiness assessments of Berlin, East Montpelier, and Middlesex.		
March 2026	Town Meeting Day – FY 27 Budget Vote. Staff Assignment Plan finalized to reduce staff anxiety and provide clarity on staffing processes, transfers, and timelines.	Budget Approval, Staffing	

Phase 2: Operational Transition and Program Alignment (Spring/Summer 2026)

This phase prepares the three consolidated K-6 elementary schools for the FY27 (2026-2027) school year opening.

Date/Timeframe	Action/Process Step	Key Areas Addressed	Input/Information Needed
April 2026	Curriculum, instruction, and systems alignment begins. Review K-6 Curriculum and class configurations. Build cross-school learning teams. Review MLSS systems across schools and plan for student needs in new environments.	Curriculum, Staffing, Special Education	Develop implementation plan for universal before- and after-school programming (staffing, facility utilization, grant applications).
May–June 2026	Plan and hold celebration and closure events for consolidating schools. Develop new elementary identities (colors, mascots, traditions) collaboratively.	Culture, Community Engagement	Secure paid summer work time for merging staff to collaborate, build programming, and align curriculum.

Summer 2026	Facilities transition plan: moving materials and resources where needed. Host “Welcome to our new school” retreats for merged staff.	Facilities, Staffing, Student Support	Schedule dedicated professional learning
End of August 2026	Launch Communications Campaign and host End of August “Welcome Week”.	Communications, Student Transition	

Phase 3: Elementary Configuration (FY27: 2026-2027 School Year)

Date/Timeframe	Action/Process Step	Key Areas Addressed	Input/Information Needed
FY27 (2026-2027)	Elementary configuration of five schools into three sustainable K-6 sites (Berlin, EMES, Middlesex).	Structure	Monitor actual class sizes versus projected configurations to ensure adherence to standards.
FY27 (Ongoing)	Grade 6 remains in elementary setting (K-6 model) to allow stability for one year prior to transition. Intensive planning for Grade 6 transition begins.	Grade 6 Transition	
FY27 (Ongoing)	Implement consistent delivery of curriculum and Allied Arts access.	Programming, Allied Arts	

Phase 4: Grade 6 Transition Planning (FY28: 2027-2028 School Year)

Date/Timeframe	Action/Process Step	Key Areas Addressed	Input/Information Needed
Year 2027	<p>Grade 6 transition implemented: Grade 6 students move to U-32, establishing a developmentally appropriate 6-8 MS and 9-12 HS structure. Elementary schools become three sustained K-5 sites.</p>	Grade 6 Transition, Structure	<p>Implement revised transportation routes</p>
Leading up to FY28	Teachers interested in teaching Middle School are supported in obtaining middle grades licensure.	Staffing	<p>Define "robust middle school program" (including specifics on middle school curriculum, electives, transition supports, and physical separation from 9-12 grades if necessary).</p>
Leading up to FY28	Implement specific actions to create a welcoming environment for Grade 6, including student-led orientation programs, multiple "Step-Up Days," community nights, and identifying students with additional emotional or logistical needs.	Student Transition	<p>Host transition meetings for students with IEPs/504 plans involving parents, sending teachers, and receiving staff.</p>

Specific Concerns and Proposed Approach

Special Education Service Delivery and Staffing

The transition is intended to increase efficiency and access to targeted support.

- **Staffing Commitment:** The goal is to average **one special educator for every 70 students** in the consolidated elementary schools (K-5/6). This structure facilitates a narrower focus for special education services and reduces travel time for specialists (Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, ECSES).
- **Service Delivery:** The larger cohorts enable a vigorous **Multi-Layered System of Support (MLSS)**, allowing for more targeted interventions (Layers 3-6) and specialized instruction in appropriately sized cohorts.

To address these, the timeline includes reviewing MLSS systems and planning for new student needs (April 2026). Needed input involves developing **clear guidance materials about Child Find, referral, and evaluation processes** to ensure equitable practice across all merged schools.

Allied Arts Staffing (FTE per Building)

The current configuration has staffing inefficiencies where allied arts teachers are often spread across multiple small schools.

- **Service Commitment:** All students in the consolidated elementary schools will receive Art, Music, and Library access once per week each, and PE access twice per week, all delivered in 40-minute blocks.
- **Staffing Commitment:** The consolidation enables the creation of full-time dedicated positions for School Nurse, School Counselor, and Librarian services in every school.
- **Input Needed:** While the *delivery time* for Arts is specified, the exact **FTE allocation per building for Art, Music, and PE teachers** needs to be calculated and defined based on the projected student enrollment and the mandated 40-minute daily schedule to confirm stability and workload.

Disposition of Closed Buildings

The proposed model involves maintaining the Berlin, East Montpelier, and Middlesex schools as sustainable district elementary sites.

Action Needed: The transition plan requires determining the **next steps for vacated facilities**.

District Use: The district will evaluate the possibilities of using the facilities for other educational purposes such as alternative education and/or specialized services.

Community Use: Ideas raised for the use of closed buildings include early childhood centers/pre-K, infant daycare, after-school programs, senior housing projects, or community learning programs.

Development of Before and After School Care and Programming

The transition is guided by the **Community Schools Framework**, which calls for **Expanded and Enriched Learning Time and Opportunities**. The goal is to provide **universal before-school and after-school programming**.

- **Implementation:** This includes grant writing for before- and after-school programming and conducting a detailed assessment of student participation, staffing requirements, and facility needs.
- **Challenge:** Staffing remains one of the greatest challenges to implementing universal before and after care. A plan must be developed to hire/contract sufficient staff for these universal services by April 2026.

Transition Coordinator and Leadership

The transition process requires **Dedicated Leadership**.

- The administration plans to create a **Steering Team** composed of configuration committee members, teachers, support staff, families, and students (Grades 5-8) to guide the transition.
- Community input strongly suggests **hiring a specific Transition and Community Engagement Coordinator** to manage the proposal and transition process. This position's salary should be budgeted for in FY26, with the job being to build new school communities thoughtfully and coordinate engagement.

Budget Process and Timeline

The transition planning is interwoven with the FY 2026-2027 budget cycle, spanning from initial scope definition in August 2025 to voter approval in March 2026. Key steps include setting parameters (Oct 2025), reviewing drafts (Nov/Dec 2025), and final board approval (Jan 2026).