

# Hollis Enrollment Committee Frequently Asked Questions

Compiled and Posted June 2025

<u>Question, Suggestion, or Point of concern</u>	<u>Response</u>
<p><b>Why do we need to have a preschool?</b></p>	<p>Under <a href="#">Child Find</a>, School Districts in NH are required to determine eligibility for Special Education services for children ages 3-22. If a student is found eligible for Special Education Services the school district is required to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) including supports and services for Special Education as determined by the IEP team.</p> <p>About 15 years ago the Hollis School District made the decision to offer Preschool programming in the school district. The decision was based on multiple factors, such as:</p> <p><b>Inclusive Environment:</b> Our preschool classes include students with special needs alongside typical peers in order to foster social, academic and emotional development for the children within their own community. Research shows that high-quality preschool education helps improve academic performance in later grades. The district is able to design and provide appropriate instruction and services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, or physical therapy, addressing the needs of children who may require specialized services early on to improve their educational outcomes.</p> <p><b>Avoiding out-of-district placements:</b> If a school district does not offer its own preschool program, children will need to be placed in out-of-district programs to receive special education services. Costs would be incurred per child, including tuition and contracted costs for services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, etc. as well as transportation and additional expenses. By having preschool in the district the district is able to consolidate services and educational assessments which reduces costs associated with outsourcing services and programs.</p> <p><b>General Cost Savings:</b> Investing in preschool programs reduces short and long-term costs for school districts. Early childhood education helps address developmental delays and learning difficulties at a younger age, potentially preventing the need for more intensive special education services later on. By providing early support, districts can help ensure that children are ready for kindergarten, potentially reducing the need for interventions later in their schooling.</p> <p>Schools must provide a Continuum of Alternative Educational Environments for Ages 3-5. These are listed in the NH Special Education Reference Manual (Table 1100.2). <a href="https://www.education.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt326/files/inline-documents/sonh/nh-standards-2023-pri-nt-revised-2-16-24.pdf">https://www.education.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt326/files/inline-documents/sonh/nh-standards-2023-pri-nt-revised-2-16-24.pdf</a></p> <p>For more questions on this topic, please contact our Director of Student Services, Lauren DiGennaro: <a href="mailto:lauren.digennaro@sau41.org">lauren.digennaro@sau41.org</a></p>

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**Can the district avoid renovation and expansion of the Hollis Primary School by relocating the third grade to the Upper Elementary School?**

The Enrollment Committee has thoroughly examined this question. Meeting minutes from April, May, and June 2025 demonstrate our commitment to exploring this option. After meetings with both building principals and the Director of Curriculum, practical plans for each school were created before a final determination was made.

Moving the third grade class to HUES would add approximately 100 students and a minimum of six staff members to HUES. Currently, according to [NESDEC data](#), the school is projected to peak by 87 students in less than 10 years (279 to 366 in FY33). With the addition of 3rd grade, it will add the 100 students now, plus their projected growth, resulting in approximately 475 students by FY33.

### **Can HUES fit an additional 100+ students?**

One hundred students would necessitate five classrooms. From a building capacity perspective, moving the third grade class to HUES is possible. This arrangement would require relocating some services and placing the Technology class, the Environmental Science class, and possibly the Music class on carts. This all can be done without renovating or expanding the building in the immediate future.

From a septic perspective, the addition of the third grade to HUES would push our septic system to its maximum capacity in just nine years or less. Our tank, installed in 1994, is an 8,000 gallon tank. According to the design data in the 1994 [C-7 Detail sheet](#) prepared by the civil engineer at the time (Appledore Engineering, Inc.):

*The proposed septic system is designed to handle the wastewater generated from a population of 500 students and staff. The proposed facility will have a cafeteria and a gymnasium without showers. Any expansion beyond the 500 student/staff design flow will require a new permit from the NHDES-Subsurface Bureau.*

With the approximate 475 students in FY33 plus the accompanying staff, the current system would be pushed to, and perhaps exceed, its limits, requiring a reevaluation and possible upgrade of the system.

From a programming and staffing perspective, this would involve some highly impactful changes for both students and staff. Below is a breakdown of the physical changes a third grade move would require with notes regarding the physicality of the rooms:

- **Classroom 1:** Computer room (111) to cart. Room 111 converts to a sixth grade classroom. Room 111 has no windows.
- **Classroom 2:** Current Music room (310, next to cafeteria) converts to a sixth grade classroom.

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Music moves to the cafeteria stage or it moves to a cart.

- **Classroom 3:** Eliminate Learning Lab (SPED and RTI) in room 110; 110 becomes sixth grade classroom.
- **Classroom 4:** Reading specialists in room 108 move to room 212 (the current staff room). Room 108 becomes a sixth grade classroom. Staff room moves to the loft.
- **Classroom 5:** Environmental Science (room 113) converts to a sixth grade classroom; Environmental Science moves to cart. Room 113 is physically set up as a science lab from when the building housed middle school students (extensive cabinets, sink, lab tables, etc.). Room 113 does not have windows.

In this scenario, 2-3 specialists move to carts (discussed more below). From a physical space perspective, there are several factors worth consideration. Currently, students are only in rooms 111 and 113 once a week for 45 minutes. With the above changes, two groups of sixth grade students would be learning in classrooms without windows for the majority of their day. There is a large body of research that is easily searchable on the web which discusses the benefits of daylight for both student learning and the physical and mental health of students and teachers alike. The lack of sunlight for the majority of the day would be a concern for the students assigned to these classrooms for the year.

The second consideration is the effect of having staff members teaching from carts. This means that the teachers of Technology, Environmental Science, and possibly Music would not have their own classroom or office. Their supplies would be stored on a cart that would be taken from classroom to classroom throughout the day. This would limit the supplies they could use as everything for the day would need to fit on a cart that would need to be small enough to fit onto the elevator.

The limited supplies available to a cart will necessarily impact the curriculum that the teacher will be able to deliver. While this impact may not be as dramatic for Technology, Environmental Science currently utilizes microscopes, beakers, and other lab equipment that would not easily transport. The Environmental Science classroom also houses students' experiments, growing plants, owl pellets, etc. All of this would be limited and/or eliminated by a switch to cart teaching.

As for staffing, a switch to a permanent cart situation would undoubtedly motivate staff to leave our school for a place where they would have their own classroom. Cart teaching is difficult for planning and teaching, but it is also physically cumbersome and draining. Retaining quality teachers would prove challenging with this less than ideal working environment.

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### **Why is it not clear whether Music would be on a cart or not?**

Currently, the Music class is held in room 301, which is directly adjacent to the cafeteria (the classroom door opens to the cafeteria). If third graders were to move to HUES, room 301 would have to be converted to a sixth grade classroom and Music would move to the stage that is part of the cafeteria. If it were to be too loud/disruptive to have a classroom adjacent to a Music class, the Music class would have to be moved to a cart. It is also noteworthy that the sixth grade class in room 301 would also have to endure the noise of the cafeteria during parts of the day as well.

### **What other programming changes would take place with the addition of a third grade class?**

With the elimination of the Learning Lab, small group and one-on-one work for students with special needs and/or receiving intervention would now be significantly reduced due to limited space for private instruction.

The addition of the third grade would mean that the special education case manager for that grade level would have to move to HUES as well. That person would need to share an office with the school psychologist (room 105). This situation could create difficulties in maintaining confidentiality and privacy for students receiving these services.

Currently, students are able to experience “choice” recess options. That is, in addition to being able to go outside for recess, they can opt to spend time working with a specialist in their classroom. However, with the introduction of the third grade into the specialists’ schedules, the additional instructional time needed would eliminate the possibility for the recess option in the future.

### **But wouldn’t moving the third grade be a free alternative for taxpayers?**

Unfortunately, no. Renovation would still be needed at the primary school even with the relocation of the third grade. According to [NH fire code](#), classrooms for students in PreK-grade 1 must be located on a ground floor with direct egress. This means that students must be able to exit without stairs or ramps. As a result, clearing the third grade students out of the second floor would only result in minimal cost savings for taxpayers.

The upstairs would be renovated to convert the current third grade classrooms into a Music room and a Library. This would be acceptable for kindergarteners and first graders as the Fire Marshall has allowed specials to be on upper floors since these young children are only there for part of the day. On the

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	<p>positive side for taxpayers, this renovation would save the Town the cost of a potential addition of a Library and/or Music room. The renovation would maintain the current doors, providing flexibility should they need to be converted back into classrooms in the future. This was done in years past with the Learning Commons space which is currently three first grade classrooms (converted in FY25).</p> <p>In addition to the renovation upstairs, moving the third grade would not obviate the need for renovation on the first floor. Given NESDEC projection numbers, we would still need at least two additional classrooms over the next five years for PreK-2. Furthermore, moving the third graders does not solve the problems the school currently has with insufficient storage space, insufficient office space, insufficient parking, poor traffic flow, and the lack of a proper gymnasium. The Enrollment Committee would still have to address these issues, which would incur some cost to the Town.</p> <p>As a result of all of the above factors, it is the conclusion of the Enrollment Committee that relocating the third grade students to HUES is <b>not</b> in the best interests of the students, the staff, or Town taxpayers.</p>
<p><b>Can we separate from Brookline at the COOP level in order to create more room to shift grade levels?</b></p>	<p>While the Hollis Enrollment Committee understands the Town's concerns for potential enrollment constraints in the middle and high schools, a prospective separation from Brookline does not fall under our purview. The Hollis School District is separate from the COOP and cannot influence the decisions or actions of that Board.</p> <p>If a resident is interested in raising this question, please attend the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District Board Meetings. COOP Board information and meeting times can be found at: <a href="https://www.sau41.org/boards/coop-school-board-1">https://www.sau41.org/boards/coop-school-board-1</a>.</p>
<p><b>Too much new building is putting a strain on our town in general. How is the Town mitigating expansion?</b></p>	<p>We are very cognizant of this Town concern. A representative of the Hollis School Board will take part in the Select Board Advisory Committee discussed at the 2025 Town Meeting. The information gleaned from this participation will impact our approach to completing the primary school project. Our goal for the town and district is to gain the most value for our dollars by providing a long-term solution. We will aim to time our project in line with other town needs in as sensitive a manner as possible.</p>
<p><b>How much will this cost?</b></p>	<p>As of the month that this document was produced (June 2025) we are already ontrack to come under budget from the \$164,400 the taxpayers approved in Warrant Article 6 this year to fund the architectural and engineering consulting. We chose Banwell Architects, in part, because they have a history of completing projects on time and within, or under, budget. We will balance needs and wants in order to provide a proposal that is both sufficient for a long-term enrollment solution and fiscally responsible to our taxpayers.</p> <p>To remain up-to-date on the costs and cost projections of this project, please check the Enrollment</p>

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	<p>Committee page frequently, read agendas and meeting minutes, or attend our meetings as they are open to the public. You can also look out for public information events that we plan to publicize in the fall of 2025.</p>
<p><b>Why don't we apply for state aid for this project?</b></p>	<p>SAU 41 has made this attempt in the past. Most recently, applications were submitted in 2022 for Brookline's RMMS, the COOP Middle and High School, and Brookline's Captain Samuel Douglas. These four schools ranked last in the pool of applicants. The ranking list and project details can be found <a href="#">HERE</a>. This committee is confident that an equivalent effort for this project will have a similar result.</p>