EAST LYME PUBLIC SCHOOLS · BOARD OF EDUCATION

Planning for the Future of Our Schools

Beginning a community conversation about enrollment, our buildings, and the experience of every student.

Board of Education Meeting · Fall 2026

WHERE WE ARE

Exploratory Phase

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

What This Conversation Is — and Is Not

What this IS

- A shared understanding of where we are today — grounded in the data
- An honest look at how enrollment and our buildings have changed
- A wide-open menu of options
- The start of a full year of listening — to staff, families, our town, and our community

What this is NOT

- A decision — we're at the beginning of the process
- A recommendation — the options are still open
- An immediate change — any implementation is years away
- A one-way conversation — community input will shape what comes next

THE PROBLEM WE'RE FACING

Why We're Exploring This

Four pressures have converged. None is new. Together, they mean doing nothing has a cost too.

01

Enrollment has changed

We serve 637 fewer students than we did in 2010–11 — and the decline has not been even. Some schools have grown while others have emptied.

02

Our buildings no longer match

A large number of elementary seats sit empty across the district, with utilization varying significantly across our three schools.

03

Student experience varies

Class sizes differ from building to building, and the grade 4 → 5 transition has been a persistent challenge point for our students.

04

Long-term fiscal pressure

Two difficult budget cycles — a referendum that first failed, then passed narrowly. Structural costs put valued programs at risk.

The last time elementary attendance boundaries were redrawn was eight years ago.

WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO ACHIEVE

Our Goals

Two goals, weighted equally. Any path forward has to serve both.

GOAL ONE

Student Experience & Achievement

- More consistent class sizes across every elementary school
- Strong transitions and continuity across grade levels
- Continued access to the programs, specialists, and services our students value
- Learning environments that support students academically, socially, and emotionally

GOAL TWO

Fiscal Sustainability & Long-Term Stability

- Use the space we have efficiently and effectively
- Build greater protection for programs and staff through increasingly difficult budget cycles
- Reduce structural costs, not just one-year costs
- Build a structure that still works ten years from now

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS · 1 OF 2

Our District Today

Independent enrollment projections and a building utilization study, completed in 2026.

2,447

students enrolled across PK–12 today

637

fewer students than we had in 2010–11

Significant

empty elementary seats across the district

Stable

enrollment projected over the next 10 years

What this means

We are not shrinking further — but we are also not growing. Roughly one in five elementary seats sits empty, and the projections say that stays true for the next decade. This is a settled reality to plan around, not a temporary dip to wait out.

Source: MP Planning Group enrollment projections and building utilization study, June 2026. The full data packet is available to the public.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS · 2 OF 2

Our Three Elementary Schools

The district-wide number tells only half the story. The distribution tells the other half.

School	Enrollment	Change since 2020–21	Building Utilization
Flanders	236	– 13%	87%
Haynes	365	+ 29%	81%
Niantic Center	178	– 19%	66%

The key takeaway

We have close to the right number of students — they are just not distributed evenly across the buildings we have.

Redrawing boundaries would address the imbalance. It would not, on its own, address whether our building footprint and grade structure still fit the district we are.

One school is near capacity while another sits two-thirds full — and the trend lines are moving in opposite directions.

Source: MP Planning Group, June 2026. Utilization compares current enrollment to each building's designed instructional capacity.

THE OPTIONS

Options On the Table

Nothing here has been ruled in — or ruled out.

Baseline: Rebalance boundaries only

Redraw elementary attendance areas across all three schools. No building changes, no grade changes.

A/B Academy model at the current ELMS campus

Consolidate Elementary students to LBH/FL and repurpose NCS for district/community use. Create distinct Intermediate (4–5) and Upper (6–8) academies in the middle school building.

C Consolidate to two elementary schools

Consolidate Pre-K to 4th to two schools, Flanders and LBH. NCS repurposed for district and community usage. No change in Middle School.

D Return 5th grade to elementary

Move grade 5 back into the three elementary schools — K–5 elementary, 6–8 middle school.

E Reconfigure grade levels

Consolidate elementary to Niantic Center and Flanders (one K–3 and one PK–3) and transition LBH to become an intermediate school (grade 4-5). Middle school 6-8.

F Reconfigure Elementary Grade by School

Consolidate K-2 to NCS/FL. LBH becomes 3-4th grade. No change to MS..

OPEN TO IDEAS THAT WE HAVE NOT IDENTIFIED YET

THE WORK BEHIND THE OPTIONS

We're Studying the Impact of Each Path

For every scenario, the analysis models the same set of questions — so options can be compared honestly.

Building utilization
How full each school would be, grade by grade

Class size
Projected class sizes at every grade level in every building

Student transitions
How many times a child changes buildings from PK through 8

Staffing
Certified and support staffing needs under each configuration

Transportation
Bus routes, ride times, and cost implications

Facilities & capital
Building condition, needed improvements, and long-term capital cost

What we can say so far

Every configuration studied to date would raise elementary building utilization meaningfully above where we are today, and each carries a different mix of tradeoffs for students, staff, and taxpayers.

Scenario-level detail, including boundary maps and staffing models, will be published as options are refined.

OUR DECISION-MAKING LENS

How We'll Weigh the Options

These criteria are a starting point. We want the community's help refining them before they're applied.

01	**Impact on students first**	Class size, continuity, transitions, and access to programs are the first filter.
02	**Equity across our schools**	Every East Lyme student should have a comparable experience regardless of building.
03	**Fiscal sustainability**	Does it hold up over ten years, or does it move the problem down the road?
04	**Community input**	What we hear from staff, families, and residents shapes which options move forward.
05	**Feasibility & transition cost**	What it actually takes to get there — timeline, disruption, and one-time costs.

THE PATH FORWARD

At Least Two Years Before Anything Changes

2026 – 27

Explore & Engage

Partner with district leadership, the Town of East Lyme, staff, families, and residents. Public forums, surveys, and school-based conversations. Model the full set of options — including new ones — and begin narrowing toward the paths that best serve our goals.

2027 – 28

Decide & Plan

The Board selects a direction and makes a decision. Detailed implementation planning follows: attendance boundaries, staffing, transportation, facilities, and a transition plan for every affected student and family.

2028 – 29

Earliest Implementation

The first school year in which any change could take effect. Nothing changes for the 2026–27 or 2027–28 school years.

Nothing on the table would affect a student before the 2028–29 school year.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

How to Be Part of This

We want to hear from you starting in this exploratory phase.

Community forums

Open sessions across the district, beginning this fall, with time for questions and small-group discussion.

Surveys

Structured input from families, staff, and residents so we hear from people who can't attend an evening meeting.

School-based conversations

Listening sessions hosted at each school, so families can talk about their own building.

Board meetings

Public comment at every regular meeting, plus standing updates on this work.

Staff working sessions

Dedicated time with teachers, paraeducators, and support staff, who see the day-to-day impact first.

Direct to the Board

Write to us any time. Every message is read, and questions asked often become part of our public updates.

Dates, locations, and materials will be posted at [district website] · Questions: [committee email address]

TONIGHT

What We're Asking For Right Now

1

Lean into the question

Take a close look at what's changing — enrollment, how our buildings are being used, and the fiscal pressures ahead. Staying on our current path would have serious implications for our schools. and we want our community to understand the challenge we're working to solve.

2

Stay open as we explore

There are multiple ways we could respond, each with different tradeoffs. We're asking our community to stay curious and open as we learn more and evaluate what could work best for East Lyme.

3

Be part of the conversation

There will be many opportunities to hear more, ask questions, and share your perspective as this work continues. We hope you'll participate along the way.

Thank You

East Lyme Public Schools

Board of Education

School Reorganization Committee