EAST LYME PUBLIC SCHOOLS · BOARD OF EDUCATION

School Rebalancing & Future Planning

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

Board of Education Meeting · Fall 2026

WHERE WE ARE

Exploratory Phase

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

OUR DECISION-MAKING LENS

Draft Criteria for Evaluating Options

Before we narrow the options, we want to align on the criteria we'll use to evaluate them. This is a starting point for Board discussion and community input.

Student Experience

1. Academic & Student Impact

Protect the quality of the student experience, including programs, services, transitions, and school culture.

2. Class Size & Equity

Create more consistent class sizes and a comparable experience for students across schools.

3. District-Wide Impact

Consider the impact on students, staff, school communities, and district culture.

Operational & Fiscal Sustainability

4. Building Utilization

Move elementary schools toward a sustainable utilization range (approximately 75–85%) without overcapacity.

5. Long-Term Economics

Deliver meaningful, sustainable operating savings while accounting for staffing and long-term capital needs.

6. Feasibility

Be realistic to implement, including timing, transportation, facilities, staffing, transition needs, and one-time costs.

The question for the Board: Are these the right criteria to anchor our evaluation of the options? What's missing?

What's Next

Fall 2026

Establish the foundation

Kick off the discussion, align on the criteria that will guide our work, and begin exploring potential options against those criteria.

Winter 2027

Deepen the exploration

Narrow the field as we learn more, with some options set aside and others moving forward for deeper analysis. Expand community engagement through staff and school sessions, community forums, Board meetings, and a representative stakeholder committee.

Spring 2027

Focus the work

Identify the options that warrant serious consideration and conduct deeper analysis of their student, operational, financial, and community impacts. Use that work - and continued community input - to understand the tradeoffs and inform the path forward.