


School Choice Hearing

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE

ANNUAL SCHOOL CHOICE HEARING

THURSDAY APRIL 30, 2015



School Choice Law

- Chapter 76 Section 12B
- A School Committee may vote to participate in the School Choice program and accept Massachusetts students from outside the school district
- If the School Committee is going to withdraw from the School Choice program, they need to vote to do so by June 1 at an advertised public hearing
- The School District can determine how many seats to make available by grade
- If a district accepts school choice students, siblings of existing choice students have priority



School Choice Requirements

- If the School Committee votes to accept choice students, the vote cannot say that it will be limited to siblings only
- However, the district can limit the number of seats available, and siblings of existing choice students have priority by law
- The district receives \$5,000 for each school choice student (\$2,500 for kindergarten students) from the chapter 70 money of the sending school district
- AB currently has 41 school choice students



ABRHS School Choice

- Acton-Boxborough last took new choice students at the high school about 10 years ago.
- AB has taken siblings of current choice students at the high school ever since.
- There are currently 17 choice students at the high school with one sibling expected to enroll at 9th grade for next year



Blanchard School Choice

- Boxborough Public Schools accepted school choice students in specific grades from for several years leading up to 2014. They did not vote to accept siblings in most years.
- There are currently 17 choice students at Blanchard.
- There are 7 choice students at the R. J. Grey Jr. High that came from Blanchard
- Total K-12 choice = 41
ABRHS 17
R.J. Grey 7
Blanchard 17



School Choice Considerations

- Class Size
- Kindergarten Enrollment and Lottery
- Finances
- Siblings of Existing Choice Students
- Space
- Philosophy



Kindergarten Enrollment and Lottery

- 275 Kindergarten Students
- 16 classrooms averaging 17.2 students per class
2 classrooms at Blanchard and Conant
3 classrooms at Douglas, Gates, McT and Merriam
- 24 students did not receive their first choice (8.7%)
- Waitlists include 6 Acton students who wanted to attend Blanchard and 18 students who wanted to attend Conant



All Day Kindergarten

- 191 of the 275 kindergarten students requested all day kindergarten (70%)
- 161 of the 191 students requesting ADK were placed in ADK (84.2%)
- ADK Classrooms Available:
Douglas & McT 2 ADK and 1 HDK
Blanchard & Conant 2 classrooms with ADK & HDK
Gates and Merriam 1 ADK and 2 HDK (Space limit)
- Waitlists for ADK: 14 at Gates and 16 at Merriam



Class Sizes

- The average kindergarten size right now is 17.2.
- We expect an average of 15 more students. 290 students would give us an average class size of 18.1
- Class size guideline is 18-20 at kindergarten; 20-22 grades 1-3; 22-24 grades 4-6
- The incoming kindergarten students are not distributed evenly across the two towns



Class Sizes by Town

- Students who selected Blanchard as their first choice
 - 37 Boxborough students
 - 3 Acton students who have siblings at Blanchard
 - 6 new Acton students
- We enrolled the 40 that have priority to Blanchard (Boxborough students and siblings)
- The class size in the Blanchard incoming K class is 20 already.



Class Sizes by Town

- All students who move into Boxborough over the summer and through the next years will need to be added to those two classrooms
- This time last year we placed 37 students in the current kindergarten class. There are now 44 students (22 in each class). Additional students may enroll.
- The Acton incoming K class has 18 students in each ADK and smaller numbers in the half-day kindergartens until more students enroll.



Hometown Guarantee

During the period July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2019, pre-school to grade 6 students who reside in Acton will have first option for attending an elementary school in Acton while pre-school through grade 6 students who reside in Boxborough will have first option for attending an elementary school in Boxborough. Exceptions to this may be made for special education purposes or for other reasons which the Superintendent finds compelling. As of July 1, 2019, the “first option” described in the preceding two sentences will continue unless the option is altered by the Regional School Committee. In any event, any student who began his or her attendance in a particular elementary school, as well as any younger siblings of that student, will be given a preference in terms of continuing to attend at that school.



Options to Address Blanchard K & 1 Class Size

1. Watch over the next year and see how many students enroll.
2. Add a 3rd kindergarten (half day) at Blanchard and take some choice students to balance the class sizes in both towns



Administration's Recommendation

- We would like to honor the siblings of existing high school choice students (1 at 9th grade)
- We don't believe we can accommodate siblings of Blanchard choice students coming into kindergarten since we already have 20 students in each class
- After reviewing the possibilities of adding school choice students and the financial impact, we do not recommend taking any new school choice families
- We only receive \$2,500 in school choice revenue for kindergarten choice students (\$5,000 for grade 1-12)



Possible Scenario

- If the School Committee wanted to add a classroom to improve the class size for Blanchard's incoming kindergarten:
Cost to add half day K = \$55,000
(Teacher \$27,000; Assistant \$11,000, One health ins \$17,000)
- We would move the two all day/half day mixed classrooms at Blanchard to 2 all day and one half day
- Transfer 6 Acton (all day) students on Blanchard waitlist



Possible Scenario (Cont.)

- Add 4 choice students to Blanchard half day
- Add 10 choice students to Acton half day
- Revenue =
 \$35,000 choice
 \$25,800 ADK tuition
Total Revenue = \$60,800 Cost = \$55,000
- 2nd Year Cost = \$73,000 Revenue = 14 x \$5,000 = \$70,000
- Downsides: Changing landscape for families that already enrolled in mixed all day/half day option. It is late in the year to change – planning, schedules, hiring



Administration's Recommendation

Recommendation:

School Committee vote to continue participating in the School Choice program

We recommend limiting the seats available to one seat at ABRHS 9th grade

Motion: *The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee moves to continue in the School Choice program and limit openings to one seat in 9th grade at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School for FY16.*

Possible Choice Scenarios

Revenue for School Choice = \$2,500 for a Kind student and \$5,000 for grades 1-12 plus an additional amount for any Special Education students.

Model	Transfers	Class Size and Seats Available	Finances
Add a few students to Acton half day classrooms; do not add any classrooms		McT 3 Gates 2 Merriam 2	Revenue = \$17,500 No expenses Year 2 revenue = \$35,000
Add half day K at Blanchard	Move 6 Acton Students from waitlist to Blanchard	ADK #1 18 ADK #2 17 Half Day 11 Choice Seats 4 Half Day at Blanchard 10 Additional half day Seats in Acton Seats open for new students at Blanchard = 5 with class sizes of 18 Issue: Parents who registered for Blanchard are expecting mixed All Day/Half Day classes with an opportunity to move to full day mid-year.	Cost to add Half Day K = Teacher's Salary \$27,000 Health Insurance \$17,000 Half Day Assistant \$11,000 Total Cost = \$55,000 Choice revenue = \$35,000 ADK revenue increases by 6 students x \$4,300 = \$25,800 Total Revenue \$60,800 Net Surplus \$5,800
Add classroom to Blanchard with mix of All Day and Half Day Students	Move 6 Acton Students from waitlist to Blanchard	All Day/Half Day #1 12 AD/4 HD = 16 All Day/Half Day #2 12 AD/4 HD = 16 All Day/Half Day #3 13 AD/3 HD = 16 Choice Seats 8 All Day at Blanchard 6 Additional half day Seats in Acton Seats open for new Boxborough students 6 with class sizes of 18	Cost to add Full Day K = Teacher's Salary \$54,000 Assistant Salary \$25,000 2 Health Insurances \$34,000 Total Cost \$113,000 Choice revenue = \$35,000 ADK revenue increases by 8 x \$4,300 = \$34,400 Total Revenue = \$69,400. Net cost \$44,000.
Add 1 st Grade Classroom at Blanchard		Would move from 44 current students in 2 classrooms to 59 students in 3 classrooms (class size from 22 to 20). Take 12 choice students at Blanchard.	Cost: \$54,000 plus \$17,000 Insurance = \$71,000 Revenue = 12 Choice Students = \$60,000 Net Cost \$11,000

4/30/15