

The School Building Committee (SBC) wants to update voters on our activities since the Annual Town Meeting last May. This column will review our enrollment projection and the rationale we used to develop it. Over the next few weeks, future columns will cover the following topics:

- The work done at the Pompositticut and Center schools this summer
- Responses to some of the misunderstandings about the SBC
- The status of our search for land
- The results of our “outreach” meetings with various town boards and other groups
- Our current work on a conceptual plan for expansion and renovation of the Center School

The SBC hopes to improve communication with all voters so that there will be a better understanding of the problems, needs, and opportunities involving Stow’s two elementary schools.

Enrollment Projections

Expected growth of our enrollment for grades K-5 is the main reason for the need for additional classrooms. In addition, we must provide space for the preK students who are now going to Bolton, since Bolton needs more room for its own students. A third factor is the possibility that the current half-day kindergarten will become full-day.

Demographers look at historical birth rates in a town and current enrollments in order to forecast enrollments over the next ten years. The usual forecasting period is a decade because:

1. That is considered the outside limit for a valid forecast, and
2. The state’s school building assistance program requires a ten-year forecast.

The SBC worked with a professional demographer to develop a ten-year forecast starting with actual enrollments for the 2003-2004 school year. The results are shown in the following table:

	K	1	2	3	4	5	Total
03-04	102	91	87	85	86	85	536
04-05	99	109	89	89	86	85	557
05-06	92	106	107	91	90	86	572
06-07	81	99	104	109	92	90	575
07-08	75	87	96	107	111	92	568
08-09	71	81	85	99	108	110	554
09-10	94	76	79	87	100	108	544
10-11	95	101	74	81	89	99	539
11-12	97	102	98	76	82	88	543
12-13	97	103	100	101	77	81	559
13-14	98	104	101	102	102	77	584

We project that the K-5 population will rise from 536 to 584 over the next ten years; however, the demographer did not make an allowance for future growth of the town. Since Stow’s population is growing, the SBC concluded that the enrollment projection

should include this factor. To adjust for new growth, one of our members met with our Planning Board Coordinator to identify all of the known development projects as of January 2004. At that time, plans called for 340 new homes. We estimated the number of children expected from these new homes by applying the current ratio of preK-5 students per household (0.271), and the result was 92. We assumed that these students would arrive evenly over the next ten years.

The demographer did not account for preK students, so we also had to estimate this population over the next ten years. We accomplished this by calculating the year-to-year change in the total number of K-5 students (including those expected from new growth). We then applied those changes to the starting preK population of 40 as shown in the following table:

	K-5	Growth	Total	Changes Est.	PreK	Total PreK-5
03-04	536	n/a	536	n/a	40	576
04-05	557	9	566	5.60%	42	608
05-06	572	18	590	4.24%	44	634
06-07	575	28	603	2.20%	45	648
07-08	568	37	605	0.33%	45	650
08-09	554	46	600	-0.83%	45	645
09-10	544	55	599	-0.17%	45	644
10-11	539	64	603	0.67%	45	648
11-12	543	74	617	2.32%	46	663
12-13	559	83	642	4.05%	48	690
13-14	584	92	676	5.30%	50	726

For example, from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005, the K-5 population increases by 5.6%. Applying this factor to the starting number of preK students (40) yields 42 for the school year beginning in 2004. The right-hand column shows the projected total number of preK-5 students over the ten-year period. We have 576 today and we expect 726 by 2013, an increase of 26%.

The SBC will be happy to answer any questions regarding our enrollment analysis. We usually meet at 7 p.m. on the first and third Monday each month at Town Building. You may also contact me at 978-897-5803 or s.dungan@att.net.

Steve Dungan
Chairman, Stow School Building Committee