

# Easton Long Range Planning Committee – Phase II

*Reassimilation of the LRP Committee  
and a Historic Overview*

# Introduction of Easton LRP Committee Phase II

A sub-committee of the Easton Board of Education

- Dan Underberger, Easton BOE member, Chair LRPC Phase II
- Regina Bobroske, Easton BOE member (Chair LRPC Phase I)
- Jenny Chieda, Easton BOE member
- Andy Kachele, Easton BOF member and community member
- Gabriel Rossi, Easton BOF member and community member (Member LRPC Phase I)
- Claire Wilkes, community member
- Ed Nagy, Easton Public Works Director
- Dr. Thomas McMorran, Superintendent (Member LRPC Phase I)
- Dr. Stephanie Pierson-Ugol, Assistant Superintendent (Member LRPC Phase I)
- Susan Kaplan, Principal, HKMS (Member LRPC Phase I)

# Tonight's Presentation

- This presentation was created by Dan Underberger, Easton BoE member and new member of the LRP Committee Phase II.
- Many slides are from the May 2015 LRP Committee Phase I Presentation.
  - “From 5/26/15 Presentation” – copy of slide without modifications
  - “From 5/26/15 Presentation\*” – copy of slide with comments
- It is meant to foster discussion and lay plans for moving forward.

# Educational Mission

The mission of the E/R/9 school community is to inspire, nurture, and educate all students to attain their highest level of academic excellence with personal and social integrity through a committed partnership of two towns and five schools that provides a rigorous, dynamic, caring, and creative learning environment.

# Summary of LRP Committee Phase I Work

Information from May 12 (refined May 26), 2015 Presentation

# Charge of Committee/Objective of Phase I

Initiate a long term conversation to explore and identify possible options that will address the projected enrollment decline in Easton schools over the next 5 to 10 years that will:

- Preserve or enhance regional educational quality at an acceptable cost.
- Be flexible/reversible in response to a prospective enrollment rebound.

# LRP Phase I Committee

- Previous Easton LRP committee had 8 meetings between Oct 23, 2014 – May 26, 2015, culminating in a presentation on May 26, 2015
- Most of the work was collaborative between the Easton & Redding LRP committees. ER9 was peripherally involved.
- View listing (with links) of prior meetings [here](#)
  - View 5/26/15 PDF of Easton Long Range Planning Initial Exploration presentation [here](#)

# Easton Long Range Planning Committee Presentation Closing Comments

“Enrollment declines are predicted to continue to a point that likely will exhaust the elasticity of existing arrangements. Nonetheless, many of the existing arrangements have some shelf-life remaining. Their expiration date is not tomorrow. But “not tomorrow” is “not forever.” I guesstimate that significant redesign will be needed within five years. Via tonight’s report, the first re-design steps have been taken. The pace needs to be maintained and, in due time, quickened.”

Dr. Bernie Josefsberg  
Former ER-9 Superintendent of Schools  
May 26, 2015

# Overview of Phase I Work to Date

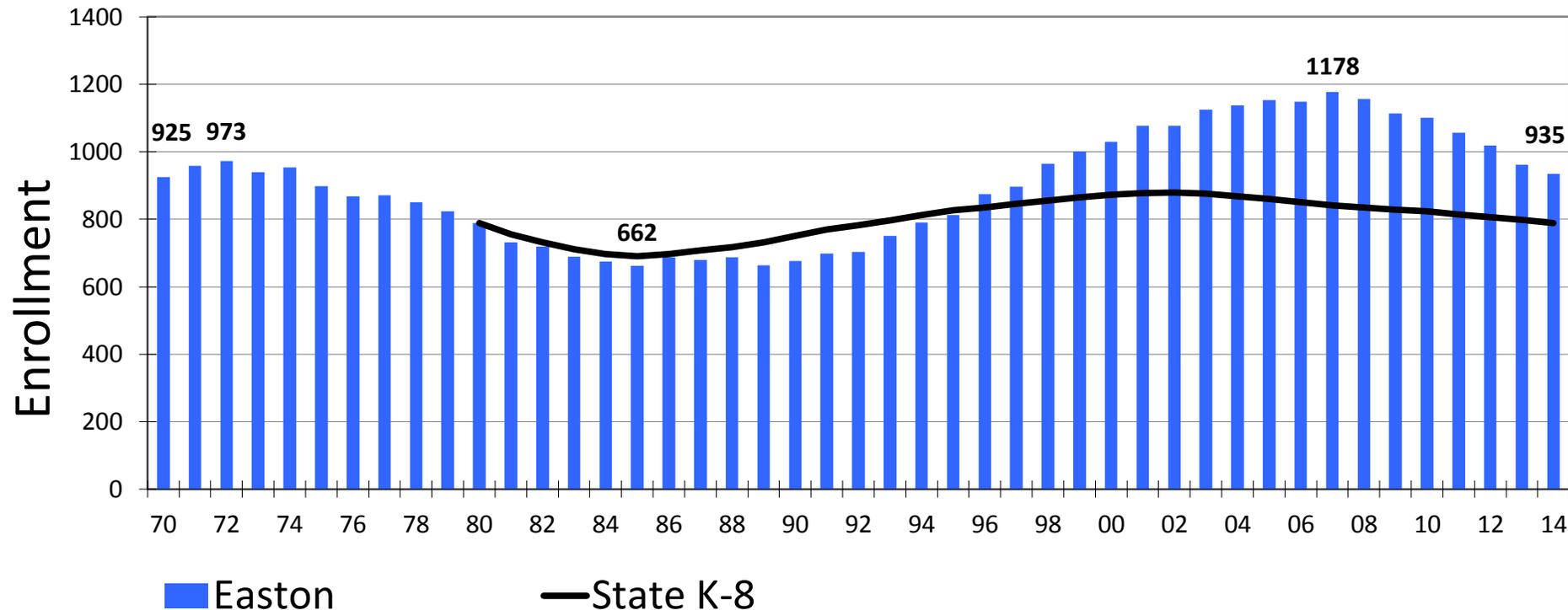
- Discovery Process:
  - Discussed objectives of phase one and possible scope of work.
  - Defined assumptions/criteria for considering any options.
  - Researched Declining enrollment via numerous resources including:
    - ER9 Administrative team
    - Redding LRPC work to date
    - Jonathan Costa, Education Connection
    - Prowda enrollment projections and population trends
    - Education articles on best practices and on declining enrollment.
  - Brainstormed possible options and future work associated with them.
  - Identified need for community conversations and involvement of key stakeholders

# Enrollment Data

Presented May 26, 2015

# Historical Perspective

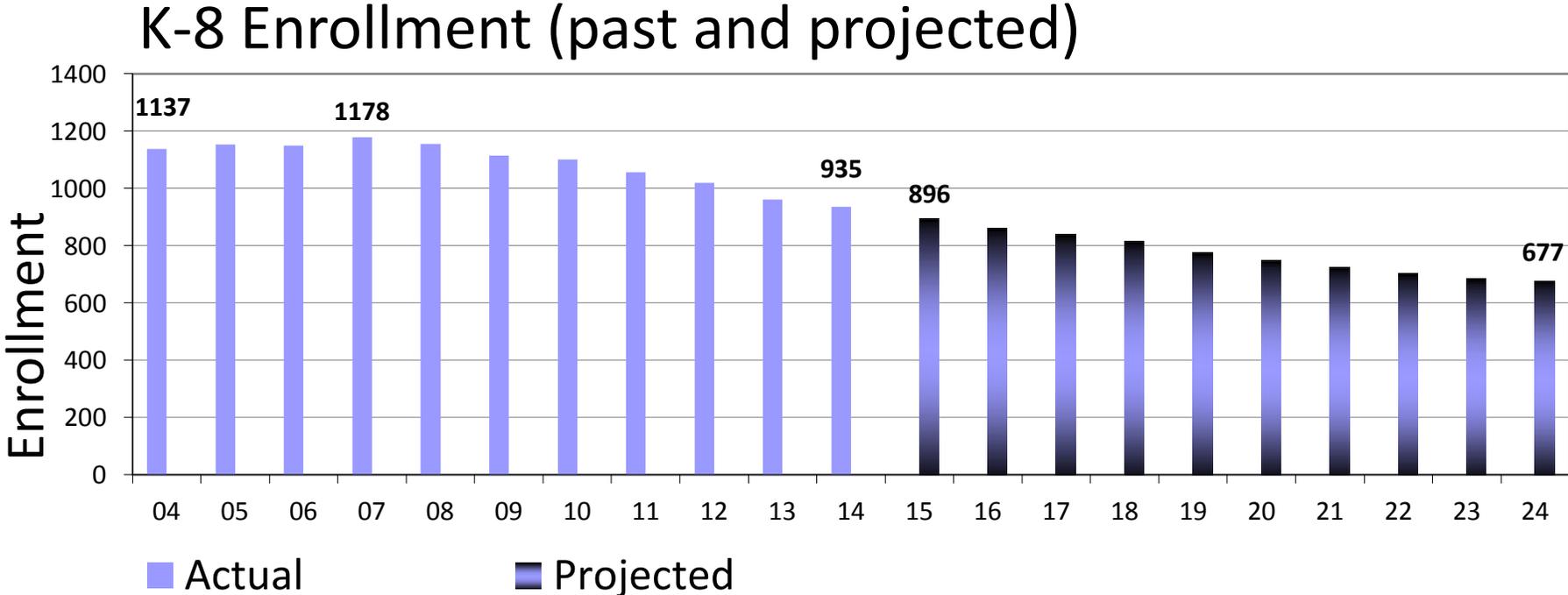
## K-8 Enrollment: 1970 to Date



- *What are the chances of another enrollment upswing?*
- *What led to the increase in the 1990s?*
- *Over what time frame are we looking to make cost-effective changes?*

# Current Enrollment Trends

- *At what point do we make changes?*
- *What is the threshold enrollment that triggers the change?*
- *When do we believe this will occur?*



# Prowda Easton Projections – Nov. 2015

Projections	K	8th	K-5	6-8	TOTAL	Ave Grade Size
2007-08	120	126	758	377	1,178	131
2015-16	76	108	582	309	921	102
2016-17	64	101	540	326	896	100
2017-18	70	101	518	334	882	98
2018-19	67	125	490	343	863	96
2019-20	63	109	465	320	815	91
2020-21	73	110	455	308	793	88
2021-22	69	102	446	290	766	85
2022-23	68	97	452	265	747	83
2023-24	68	92	449	252	731	81
2024-25	68	77	450	240	720	80
2025-26	68	84	456	239	725	81

- 22% decrease in K-8 population from peak of enrollment in 2007-8 until today.
- Another 22% decrease is projected to occur by 2025-26
- 6 years from now the **TOTAL** K-8 enrollment is projected to be close to the total K-5 SSES enrollment in 2007-8

**Source:**  
 EASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ENROLLMENT  
 PROJECTED TO 2025  
 Peter M. Prowda, PhD  
 Nov 10, 2015

# Summary of Jonathan Costa (Education Connection) analysis

- Decreasing enrollment doesn't equate to same percentage cost savings.
- "To bend the cost curve and improve the pool, it is all about buildings and staff."
  - “Bend the curve” for enrollment takes time and factors may be out of our control.
- Declining enrollment in CT is a trend throughout the state
  - Due to economics, families with fewer children, fewer families buying homes in our area.
- Shrinking class size leads to lack of options. Efficiencies run out and there is an upward spiral for per pupil cost.

# Summary of Jonathan Costa (Education Connection) analysis

Options that other towns are trying and **how they apply to us**

- Make schools more attractive
  - We already have high performing school district
- Pull from current residents percentage attending private school.
  - Stable and unchanging (7-9%) across all regions
- Specialized Programs/International Exchange
  - upfront investment with no guarantee
  - runs counter to controlling student costs
- Magnet and Charter schools
  - Money does follow the student, but that comes with restrictions/strings attached. Would need to draw kids from Bridgeport, Norwalk and Danbury to have the diversity that would be looked at seriously by the state.

# Summary of Jonathan Costa (Education Connection) analysis

- Try to attract more families to increase tax base
  - High housing and tax cost - problem in all of Connecticut, not just Easton.
  - Increasing population of non-school age children is best for increasing tax bases without burdening school infrastructure. However, high taxes and housing cost is not a huge draw for that population.

## High Level Recommendation from Jonathan Costa (Education Connection) analysis

- Effectively addressing declining enrollment would require at the least, cooperation between Easton, Redding and Region 9.
- "To bend the cost curve and improve the pool, it is all about buildings and staff."
- "Trying to drum up business" i.e., attract new kids into district, is not an effective/suggested strategy.

# Criteria for Consideration of Options

- District educational quality will be preserved or enhanced
- Cost effective – will be managed within budget constraints and/or offer cost savings.
- Implementation Complexity - Executable within necessary time frames with minimal disruption for students. Consider human as well as financial resources required, and required coordination with other groups.
- Flexible in response to possible shifts in enrollment.

# About the Options .....

- Ideas only – **nothing** has been decided or pursued.
- **Much** more exploring to do.
- Some options might be possible as individual initiatives or in conjunction with others.
- Time frames for execution vary greatly.

# Options to Explore

- Existing Strategies/Structure (Current to Short Term)
  - Staff reductions correlated to enrollment decline
  - Resource sharing
  - Instructional Technology
- Modifications within Easton
  - Redeployment of existing resources (Short To Mid-Term)
    - Example: Use of space:
      - Reconfigured for innovative instructional models/learning environments
      - Lease unused space
  - Vertical Consolidation- some form of reconfiguration of HKMS and SSES (Long- Term)
- Cross District Cooperation/Consolidation (Long Term)
  - Cooperation between and/or consolidation with Redding/Region 9 in some form.

# Recommended Next Steps

- Meeting with Jonathan Costa and Redding on process for evaluating options and working cooperatively with Redding/Region 9. – *No more \$ for Costa*
- Establish joint committee with Redding. – *Redding LRP Committee will not reengage until after May 2016*
- Define work process and establish time line.
- Initiate an ongoing community conversation for input from key stakeholders
  - Stakeholders include
    - all taxpayers, including seniors, parents and families without Easton school students
    - Students
    - Teachers and staff
    - Town Governance
    - Sister Districts – Redding and Region 9
  - Joint meeting with representatives from all stakeholder groups, Outreach conversations with individual stakeholder groups, broader community conversations.
  - Ongoing communication on progress – *very little has been done since May 2015 due to Easton & Redding BoE and Superintendent changes.*
    - Emails, section on district website, etc.
- Phase II of Committee work

# LRPI Committee Recommendations for Phase II

- Stakeholder and professional input
- Community conversations
- Deeper exploration and analysis of options
- Refinement of Options

Time Frame:

Goal for Completion of Phase II – before end of 2015-16 school year

- Key checkpoint in January

# Long Range Planning Committee – Phase II

# What are public expectations of the LRPC?

## Questions I have heard from town members...

- Do we close a school and if so when? (expectation is HKMS)
- How much money will it cost or save us?
- How many students can SSES hold and what are the enrollment projections for 2020?
- How can we cut down on the number of buses?
- Do we integrate with Redding? If so, will Redding students come to Easton so we don't have to drive there?
- Will the grade structure change? i.e. a single K-7 elementary and 8-12 a high school?
- What do we do with the closed school? Can we generate revenue from it?
- What are tax and housing implications?
- When are you going to decide what to do?
- What other boards, town agencies need to be involved?
- Whose decision is this? Do we need a vote? When?

# Questions I have not heard at BoE Meetings

These items were discussed by the LRPI Committee

- **What are the educational impacts of any change to our children?**
- **What is the best EDUCATIONAL solution?**
- **How will the delivery of education change in the next 10-20 years and will our choices accommodate those changes?**
- What are the legal, legislative and political considerations of 'regionalizing?'
- What is "regionalization"?
- How are other communities handling the decrease in STATE population?
- What will happen if the town population increases in the future?

# What should LRP Phase II focus on?

- **At the core: Long range planning must be based on EDUCATIONAL requirements / criteria and adhere to our education strategic plan**
  - Defined district educational goals
  - Understanding future education and technology needs
- What is the 'critical' student population where we consider when to consolidate/regionalize schools
  - Existing buildings/structures – review work that Steve Rowland has done
  - Cost analysis and EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS of moving students and education staffing restructuring.
  - Revenue opportunities to repurpose a school or rent out portions. ?? convert to Specialty School (i.e. STEM, Arts), Central Office, etc.
  - Costs to reopen a school once closed and chances this could occur
  - Possible options: K-8, K-6 + 7 & 8 moving to Barlow, Regionalization with Redding, closing sections of buildings.

# What LRP Committee is **NOT** here to solve

- Definition/meaning of Educational Quality including future world of work for students
- Educational goals & curriculum
  - These will be defined by our Education Administrators, their strategic teams and the Board of Education. These decisions will help drive our decisions.
- Current cost per student
  - This ratio will be influenced by our decisions
- How to generate revenue not involving BoE facilities
- Changing teaching contracts or faculty head count
  - Our decisions will lead to teacher and program consolidation

# Possible Next Steps

- Identify required resources to help facilitate and provide necessary information
  - Need to incorporate Redding and ER9 boards
  - Community – households with and without school children.
    - Need to consider affect on housing prices and taxes
  - Legal, Political (local, regional, state), Zoning - Understand the implications of regionalization and building changes.
  - Community Conversation
    - Taxpayers – seniors, parents, and families without students in Easton schools
    - Students – all factions
    - Teachers and Staff
    - Town Governance - BOF, BOS, BOE
  - Review existing districts who have successfully managed declining enrollment

# Possible Next Steps

- Time frames - Establish relevant triggers requiring related action
- Capacity study based on facilities and population projections
- Cost analysis for options

# Questions and Answers