

Needham Public Schools

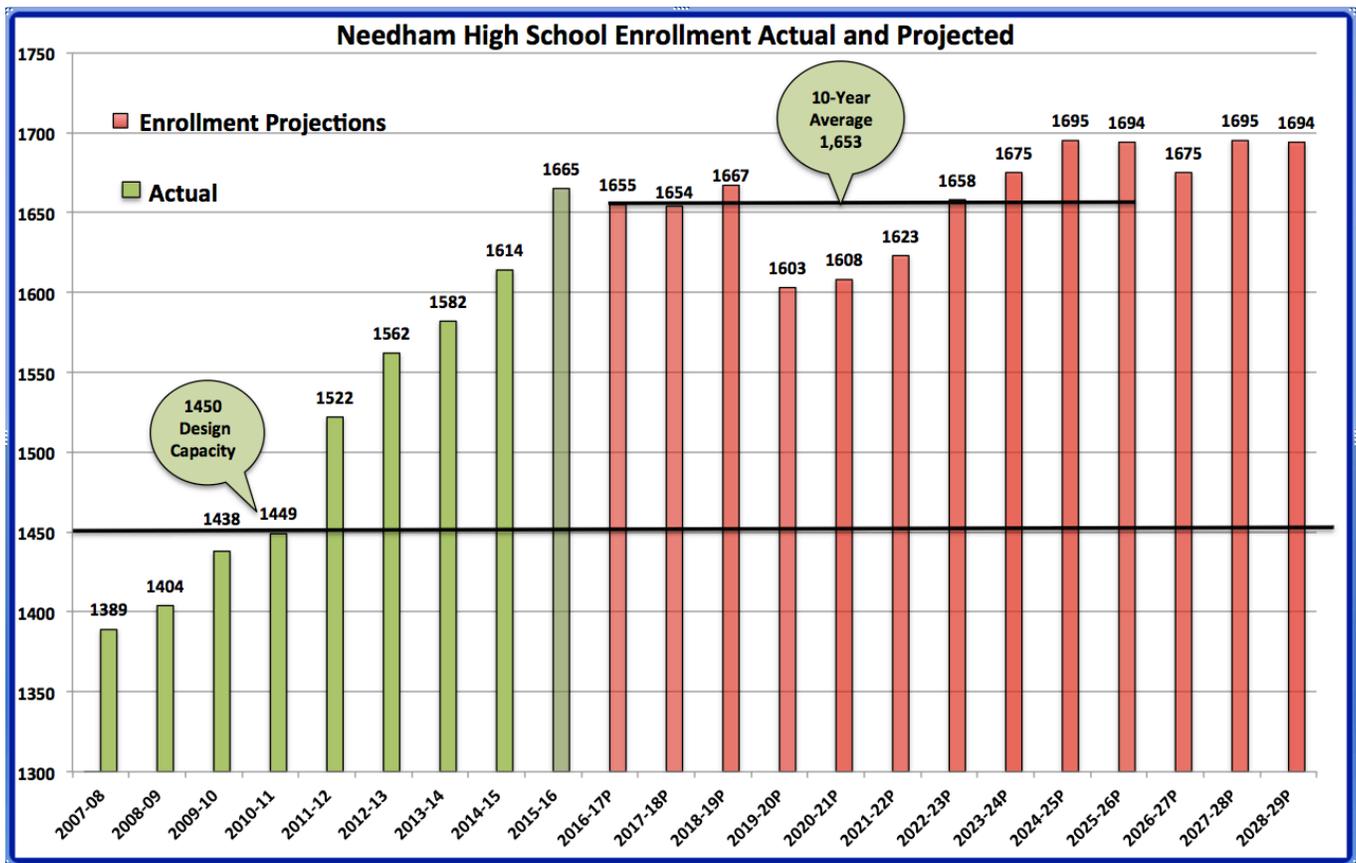
November 2, 2015

Frequently Asked Questions Article 11: Appropriate for High School Cafeteria Renovation

1. Given many School Committee and Town priorities and the limited resources available, why is the Needham School Committee looking to add space to Needham High School seven years after it opened?

Needham High School lacks sufficient space to meet the current and projected needs of its students, staff, and families. The community's expectation for a high performing high school program cannot be met within the existing constraints of the building.

The high school is—and will remain—over its capacity by 200 students, all of whom learn in classrooms designed below contemporary standards. For example, Needham High School (NHS) was designed for 1,450 students and opened the doors in 2008 with enrollment of 1,404. Current enrollment is 1665 and is projected to sustain an average of 1,653 students through the year 2026.



2. Why does the cafeteria need to be expanded?

The cafeteria is undersized, and during most lunches the number of students assigned exceeds the cafeteria's maximum occupancy of 488. For example, in 2014-2015 the second lunch seating had an average of 620 students assigned, and students were forced to find alternative seating and/or juniors and seniors eat off campus. The school can no longer simply add seats; additional space must be provided to meet building and safety codes. A prudent and practical expansion will meet code deficiencies, address circulation issues, and strengthen school programs.



	1st Lunch	2nd Lunch	3rd Lunch
A	384	643	587
B	520	621	440
C	502	575	532
D	502	631	487
E	498	647	456
F	501	623	486
G	551	600	460

**CAFETERIA
OCCUPANCY
488**

Number of students assigned to lunch in 2014-2015

3. Do all students eat in the cafeteria during lunches?

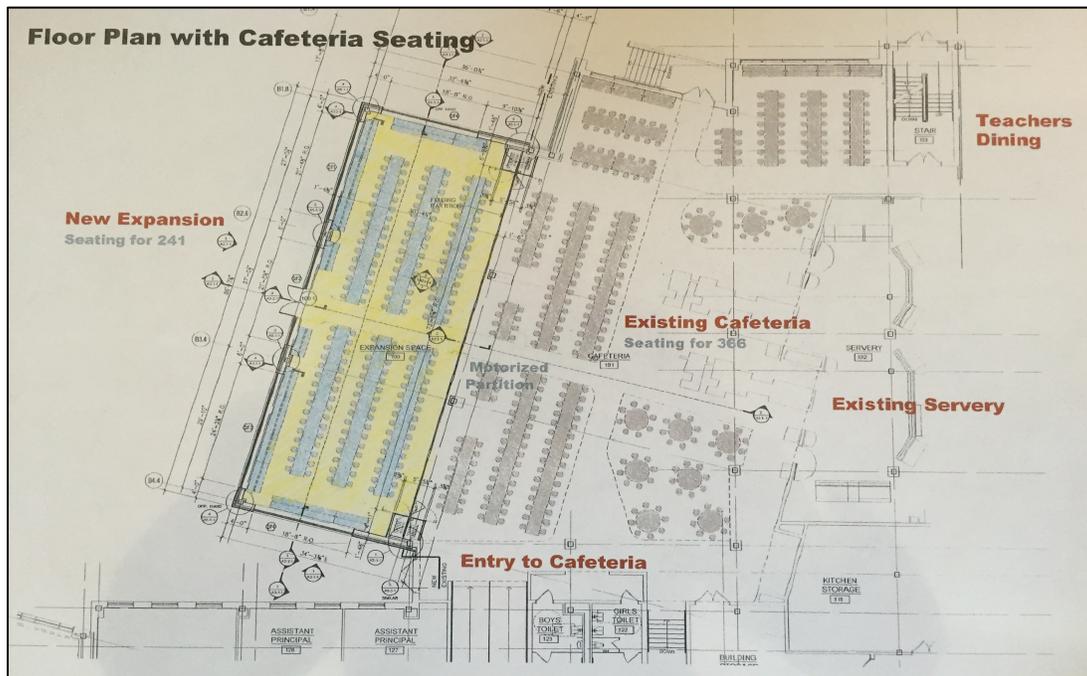
Needham High School has three lunch times, with approximately a third of our students assigned to each lunch through the classes they are in at the time. It is the only place food is served or eaten in the building. All freshman and sophomore students are required to spend their lunch in the cafeteria. Junior and seniors students have the ability to leave the building for lunch through open campus privileges. The vast majority of the upperclassmen choose to eat in the cafeteria, with the percentages getting even higher during the large portion of the year when the weather is not conducive to leaving the building.

4. What is included in this project?

The project includes two key portions. The first is expanded cafeteria space that adds about 50% more seating to the cafeteria and an additional register to decrease the time students spend in line when buying lunch. These will create less congestion during the lunchtime and ensure that we remain in compliance with fire codes. The second aspect of the project is the ability to use the expansion for multi-purpose space. With a dividing wall and multi-media equipment, the additional room can be used for a wide range of presentations, professional development, and meetings. This additional capacity ensures the expansion is not simply used just during the lunches but provides much needed space throughout the day.

5. How will the expansion impact a student's experience at lunch?

The additional register will allow students to get their food and to a table in less time. The expanded space will ensure each student has a comfortable seat without being forced into one of few available seats. In combination, the 25-minute lunch experience will be significantly more relaxing and calming than it is currently. This is the one time of day that students experience unstructured and social time. The expansion allows for students to experience their lunch without the rush of time or pressure of finding a seat. The current setting creates discomfort and anxiety for a portion of our students who choose not to eat or eat in a nearby office rather than in the crowded cafeteria. The expanded cafeteria will create a far more comfortable and welcoming space for all students while providing additional learning and flexible space.



6. Will the outdoor seating be kept?

Although the outdoor area will be reconfigured with the expansion, the outdoor seating will be kept. Students who choose to sit outside at the picnic tables at lunch will still have that option.

7. What will the space be used for other than lunches?

The cafeteria is used to prepare, serve, and clean up after lunch for approximately 2.5 hours per day. It is also used in the morning to serve breakfast. Before and after meals, the cafeteria is heavily used for class meetings, club activities, and athletic practices before and after school hours. An expanded cafeteria will strengthen school programs as well as address lunch serving needs. Properly designed with flexible seating and a technology infrastructure (e.g. wireless, cable) the addition can be segmented and used to support school and academic needs, including directed study halls and academic support, testing, lectures, training, class meetings, and co-curricular space.

8. What is the project cost?

The cost of the 2,900 square foot expansion, including furniture, technology, and sound systems, is \$2.27 million, of which Town Meeting is being asked to appropriate \$2.1 million toward the cost.