

School Reconfiguration Timeline & Accompanying Materials

2021: Salem Public Schools (SPS) engages Cannon Design to develop a Districtwide Facility Master Plan to provide direction for capital investments aligned with district goals, enrollment, community needs, and educational future.

2021: Cannon Design holds workshops in which the District Planning Committee (staff) and Stakeholder Advisory Committee (parents, guardians, and students) develop a series of 25 options for programs and facilities including all 11 SPS schools.

Cannon presents the [Salem Facilities Master Plan](#) (SFMP) to the School Committee. The Plan indicates that, “in 2022 the City of Salem faces numerous operational challenges: shifting demographics driven by housing gentrification and charter school competition, declining enrollment and corresponding financial imbalance, aging and under-enrolled facilities.”

Spring 2022: The following options were explored and developed with consideration of a comprehensive set of data:

- student demographics and enrollment;
- educational programs: CTE, Special Education, Alternative Programs, and Pre-K;
- facility condition and capacity; campus size, developable site; and
- proximity to students, other schools, and community assets;
- measures of stakeholder preferences for planning criteria.

In addition to facility solutions such as new schools, replacement schools, renovations, and building additions, SFMP stakeholders considered systemic solutions and alternative operational outcomes, including grade reconfiguration, enrollment policy, ‘newer-fewer’ consolidation scenarios, and thematic magnet programs. At minimum, all schools were planned for prioritized renovations and enhancements.

Feb-May 2022: The Salem School Committee reviews [transportation data](#) and revises transportation policy to improve efficiencies.

Mar 2023: At the request of the School Committee, Dr. Zrike gives a presentation on SPS Enrollment and Assignment Trends. [Video](#); [Slides](#)

Mar 2024: The School Committee holds a retreat to discuss school choice, grade configuration, and transportation data. [Slides](#)

**May
2024:**

In anticipation of the need to right-size operations district-wide, Superintendent Zrike invites the community to a [series of community meetings](#) for the purpose of collecting community “perspective[s] regarding our elementary, middle and high school configuration as well as Salem’s intra-school choice policy.” School Sr. Zrike facilitates these meetings and [provides feedback](#) to the School Committee.

**May
2024:**

City of Salem Finance Director Anna Freedman presents the [2026 - 2030 Annual Operating Budget & Capital Plan](#) to the City of Salem. In it, Ms. Freedman projects a five-year financial forecast which can be found on page 196 of the presentation. The district’s Assistant Superintendent of Finance works closely with the City Finance Director to anticipate potential funding for the coming fiscal year.

**August
2024:**

The School Committee and the Salem Teachers Union agree to an historic contract that increases teacher salaries by 4.25% in year one, and an average increase of 19% over the life of the contract; these are competitive wages relative to neighboring communities. An overview of the contract can be found [here](#).

**Sept
2024:**

Assistant Superintendent of Finance Pauley gives an update on the FY25 budget cycle to the School Committee, outlining the significant budget challenges the district will face in the FY26 cycle; Dr. Zrike explains that with the phasing out of ESSER funds and rising inflation, the district must begin right-sizing operations in order to address those challenges and pay educators what they are owed and deserve. [Video](#).

**Nov 3
2024:**

Assistant Superintendent of Finance Pauley gives a follow-up presentation to the School Committee on FY25 budget concerns. Included here is Ms. Pauley’s assessment that new transportation policies and procedures have led to increased efficiencies with regard to bussing. [Video](#); [slides](#).

**May
2025:**

The FY26 Budget is passed, with Dr. Zrike, Assistant Superintendent Pauley, Vice Chair Cruz and others stating that the School Committee must make difficult decisions before the next fiscal year if the District is to continue supporting students effectively. [Budget Book](#); [Video](#); [Summary](#).

**June
2025:**

Cannon Design, who worked on the [2022 Facilities Master Plan](#), are invited to a School Committee retreat to lead the committee in brainstorming exercises with the following goals in mind:

- Initiate strategic discussion about Salem elementary school programs and facilities
- Review elementary school options considered in the 2022 School Facility Master Plan
- Review current conditions projected enrollment, school capacity, and facilities
- Re-explore potential options for future implementation

During the retreat, the School Committee develops several scenarios for school consolidation. However, neither the School Committee nor Cannon are experts in implementation, and the School Committee requires more data. [Retreat presentation](#); [retreat summary](#).

**Sep
2025:**

The School Committee hires consultants Drs. Sarah Faude and Dan Anderson, education experts with expertise in school management and intradistrict school choice, to conduct an analysis of cost savings options including school closures, school consolidations, intradistrict school choice, and transportation, among other options. The consultants engage in an analysis of all past data and community input, and meet with district leaders, School Committee members, and student and parent/guardian groups to assess options.

**Oct
2025:**

Superintendent Zrike, the Mayor and one School Committee member meet with each elementary school group including the Early Childhood Center (ECC) for a total of 7 meetings to introduce the process by which the School Committee will make a decision regarding school reconfiguration over the next two months. Dr. Zrike and the School Committee member introduce the process in the following [slides](#) and then take questions from teachers, parents and guardians for an hour to an hour and a half. Each meeting has 30-50 people in attendance, including representatives from the Salem Teachers Union. All questions posed at meetings are communicated to both the consultants and the School Committee. Questions can be found [here](#).

Drs. Faude and Anderson present four possible options for school reconfiguration for the School Committee to consider over the course of six weeks. The full presentation with slides can be found [here](#), and a summary spreadsheet can be found [here](#).

**Nov 3
2025:**

Public feedback hearings are scheduled on two different dates:

- Monday, November 17th (5 p.m.) at Saltonstall School (Spanish and Portuguese interpretation will be provided)
- Tuesday, November 25, 2025 (6:30 p.m.) at the Horace Mann Laboratory School (Spanish and Portuguese interpretation will be provided).

The School Committee encourages the community to offer feedback at:
reconfiguration@saalemk12.org

**Dec
2025:**

The School Committee determines whether or not to vote on a recommendation.