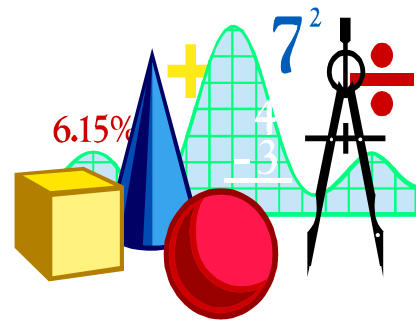


21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS: BUILDING FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

Volume I: Analysis and Recommendations



Prepared for

The Fall River Partnership
Committee on Education

by

Clyde W. Barrow, Director
David R. Borges, Senior Research Associate

CENTER FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH

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Executive Summary

As we approach the 21st Century, it is critical that the City of Fall River make a strong commitment and take aggressive action to ensure quality education for all of its residents, enabling them to successfully compete in today's global, technologically based economy. This report recommends that:

- (1) the City of Fall River should abandon its piecemeal strategy of incremental improvements and adopt a comprehensive school construction program, and
- (2) given the 90% SBAP grant rate available to Fall River, the City should build, expand, and reconstruct several elementary schools, build a new middle school, and expand Morton Middle School, especially since the proposed projects can be completed at less than half the out-of-pocket cost to the City's residents than the cost of renovating existing schools. Six of the thirteen elementary schools to be impacted by new school construction or expansion were constructed in the 1800s, while five were constructed before 1925.

No elementary schools have been constructed in Fall River since the 1950's and many of the City's elementary schools were constructed in the 19th century. Every building needs study conducted since 1964 has found that most of Fall River's elementary schools are seriously inadequate and each of these studies has recommended that most of the City's elementary schools be replaced with fewer, larger, and more modern facilities. In many of the City's schools, water is leaking into electrical systems, boilers are aging, roofs are leaking, paint is peeling, bricks need repointing, and some classrooms are without electrical outlets. The *Ganbatte Report* estimates that repairs and renovations to existing schools in Fall River will cost at least \$55.6 million (1998 dollars). Importantly, these renovations are considered the minimum improvements necessary to keep many schools habitable for students and to maintain compliance with basic health and safety codes. The renovations include few real improvements such as reduced class size, new technological capabilities, or increased cost efficiency.

The Massachusetts School Building Assistance Program will reimburse Fall River for 90% of the total cost of new school construction. Because of the SBAP match, it will actually cost Fall River less to build new schools, rather than renovate and rehabilitate old schools. New school construction could save the city at least \$12.4 million in comparison to the full cost of renovating all existing elementary schools. These savings will be available for reallocation to the remaining schools.

If a comprehensive program of school construction and expansion is undertaken, the City's school system will have "surplus" capacity of approximately 2,300 elementary classroom seats. The surplus capacity could be used for several purposes including: (a) the reduction of class size, (b) shifting students from non-conforming classroom space to modernized classrooms that meet State requirements, (c) improving and upgrading existing space to meet modern educational standards and functionality, (d) closing obsolete schools. The addition of new middle school capacity would allow Kuss Middle School to be converted into a centrally located alternative school.

The plan is consistent with comprehensive school construction and reconstruction programs being pursued in similar communities. For example, between 1990 and 1995, Lowell constructed 5 new schools and reconstructed 5 other schools. During the same time, Worcester constructed 5 new schools, while Chelsea constructed 3 new schools and reconstructed 1 other school.

1.00 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

During the 1994-95 school year, the Fall River School Department responded to state and federal education reform initiatives by producing its first *Community Report Card* (Barrow, Borges, Doyle 1995). The *Community Report Card* is a set of objective indicators that provides baseline data for measuring the City of Fall River's progress in achieving its major educational goals. Since its inception in 1995, the *Fall River Community Report Card* has measured the school system's progress from year to year *and* evaluated its performance in comparison to similar – or peer – communities in Massachusetts.¹ These peer communities include Brockton, Cambridge, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Newton, Quincy, Somerville, Springfield, and Worcester. The peer communities were identified on the basis of similarities in population and fiscal capacity.² In comparison to its peers, Fall River's Public Schools have documented measurable progress since the Massachusetts Education Reform Act was passed in 1993. These improvements include enhanced professional development for instructional staff, the implementation of innovative teaching techniques, the adoption of a technology plan, a reduced high school drop-out rate, higher scores by students taking standardized tests, and increasing rates of college attendance by high school graduates (Barrow and Borges 1997).

However, education reform and school improvement is a continuous long-range process that is far from being finished in Fall River. This is particularly true of the limited progress that Fall River has made toward improving the school system's physical plant. In fact:

*since 1917, Fall River has conducted at least seven major studies of its school buildings. Every building needs study conducted since 1964 has found that most of Fall River's elementary schools are seriously inadequate and each of these studies has recommended that most of the City's elementary schools be replaced with fewer, larger, and more modern facilities.*³

The physical deterioration of Fall River's public schools, and their declining suitability for modern school instruction, was highlighted most recently by a series of studies conducted by the Fall River Regional Task Force. In October 1982, the Fall River Regional

¹ The methodology used in selecting Fall River's peer communities is found in Barrow and Borges (1997, 3-4).

² For purposes of this study, the City of Chelsea was included as an additional peer community.

³ See Fall River Regional Task Force (1990) for a summary of past studies.

Task Force began a comprehensive building needs assessment that was received by the Fall River School Committee in early 1984. The 1984 report relied heavily on enrollment data and enrollment projections as the rationale for its recommendations, but since the City's school-aged population began to stabilize during the 1980s, the report's original rationale was quickly rendered obsolete.

Thus, in 1989, the Fall River School Committee asked the Fall River Regional Task Force to update its building needs assessment using a methodology that would take enrollment data into account, but that would use modern elementary school curriculum requirements as the primary guideline for school building decisions. The Task Force released this report in 1990 as *A Fall River Public Schools Building Needs Update* (also known as *The Ganbatte Report*). The findings of *The Ganbatte Report* were based on a meticulous multi-year physical inspection of Fall River's public schools. The report compiled an extensive itemized list of repairs, renovations, and improvements with an estimated total cost of \$44 million (1990 dollars). Importantly, the renovations recommended in *The Ganbatte Report* were considered the minimum improvements necessary to keep many schools habitable for students and to maintain compliance with basic safety codes. The *Ganbatte* recommendations include few real improvements such as reduced class size, new technological capabilities, or increased cost efficiency.

However, following the adoption of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act in 1993, the state renewed funding for its nearly defunct School Building Assistance Program (SBAP). In response to this funding, the Fall River School Committee asked the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Policy Analysis to update the *Ganbatte Report* in 1995 (Barrow and Borges 1995). The revised *Ganbatte Report* estimated the total cost of previously recommended renovations to be \$52.4 million (1995 dollars). Using the same methodology employed in the 1995 revisions, it is estimated that these same repairs and renovations will now cost at least \$55.6 million (1998 dollars).⁴

However, many things have changed on the educational, legislative, and financial landscapes since *The Ganbatte Report* was first released in 1990. First, the Education Reform Act has mandated improvements in the areas of class size and technology instruction. As a

⁴ The methodology used in updating these estimates is found in Barrow and Borges (1995, Preface).

result, the citizens and parents of Fall River need to start thinking about new and improved school buildings, rather than merely repairing school buildings constructed in the 1800s. Second, the state has steadily increased its funding of the School Building Assistance Program and, as documented later in the report, Fall River's peer communities are aggressively seeking these funds to build new schools in their cities. The matching formula used by the state in awarding SBAP grants to towns and cities has dramatically changed the cost-benefits ratio for Fall River residents in choosing between the options of renovating existing schools and building new schools.

Finally, despite its exceptionally low per capita debt ratio, the City of Fall River was severely limited in its ability to incur debt prior to 1997. City ordinances required a referendum vote on any bond issue of \$1 million or more. This meant that each new school, or any major school reconstruction, had to be approved individually by voters. In 1997, voters and the City Council approved a referendum that raised this limit to \$5 million and that adjusts this limit upward each year by the rate of inflation. As a result, the City now has the bonding capacity to launch an ambitious school construction program. In addition, the City's financial position has improved notably in the last three years, resulting in a Standard and Poor's upgrade of its municipal bond rating to Baa2. Thus, Fall River now has the legal and financial capacity to undertake a 21st century school construction program. The purpose of this study is to provide Fall River's citizens, parents, educators, and elected officials with a factual basis for making this decision.

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2.00 THE SCHOOL BUILDING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The School Building Assistance Program (SBAP) was established in 1948 to help towns and cities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts finance the construction, expansion, and repair of school buildings (St. 1948, c.645). The program's regulations are established in 603 *Code of Massachusetts Regulations* 38.00 (see Appendix A). The School Building Assistance Program was virtually dormant by the end of the 1980s, but beginning in 1995, the Commonwealth increased funding for the program as part of a renewed commitment to educational reform and educational improvement established in the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993.⁵

2.10 Application Procedures

2.11 Building Needs Conference

Applications to the School Building Assistance Program may be submitted to the School Governance, Environment, and Instructional Services Division of the Massachusetts Department of Education at any time of the year. An application form and check list of the required submissions is provided by the Department of Education and application materials may be submitted in stages as planning for the project progresses. As a first step in the DOE's application consideration process, a *building needs conference* is convened to determine whether a proposed project is in the best interest of the applicant and of the commonwealth with respect to site, sufficiency of accommodation, efficiency, and cost effectiveness, and to examine alternatives available to meet the school district's long term facilities needs. CMR 38.00 requires that one or more members of the school committee, one of more members of the building committee (where applicable), and the superintendent of schools attend the building needs conference.

⁵ It is also possible that additional federal funds will become available for school construction, repair, and modernization. At this time (May 1998), H.R. 332, the Public School Modernization Act of 1998, and H.R. 3652, the School Construction Act of 1998, are the most viable bills. H.R. 3320 currently has 91 co-sponsors, and would provide \$3.3 billion over five years to leverage more than \$22 billion in interest free school construction bonds. H.R. 3652 has 30 co-sponsors and would make additional funds available for interest free bonds for the construction and renovation of public schools in States experiencing large increases public school enrollment.

If the need for a school project is established by the building needs conference, then the school department and the DOE will (1) develop an agreed-upon educationally and financially sound long-range facilities plan for the system and (2) agree upon the scope of the proposed project including a specific number of students for a specific range of grades. However, a completed project application will not receive final approval from DOE until the Department receives a certification that the applicant (town, city, regional school district) has approved the funding required to cover the estimated cost of the proposed project.

2.12 Funding Authorization

On or before December 1 of each year, the Department of Education (DOE) compiles a list of applicants for school building assistance which is used to calculate its SBAP funding request to the legislature for the following fiscal year (beginning July 1). The DOE will not consider an application for *funding authorization* in the subsequent fiscal year unless it has received all required application materials and supporting documentation by June 1 and only if the proposed project meets all of the requirements set forth in St. 1948, c.645, and in 603 CMR 38.00 (see Appendix A).

The DOE's School Building Assistance Program funds four types of projects: (1) capital construction, (2) major reconstruction, (3) regional buy-ins, and (4) emergency reconstruction. Within each funding category, projects are further prioritized as Category One, Two, or Three with Category One projects receiving the highest priority. A project is eligible for a Category One designation if it (a) is required to implement a court-ordered or Board of Education approved racial balance plan or (b) alleviates or prevents overcrowding and meets educational program needs, particularly accreditation deficiencies. Importantly, the total cost of the project is unrelated to its priority ranking which is based exclusively on the merits of the school construction project.

In July of each fiscal year, the Department of Education submits a list of all approved capital construction projects, in priority order, to the Board of Education. The Board of Education may then authorize individual school building assistance grant awards within the limits of the legislature's annual program authorization. The amount of each individual grants awarded is based on the *grant rate*; that is, a reimbursement percentage for each

community that is calculated according to a needs formula established in St. 1948, c.645, section 12.

As communities are awarded construction bids, they must send the DOE an amended financial form along with bid documentation. In cases where the original estimate exceeds the bids, the portion of the authorization no longer required for a given project may be released and accrued so that the Board can approve additional projects. The Board shall determine the final approved project cost within two years of the occupancy of new space, or in the year of the third payment, whichever occurs later. This audit is performed by Department of Education staff. Subsequent payments are adjusted to reflect the actual approved project cost on an equal annual payment schedule that begins in the fiscal year following the fiscal year of the audit. Audit materials are due in the Department by December 1 of the fiscal year in which the audit is scheduled.

2.20 Fall River

The Fall River School Department has a Board of Education approved racial balance plan. Consequently, applications submitted to the School Building Assistance Program by Fall River are likely to be prioritized as Category One projects. In addition, Fall River ranks 7th among the 348 Massachusetts school districts as having one of the highest grant rates in the state. As of July 1, 1997, the SBAP grant rate for Fall River is ninety percent (90%). Thus, Fall River has a unique opportunity to improve its school system physical plant in a way that has not been done in almost a century. The City of Fall River is positioned advantageously in terms of the likely priority rankings that will be awarded to proposed construction projects and it is eligible to receive one of the highest reimbursement percentages in the state.

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3.00 TRENDS IN SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND MAJOR RECONSTRUCTON

3.10 New School Construction by the Peer Communities, 1990-1995

Center for Policy Analysis research staff examined all applications submitted to the School Building Assistance Program for new school construction between 1990 and 1995. It was found that during this time seven of Fall River’s twelve peer communities began construction on nineteen schools with financial assistance from the SBAP (see Appendix B.1):

<u>City</u>	<u>Number New Schools</u>
Lowell	5
Worcester	5
Chelsea	3
Brockton	2
Cambridge	2
Lynn	1
Springfield	1

The nineteen new schools that were constructed by peer communities during this time included 8 elementary schools, 6 Pre-K to 8 schools, 2 middle schools, 2 high schools, and 1 “K-12.”

3.20 Major School Reconstruction by Peer Communities, 1990-1995

Center for Policy Analysis research staff examined all applications submitted to the School Building Assistance Program for major school reconstruction between 1990 and 1995. It was found that during this time eight of Fall River’s twelve peer communities began major school reconstruction projects on 20 schools with financial assistance from the SBAP (see Appendix B.2):

<u>City</u>	<u>Number Reconstructed</u>
Lowell	5
Springfield	5
Somerville	3
Quincy	3
Chelsea	1
Cambridge	1
Lynn	1
Newton	1

The twenty schools that were reconstructed by peer communities during this time included 6 elementary schools, 7 K to 8 schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 high schools.

3.30 Construction Projects Awaiting Funding or Authorization

There are currently 12 additional school building projects in six of Fall River’s twelve peer communities that have been authorized for funding by the Department of Education or that are awaiting funding authorization after receiving final approval on a completed application (see Appendix B.3):

<u>City</u>	<u>Awaiting Authorization</u>
Newton	4
Somerville	2
Quincy	2
Cambridge	2
Lynn	1
Fall River	1

3.40 Statewide School Building Construction and Major Reconstruction

Center for Policy Analysis research staff examined all applications submitted to the School Building Assistance Program for new school construction and major school reconstruction from 1996 to 1998 (see Appendix B.4). It was found that statewide:

- Ten (10) Category One building projects are authorized for funding, with an average approximate construction cost of \$28.5 million and an average reimbursement rate of 69.7%.
- Seven (7) Category One building projects are awaiting authorization for funding with an average approximate construction cost of \$38.8 million and an average reimbursement rate of 67.9%.
- Forty-nine (49) Category 2&3 building projects are authorized for funding with an average approximate construction cost of \$12.6 million and an average reimbursement rate of 65.7%.
- One-hundred and fifteen (115) Category 2&3 building projects are awaiting authorization for funding with an average approximate construction cost of \$18.3 million and an average reimbursement rate of 67.6%.

4.00 DEMOGRAPHIC AND SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS IN FALL RIVER

In 1890, Fall River had a population of 74,000. Its population increased to 104,863 in the Census of 1900 and, by 1925, the City's population reached a peak of 129,000 residents. Significantly, the majority of Fall River's schools were constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to meet the demands of this growing population. In addition, the average family during this period had 4 or more children, compared to only 2.1 children today. Fall River's 1998 population is estimated at 90,111 or 30% less than the City's population during its last major wave of school construction activity. Thus, the current need for new schools in Fall River is primarily to achieve the benefits of building modernization and economic efficiency, rather than to meet expected increases in the school-aged population as in the last century.

4.10 Demographic Trends

4.11 Total Population

Fall River's population has been relatively stable for the last two decades and it is not likely to increase substantially in the coming decade. Fall River's population increased by only 0.1% between 1980 and 1990 from 92,574 to 92,703 (U.S. Census). The Center for Policy Analysis estimates that the City's population has probably declined by 2.8% since 1990 to approximately 90,111, although some estimates such as those by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research, and the Fall River City Census estimate that the City's population may be between 86,000 and 89,000 (see Appendix C).⁶

⁶ The Fall River City Census records a 1997 population of 85,332. It is widely agreed by demographic experts that the town and city census in Massachusetts undercounts the actual population. Nevertheless, it should be relatively consistent in the degree to which it undercounts the population and can therefore be used as a basis for measuring statistical *trends* in population growth or decline. The Fall River City Census indicates a population decline of 2.8% from 1989 to 1997. Consequently, this ratio was applied to the 1990 U.S. Census to arrive at the current population estimate of 90,111.

4.12 School-Aged Population

In addition, the 5-14 year old population in Fall River declined by 14.4% between 1980 and 1990 and this decline occurred in each of the City's four "magnet school zones." During the same period, the 5-14 year old age cohort declined from 15.0% to 12.9% of the City's population. Widespread declines in elementary school enrollments throughout the City between 1979 and 1998 confirm this trend and suggest that it has continued unabated right up to the present time (see Appendix C1).

4.13 Foreign-Born Population

Immigration to the City of Fall River has abated somewhat with the percentage of foreign born residents declining by 5.7% from 1980 to 1990 (see Appendix C). The only increase in the foreign born population occurred in the Maplewood magnet zone. Similarly, the percentage of residents for whom English is a Second Language declined by 3.7% from 1980 to 1990 (see Appendix C).

4.14 Geography of Income Distribution

Real incomes have been fairly stable in Fall River with real median household income increasing city-wide by only 0.4% from 1980 to 1990, although most of that increase was concentrated in the North Zone. In contrast, real declines in median household income occurred in the Central/South and East zones and, not surprisingly, these two zones also showed an increase in the percentage of families living below the official poverty level (see Appendix C).

4.20 School Enrollment Trends in Fall River

4.21 Number of Schools

Number of Schools				
Municipality	Population 1990	# Elem. Schools	#Middle Schools	#High Schools
Brockton	92,788	18	5	1
Cambridge	95,802	14	1	1
Chelsea	28,710	6	2	1
Fall River	92,703	29	4	1
Lawrence	70,207	16	0	1
Lowell	103,439	21	7	1
Lynn	81,245	20	3	4
New Bedford	99,922	23	3	1
Newton	82,585	15	3	2
Quincy	84,985	11	4	2
Somerville	76,210	10	1	2
Springfield	156,983	31	5	9
Worcester	169,759	41	4	4

Source: Department of Education School District Profiles, 1997

The City of Fall River has 29 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 1 high school. Fall River has from 8 to 19 more elementary schools than other cities in Massachusetts with a comparable population. Springfield has 31 elementary schools to serve a city with nearly twice the population.

4.22 Total School Enrollment

The total enrollment in Fall River's public schools is currently 12,043 (March, 1998). In addition, approximately 1,800 students are enrolled in private and parochial schools within the City, while an additional 420 students attend the Atlantis Charter School. Total public school enrollments have decreased by 3.3% since 1990, a figure that is consistent with the Center's estimate for an overall population decrease of 2.8% in the City (see Appendix D).

4.23 Elementary School Enrollment

There are 29 elementary schools in Fall River. The total enrollment in Fall River's public elementary schools has been declining overall since 1988 and enrollments have been stable or declining in every magnet school zone (see Appendix D.2). Most elementary schools have shown enrollment declines over the last decade (see Appendix D.3). Total elementary school enrollment as of March 1998 is 6,531.

4.24 Middle School Enrollment

There are four middle schools in Fall River. Total middle school enrollments have increased from 2,640 in 1988 to 2,868 in 1998 (see Appendix D.4).

4.25 High School Enrollment

There is one high school in Fall River. Overall, high school enrollments have decreased from 2,925 in 1988 to 2,644 in 1998 (see Appendix D.5).

5.00 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The estimated current cost of renovating Fall River's existing school buildings is approximately \$55.6 million (1998 dollars). These expenditures will at best maintain or restore 19th century school buildings, but they are not sufficient to modernize or improve those buildings to accommodate the demands placed on contemporary schools. The cost of implementing *The Ganbatte Report's* recommendations:

- ◆ does not include internet connections, computer laboratories, or the cost of computing equipment (which are covered by the SBAP program)⁷,
- ◆ does not accommodate new and increased demands on schools for special after school programs, tutoring, etc.
- ◆ is not eligible to receive matching funds or grant awards from the School Building Assistance Program.⁸

Moreover, the School Building Assistance Program is currently slated to expire in 2001. The program is likely to be renewed as part of the state's continuing commitment to education reform, but there is no guarantee that Fall River will retain its current reimbursement rate of 90% and there is no guarantee that the program will be funded at the same level in the future. Thus, Fall River has a window of opportunity for school construction that may close or narrow in the coming years. Consequently, it is our conclusion that:

- ◆ *the City of Fall River should abandon its piecemeal strategy of incremental improvements and adopt a comprehensive school construction program similar to those being pursued by Lowell and Worcester, and*
- ◆ *given the 90% SBAP grant rate available to Fall River, the City should build, expand, and reconstruct several elementary schools, build a new middle school, and expand Morton Middle School, especially since the proposed projects can be completed at less than half the out-of-pocket cost to the City's residents than the cost of renovating the existing physical plant, and*

⁷ For example, only 7.8% of Fall River classrooms have Internet access, compared to a statewide average of 40.4%.

⁸ A "major renovation" such as roofs or HVAC is eligible for a SBAP grant award if the total cost is a minimum of \$100,000. However, there are currently 400 major renovation projects authorized, but awaiting funding. No major renovation project with an application submitted and approved since 1988 has actually been funded. Thus, a major renovation is most likely to be funded if it is included as part of a capital construction project (i.e., new construction or major reconstruction).

- ◆ *the square footage of new construction should be designed to achieve a balance of 21 students per class throughout the City. This will still provide flexibility to increase class size to 25, if necessary, if the school-aged population starts to increase due to commuter rail extension and/or other economic development initiatives that could lure younger families back to the City.*⁹

However, adopting a comprehensive approach to school building construction may require citizens, parents, educators, and elected officials in Fall River to make some difficult choices between the attractions of “neighborhood schools” and the benefits of school building modernization. The comprehensive program of school building construction outlined below will give Fall River an elementary and middle school physical plant that is among the most modern in the United States and it will be one that provides an environment with the technical, scientific, and recreational facilities capable of preparing the City’s students for the 21st century:

- ◆ *The recommended program of school building construction will entail the construction or major reconstruction of 9 elementary schools, the construction of 1 new middle school, and the expansion of Morton Middle School.*
- ◆ *In order to achieve the full benefits of school modernization and its economic efficiencies, the construction program will simultaneously require the closing of several elementary schools.*
- ◆ *The remaining elementary schools are to be modernized and improved with the funds that would have otherwise been spent to renovate the closed schools.*

The rationale for building new elementary schools is:

1. ***The Age of Existing Schools:*** No elementary schools have been constructed in Fall River since the 1950’s. Many of the City’s elementary schools were constructed in the 19th century. Two concerns arise because of the age of Fall River’s existing schools:
 - a. ***Safety:*** Safety has become a significant issue because of the age of Fall River’s schools. In many of the City’s schools, water is leaking into electrical systems, boilers are aging, roofs are leaking, paint is peeling, bricks need repointing, and some classrooms are without electrical outlets. The *Ganbatte Report* estimates that repairs and renovations to existing schools in Fall River will cost at least \$55.6 million (1998 dollars). Importantly, these renovations are considered the minimum improvements necessary to keep many schools habitable for students and to maintain

⁹ A class size of 25 is generally considered the optimum elementary school class size. By planning for class sizes of 21, Fall River could achieve an excellent teacher-pupil ratio and still accommodate a 19% growth in the school-aged population in the future.

compliance with basic health and safety codes. The renovations include few real improvements such as reduced class size, new technological capabilities, or increased cost efficiency.

- b. ***New Space Requirements - New Mandates.*** Since the construction of most of Fall River's schools, public school systems have offered a variety of new services such as after school programming, counseling, pre-school, school lunch and breakfast, special needs programming, and after school day care. Consequently, space needs per pupil have steadily increased over time. Additionally, new education mandates have changed the design requirements of schools to require space for technology, gyms, cafeterias, and libraries. Fall River is currently under-spaced since it is using basements, closets, and portable classrooms, which are not recognized by the state as real classrooms. In addition, the state requires separate space for cafeterias and gymnasiums. Because of Fall River's demographics, the need for many services such as pre-school and after school care is higher than in most communities, and census data shows that these needs are growing.
2. ***Integrated Curriculum Architecture:*** New schools will foster pride among Fall River's citizens and create a positive learning environment for teachers, students, and staff. Teaching methods have changed dramatically over the last forty years. To accommodate new initiatives, such as block scheduling and new technologies, new classrooms need to be constructed that can accommodate these innovations. Importantly, the \$55.6 million in school renovations recommended in the *Ganbatte Report* does not include funding for these types of improvements.
 3. ***Cost Savings and Reallocation:*** The Massachusetts School Building Assistance Program will reimburse Fall River for 90% of the total cost of new school construction. It is estimated that repairs and renovations to existing schools in Fall River will cost at least \$55.6 million. Because of the SBAP match, it will actually cost Fall River less to build new schools, rather than renovate and rehabilitate old schools. New school construction could save the city at least \$12.4 million in comparison to the full cost of renovating all existing elementary schools. These savings will be available for reallocation to the remaining schools.
 4. ***Improving the Business Climate:*** Schools and educational achievement are key factors in attracting and retaining businesses in the new economy. By implementing an ambitious school construction program, Fall River will indicate to businesses outside of the City that it is ready to meet the educational challenges of the next century.

The rationales for closing elementary schools are that:

1. Fall River has more elementary schools (29) than any comparable community in Massachusetts. Fall River has almost as many elementary schools as the City of Springfield which has a population of 156,983 (compared to 90,111 for Fall River).

2. Fall River's number of elementary schools and the geographic distribution of those schools was constructed for a population of 129,000 residents, at a time when families generally had more children per family, and when walking was the main form of school transportation.
3. Enrollment at most elementary schools has been declining for a decade or more and demographic data do not indicate that these trends will reverse in the coming decade.
4. If a comprehensive program of school construction and expansion is undertaken, the City's school system will have "surplus" capacity of approximately 2,300 elementary classroom seats. The surplus capacity could be used for several purposes including: (a) the reduction of class size, (b) shifting students from non-conforming classroom space to modernized classrooms that meet State requirements, (c) improving and upgrading existing space to meet modern educational standards and functionality, (d) closing obsolete schools. The addition of new middle school capacity would allow Kuss Middle School to be converted into a centrally located alternative school.

We recommend that the following criteria be used in identifying schools for closure: (1) facilities that are currently rented (2) the age of the school, (3) the saved costs of renovation and rehabilitation, (4) enrollment trends, (5) the lack of available space for expansion or new school construction and, (6) geographic proximity to other schools where expansion is possible or sites are available for the construction of new schools. Based on these criteria:

1. Six of the thirteen elementary schools impacted by new school construction or expansion were constructed in the 1800s, while five were constructed before 1925.
2. the total 1998 estimated cost of renovating the thirteen schools impacted by new school construction or expansion in this proposal is \$24,790,000. If these same monies are used to leverage SBAP funds at a 90% grant rate, it will be possible to finance \$24,790,000 of new school construction or expansion. For example,
 - a. the rehabilitation of the Spencer Borden School would require \$5.7 million in City expenditures, while the construction of an entirely new school under the SBAP would require approximately \$1.5 million in City expenditures (assuming a 100,000 square foot building and a SBAP reimbursement rate of \$153 per sq. ft.).
 - b. the rehabilitation of the William S. Green School would require \$5.7 million in City expenditures, while the construction of an entirely new school under the SBAP would require approximately \$0.8 million in City expenditures (assuming a 50,000 square foot building and a SBAP reimbursement rate of \$153 per sq. ft.).

- c. the rehabilitation of the Samuel Watson School would require \$2.6 million in City expenditures, while the construction of an entirely new school under the SBAP would require approximately \$1.5 million in City expenditures (assuming a 100,000 square foot building and a SBAP reimbursement rate of \$153 per sq. ft.).
- d. the rehabilitation of the Slade School would require \$2.7 million dollars in City expenditures, while major reconstruction and renovation of a modern facility under the SBAP would require approximately \$1.5 million in City expenditures (assuming a 100,000 square foot building and a SBAP reimbursement rate of \$153 per sq. ft.).

Importantly, City expenditures for school renovations would only provide the minimum improvements necessary to keep many schools habitable for students and to maintain compliance with basic health and safety codes. The Ganbatte renovations include few real improvements such as reduced class size, new technological capabilities, or the increased cost efficiency provided by new school construction under the SBAP program.

- 3. Nine of the thirteen elementary schools impacted by new school construction or expansion have enrollments of less than 200 students and the thirteen schools combined have an average enrollment of 201 students.

Nevertheless, given the proposed configuration of new school construction and school closings:

At the conclusion of the comprehensive plan, Fall River will still have as many elementary schools as most of its peer communities. This number of schools will leave the concept of “neighborhood schools” essentially intact in Fall River.

However, in addition to the modernization benefits of new school construction, the closure of selected elementary schools will yield additional cost efficiencies for the school system without sacrificing the concept of neighborhood schools. The existing geographic layout of Fall River’s elementary schools costs the school system substantial amounts of money for administrative, heating, maintenance, and repair costs that divert funds from potential modernization initiatives or the ability to enhance instructional and after-school activities. The large number of elementary schools in Fall River requires financial outlays for additional administrative staff at the extra schools. The school system must expend funds for additional heating, partly because it must heat more schools and square footage and partly because aging buildings lack the heating efficiency innovations of modern construction. Likewise, the school system must expend extra sums for maintenance, partly because of the additional personnel required to staff numerous locations and partly because of the increasing need for emergency repairs. Finally, by consolidating elementary schools, the system can

achieve additional efficiencies in library costs, because of reduced staffing requirements and by avoiding the need to duplicate book holdings. These efficiencies will allow the school system to reduce overall costs, to reallocate funds toward instructional activities, or keep school facilities open longer hours to provide additional services.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND CONSOLIDATION

Schools to be Expanded/Constructed	Schools to be Closed	Other Schools Impacted	Enrollment October 1988	Enrollment October 1997	Enrollment Change 1988-1997	New Capacity
Watuppa Heights Area (new) and						est. 600
William S. Greene School (1909) (expand and reconstruct)			184	182	-1.1%	est. 100
		Connell (1895)	175	157	-10.3%	
	Silvia (Rehabed several times)		400	391	-2.3%	
		Brayton Avenue (1899)	202	184	-8.9%	
		N.B. Borden (1865)	181	181	0.0%	
Letourneau School (1925) (expand and reconstruct)			252	281	11.5%	est. 100
Doran School (under expansion)			278	241	-13.3%	est. 150
	Doran Annex (slated to close)		169	149	-11.8%	
		N.B. Borden (see above)				
	Silvia (see above)		400	391	-2.3%	
East End School (new)						est. 600
		Watson (1905)	333	343	3.0%	
		Davol (1894)	191	181	-5.2%	
		Coughlin (1895)	197	177	-10.2%	
North End School (new)	Father McCarrick (Carroll Annex)		153	113		est. 250
		Wiley (1911)	159	167	5.0%	
		Spencer Borden (1922)	201	233	15.9%	
Spencer Borden School (1922) (expand and reconstruct)			201	233	15.9%	est. 250
		Highland (1901)	176	161	-8.5%	
		Tansey (1952)	171	274	60.2%	
Slade School (1929) (expand and reconstruct)			265	283	6.8%	est. 250
		Healy (1897)	264	215	-18.6%	
		Belisle (1951)	194	177	-8.8%	
Ralph M. Small School (1957) (expand)			344	323	-6.1%	est. 250
		Davol (1894) see above				
		Dubuque (1911)	161	168	4.3%	
Morton Middle School (expand and reconstruct)		Kuss Middle School	679	767	13.0%	est. 150
Globe Four Corners Area Middle School (new)		(Convert to Alternative School)				est. 800

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6.00 THE NEXT STEPS

The following actions are necessary to initiate the comprehensive school construction program identified in Section 5.00:

1. Identify specific sites for new school construction in consultation with neighborhood groups, community organizations, and school councils.
2. Submit School Building Assistance Program applications to the Massachusetts Department of Education for each proposed new school or major school reconstruction. While separate applications must be submitted for each project, there is no limit on the number of applications that can be submitted annually.
3. Target obsolete schools for closure and formulate timetables for closure in consultation with neighborhood groups, community organizations, and school councils. Consider alternative uses and disposition of surplus properties at this time to the extent possible.
4. Identify older schools that remain open for modernization, rehabilitation, and improvement. Redeploy existing funds and grants into these schools. The reallocation of these funds should be guided by a modernization plan for each school that includes estimates for:
 - a. the renovation and physical maintenance of these schools for an additional 20 to 30 years.
 - b. new furniture,
 - c. hard-wiring of existing classroom, library, and other instructional spaces,
 - d. new computers for all classrooms, library, and other instructional spaces,
 - e. building additions where necessary.

Depending upon the size and scope of each plan, the modernization projects in item 4 may be eligible for a 90% SBAP match as “major reconstruction.” In addition, there is continuing discussion at the national level about making federal funds available for school modernization projects. Such funds may become available in the next few years pending legislation.

5. The estimated total cost of modernizing existing schools, as calculated in the school modernization plans (Item 4), should be included as part of a total bond authorization that covers the cost of new school construction, reconstruction, expansion, and modernization.

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