

## SCHOOLS

The following report comprises an important part of Sterling's Master Plan. Commensurate with growth, particularly growth in terms of young families emigrating from urban centers, there is always the need for a town like Sterling to face community responsibility in educating its young people.

Population studies show that Sterling will continue to grow and that a large part of this growth is coming through migration. In order to accommodate the young people that are part of this population change, this section of the Master Plan attempts to forecast the physical needs of Sterling's Public School system in 1970 and 1980.

Part I deals with the system

Part II summarizes the present school plant

Part III including graphs represents an estimate of enrollment and classroom needs for each five year period up to 1980 with emphasis on 1970 and 1980.

### Part I - System

Sterling's present school system is an 8-grade elementary, 4-year senior high school system with no kindergarten facilities. At present, the entire town is one school district. The eight elementary grades are housed in two buildings (Buttrick and Houghton) located (Buttrick) in the town center on the Common, and (Houghton) in West Sterling on the south-east corner of a 50 acre tract of land. All pupils in grades I, II, and III, and one grade V are housed in the Buttrick School. The Houghton school houses grades IV, V, VI, VII, and VIII. School bus service to both schools is provided by the town. Sterling is a member of the Wachusett Regional High School District and grades IX - XII (233 pupils) attend that district school, located in the town of Holden.

### Part II - Present School Plant

Present school needs are served by two elementary school buildings. The Buttrick school, built in 1932, has 9 classrooms housing 245 students. Two of these, which are in the basement, are substandard. It has no cafeteria- school lunches are prepared at Houghton and transported to the Town Hall (across route 12 from the Buttrick School) to which the Buttrick children move daily at lunch time. The building is a substantial attractive and well maintained two story brick building, typical of school plants designed in the

late twenties and the thirties. The available recreation area of approximately two acres is small for an elementary school of Buttrick's size.

The Houghton school is a new single-story, completely modern structure built in 1957. Houghton has 12 classrooms, a cafeteria and an auditorium that serves also as a lunchroom and physical education room. The school is located on a relatively level 50-acre tract of land owned by the town. Although there is ample area, as yet no organized, planned recreation area has been developed for this school. This site has some drainage problems because of its grade and location, but these can be corrected. Town water is adequate for school needs and fire protection.

Presently the Houghton school is being expanded by the addition of five classrooms and an auditorium. Two of these classrooms will eliminate the substandard classrooms at Buttrick, two are for a predicted increase in enrollment, and one classroom will serve to meet State requirements for a room for special students. Also included in the current expansion program is a library and a gymnasium. The addition started in 1961 will be ready for use in the fall of 1962.

An essential part of the planning program for the town of Sterling, based on predicted growth in the next 20 years, is an evaluation of this growth in terms of future school needs. Part 3 of this report deals with these future needs and methods used to evaluate them.

### Part III - Estimated Enrollments and Future Classroom Needs :

In this study classroom needs based on estimated enrollments for the years 1965, 1970 and 1980 are projected for both the present 8-grade elementary and 4-year senior high system and a modern 6-grade elementary, 3-grade junior high, 3-grade senior high school system.

Two methods were used to estimate classroom requirements for the future. The first estimates were arrived at by the survival percentage method (Table I). This method traces yearly groupings of students by grade at each grade level throughout the 12-year program. Using actual birth and school enrollment records since 1940, it was possible to find the average percentages of the number of children born to the number attending school at each grade level for every age group. The average percentages for each grade level are then applied to actual and estimated birth figures to project enrollment for each grade or grouping of grades through 1980. The second method was used to check the results of the first. Projected population figures for the appropriate years taken from the Population Report in the Master Plan (Table II). The percentage of the population attending school at each of the several grade-groupings was applied to the high, median and low population forecasts to project future enrollments. The median projected enrollments were then translated into classroom requirements (Table III).

The following table shows classroom needs for the 8-grade elementary, 4-grade senior high school system:

TABLE NO. 7

YEAR	GRADES 1 - 8		GRADES 9 - 12	
	<u>Pupils</u>	<u>Rooms</u>	<u>Pupils</u>	<u>Rooms</u>
<u>1970</u>				
high	812	27	227	9
low	676	23	230	8
<u>1975</u>				
high	980	33	287	10
low	725	24	278	10
<u>1980</u>				
high	1170	39	336	12
low	876	30	276	9

Presently (in 1962) the 8-grade elementary system is housed in 23 classrooms with an additional 5 under construction. As previously shown, the net gain is only two classrooms because of existing classroom commitments. Therefore, the 25 classrooms available for growth will not be sufficient to house the 1970 high enrollment estimate. Sterling will need at least two additional classrooms by that time. As the space in the Buttrick school basement is to be converted to a cafeteria, the additional classrooms will have to be provided beyond the present plant and the addition under construction.

By 1980 elementary classroom needs for grades 1 - 8 will reach a high of 39. An additional 12 classrooms will be needed. These projections indicate that a detailed study should be made in the early 1970's to ascertain when construction should begin on a new 12 room 8-grade elementary school located in the eastern part of Sterling in order to accommodate 1980 enrollment in this part of the system unless the following recommendations are adopted to forestall the necessity of another elementary school.

The senior high school classroom space problem will increase proportionally in the years to 1980. 1962 enrollments in the Wachusett Regional High School will reach approximately 250 pupils. By 1970, these enrollments will have reached 277 (high estimate). These children will occupy 9 classrooms (if they are available) at the Regional High School. By 1980, the high school enrollment will reach an estimated 336 pupils, necessitating at least 12 rooms to house them. Obviously the Wachusett Regional High School cannot accommodate all of these children. Other towns in the region are growing as well. So either they must be housed in a new building, jointly with Princeton or some other town, or School Union 24 must reorganize at the regional level into junior-senior high school system. In other words, the total regional picture indicates that, unless the town of Sterling wants to return to a fragmented high school program for its children, with students scattered among the region's high schools, or construct a new senior high school by 1980 - construction of a junior high school (with Princeton) of approximately 15 classrooms is a necessity on the 50-acre Houghton site. Over the long range, this system (junior-senior high) will offer the best advantage to the town of Sterling, because:

1. Financially, the town will have to share in the construction of only one school building in the foreseeable future - the junior high.
2. A more balanced and forward looking educational program will be provided for grades 7, 8 and 9 in the years ahead, according to most educators.
3. No change will be necessary in the elementary building situation except that there will be room for kindergarten classes.
4. More complete development of the Houghton site with adequate recreation facilities will be provided by this building program.

The following table shows the classroom needs for the 6 grade elementary junior-senior high school system.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>GRADES 1 - 6</u>		<u>GRADES 7 - 9</u>		<u>GRADES 10 - 12</u>	
	pupils	rooms	pupils	rooms	pupils	rooms
<u>1970</u>						
high	629	21	246	8	208	7
low	499	17	245	8	176	6
<u>1975</u>						
high	760	26	296	10	213	7
low	536	19	242	8	207	7
<u>1980</u>						
high	916	31	347	12	257	9
low	667	22	288	10	210	7

TABLE NO. 8

A review of classroom estimates for a 6-3-3 system indicates the following:

1. In 1970 need for elementary classrooms would range from 17 to 21. With these maximum-minimum requirements changes in curriculum in the first 6 grades can be accomplished - for example, kindergarten classes can be started for 5 year olds.
2. 1970 estimates for senior high enrollments is 208 - this indicates an immediate relief for Wachusett Regional High School at such time as a junior high school is available for Sterling's 9th grade, as well as, perhaps, similar grades in the town of Princeton. For grades 10-11-12 in 1980 enrollment will be approximately 257 pupils (high estimate) this is close to the present 4 grade total in the senior high bracket. This means a junior high school would tend to level off the pupil load on the Wachusett Regional High School and that senior high school facilities would not have to be built in Sterling during the next 20 years.
3. The chart (Table showing highs and lows in enrollment and classroom space indicates that planning should begin now for a junior high school with Princeton to be ready in 1965, accommodating approximately 500 - 600 pupils.
4. Sterling has a ready made site (50 acres) for such a school plant, and even in the 1980 - 2000 growth period a senior high school. It has adequate access to all parts of the town and adjacent towns, as well as municipal services for health, fire protection and the safety of its students.

The school study indicates that school planning in the past has been adequate. In the future, the planning must be more long range in order to accommodate a variety of suitable solutions. The town must face squarely the problem of constructing a new 8-grade grammar school after 1970 and having a fragmented high school program or

Change the educational system to a 6-3-3 program and construct a junior high school in conjunction with some other town, preferably Princeton, keeping grades 10-11-12 in Wachusett Regional until such a time as is practical to construct a senior high school in Sterling.

The findings of this survey indicate the latter to be more satisfactory.

To accomplish this, it will be necessary to revise the legislation by which the Wachusett Region was established. Any future changes in the regional organization must be preceded by changes in the enabling legislation. Such legislative revision requires time and thus should be commenced well in advance of the time any actual changes are contemplated. Legislative revision, commenced as soon as possible, should make provision for:

1. the regionalization of grades 7 - 12
2. the establishment of two sub-regions - comprised of Paxton - Rutland and Sterling - Princeton
3. the eventual dissolution of Union 24 (Wachusett Region)
4. the eventual dissolution of the two sub-regions - which this time would be completely separate from each other.

Such legislation would permit the construction of two junior high schools - Paxton, Rutland and Sterling, Princeton - the expense of constructing and operating same to be borne by the five towns of Union #24. By approximately 1970, the two sub-regions will convert the junior high schools into junior-senior high schools and the town of Holden will buy out the shares of the other four towns in the Wachusett High School. Holden will then operate its own school system; the two sub-regions will sever ties and become separate two town unions. Thus the dissolution of Union #24 as the Wachusett Region will be completed.

In due time, with the necessary legislative machinery already in existence, Sterling and Princeton may dissolve their school union in favor of separate school systems when they feel that such separation is feasible.