

CHAPTER 9 – EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

Schools are among the most important public facilities in Williston. They are focal points of activity for children and adults, a role that is reinforced by the location of school buildings and playgrounds in close proximity to the town's public parks and recreation facilities, as well as to the town library. For many people, the town's schools are one of the primary reasons for living in Williston. The funding of public schools accounts for roughly 75% of all local government expenditures, thus careful planning for the future needs of the school system are essential to sound fiscal management.

The schools are not operated by the town government. They have separate, elected boards which are responsible for operation of their facilities and programming. Williston's school board is responsible for the Allen Brook and Central Schools, which provides grades K-8 education for Williston and St. George children. For the location of these buildings see Map 13 – Public Facilities. Williston high school students attend Champlain Valley Union High School in Hinesburg, which is a regional school serving children from Williston, Charlotte, Hinesburg, Shelburne, and St. George.

This plan element explains how the town will consider the needs of the schools when making land use and infrastructure decisions. It also covers child care.

Objective 9.1 – Schools – This objective and its supporting policies call for the town to manage growth in a way that is consistent with the capacity of the schools.

Objective 9.2 - Child Care - Vermont law was recently amended to require towns to address child care in comprehensive plans.

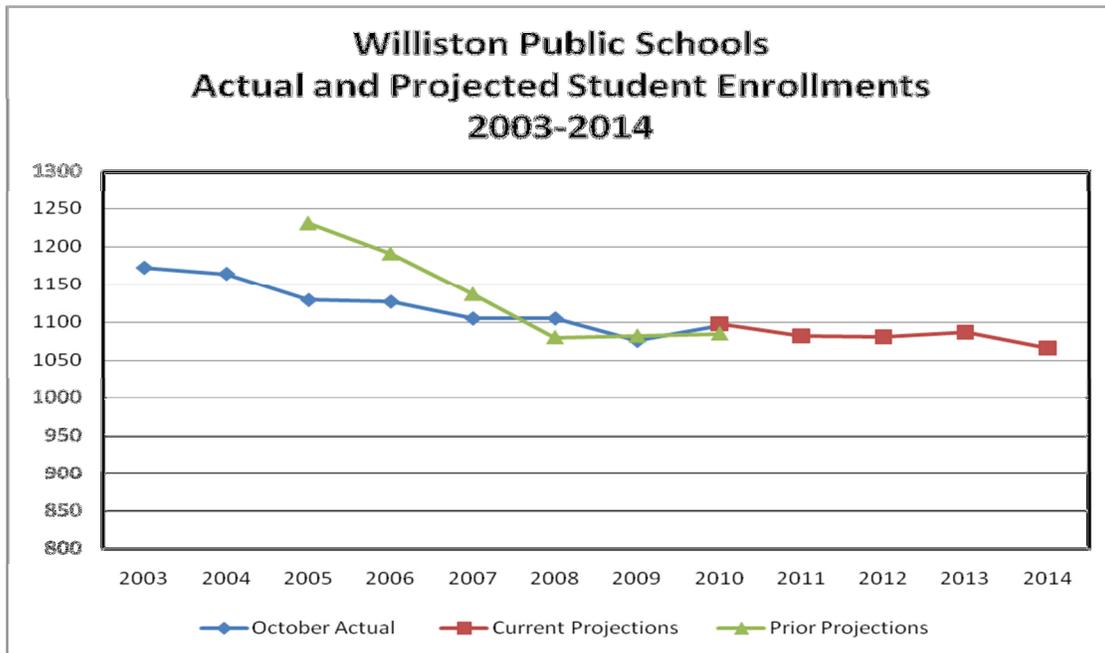
Objective 9.3 – Higher Education – The Vermont Technical College's (VTC) Chittenden County campus is Williston's only institution of higher education at this time. The town will facilitate VTC's expansion and welcome other institutions of learning.

9.1 Schools - The Town will continue to consider the capacity and needs of the schools serving Williston as it makes land use and capital budget decisions.

Williston's schools are operating near their physical capacity. The school board has set the total capacity of the Allen Brook and Central Schools at 1,350 students. The official (October 1) enrollment reported to the Vermont Department of Education for the 2010-11 school year was 1,345, including grades K-8, pre-kindergarten and Early Essential Education (EEE). That represented a growth of 104 students (15%) over the past five school years and represents 99% of the schools' capacity. The official enrollment for SY 2005-06, however, was 1,168.

Ten years ago, there was great concern about rising school enrollment levels and the ability of the town to ensure that school facilities could keep pace with the needs of the projected student population. The 2000 plan projected that the local schools would begin to exceed the capacity of the school system's facilities in the 2006-07 school year, and modular classroom facilities were installed at the Allen Brook School. The last decade, however has seen a slow but steady drop in school enrollment numbers. These declining enrollment numbers allowed the Williston School System to remove the modular classroom buildings from the Allen Brook School campus after a reorganization of programming at the town's two elementary schools. An analysis of changing enrollments by grade and the number of births to Williston residents suggests that this pattern of small but steady declining enrollment levels will continue through the 2011-2016 time frame of this plan. The school board's is not currently proposing a new or expanded facility at this time, but will likely look to expand the Allen Brook School should school enrollment patterns change course and point to the need for additional classroom space.

The newly renovated and expanded Champlain Valley Union High School has a capacity of approximately 1,460 students. The October 1 SY 2010-2011 enrollment was 1,363 students, or 97% of the high school’s capacity. Enrollment levels at CVU have varied slightly in recent years, having reached its highest level of 1,418 during the 2009-2010 school. However, moving forward, the school system is projecting the student population at CVU to decline by approximately 100 students through the 2015-2016 school year and thus staying within the design capacity of the existing school building. Over the time frame of this plan, no new or expanded facilities are contemplated at this time at CVU.



Source: Williston School District

9.1.1 Continue to Charge a School Impact Fee. Update the School Impact Fee Ordinance. The town currently collects a school impact fee for every new dwelling. These fees change each year, reflecting their use in paying debt service on the Allen Brook School and the improvements at CVU. The school impact fees assessed in FY 2011 are approximately \$10,744 for single-family dwellings and \$3,580 for multi-family dwellings. The school impact fees are used to fund facilities at Williston’s two public schools and at CVUHS, and approximately 64% of the school impact fees collected go to the Williston School District. Overall, the impact fee has raised more than \$2.3 million since its adoption. The town will continue to collect these fees as provided by the 2003 school impact fee ordinance. That ordinance will be updated upon completion of the facilities plan called for in 9.1.2.

Private Schools. Private schools play a significant role in educating Williston residents. The 2000 Census found that roughly 18% of the town’s elementary and middle school students and some 30% of its high school students attended private schools.

9.1.2 Prepare a Facilities Plan. To the extent that Williston’s growth management decisions - which include both the annual cap on residential construction and the collection of impact fees - are based on the capacity of the schools, the school boards must be willing to provide the town with

the facts it needs to defend those decisions. A facilities plan must be prepared by, or for, the school boards. That plan should include enrollment projections, a clear explanation of the capacity of the school buildings and bus routes, and action steps for providing any new facilities that increasing enrollments may require.

9.1.3 Meet Regularly to Discuss School Needs. The Selectboard, school boards, and the planning commission should meet at least once a year.

Enrollment Projections

Making accurate projections of future school enrollments is difficult, especially for small schools like Williston's, and for secondary schools, which are affected by competition from private schools, drop-out rates, and teen-age mortality. The facilities plan called for by Policy 9.1.2 should include projections prepared by an experienced professional planner or demographer. This appendix briefly assesses the potential for increasing enrollments in the Allen Brook and Central schools as it stands in 2011.

Table 9.A shows the enrollment at Williston's schools by grade for the past five school years (2006-2010), along with enrollment projections through the end of this plan's horizon (2016). It also traces the progression of the number of students in each grade through time. School enrollments have been declining, a trend that pre-dates this plan. Both births and in-migration of students are declining. Given this level of in-migration and the number of births to Williston residents during the past five years, entering class sizes should be smaller than exiting class sizes for the next few years. Enrollments will fluctuate, but the capacity of the Allen Brook and Central Schools are unlikely to be exceeded unless net in-migration accelerates.

Williston's growth management system holds in-migration to a moderate pace. The number of new dwelling units is limited to 80 per fiscal year. Also, the many of the recently approved developments call for smaller (two-bedroom) dwellings that are currently yielding approximately 0.16 students each on average, or one student for every 6 dwellings. Growth will eventually require more space in the schools, but current demographic and development trends allow some time for planning how that space can be provided. For more on how the growth management system works see Chapter 5.

It should be noted however, that Williston's population continues to grow and additional houses are being built and have been built even during the worst of the recession of 2008-2009. Should the pace of growth increase significantly, recently observed enrollment trends are also likely to be affected.

Table 9.A Williston School Enrollments and Projections, 2006-2016

Birth Year	Births	School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	K-8	9-12
2001	95	2006	108	108	115	132	118	104	128	139	122	1,074	460
2002	87	2007	95	113	112	113	129	120	102	128	137	1,049	459
2003	98	2008	119	111	117	111	113	125	122	99	131	1,048	482
2004	82	2009	97	126	107	124	106	108	124	126	95	1,013	478
2005	83	2010	97	99	129	109	123	115	108	126	127	1,033	459
2006	90	2011*	98	106	101	131	109	123	115	109	124	1,016	472
2007	106	2012*	111	107	108	103	131	109	123	116	108	1,016	448
2008	65	2013*	96	121	109	110	103	109	124	124	114	1,017	432
2009	77	2014*	80	105	123	111	110	103	131	110	122	995	448
2010	80	2015*	89	87	107	125	111	110	103	132	109	973	443
2011*	80	2016*	90	97	88	109	125	111	110	104	130	895	423

Source: Memo from William J. Smith to CSSU: Fall 2011 Enrollment Projections, Oct. 24, 2010.

*Projections.

9.2 Child Care – The Town of Williston recognizes the importance of child care in community life, and will ensure that its planning and development review process do not place unreasonable limitations on child care facilities.

The private sector provides child care services in Williston. In 2010 there were 12 licensed child care centers and 12 registered child care homes in Williston, offering 530 full-day and 30 part-day slots. There were also 180 slots for after-school child care. There were vacancies in each category, but inquiries to the Child Care Resource Center (which provided the data reported here) suggested that there was a shortage of infant care.

9.2.1 Permit Child Care Centers Wherever Schools are Permitted. Williston brought its bylaws into compliance with the state law (24 V.S.A. § 4412(5)) allowing home child care in residential zoning districts in September 2005. In 2008 the town’s bylaws were amended to allow child care centers in all zoning districts where elementary schools are permitted by right.

9.2.2 Permit Child Care Centers as Accessory Uses. The bylaws have also been revised to make it clear that child care is a permitted accessory uses for educational institutions, churches, and places of employment.

9.3 Higher Education – The Town of Williston will encourage and facilitate the location and expansion of institutions of higher education within the town. Specifically, the town will facilitate the expansion of Vermont Technical College at its new location in Blair Park.

Williston residents have access to many opportunities for higher education. The University of Vermont and several private colleges are nearby in the greater Burlington region. The Vermont Technical College (VTC) is the only college located in Williston, and offers a number of engineering and technical degree programs, as well as an array of other vocational and technical training programs. Based in Randolph, VTC has been expanding its presence in Chittenden County with the acquisition of a building in Blair Park (see Map 13 – Public Facilities). Enrollment has grown from roughly 350 students in SY 2004-05 to approximately 450 today, and projected enrollment of roughly 660 students by 2015. VTC has also started housing a limited number of students on campus, and currently offers dormitory space for roughly 50 students. The town will continue to work with Vermont Tech to ensure that adequate infrastructure is

available for its expansion, and that the change from commercial space to an educational institution complies with relevant bylaws. You can learn more about VTC at <http://www.vtc.vsc.edu/>.