

# CHILMARK SCHOOL AND CHILMARK PRESCHOOL SPACE MEMO<sup>1</sup>

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Since its founding, the Chilmark School has grown from a one-room schoolhouse in the current Police Station to the thriving educational institution it is today. The current school building was designed to accommodate a larger school population and to integrate with and benefit from the broader “campus” at Beetlebung Corner including the Chilmark Library, CCC and the field. Over the years, the school’s population has fluctuated, leading the school and town to adapt and make changes in response to fluctuations in enrollment. Over the years and throughout the growth in enrollment, The Chilmark School has continued to provide a robust and high-quality, community-based learning experience in a multi-age setting and uphold the culture and traditions that make our school community unique.

In early 2004, a newly formed Chilmark School Task Force explored how the school could better meet the needs of its community and increase its enrollment. From this Task Force, community members assembled as a Preschool Committee, with the task of evaluating the possibility of housing a private, not for profit, multi-age preschool within the school. After a comprehensive town survey the committee found that there was public support and interest in adding a preschool. As a result, Chilmark Preschool opened at the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year. The Preschool is a vibrant and thriving early childhood program which is highly regarded within the community. The Preschool operates a licensed early childhood program during the school year and also offers a separate, licensed summer program with priority and discounted tuition for island families. Together, these two offerings are an important resource for year-round, working families seeking consistent, affordable, year-round childcare. Critically, The Preschool has served as a feeder program for the Chilmark School, giving local families a strong early education on the Chilmark campus and the majority of Preschool graduates have gone on to enroll at the Chilmark School.

In early 2017, in response to concerns surrounding another dip in enrollment, the Chilmark School Advisory Committee partnered with town representatives to actively promote the school within the broader community with the goal of increasing the school population. This involved a get-out-the-word campaign, community outreach, and a rebranding effort, among others.

Both the establishment of the Preschool and the specific concerted recruitment actions taken by SAC and town representatives have resulted in a strong and positive impact on enrollment.

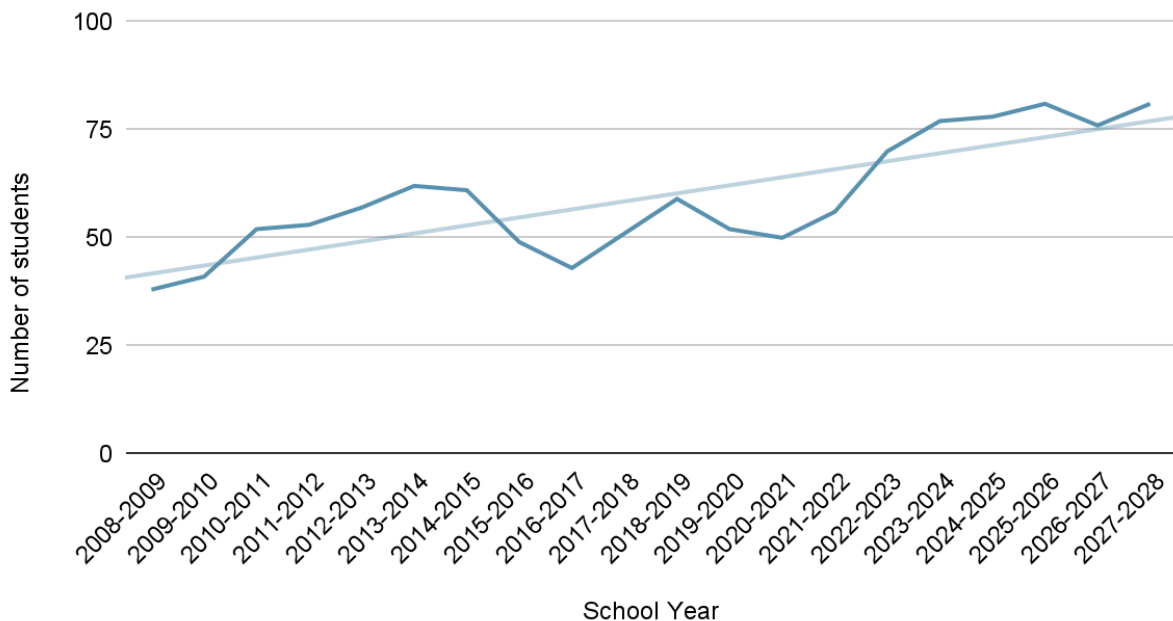
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<sup>1</sup> This Memo has been prepared by the Chilmark School SAC and members of the Chilmark Preschool Board in consultation with both schools’ parents and teachers, as well as Richie Smith (Superintendent of Schools), Robert Lionette (Chilmark Representative to the School Committee), Warren Doty (Chilmark Selectperson), Janet Weidner (Chilmark Town Moderator and Trustee of the Chilmark Library), and Tim Carroll (Chilmark Town Administrator).

## ENROLLMENT GROWTH

Historical and predicted enrollment growth is presented below. Over the last 16 years the Chilmark School population has grown on average by 2.44 students per year, from 38 students in the 2008-2009 school year to 70 students in the current academic year. While the school has seen a slightly steeper uptick in enrollment during the pandemic and there is also downward pressure on enrollment stemming from the housing crisis, enrollment projections from NESDEC suggest that enrollment at the Chilmark School will continue to trend upwards over the next 5 years (the period for which we have data).

### Chilmark School Enrollment



Similarly, there is increased demand from Up-Island families for preschool education. The Chilmark Preschool has experienced increased interest over the last few years – the majority of this interest from Chilmark and Aquinnah families and/or siblings – and the waitlist for future enrollment indicates that this trend is ongoing.

## CHILMARK SCHOOL CLASSROOMS AND USE OF SPACE

Over the last two decades, the most common classroom configuration at the Chilmark School has been three combined classes:

- K/1 classroom
- 2/3 classroom
- 4/5 classroom

As the school population has grown (and also in response to COVID19), the school has made a number of adaptations and changes to safely and appropriately accommodate the growing population. These changes have included temporarily moving to single-grade classrooms (The Chilmark School has a long history of successfully embracing multi-grade learning models), creating overlapping multi-grade classrooms (K/1, 1/2, 2/3), and converting a smaller, art room in the front of the building into a fourth classroom to help accommodate larger numbers of children.

The Chilmark Preschool has also embraced adaptations, including creating an additional classroom in the CCC during COVID and afterwards as it sought to accommodate the larger number of final year preschoolers in the year after COVID to help support young children whose learning opportunities were curtailed by COVID. Both the Preschool and the School have also leaned into the “campus” structure, using the CCC to support various programming needs. Time and again, both the Preschool and the School have demonstrated great flexibility and an unwavering commitment to adapt to provide the best possible learning experience for their students.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Increased enrollment at the Chilmark School combined with increased numbers of students eligible for special education and requiring separate space for mandated service provision, is presenting pressing space challenges within the existing school infrastructure. Instructional and meeting space is currently very tight at the Chilmark school and we do not have sufficient 1:1 SPED space, small group working space, and meeting space. Next year, we will face these same space shortages and will face the additional need for one additional full-size classroom space. This is despite plans to contain enrollment, *not* increase it as is the strategy that was pursued in the past.

	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
<b>Kindergarten</b>	8	10	10
<b>1st Grade</b>	18	8	10
<b>2nd Grade</b>	13	18	8
<b>3rd Grade</b>	12	13	18
<b>4th Grade</b>	8	12	13
<b>5th Grade</b>	12	8	12
<b>TOTALS</b>	69	69	71

*Please note: we have not received this year's NESDEC projections. The numbers in grey above reflect our best estimates of enrollment based on conversations with the Preschool leadership and historical rates of Preschool graduates enrolling in the Chilmark School.*

The proposals below seek to identify one additional space for use and assume that the Chilmark School will be able to continue to house one of the classes in the smaller, front classroom, subject to class size and space regulations (or reclaim an additional classroom space in the building and move its prior use to the front classroom). This would allow the School to meet the need for 5 classrooms for core instruction plus space for Specials (as detailed below and in Appendix B).

While the Chilmark Preschool's preference is to stay in its current space, ongoing space shortages may demand a more permanent, long-term solution and as such, The Chilmark Preschool is actively researching a permanent, on-campus home for the Preschool that could be operational within 24 to 36 months. The Preschool Board is currently exploring this option, with specific efforts being made to evaluate the feasibility of building on town land and the sources

of non-public financial support that would be available to finance construction. Additional potential long-term solutions are presented on Page 9 of this memo.

## **PROPOSED SHORT-TERM SOLUTIONS<sup>2</sup>**

### **1. *Chilmark School rents or purchases a new, modular building to be sited on the school campus [exact location TBD]***

- a. Proposed use: Visual Arts/Theatre/Music/Arts Integration to free up one new classroom in the main school building
- b. Needs: fully insulated classroom/studio space (possibly without facilities)
- c. PROS:
  - i. Preschool retains use of current space
  - ii. Chilmark school students gain extra fresh air and movement time in the transition between the main school building and the new Arts building
  - iii. The Preschool children and families remain closely connected to the Chilmark School community through the continued use of shared facilities
- d. CONS:
  - i. Funding for the modular building would need to be approved by all three towns, in addition to the current funding requests related to the Tisbury School project, The High School project, and the proposed renovations at the West Tisbury School
  - ii. The MVYPS Administration would need to provide administrative oversight for the project, alongside the existing capital projects underway in the district
  - iii. The Town of Chilmark would need to identify space for the modular building
  - iv. Chilmark School students lose valuable instructional time in the transition between classroom and CCC, especially during winter when children will have to dress for the transition. This is particularly important in the context of Visual Art, for which state standards are rigorous and specific and it would be difficult to meet the standards under the resulting time constraints
  - v. The distance between the main building and satellite learning area would result in a longer principal or nurse response time in the case of emergencies or a dysregulated student
  - vi. Students on a behavior plan who are required to leave the classroom for their own safety during episodes of dysregulation would require supervision from additional staff at the satellite space

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<sup>2</sup> All proposals are subject to the Regional Agreement and agreements with the town of Chilmark.

**2. The Preschool rents or purchases a new, modular building to be sited on the school campus [TBD]**

- a. Proposed use: to house the preschool (20 children)
- b. Needs: fully insulated classroom space(s) with bathroom facilities
- c. PROS:
  - i. Chilmark school recovers the current preschool classroom as the new 5th classroom and the majority of school activities remain in the existing school building
  - ii. The Preschool could meet increased enrollment demand if the modular building were to have two instructional spaces
  - iii. Could serve as a trial for a more permanent Preschool building on campus
  - iv. CCC summer preschool and extended day programs would not need access to school building
- d. CONS:
  - i. Need to identify funds and space for the modular building
  - ii. Preschool children would spend full days (and potentially their entire 2 or 3-year preschool experience) in a modular building which would be potentially less well suited to developmentally appropriate early childhood education
  - iii. Would potentially decrease enrollment due to parent perception of the quality of the facility and education that could be offered therein
  - iv. Depending on where it was sited, it could require the addition of a new fenced outdoor learning area

**3. The Preschool moves to the Library Front Room**

- a. Proposed use: to house the preschool (15 children)
- b. Needs: Addition of storage solutions and a fenced, outdoor classroom
- c. PROS:
  - i. Chilmark school recovers the current preschool classroom as the new 5th classroom and the majority of Chilmark School activities remain in the existing school building
  - ii. There are no significant capital expenses incurred by the Town, the UIRSD, nor the Preschool community
  - iii. The Preschool operates in a bright, well-lit facility with existing bathroom access and easy pick-up/drop-off for Preschool families
- d. CONS:
  - i. The Preschool is subject to the limitations of a shared space which may impact the hours it can operate in the facility and the scope of

programming that can be offered (including adaptations to address potential noise concerns)

- ii. The Preschool would be able to accommodate fewer children (15 vs the 20 currently permitted in the Chilmark School classroom space)
- iii. There would be additional staff and janitorial time needed for the transition between Preschool and Library programming
- iv. Limited socialization and integration with Chilmark School for Preschool children and families
- v. Library programming would require the Preschool to de-camp at certain times – including moving the Preschool Program to another space for the summer – which is inconvenient and disruptive

#### **4. *The Preschool moves to the CCC***

- a. Proposed use: to house the preschool (20+ children)
- b. Needs: 5-day per week, full day access to the CCC, modifications to the CCC space including a fenced outdoor classroom
- c. PROS:
  - i. Chilmark school recovers the current preschool classroom as the new 5th classroom and the majority of school activities remain in the existing school building
  - ii. The Preschool could enroll a larger number of children due to the larger facility size
  - iii. Easy drop-off and pick-up for preschool families
- d. CONS:
  - i. The Preschool is subject to the limitations of a shared space which may impact the hours it can operate in the facility and the scope of programming that can be offered
  - ii. There would be additional staff and janitorial time needed for the transition between Preschool and town uses
  - iii. Limited socialization and integration with Chilmark School for Preschool children and families
  - iv. CCC programming would require the Preschool to de-camp at certain times (estimated 5-7 times per year based on the experience of the Preschool Pod which operated in 2021-2022) – including moving the Preschool Program to another space for the summer – which is inconvenient and disruptive
  - v. Younger children having their first structured experience out of the home are significantly impacted by disruptions in routine, schedule and "changing spaces" or school cancellations when the CCC space is needed by the town.

## **5. Chilmark School uses the CCC for Specials**

- a. Proposed use: Visual Arts/Theatre/Music/Arts Integration take place in the CCC to free up one new classroom in the main school building
- b. Needs: 5-day per week, full day access to the CCC, additional dedicated storage solutions in the CCC, additional janitorial time and funds
- c. PROS:
  - i. Preschool retains use of current space
  - ii. Chilmark school students gain extra fresh air and movement time in the transition between classroom and CCC
  - iii. There is a precedent for the Chilmark School using the CCC, whether for gym classes, musical and theatrical performances, or other school community events. Increased use of the CCC by the Chilmark School would be an expansion of the School's existing use of the space.
  - iv. The Preschool children and families remain closely connected to the Chilmark School community through the continued use of shared facilities
- d. CONS:
  - i. The Town would need to provide funding for renovations/retrofitting of the space for School use
  - ii. There would be additional staff (non-teacher) and janitorial time needed for the new facility and for the transitions between School and town uses and funds would need to be identified to cover this expense
  - iii. The School is subject to the limitations of a shared space which may impact the hours it can operate in the facility and the scope of programming that can be offered, including requiring the school to de-camp at certain times (estimated 5-7 times per year based on the experience of the Preschool Pod which operated in 2021-2022), which is inconvenient and disruptive
  - iv. Due to the class load needed to accommodate Specials, band practice and string lessons could no longer be accommodated in the CCC and would need a new location elsewhere on campus (the only available space would be the library front room)
  - v. Chilmark School students lose valuable instructional time in the transition between classroom and CCC, especially during winter when children will have to dress for the transition. This is particularly important in the context of Visual Art, for which state standards are rigorous and specific and it would be difficult to meet the standards under the resulting time constraints
  - vi. The distance between the main building and satellite learning area would result in a longer principal or nurse response time in the case of emergencies or a dysregulated student
  - vii. Students on a behavior plan who are required to leave the classroom for their own safety during episodes of dysregulation would require supervision from additional staff at the satellite space



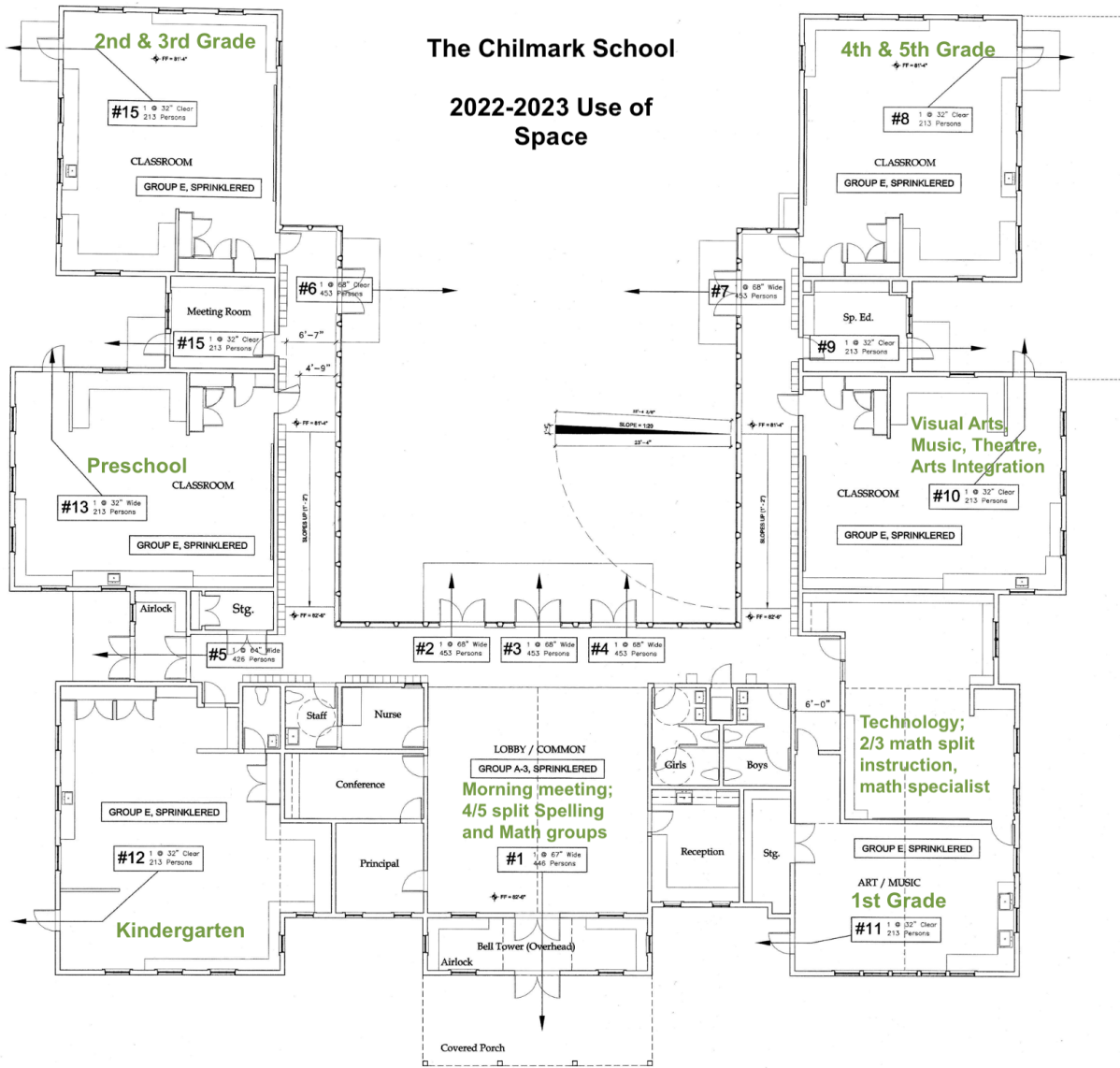


## **LONG TERM OPTIONS**

The following long-term options could be considered to address the space needs of The Chilmark School and the Chilmark Preschool. The options could be pursued independently of each other OR in combination:

1. Construct a new Chilmark Preschool on leased town-owned land, with a strong preference for locating the new facility on campus and a long-term lease
  - a. School could potentially be sited on/near the additional classroom location on the original architectural plans (by the tennis courts and new playground)
  - b. Funds needed could be sourced from MV Youth, state early childhood grants, and private philanthropic support
2. Construct an addition on the Chilmark School to house an Arts studio space and small meeting rooms AND/OR a preschool space
3. Establish an enrollment cap and restrict enrollment at the Chilmark School, with places made available for school choice only in years when there is an abnormally small class in any given grade.

# APPENDIX A



## APPENDIX B

<b>Area of Instruction</b>	<b>2022-2023 Location</b>	<b>Time per week (cumulative for whole school)</b>
Core curriculum	Classrooms	-
Gym/Physical Education	The Chilmark Community Center or Field	4 hours in 2022-2023 5 hours in 2023-2024
Visual Arts	Specials Classroom in the Main Building	4 hours in 2022-2023 5 hours in 2023-2024
Theatre	Specials Classroom in the Main Building	4 hours in 2022-2023 5 hours in 2023-2024
Music	Specials Classroom in the Main Building	4 hours in 2022-2023 5 hours in 2023-2024
Arts Integration	Specials Classroom in the Main Building	4 hours in 2022-2023 5 hours in 2023-2024
Technology	Technology classroom in the Main Building	4 hours in 2022-2023 5 hours in 2023-2024
Library	The Chilmark Library	2 hours in 2022-2023 2.5 hours in 2023-2024
Band	The Chilmark Community Center	3.25 hours
String Lessons	The Chilmark Community Center	3.25 hours