

# Killam parents voice displeasure with fourth grade class sizes

By GREG ANDERSON

**READING** - Roughly two dozen parents of school aged children appeared before the School Committee at their meeting Monday night to voice their concerns regarding fourth grade Killam Elementary enrollment and the large classroom sizes their children will be a part of in the fall.

About 100 Killam fourth graders will fill four classrooms in September, averaging out to more than 26 students per classroom. Other classes will face similar size issues as well, among them grade four at Barrows and at Joshua Eaton, and grades two and five at Eaton.

What makes the Killam

fourth graders different from the other classes is that as kindergartners they were "spot redistricted" - moved as a temporary fix - to Birch Meadow Elementary. They were transported to the further elementary school to free up a classroom and a teacher at Killam. The parents who went before the committee offering suggestions and venting frustration say they feel the favor should be returned so a teacher can once again be freed up, this time to reduce the class sizes in the Killam fourth grade.

Anticipating concerns regarding spot redistricting, Superintendent Patrick Schettini gave a short presentation outlining a possible method of

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redistricting that would send some would-be Killam fourth graders to Birch Meadow. Schettini said the proposed changes could even out the fourth grade classroom sizes at both schools (Birch Meadow currently will average less than 20 students in each fourth grade classroom) and would affect families living within the narrow triangle formed by Main, Pearl and Charles Streets.

After the brief presentation however, Schettini said he did not like the idea of spot redistricting and "could not support it." "It is not a recommendation of the administration," he said.

The committee felt similarly, the members all making clear they would rather wait for the more permanent redistricting that will take into account the brand-new Wood End Elementary on Sunset Rock Lane, rather than spot redistrict on an ad-hoc basis. The committee also worried that addressing the classroom size problems of Killam fourth graders would send the wrong

message to other parents in town who are dealing with similar situations, such as the parents of fifth graders at both Joshua Eaton and Killam. "If we address the Killam fourth grade, we should address the others," said committee member Rob Spadafora.

Committee member Pete Dahl also noted he felt that it is difficult to appease everyone who is looking for a fast solution. "In the process of fixing one problem you can create others," Dahl said. He also stated that spot redistricting now cannot take into account what the makeup of the neighborhood will be in coming years, saying, "People don't move into neighborhoods at the same rate at the same times."

For now at least, Killam fourth grade parents will be sending their kids to school in the most densely populated classrooms in Reading, but the school administration and school committee say they have no need to think the students will get anything less than the best education. "We are trying to provide for all youngsters [in town]," Schettini said Monday night. "All will get a very good education without any redistricting."