

PLYMOUTH EDUCATION PROFILE

October 4, 2005

1. Summary

Plymouth's academic institutions distinguish the town from surrounding communities. Plymouth State University, Plymouth Regional High School and Plymouth Elementary School bring a large number of students, their families and nearby residents to Plymouth for education and employment, which in turn generates activity in Plymouth's streets and downtown businesses. The University and public schools offer sporting events and cultural activities making Plymouth an entertainment center for the region. The Plymouth public schools are considered by many to be among the best in the area making Plymouth a desirable place for families. In the 2004 Community Attitude Survey, 75% of the respondents were satisfied with the Plymouth's public educational system (14% had no opinion with only 8% dissatisfied.) For these reasons and others, the institutions help to shape Plymouth's identity. This section of the Master Plan provides a profile of these schools and the private institutions in the area to better understand their contributions to the community.

2. Plymouth Elementary School

Plymouth children attend the Plymouth Elementary School starting in kindergarten and going through eighth grade. The school is located off Highland Street on Old Ward Bridge Road adjacent to the Plymouth Regional High School (PRHS). The School Administrative Unit (SAU #48) is also located on Old Ward Bridge Road situated between the school facilities in the part of Plymouth zoned "Civic/Institutional."

The Plymouth Elementary School Board is a five-member board elected by town residents. It is responsible for students in kindergarten to eighth grade. It develops and adopts policies for the school and plans for facility needs.

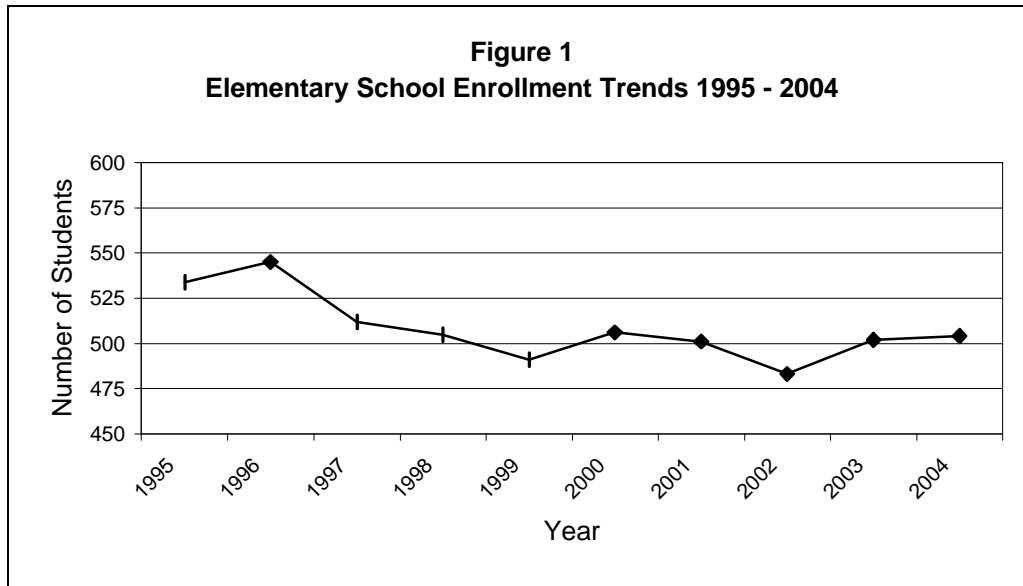
Plymouth Elementary School Enrollment Trends

The Plymouth Elementary School has a capacity of 600 students. Enrollment peaked in 1996 to 545 students, probably as the effects of the baby boom echo (the children of baby boomers entering elementary school) began to recede. Current enrollment is 504 students.

According to NH Department of Education data:

- Plymouth's kindergarten through grade 8 enrollment has seen minor fluctuations during the past ten years. In 1996, enrollment peaked at 545 students then dipped to the low of 483 students in 2002. Since then student numbers have increased by 4% (21 students) in 2004. It is too early to tell if this increasing trend will continue.
- During this same ten year period the town's population was relatively unchanged. However, new home construction since 2002 has been above the levels of the past decade which may indicate a population increase.

- As noted in data collected by the NH Department of Education, student enrollments in towns throughout the State of New Hampshire have generally been increasing. The number of students increased by 10% between 1994 and 2003, while Plymouth's student population declined by almost 6% during the same time period.



Source: NH Department of Education and SAU #48.

- Home schooling accounts for generally less than 1% of the total elementary-aged population and has seen insignificant fluctuations in the last four years. During the same four-year period, approximately 1.5% of elementary-aged students were home-schooled in New Hampshire with numbers increasing slightly annually.
- More than one-third of the elementary-aged students at Plymouth Elementary School is eligible for free or reduced cost lunches. Data prior to 2002 was unavailable.
- Plymouth maintains small class sizes with an average student to teacher ratio of 17 to 1 during the last three years. NH Department of Education Rule Ed 306.16 specifies a maximum allowable class size of 25 for grades 1 and 2 and 30 students for higher grades.

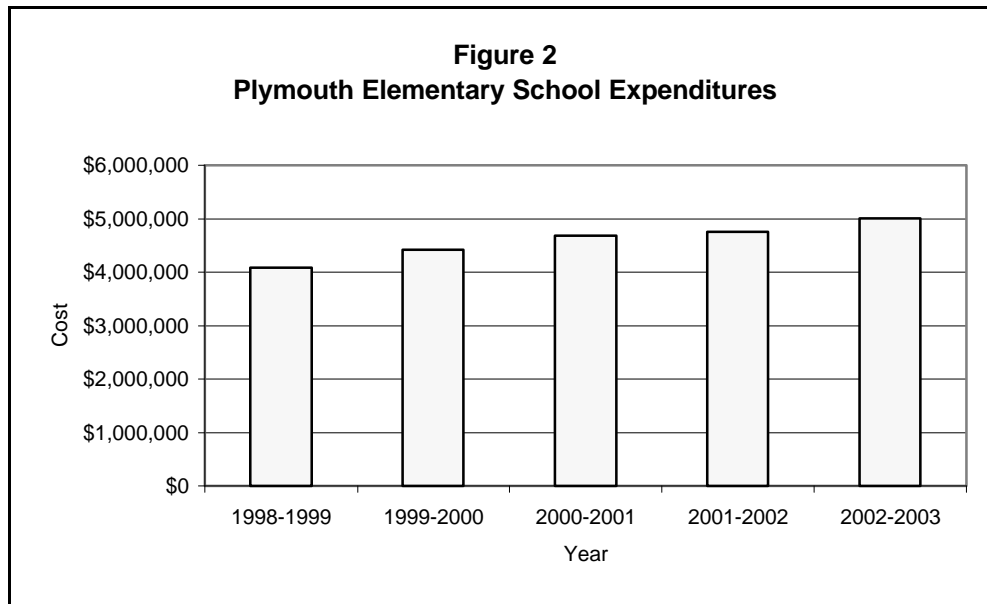
	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Kindergarten	45	40	44	35	44
Elementary (1-8)	438	466	457	448	438
Home schooled	NA	5	3	8	6
Total elementary-aged children	483	511	504	491	488
Students eligible for free lunch	NA	NA	NA	35.9%	34.9%
Attendance	95.9%	95.8%	96%	95.7%	NA
Students per teacher	NA	NA	17	17	21

Source: New Hampshire Department of Education. NA = data not available

Education Costs

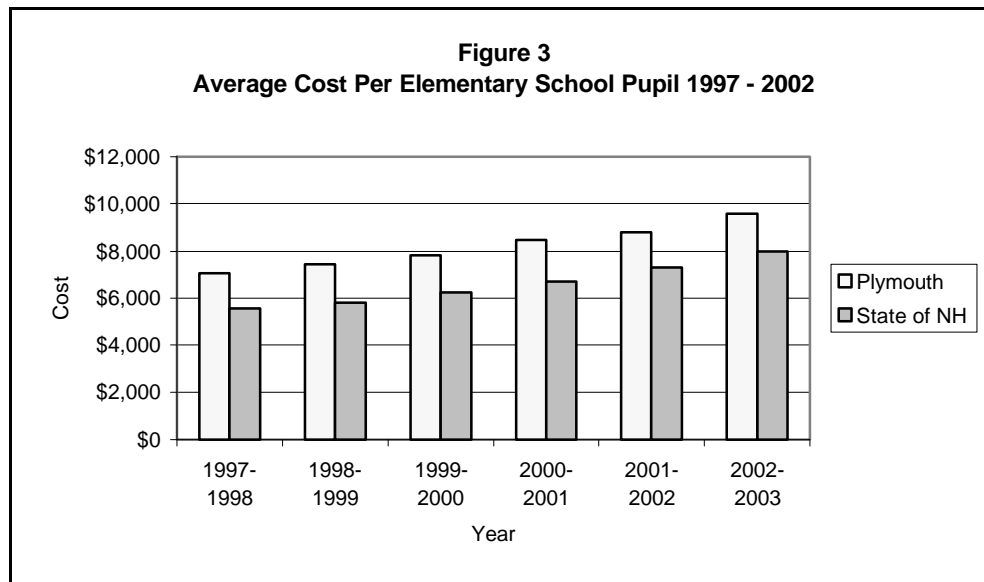
Like most school districts in New Hampshire and across the nation, the Plymouth School District has seen an increase in the total recurring expenditures at the Plymouth Elementary School during the past five years. According to the NH Department of Education:

- The total recurring expenditures at the elementary school increased by 22.7% between 1998 and 2003 from \$4,082,708 to \$5,009,906 (figures not adjusted for inflation).



Source: .NH Department of Education

- During the same period of time, the average expenditure per Plymouth Elementary School student increased from \$7,432 to \$9,567 or 27% in five years. While the State average increased by 37% (\$5,793 to \$7,961).



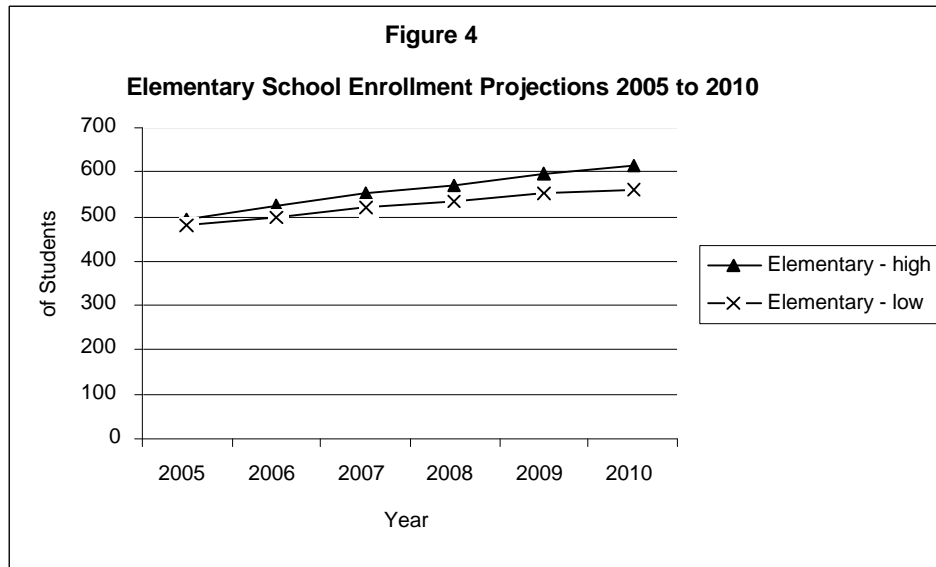
Source: .NH Department of Education

- Plymouth's expenditure per elementary student since 1998 has been consistently higher than the State's average.
- In 1998, Plymouth spent roughly 28% more per pupil than the state average expenditure. Five years later, expenditures per Plymouth pupil had dropped to 20% more than the average NH elementary school student.
- Conversations with the SAU and Plymouth School Board members attribute the cost difference to economy of scale; the District's commitment to small class size; extensive co-curricular program including A+ (an afterschool program), intermural sports, club activities and other after-school programs; the Parks and Recreation budget runs through the school (i.e. Town Common maintenance is part of the Parks and Recreation budget); and the cost of hosting regional special education programs such as L5 and NCR.

Enrollment Projections

Student enrollment projections were developed by Applied Economic Research in June 2003 for the Phase I analysis to explore the feasibility of school impact fees. Russ Thibeault, the author of the *School Impact Fee Feasibility Analysis*, used the cohort-survival method to develop enrollment projections. It is the standard school enrollment projection technique and generally, is quite accurate for projection periods of ten years or less. Two projections were developed; one reflecting recent trends and the second reflecting a greater rate of development based on a recent housing study for Plymouth. According to the Phase I analysis, the following projections cover the range of probable future enrollment at Plymouth Elementary.

- Student enrollment at the Plymouth Elementary School will rise slightly and then remain relatively flat for the foreseeable future.
- Based on these projections, the elementary school appears to have adequate capacity to accommodate anticipated growth.



Source: *School Impact Fee Feasibility Analysis* by Applied Economic Research, June 2003

- It is recommended that the Plymouth School District revisit these projections on an annual basis using the most current information available including birth data and building permit activity.

Facility Needs at the Elementary School

As noted previously, the Plymouth Elementary School has a capacity of 600 students. The school was built in 1996 and is in excellent condition. The Plymouth School Board plans for the short and long term needs of the facility including the grounds. Long term improvements which are addressed in the town's Capital Improvement Plan are:

- Replacement of the 10,000 gallon underground storage tank and upgrade of the monitoring equipment, estimate \$100,000.
- Purchase of an electrical generator, to equip the building for potential use as a civil defense site, estimate \$95,000.
- Recondition and pave the parking lots.

Short-term upgrades and replacement of furnishings and equipment are addressed annually through the budget process.

In addition to the aforementioned improvements, it has been noted that any future facility needs should incorporate sustainable design principles (i.e., energy efficiency, "day-lighting," toxic-free paints, carpets, etc.) The School Board working with town officials should encourage and help provide safe routes to school so more children can walk and ride their bicycles (see Transportation Profile for more information.)

3. Plymouth Regional High School

Plymouth Regional High School is a four-year comprehensive public high school with a vocational center and alternative high school program. It serves Plymouth teenagers, as well as, teens from seven surrounding communities including:

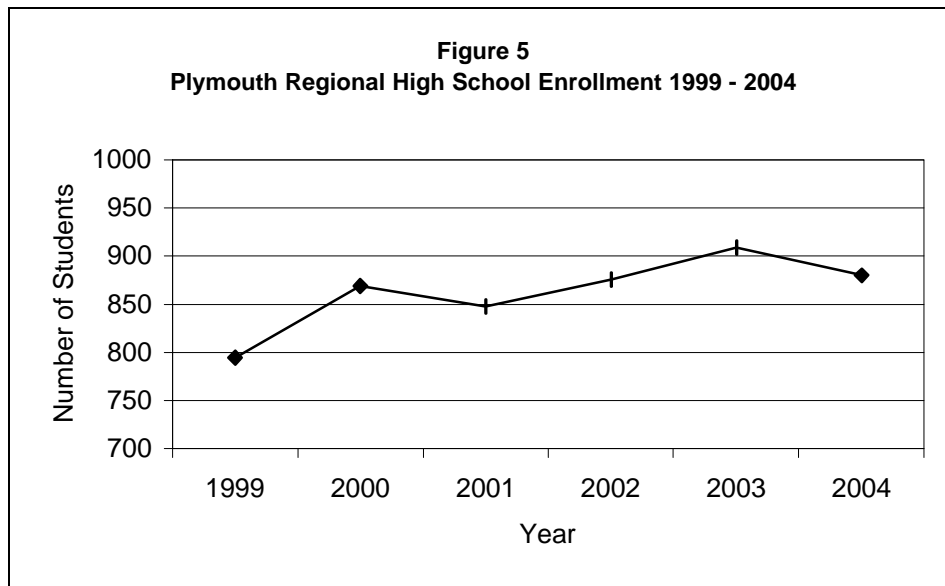
- Ashland
- Campton
- Ellsworth
- Holderness
- Rumney
- Thornton
- Wentworth

Waterville Valley also sends children to PRHS.

The Pemi-Baker Regional High School Board is a 13-member board with elected representatives from the eight communities that comprise the district. They serve students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school board develops and adopts policies for the school and plans for facility needs and also develops the school budget. The budget is acted on by voters in the district. The SAU provides general administrative services to all schools in the district and supervises the expenditure of all funds appropriated for public schools.

Plymouth Regional High School Enrollment Trends

According to the SAU, Plymouth Regional High School has a capacity of 1,000 students. In contrast to the elementary school enrollment trends, high school enrollment has been rising.



Source: .NH Department of Education

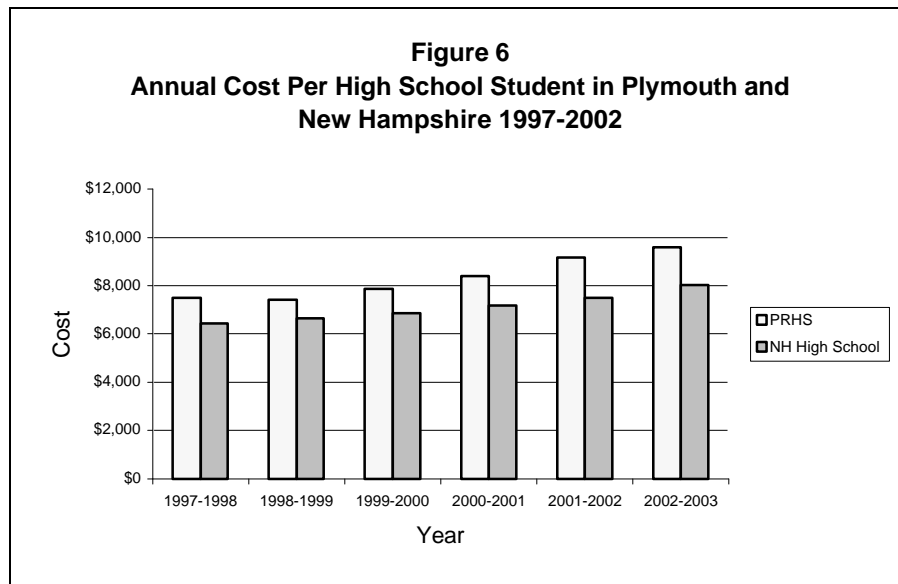
- Enrollment in the past decade peaked in 2003 with 909 students. It has been noted that the influence of the baby boom echo is still being felt and some of the outlying communities may be growing faster than Plymouth.

- Fall 2004 figures indicate a return to the 2002 enrollment, which is still below the high school's capacity of 1,000 students. Overcrowding at the high school does not seem to be a problem at this time.
- Approximately 67% of PRHS seniors go to post-secondary school upon graduation. The drop-out rate at PRHS is 2.2%.

Education Costs

As noted previously, Plymouth's public high school students attend PRHS.

- Plymouth's cost per high school pupil has increased from \$7,500 per year in 1997 to \$9,569 per year in 2002. This 28% increase is only slightly more than the State's increase of 25%.
- The 2002 State average costs per student were 19% lower than the per student costs at Plymouth Regional High School.



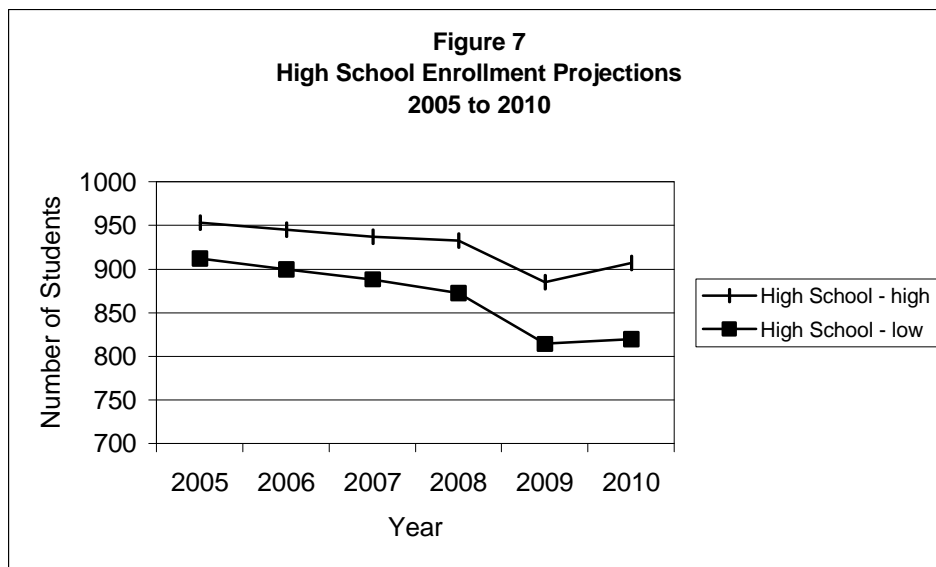
Source: New Hampshire Department of Education

- Conversations with the SAU attribute the cost difference between PRHS and NH average to a number of issues similar to those associated with the Plymouth Elementary School. These include:
 - economy of scale (PRHS is not a big NH school nor is it so small that it does not need to offer a wide variety of programs);
 - the town's commitment to small class size and a strong special education program;
 - an extensive co-curricular program.

Enrollment Projections

Enrollment projections for PRHS were developed by Applied Economic Research in June 2003 for the Phase I analysis exploring the feasibility of school impact fees. According to the Phase I analysis, the following projections cover the range of probable future enrollment.

- It is anticipated that high school enrollment will dip slightly within the next five years and then remain constant for the foreseeable future, like the K-8 enrollment projections.
- Based on these projections, the high school appears to have adequate capacity to accommodate anticipated growth.
- It is recommended that the Pemi-Baker Regional School District revisit these projections on an annual basis using the most current information available including birth data and building permit activity.



Source: *School Impact Fee Feasibility Analysis* by Applied Economic Research, June 2003

Facility Needs

In the fall of 2003, the Pemi-Baker Regional School Board authorized the long-range study and review of its present facilities in light of future growth and program needs. After extensive debate and evaluation of data, the committee determined that:

- The area's population growth is relatively stable. The age group that shows the greatest increase, like the rest of the nation, seems to be people over-60 who generally are not sending children to school
- From a developmental standpoint, the current structure of the area elementary schools (kindergarten through 8th grade) feeding students to the high school (9th through 12th grade) best meets the current demands.
- The high school has adequate capacity to meet existing and future needs.

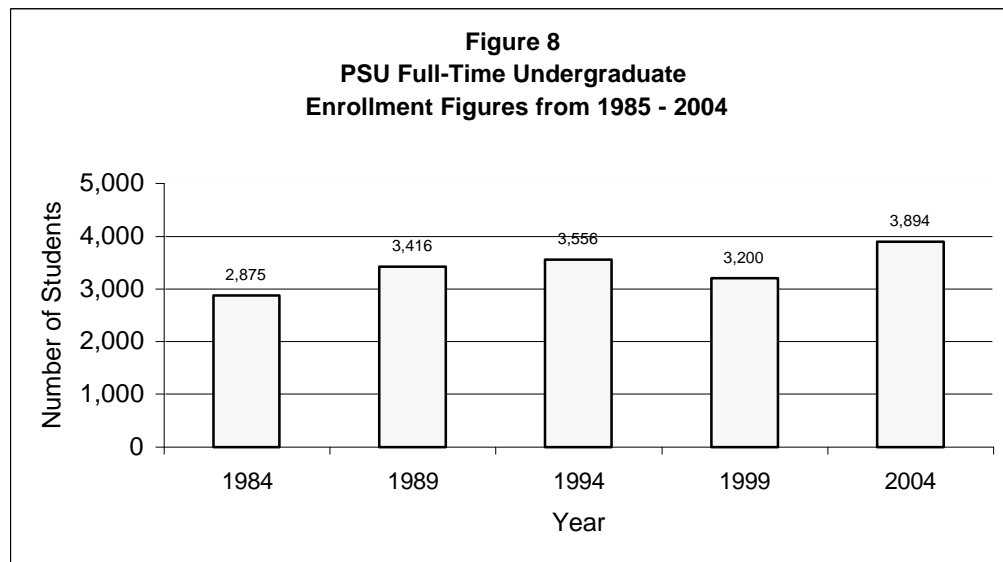
4. Plymouth State University

With a core campus of over 46 buildings on approximately 170 acres in Plymouth and Holderness, Plymouth State University is a dominant factor in the character of Plymouth. Boundaries between PSU and the town are often blurred which has reinforced their mutual interdependence and, upon occasion, created challenges. As the university evolves, so the town will evolve. This section presents a brief history of the university, recent enrollment trends and key PSU planning assumptions.

From Normal School to Plymouth State University - Trends

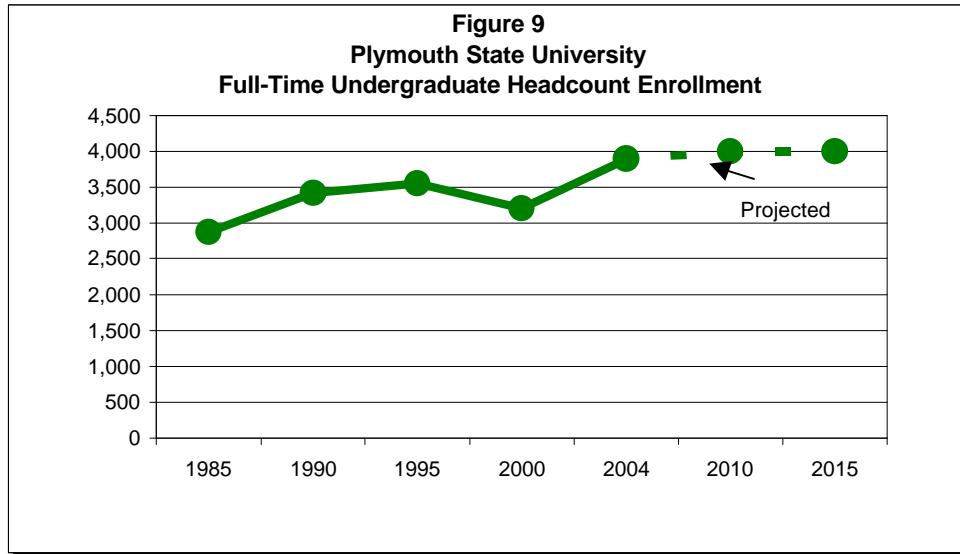
Plymouth State University was founded in 1871 as a normal school. It has evolved from a normal school to a teacher's college to a state college and in 2003 to a state university. It is a co-educational, residential university with an enrollment of approximately 4,000 full-time undergraduate students and 1,050 graduate students in the fall of 2004. According to the PSU web site, "Plymouth State preserves the brick-and-ivy look of its New England small-college heritage while integrating state-of-the-art technology and facilities into an attractive, contemporary campus design."

As PSU has evolved, its student population has increased significantly, relative to the number of permanent town residents. The following enrollment trends include all full-time undergraduates.



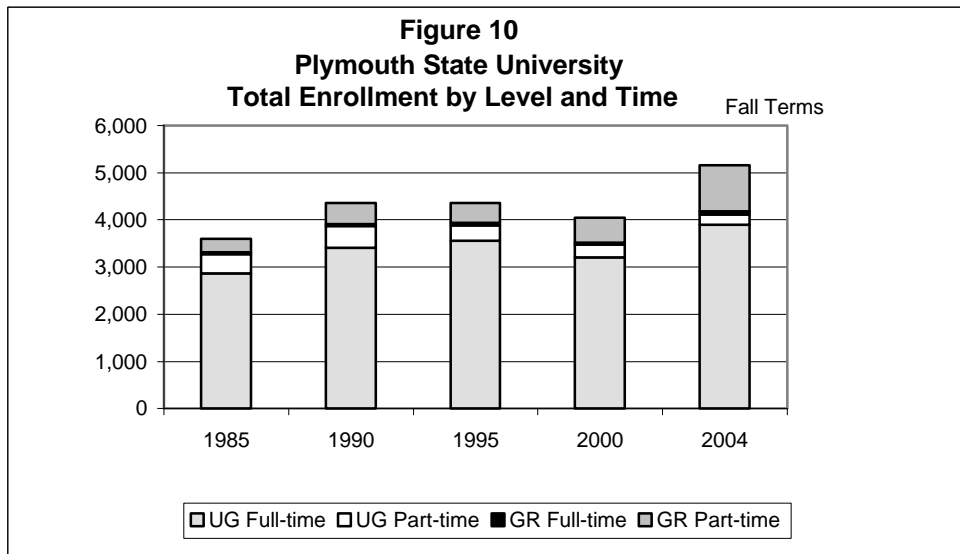
Source: Nick Mathis, PSU Office of Institutional Research - June 1, 2005

- Since 1984, PSU has increased its undergraduate student body by about 35% from 2,875 students to 3,894.
- Enrollment figures do not include full-time graduate students nor any part-time students.



Source: Nick Mathis, PSU Office of Institutional Research - June 1, 2005

- Based on the PSU Master Plan and conversations with the Office of Institutional Research, it is anticipated that PSU enrollment will reach its peak of 4,000 full-time undergraduates within a few years and maintain 4,000 students through 2015.



Source: Nick Mathis, PSU Office of Institutional Research - June 1, 2005

- Since 2000, there has been a 31% increase in student population with a near doubling of the full-time graduate program from 36 to 69 students.
- The part-time graduate student population has increased by 47% from 528 to 974, while part-time undergraduate population decreased from 271 to 214 (-21%).
- Approximately 56% of the undergraduate population lives on-campus in housing that ranges in age and character.

Planning at PSU

Planning at Plymouth State University is ongoing and recently has included the preparation of the University Master Plan. The *Plymouth State University Campus Master Plan: A Framework for Future Decision Making* (November 2004) (see Appendix) identifies key planning assumptions as the university looks to the next ten years in Plymouth and Holderness. These assumptions include:

- (1) Minimal growth in traditional student population
- (2) 65% undergraduate students housed on campus
- (3) New residence halls should:
 - be small in scale
 - be built in suite-style configurations
 - provide for 280 to 320 gross square feet per student and
 - incorporate principles of sustainable design.
- (4) Existing Residence Halls should:
 - be renovated according to need
 - include a mix of singles, doubles and suites
- (5) Classrooms to achieve 25 square feet per person (*national standard*)

The Campus Master Plan provides a number of recommendations for future projects. Taken directly from the Campus Master Plan (page 7), the summary of recommendations follows:

Academic:

- Renovation and addition of new athletic facilities at Holderness Campus
- New Hyde Hall extension
- New academic building on the site of existing Holmes House
- Miscellaneous renovations/upgrades

Administrative:

- Rounds Hall changes use to function as ceremonial administration building
- Speare Hall converts to accommodate new uses
- President's House changes use to accommodate administrative functions
- Welcome Center at Holderness
- Re-locate campus bookstore and/or art gallery to Main Street in town

Residential:

- 650 new suite-style beds in North Campus district
- Renovations of various existing resident halls

Student Services:

- HUB addition and renovation
- 'Mini hubs' at Russell House, PE Center, and Center Lodge
- Speare Hall converts to student services and learning support center

Infrastructure/Landscape:

- TEA-21 Bridge Realignment project and streetscape improvements
- Campus arrival/entry streetscape improvements
- Signage Plan
- Co-Generation plant expansion and related landscape improvements
- Various utility infrastructure projects

Sustainability:

- Design guidelines for new site and building systems that include life cycle criteria, deferred maintenance priorities, and ongoing custodial concerns.

Parking (see PSU Master Plan page 39):

- No free parking
- Parking fee related to convenience of parking
- Limited residential parking on Holderness side in flood prone zones

In addition to these comprehensive recommendations, the Campus Master Plan outlines multiple tracks for implementation and construction. It also recognizes the fluid nature of state funding for state university system projects.

5. Private School Opportunities for Infants to Age 18

In addition to public education opportunities in Plymouth, there are a number of private schools in town and in the immediate vicinity. Private schools serve not only the kindergarten through high school population but also the pre-K sector. A sampling of these schools include:

Plymouth Preschool

The Plymouth Preschool is a self-funded program for 3 to 5 year olds. The preschool is located within the Plymouth Elementary School. It serves approximately two dozen children annually, primarily from Plymouth. The preschool offers two morning sessions per week. The 3 and 4 year olds meet on Tuesdays and Thursday. The older preschoolers meet on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Plymouth State University Child Development and Family Center

The PSU Child Development and Family Center serves 57 children ranging in age from 18 months to kindergarten. The facility is located on Langdon Street. Since 1995, the PSU Child Development and Family Center has been accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. This accreditation is considered a guarantee of high quality care for children - only 7% of the nation's facilities have achieved this distinction.

Plymouth Area Head Start Program

The Head Start Program, which is located at the Whole Village Family Resource Center on Highland Street, provides preschool opportunities for low-income Plymouth families. There are 20 preschoolers enrolled in the Tuesday through Friday program during the school year.

Bodhi Tree Montessori School

Located in Rumney on 8 acres adjacent to the Baker River, the Bodhi Tree Montessori School opened its doors in 1999 to 11 children. The school and the original 11 students have grown up together. Bodhi Tree Montessori offers a pre-K through 6th grade education based on the philosophy of Doctor Marie Montessori. Fifty children attend the secular institution with ten students from the town of Plymouth.

Calvary Christian School

Located on Yeaton Road in Plymouth, the Calvary Christian School provides a Christian education for approximately 60 area students ranging from pre-school to 12th grade. The school was established in 1976 by Calvary Independent Baptist Church of Plymouth.

Holderness School

The Holderness School is a private high school with a student body of 270 students. It is located on a rural, 600-acre campus in the town of Holderness. More than three-quarters of the students live on campus with 57 day students.

Mount Prospect Academy (formally Wreath School)

In 2003, the Wreath School was bought by the Becket Family of Services and became Mount Prospect Academy. Becket Family of Services has been educating youth experiencing difficulties since 1964. The Academy is located on Main Street in Plymouth. Annual enrollment

is approximately 40 students ranging in age from 11 to 17. In general, students are not from the immediate vicinity.

New Hampton School

New Hampton is a private high school located on 100-acre campus in the village of New Hampton. There are 100 day students and 225 students that live at school. From 1999 through spring 2005, New Hampton has enrolled 23 students from Plymouth.

School	Grades Offered	# of Students	# of Plymouth Students	Student to Faculty Ratio
Bodhi Tree Montessori	pre-K - 6	50	10	8:1
Calvary Christian School	pre-K - 12	60	3	6:1
Holderness	9 - 12	270	8	6:1
Mount Prospect Academy	6 - 12	40	0	5:1
New Hampton	9 - 12	270	6	5:1
Plymouth Area Head Start	preschool	20	20	10:1
Plymouth Preschool	preschool	24	22	6:1
PSU Child Development Center	preschool - K	57	~30	5:1

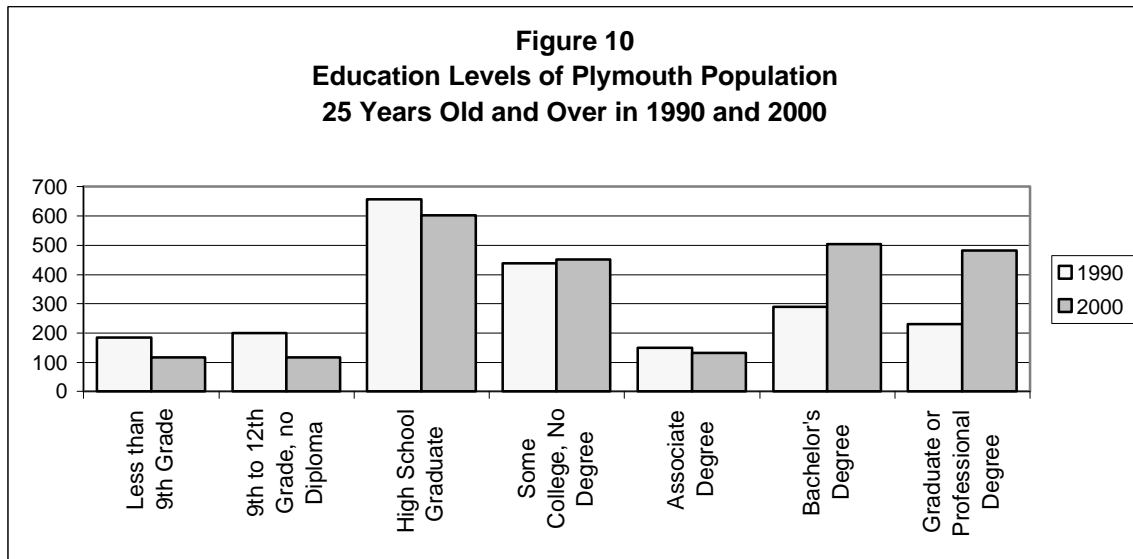
Source: May/June 2005 phone conversations with representatives from the institutions.

Although the Town of Plymouth is not directly involved in providing day care or private school opportunities to local residents, it does allow for these institutions to exist and expand in town through its zoning ordinance. Changing demographics resulting in one parent homes and more two working-parent families have created a growing need for adequate day care for children as well as an aging population that may demand day care services for seniors. Anecdotaly, there is a shortage in Plymouth for consistent full-time, high quality childcare for the working parent.

While there are few actions the town would likely take to remedy the potential shortage of day care facilities, the town could encourage development through the elimination of any local regulatory barriers.

6. Educational Opportunities for Residents Older than 18

Plymouth has seen a change in the education levels of its population since the 1990 Census. The numbers of people with a Bachelor's degree and or a graduate degree have nearly doubled. This trend, although more pronounced in Plymouth, is similar to the rest of the country in that college degrees are becoming as important for employment opportunities as a high school diploma was thirty years ago.



Source: US Census 1990 and 2000

With a well-educated community comes the demand for adult education offerings. Such offerings are available at PSU and Granite State College (formerly the College of Lifelong Learning) through the state university system as well as other private institutions. The Internet also has made lifelong learning opportunities more accessible to Plymouth residents.

7. Planning Considerations

Goal: Promote timely coordination and cooperation of public school and town planning efforts.

- (1) Schedule periodic meetings between Planning Board and School Boards to encourage communication and coordination of town and school plans.
- (2) Continue to share residential development proposals with the SAU and School Boards.
- (3) Revisit school enrollment projections on an annual basis using the most current information available including birth data, building permit activity, and annual inventories of taxable properties. Track data on behalf of the town and in concert with the SAU.
- (4) Coordinate major school capital expenditures with the town's capital budget in order to minimize the tax rate increase in any one-year. Continue to improve the Capital Improvements Program.
- (5) Encourage the School Boards to continue to share their budget and meet quarterly with the town.

Goal: Create a healthy balance between the community and the university so that neither dominates nor has an adverse impact on the other.

- (1) Enhance interaction between town government, residents of Plymouth, and PSU.
- (2) Plymouth administrators, boards, commissions, and committee should work closely with PSU on land use and development issues, through shared master planning results and conceptual project plans, and regular discussion of issues of common concern.
- (3) Attention should be paid to the "boundary" between PSU activities and adjoining neighborhoods. Careful planning, setbacks and where possible buffers should be considered to provide reasonable transition from institutional use to residential use, to protect the character of the neighborhood and to protect residents from noise, light, activity, odor, university pedestrian traffic and vehicle traffic.
- (4) Encourage the town and University to work together to promote safe walking and cycling routes to the educational institutions.