

Contents in this printed update will be discussed at the July 10, 2024 regular meeting of the RSD 13 Board of Education.

Determining Our Next Steps

June 11, 2024

Referendum Results:

Middlefield	Durham
No: 215	No: 381
Yes: 195	Yes: 471



June 18 - July 5, 2024

Board of Education feedback collection about long range planning:
40 respondents

FEEDBACK SUMMARY

Thank you to all who emailed NextSteps@rsd13.org to share thoughts on long range facility planning. The prominent themes that emerged include:

Concerns About Grade 5 Attending Strong:

Age appropriateness and environment, bus safety with riders in grades 5-12, need for quality daily recess, and space availability.

Communication and Process Issues:

Plan passed without sufficient input from parents/taxpayers/towns' officials, without publications, flawed decision-making process, concerns about timely responses to email questions, and not receiving responses from superintendent.

Suggestions & Alternative Ideas:

Modify the plan - repair existing schools, bring back school choice, put one K-5 school in each town, make Brewster and Lyman K-3 with school choice, and include eventual universal Pre-K in CT in renovation plans.

Logistical & Financial Concerns:

Bus routes and timings, need for contingency plans for large system failures at Lyman, capacity questions about Memorial and Strong schools, project costs and funding, uncertainty about mill rate changes, and financial burdens on our seniors.

Educational & Developmental Concerns:

Frequent transitions, impact on educational standards, questions about class sizes and special education needs.

WE HEARD

I'm most concerned that the BOE's focus has slipped away from providing an excellent education to our students; I hope moving ahead with this plan will allow that focus to return.

Everything, almost every concern, needs to be communicated to parents before a shovel breaks into the earth.

We definitely need a better way to get the factual info out to people.

What do our teachers want? Why?

Listen to and heed the community's concerns about what our current learners' experiences will look like.

It is appalling to think of 5th graders on the bus with high school students and at a school that has no recess during the interim.

Plans for Fall 2024

At this juncture, we acknowledge the frustration over the fall 2024-2025 school year grade level configurations and are committed to continuing to provide the communication, support, and guidance to help establish safe and welcoming communities in all 5 district buildings.

The Board is aware that no matter the outcome of the June 11, 2024 vote, the 2024-2025 configuration was set in motion in August of 2023, when the school leadership gave their feedback that this plan was doable and practical, and were prepared to support and implement that plan.

At the date of this publication, boxes are packed and are moving to their new schools, teachers will soon be readying their classrooms, and new-to-district families have received their school assignments.

We are dedicated to soliciting all input, feedback, and concerns while working with the community to advance our school district.

Response to Feedback

1. Communication & Process Issues:

The Board of Education commits to:

- Meet with Durham and Middlefield leadership to gather their input on facilities planning.
- Host two community events in July and August to continue discussion of next steps.
- Publish up-to-date information on projects, long-term goals, and other Board responsibilities.
- Clearly define expectations regarding the frequency of school, district, and Board communications, as well as timeliness of responding to stakeholder calls/emails.

2. Concerns About Grade 5 Temporarily Housed at Strong During 2-year Construction:

We will begin by asking the Strong School administration to communicate the following:

- A 30 minute daily recess will be provided.
- Grade 5 classrooms will be located in their own wing of the building.
- Additional supervision will be provided during passing time in the halls, on bus transport, etc.
- Plans to maintain developmental appropriateness for fifth graders while also fostering a sense of belonging within the school community.

3. Logistical & Financial Concerns:

The Board of Education commits to:

- Work with Dattco on bus routes and supervision of students when riding.
- Utilize Building Committee to share contingency plans for system maintenance at Lyman and Brewster.
- Work with town officials to communicate potential mill rate changes.

4. Educational and Developmental Concerns:

The Board of Education will work with administration to:

- Ensure that class sizes remain within the district targets.
- Require that school transition plans for students are shared with families in a timely manner.
- Create a 5-year strategic plan with input from various stakeholders, including parents, students, and community members in order to define the long-term educational vision, goals, and priorities for the district.
- Align vision and goals with building and facilities plans. Continue enhancing student achievement and broaden access to high-quality, evidence-based programming.

Memorial PreK-5 Project By the Numbers

Funding the Memorial PreK-5 Project

(Estimates provided by QA&M and Arum & Associates, LLC)

Construction Cost \$76,130,000

State Reimbursement \$37,196,500

Net Cost to District \$38,933,500

What is Bonding?

The primary method for the district to finance major project construction is through the issuance of bonds. A bond is similar to a loan, but the district will advertise that it is issuing bonds for the project construction and financial institutions will bid on all or a portion of the bonds. The district will accept the bids and choose the offer(s) with the lowest interest rate. The district will receive the bond amount and begin to pay the principal and interest back over twenty years. The payback is paid once a year and is referred to as debt service. Bonding is needed to fund the project. To receive state reimbursement, the district will need authorization (via referendum) to borrow the full amount of \$76 million, but will only need to actually issue \$39 million in bonds, which is the cost after state reimbursement. The Referendum Question will reflect the full borrowing amount to meet state requirements.

RSD 13 10-year Estimated Budget Impact 2024-2034

■ RSD 13 Est. Budget WITHOUT Memorial Renovation/Expansion or 5 building maintenance needs

■ RSD 13 Est. Budget WITH Memorial Renovation/Expansion

■ RSD 13 Est. Budget WITHOUT Memorial Renovation/Expansion; *with only general maintenance of 5 buildings.*



The orange bars indicate the estimated annual school district budget *plus* the cost of the Memorial PreK-5 project from 2024-2034. They indicate a reduction in budget impacts after construction. Because of the scheduling of bonding (loan), proceeding with the Memorial School project is more cost effective than doing nothing. It will also be more cost effective than making repairs (at today's prices) to all 5 schools.

Memorial PreK-5 Project By the Numbers

The Board of Education believes that students, staff, and by extension, the community will reap the benefits of a 3-school district (Memorial, Strong, CRHS) through expanded high quality programming, robust infrastructure and resources, and a focus on innovative and personalized approaches to education that foster critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration.

Estimated Mill Rate Impact of Memorial School Renovation/Expansion Project bonding amount of \$38.9 million

	DURHAM		MIDDLEFIELD	
	Estimated Mill Rate Impact	Yearly tax increase (decrease) on market value of average median home (\$390,700)	Estimated Mill Rate Impact	Yearly tax increase (decrease) on market value of average median home (\$344,400)
2025-2026	.23	\$61.73	.17	\$41.55
2026-2027	1.02	\$279.36	.78	\$188.04
2027-2028	-.67	(\$182.47)	-.51	(\$122.82)
2028-2029	.03	\$6.85	.02	\$4.61
2029-2030	.17	\$47.20	.13	\$31.77
Average	.16	\$42.53	.12	\$28.63

*Prepared by: Bill Lindsay, Munistat Municipal Financial Advisory Service 7/8/24

The estimated mill rate impact of ONLY the Renovation/Expansion Project of Memorial School over 5 years for each town is shown above. The impact is calculated on the \$38.9 million bonding debt service utilizing current enrollment calculations and incorporating the operational savings of closing 2 schools beginning in the 27-28 year.

Estimated Mill Rate Impact of End of Life System Improvements only; estimated bonding amount \$25 million

	DURHAM		MIDDLEFIELD	
	Estimated Mill Rate Impact	Yearly tax increase on market value of average median home (\$390,700)	Estimated Mill Rate Impact	Yearly tax increase on market value of average median home (\$344,400)
2025-2026	.24	\$64.34	.18	\$43.31
2026-2027	1.04	\$284.04	.79	\$191.19
2027-2028	1.49	\$407.16	1.14	\$274.06
2028-2029	2.01	\$549.27	1.53	\$369.71
2029-2030	1.95	\$533.91	1.49	\$359.37
Average	1.34	\$367.74	1.03	\$247.53

*Prepared by: Bill Lindsay, Munistat Municipal Financial Advisory Service 7/8/24

The estimated mill rate impact of bonding for replacement of end of life systems in the existing grade configuration over 5 years for each town is shown above. The impact is calculated on bonding debt service of \$25 million, utilizing current enrollment calculations and eliminating the operational savings of closing 2 schools beginning in the 27-28 year.

Memorial PreK-5 Project Benefits & Q & A

Q: What are the benefits to renovating Memorial School to be the District's PreK-5 elementary school?

- A unified PreK-5 building ensures a consistent curriculum and instructional approach.
- Teachers can collaborate more easily with their grade level colleagues, sharing resources, teaching strategies, assessments, and best practices.
- Students and families build longer-term relationships with the school staff, fostering a strong sense of community and belonging.
- Centralizing resources such as libraries, technology, and extracurricular activities can lead to better utilization and access for all students.
- Cost savings on administrative and operational expenses can be redirected to enhance educational programs and services.
- A "future ready" school, which means built with features and infrastructure that prepare it to meet the evolving educational needs and technological advancements of the future, such as advanced security systems, accessible and inclusive design, energy-efficient systems, natural lighting, STEAM spaces, and adaptable classrooms.

What will become of Lyman and Brewster?

The Board places priority on sale or long-term leases to educational organizations for both buildings.

The Brewster School property is subject to a right of first refusal in favor of the Town of Durham in the event that the Brewster School property is closed and no longer used or retained for school purposes, whereby the Town may repurchase the Brewster School property for \$1.50, all as set forth in a 1986 agreement.

The Lyman School property can be sold or leased without restriction.

Q: What happens if no action is taken?

A: The district will continue to operate all 5 buildings. The estimated cost of basic capital improvements and repairs on all 5 buildings is estimated at \$25 million. This number does not include any enhancements for educational improvements, a delayed full-implementation of ADA requirements, and safety and security needs.

Q: What are operational savings?

A: Operational costs are the costs to run and maintain school buildings. These costs include staffing, buildings and grounds maintenance, plowing, utilities, and the repair and replacement of critical end of life systems such as HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and much more. The cost of replacing these end of life systems will be redirected to the yearly payment of the Memorial School Renovation/Expansion project resulting in new infrastructure systems designed to last 20+ years.

Building Committee Members

Howard Weissberg (Chairman)
Darin Overton (Vice Chairman)
Nick Faiella (Secretary)
John Cross
John Giamatteo
John Mennone
Robert Moore

Scan QR Code for more
information on the Memorial
School PreK-5 Project



Board of Education Members

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Stephen DelVecchio
Concetta (Tina) Hurlbert
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