

# **Shrewsbury Public Schools**

## **Preschool-Grade 4 Capital Planning Study Committee Report**

**Presentation to the School Committee  
Wednesday, March 27, 2024**



## Overview and Timeline

- 1997. Lamoureux Pagano Associates|Architects produced facilities study for Shrewsbury; used as the basis for capital projects in the District for past 25 years.
- Late 2021. LPA|Architects hired to reassess the district facilities inventory as it relates to long-term programmatic goals.
- February 2022. Results of study presented; provides an assessment of current school buildings and made recommendations for various ways in which the District could approach addressing future needs. Study highlighted severe overcrowding at Shrewsbury High School as the top issue.
- April 2023. School Committee and Select Board authorized submission of a Statement of Interest to MSBA for potential project at Shrewsbury High School.

## Overview and Timeline

- Note: LPA|A Study also identified age and condition of Coolidge School, the amount and quality of space for preschool programs, and providing parity among the K-4 elementary schools as key issues to address.
- April 2023. School Committee adopted recommendation from the Superintendent to convene a study committee to identify a pathway for future direction for preschool and elementary capital investment.
- September 2023. The PreK-4 Capital Planning Study Committee was formed and began this work.

# Charge and Key Questions

- Charge to the Committee:
  - Create a transparent process to discuss the future direction for early childhood and elementary capital investment.
  - Review the LPA|A PreK-4 Space Study and determine the pros and cons of the various preschool and elementary configurations suggested in the study and make recommendations to the School Committee and Select Board for a preferred pathway forward.
- Key questions outlined for this Planning Committee:
  - In the future will the need for preschool increase, either because of demand or due to the potential of state/federal law requiring universal preschool?
  - What is the best model for early childhood and elementary education in terms of size of building? What are the benefits and tradeoffs of large elementary schools?
  - Should preschool be folded into each elementary school or provided in a separate setting?
  - What is the value of “neighborhood” elementary schools?
  - How should equity fit into our thinking about preschool and elementary education?

# Project Methodology and Schedule

- Monday, September 18, 2024 @ Calvin Coolidge School. Sean Brennan from LPA|A, presented a summary of the recent LPA|A *Pre-K Through 12 Capital Investment and Assessment Study*.
- Monday, October 30, 2024 @ Walter J. Paton School. Dr. Sawyer and Mr. Girardi presented the October 1st enrollment data and future enrollment projections.
- Monday, December 4, 2024 @ Spring Street School. Members of the Committee worked in small groups to consider the importance of “neighborhood” (i.e., “smaller”) schools in Shrewsbury.

# Project Methodology and Schedule

- Monday, January 8, 2024 @ Major Howard W. Beal School. Bridget Nichols, Director of the Parker Road Preschool, provided the group with a presentation on Preschool in the Shrewsbury Public Schools. During the second half of the meeting, Committee members divided into five (5) groups to consider issues of neighborhood schools v. consolidation.
- Monday, February 12, 2024 @ Floral Street School. Committee members divided into the same five (5) groups to consider the questions related to which elementary school should be the first priority for replacement or renovation and whether Shrewsbury should consider expanding preschool seats.
- Monday, March 4, 2024 @ Major Howard W. Beal School. The Committee reviewed a draft of the report and provided suggested changes to the document.

## Small Group Questions

- Is there consensus regarding maintaining the current neighborhood school configuration v. potentially consolidating to fewer, larger elementary schools? Reasoning?
- Is there consensus regarding which elementary school should be the first priority for replacement or renovation? Why? Next after that?
- Is there consensus regarding whether Shrewsbury should consider expanding preschool seats and how that is best accomplished?
  - Stand-alone new construction
  - Renovated/Expanded Stand-alone building
  - Combined New Elementary with Full New Preschool Space
  - Spreading Preschool Across Elementary Schools

## Key Recommendations

There appears to be consensus among Committee members on the following issues:

- Given the limited resources of the Town, the need for support from MSBA, and the current condition of Shrewsbury's smaller schools, the next elementary school project should address as many of the current space issues as feasible.
- Future PreK-4 building projects should focus on consolidating students and programs into larger schools in order to maximize resources.
- Coolidge is the greatest priority to address in some fashion due to its age and physical condition.



# Variables Impacting Capital Planning

While these factors should not be construed as recommendations from the Committee, they do represent important issues for consideration in planning for future capital projects:

- **Enrollment**
  - Modular Classrooms and Possible ADA Compliance
  - Ongoing Maintenance
  - Recent Projections (and how they may evolve)
  - 2023-2024 Enrollment Changes
- **Class Size**
  - Shrewsbury v. MSBA Guidelines
- **Beal School Capacity**
  - Current enrollment v. Projections
  - Preschool classrooms
- **Demographic Trends and Program Needs**
  - English Language Learner Enrollments
  - Dedicated spaces for music, art, special education, ELL services

# Potential Future Solutions

- While the following alternatives should not be viewed as recommendations, they do represent possible future solutions generated during small group discussions of the Committee:
  - Build a new school on the Coolidge site that would replace and expand the current Coolidge School, including the possibility of also replacing Parker Road Preschool and expanding preschool classrooms as part of this new school
  - Renovate and expand Coolidge without replacing Parker Road Preschool
  - Renovate and expand Paton School without replacing Parker Road Preschool
  - Replace Paton and Spring Street with a new school located somewhere within the geographic area near those current buildings
- Important to examine these options through the lens of the recommendations of this Committee.
- Varying opinions on how to best solve the preschool space and program needs (adding dedicated preschool spaces to a k-4 building project and/or spreading preschool classes across multiple k-4 schools)

# Summary

- “. . . how actual enrollments materialize in future years will have a significant impact on what options might make sense to pursue.”
- “. . . demographic trends . . . may require more specialized programming and, as a result, . . . more specialized instructional spaces.”
- “. . . the next PreK-4 capital project should be as cost effective as possible in addressing multiple needs . . .”
- “. . . [at time] MSBA has made a funding commitment contingent upon efficiencies such as consolidation and closure of smaller school facilities . . .”
- “. . . a K-4 project that includes preschool space would leverage MSBA cost sharing for preschool space that is currently not available for stand-alone preschool facilities.”
- “If the approach outlined by this Study Committee is utilized, the Town will maintain its tradition of providing school facilities that reflect both its citizens’ pride in its public school facilities and its excellent stewardship of their tax dollars.”