



# Shrewsbury Public Schools

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Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

April 26, 2023

To: School Committee  
Re: Recommendation for PreK-4 Capital Planning Process

The recently presented [PreK-12 Capital Inventory and Improvement Study](#) (aka, PreK-12 Space Study) created by LPA|A provides an assessment of our current school building facilities and makes recommendations for various ways in which the district might approach addressing future needs. The top issue that the space study emphasized was the severe overcrowding at Shrewsbury High School, and in response the School Committee and Select Board recently submitted a Statement of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to see if the MSBA will collaborate with our town on a jointly-funded solution for expanding the SHS building.

The second priority the space study brought forward is the need to address, in some combination, the age and condition of Coolidge School and the amount and quality of space for the district's preschool program, and the third priority is to provide parity among the K-4 elementary schools. The study illustrated several potential approaches to solve these issues in various combinations, all of which would affect the entire preschool to grade 4 level. The School Committee has asked that I provide a recommendation for a process that would enable the district to identify the preferred future direction for preschool and elementary capital investment. Such a process would examine the following questions that Lynsey Heffernan, School Committee Chair, [presented at a joint workshop](#) of the School Committee and Select Board in February:

- In the future will the need for pre-school 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 the building? What are the benefits and trade-offs 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?

In order to answer these and other questions that will surely arise, Ms. Heffernan suggested that a study committee be formed to address them and make recommendations for PreK-4 capital needs in future years, and I concur that this approach will be beneficial. Based on Ms. Heffernan's original recommendation, the goals of this study committee would be as follows:

- 1) Create a transparent process to discuss the future direction for early childhood and elementary capital investment.
- 2) 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.

In line with Ms. Heffernan's suggestion, I suggest that the study committee might consist of the following members:

- Two members of the School Committee
- Two members of the Select Board
- A parent representative from each PreK-4 school (Parker Road Preschool, Beal School, Coolidge School, Floral Street School, Paton School, and Spring Street School), appointed by the chair of the School Committee
- A faculty/staff representative from each PreK-4 school, appointed by the Superintendent of Schools
- The Director of Parker Road Preschool and the principal of each K-4 school
- The Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, and the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- The Assistant Director of Public Works and the Division Manager of Public Buildings
- Town Manager/Assistant Town Manager
- Superintendent of Schools

While this is a large number of individuals, I believe the importance of the topic requires this level of stakeholder representation and the expertise of the professionals listed. I believe our experience with the Sleep Health Advisory Committee this past year demonstrates our ability to effectively facilitate an important process with this size of a group.

I recommend that this process follow a similar timeline to the Sleep Health Advisory Committee, where some planning work would be conducted over the summer, the committee would convene at the start of the new school year, meet throughout the fall and winter, and bring its recommendations forward with a target of completion by March 2024.

If the Committee concurs, we will need to communicate this plan with our partners in municipal government to see if they are able to participate in the manner described above, and a specific timeline with dates for meetings would be established.

I look forward to your feedback about this possible approach to this very important endeavor.