

Wolcott Public Schools

FACILITIES UPDATE

INTRODUCTION

Hello Wolcott Families and Staff:

At the September 5th Town Council meeting an important presentation was given regarding our current school facilities, the need to renovate them, and a potential future direction for how we use these buildings. While there was a lot to digest, I'd like to summarize the key issues for you here.

In partnership,
Tony Gasper, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



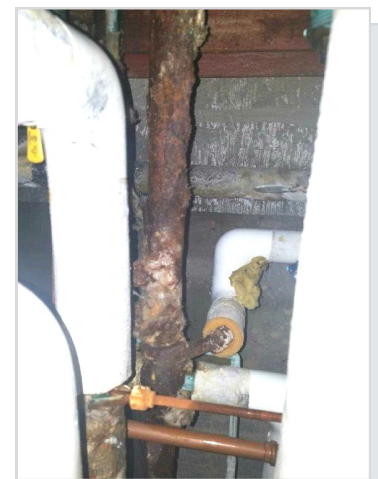
At a glance:

- Two architectural studies show that our school buildings need critical repairs and renovations
- Current enrollment in our elementary schools ranges from 51% to 62% of capacity
- Total time for renovations & upgrades of all buildings would be 8-10 years
- Total project will be spread across multiple referenda in 2-3 phases

WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT OUR FACILITIES NOW?

Our school buildings and infrastructure are old and aging quickly. Our schools' original construction dates range from 1947 to 1967 and the age of the most recent renovations ranges from 17 to 49 years. When you visit our schools, they look clean and well-maintained. But critical problems lie behind the scenes. Our maintenance and custodial staff work hard to keep up with the

needs of these old facilities, but only so much can be done. Our roofs are leaking, boilers are breaking down, plumbing is crumbling, and electrical systems are over-taxed. The Board and I believe that Wolcott's children deserve to attend school in buildings that are clean, bright, supportive of modern learning activities, and up to code for safety and handicapped access.



A badly corroded heating pipe at WHS caused a loss of heat to one full wing in the winter of 2016-17

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Plumbing leaks caused widespread damage in the FCS lab at Tyrrell.

First and foremost, we want to provide Wolcott's children with great places to learn that are modern, safe, efficient and bright.



Roof leaks at Alcott caused ceiling damage

HOW DO WE KNOW THE BUILDINGS NEED ATTENTION?

The Board engaged Friar Associates, an architectural firm from Farmington experienced in school construction, to conduct a feasibility study. This study was thorough and looked at all of our building exteriors, interiors, systems, and our enrollment projections. These architectural and engineering studies verified that our school buildings will need critical attention within the next five-to-ten years.

WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES?

First and foremost, we want to provide Wolcott's children with great places to learn that are modern, safe, efficient and bright. We want to be good caretakers of the community's buildings and ensure that they are useful well into the future. We want to make critical replacements of aging systems in the most fiscally-responsible way possible. To do this, we must maximize all of the possible reimbursements that might be available from the State of Connecticut. While we are not exactly sure what these reimbursement rates will be in the future, it is very safe to say that these rates will be directly related to how many

students attend each school. The fuller a school is the more reimbursement the Town will receive from the State. Currently, our three elementary schools range from 51% to 62% full according to State of Connecticut formulas. It is also reasonable to assume that the state budget crisis will cause legislators to reduce reimbursement rates in the future. Also, as a rule, inflation drives up construction costs 3-4% each year. So, time is of the essence because the longer we delay these upgrades and repairs the more they will cost.

HOW LONG OF A PROCESS WILL THIS BE?

It's important to remember that we are in the very, very initial stages at this point – fact-finding and choosing an initial direction. This school year, the Board will be looking more

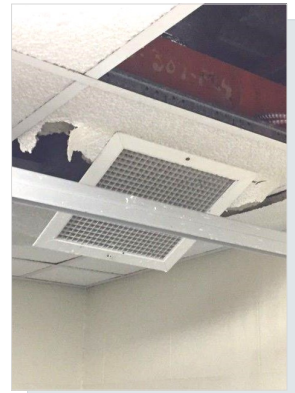
closely at these plans and deciding when to ask Town Council for the first phase to come up for referendum. From the date of a successful referendum for the first phase of this work

until final completion would be eight to ten years, with each phase having a separate bond referendum. There would be two or three phases.

WHAT CHANGES ARE PLANNED?

The Board and I have had several presentations by Friar Associates, looking at a wide variety of options. Based on our projected enrollments we believe that restructuring how we use our schools is the best way to provide great learning environments while maximizing reimbursements from the State and efficiency of operations. As you saw in the numbers earlier, our elementary schools are not full to capacity and therefore would not receive the greatest possible reimbursement from the State for renovations. To address this, the Board is researching an option that would reduce us from three elementary schools to two. This process would reconfigure Alcott School to serve Kindergarten through second grade for all students in town and Wakelee would serve grades three through five. We recognize that this would be a change

for Wolcott but it is a common model throughout Connecticut and holds some important advantages. Among these advantages are the ability to make class sizes more consistent throughout the system and to better support teacher training and development by having all teachers of the same grade at the same school. Frisbie School would not be closed but rather repurposed into an education center where the school district could provide greater services to families such as expanded pre-kindergarten and broader special education services. Tyrrell Middle School and Wolcott High School's grade levels would not be changed in the current plan.



Roof leaks at TMS caused ceiling damage

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Board of Education will continue to review these plans. Each year, the State of Connecticut accepts applications for school construction prior to June 30th. This is the deadline each year for towns to get all of the necessary local approvals in place before applying to the State for the reimbursements in advance of beginning construction. Interested parents and community members should email the Superintendent with questions and ideas: agasper@wolcottps.org

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