

Executive Summary

Margaret A. Neary Elementary School Educational Program

Introduction

The Public Schools of Southborough is committed to delivering an educational experience that aligns with the District's mission to "**Educate, Inspire, Challenge**" all students. The modernization of Margaret A. Neary Elementary School is a critical initiative aimed at enhancing student learning, improving operational efficiency, and creating an adaptable educational environment that meets the evolving needs of 21st-century learners.

This document outlines the strategic vision, project goals, and priorities associated with the redesign of Neary Elementary School to better serve students and the broader Southborough community.

Vision and Strategic Objectives

The District's **Vision 2026: Educate, Inspire, Challenge** strategic plan serves as the guiding framework for this initiative. The District envisions creating an educational environment that empowers students to become:

- **Collaborators:** Engaging in teamwork, respecting diverse perspectives, and leveraging collective strengths.
- **Critical and Creative Thinkers:** Applying knowledge in innovative ways and solving real-world problems.
- **Effective Communicators:** Using oral, written, and digital tools to express ideas clearly.
- **Socially and Civically Engaged Citizens:** Demonstrating ethical behavior and cultural awareness.
- **Growth-Oriented Individuals:** Embracing curiosity, resilience, and lifelong learning.
- **Healthy and Balanced Individuals:** Developing emotional intelligence and a healthy lifestyle.

Core Values Driving the Project:

- Integrity
- Empathy
- Inclusivity
- Equity
- Perseverance

- **Respect**

The District is dedicated to fostering an environment that is inclusive, equitable, and future-focused, ensuring that every student has access to high-quality educational opportunities.

Project Goals and Priorities

The modernization of Neary Elementary School is driven by several overarching goals:

- 1. Enhanced Learning Environments:**
 - Design flexible, adaptable spaces that promote student engagement and support various instructional models.
 - Foster collaborative learning experiences through purpose-built classrooms, learning neighborhoods, and common areas.
- 2. Equity of Opportunity:**
 - Provide all students with access to inclusive and responsive learning environments.
 - Ensure facilities support students with special educational needs through targeted interventions and accessible spaces.
- 3. Health and Wellness Focus:**
 - Prioritize the social, emotional, and physical well-being of students through expanded physical education, health programs, and wellness initiatives.
 - Create outdoor and indoor spaces that support physical activity and mindfulness practices.
- 4. Efficient and Sustainable Operations:**
 - Develop a financially and environmentally sustainable school building that meets future educational demands.
 - Incorporate energy-efficient designs and eco-friendly building materials.
- 5. Community Engagement:**
 - Involve parents, educators, and community members in the planning and implementation process.
 - Foster a sense of belonging and connection within the school community.

Proposed Grade Configurations

To optimize the student experience and operational efficiency, three potential school configurations were considered:

- 1. Grades 4-5 at Neary (PreK-3 at other elementary schools):**

- Offers minimal disruption but maintains current challenges related to multiple transitions.
- 2. **Grades 3-5 at Neary (PreK-2 at other elementary schools):**
 - Enhances curriculum continuity and student-teacher relationships while reducing transitions.
- 3. **Grades 2-5 at Neary (PreK-1 at other elementary schools):**
 - Preferred option due to improved vertical curriculum alignment, resource efficiency, and a stronger sense of community with fewer transitions.

Of the three options studied, the Neary Building Committee selected to move forward with a new elementary building for grades 2-5:

- Greater collaboration among teachers across four grade levels.
 - Reduced transitions, leading to smoother academic and social development.
 - Increased opportunities for shared resources and school community-building.
 - Improved transportation logistics and cost efficiencies.
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Curriculum and Instructional Enhancements

The redesigned school will provide comprehensive academic support across multiple disciplines:

Mathematics:

- Focus on small-group instruction, hands-on learning, and adaptive technologies.
- Modern classrooms will facilitate whole-class and small-group activities.

English Language Arts (ELA):

- Continued use of the English language arts curriculum with an emphasis on literacy-rich environments.
- Integration of digital tools and flexible classroom layouts to foster engagement.

Science, Technology, and Engineering (STE):

- **STE spaces** for hands-on experiments and problem-solving.
- Seamless integration of Digital Literacy and Computer Science standards.

Social Studies:

- Inquiry-based learning that integrates historical and cultural perspectives with technology.

- Enhanced access to digital and physical resources for project-based learning.

World Languages:

- Dedicated language classrooms to provide immersive Spanish learning experiences.

Arts and Music:

- Purpose-built visual and performing arts spaces that support creativity and collaboration.
- A dedicated performance area to enhance musical education and student engagement.

Physical Education and Wellness:

- Expanded gymnasium facilities and dedicated spaces for adaptive PE, yoga, and health education.
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Facilities Upgrades and Functional Improvements

Learning Neighborhoods:

- Flexible classroom spaces with small breakout rooms for targeted support.
- Open collaboration spaces that promote student agency and engagement.

Library Media Center:

- A modern hub for research, digital literacy, and interdisciplinary projects.
- Enhanced technology integration with mobile devices and flexible seating.

Special Education Support:

- Improved accessibility and inclusion with purpose-built spaces for intervention services.
- Additional small-group and sensory-friendly spaces.

Security and Visual Access:

- Enhanced building security features to ensure student safety while maintaining an open, welcoming atmosphere.

Transportation and Drop-Off Improvements:

- Redesigned traffic flow patterns to enhance student safety and minimize congestion.

Community Involvement

The project has been shaped through a collaborative process involving:

- **District Leadership:** Superintendent, principals, and academic coordinators.
- **Educators:** Teachers across grade levels and disciplines.
- **Parents and Community Members:** Representatives from PTO, School Committee, and local organizations.
- **Specialists:** Experts in instructional technology, wellness, and special education.
- **Neary Building Committee members**

The community engagement process has included visioning sessions, facility assessments, and stakeholder meetings to ensure the final design reflects the collective educational priorities of Southborough residents.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The modernization of Margaret A. Neary Elementary School represents a transformative investment in the future of Southborough's students. Through a thoughtful, strategic approach, the District aims to create a school environment that is:

- **Academically Rigorous:** Supporting high-quality instruction and student engagement.
- **Inclusive and Equitable:** Addressing the needs of all learners through specialized support.
- **Sustainable and Future-Ready:** Designed to meet evolving educational and community needs.

Moving forward, the Neary Building Committee will continue working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), educational planners, and local stakeholders to finalize designs and secure necessary approvals.

By implementing the proposed improvements, the District reaffirms its commitment to providing an exceptional educational experience that prepares all students to thrive in an ever-changing world.