

Executive Summary (as of 11/12/2024)

Elementary School Building Independent Working Group (ESBIWG) Findings*

I. Problem/Situation

The South Elementary School is in disrepair, out of compliance with ADA and safety regulations, and beyond its capacity without room to grow. It will be closed within the next year or two if the Town does not fund a new elementary school. If the proposed project advances, the South School will remain in operation during construction of the new school, so long as it is safe to be kept open.

The Town's proposal, which has been accepted by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), is to build a new \$113 million expanded elementary school project that will expand capacity twofold (from 250-300 to approximately 600). To fund this project, the Town is asking voters to support a debt exclusion to cover Stoughton's \$66 million share with the remaining \$47 million to be paid for by a grant from the MSBA (already approved).

Whether or not the debt exclusion passes, **Stoughton is undergoing a redistricting process**. All elementary school children may be affected by this process and may be sent to a different neighborhood elementary school.

II. Doing nothing is NOT an option

Either the debt exclusion passes and the project accepted by the MSBA goes forward with Stoughton and Massachusetts sharing the costs, or another solution must be found and paid for solely by Stoughton taxpayers.

A. If the MSBA-accepted project passes: If the Town passes the \$66 million debt exclusion, Stoughton would build the approved new modern \$113 million school that accommodates 600 students with an MSBA grant of \$47 million from the state. The new school that would meet educational needs would open in 2029 or 2030, and the current South School would remain in operation during construction, barring unforeseen circumstances. The Wilkins would most likely be used as a preschool, which would not trigger the need for a full costly base repair. The debt exclusion estimated cost would be \$0.61/\$1000 valuation (i.e. \$305/year for a \$500,000 single-family home).

B. If the MSBA-accepted project fails: The most likely outcome is to add temporary (+/-10-year), modular classrooms to the Hansen, Dawe, and Gibbons schools at a cost of an estimated \$22-\$30 million plus the estimated \$30-\$45 million cost of bringing the Wilkins up to code for elementary use. This would address the overcrowding issue, but the physical structures would not meet classroom needs. Cafeterias, gyms, and libraries would not be able to accommodate the increase in student body in all schools. Lunch shifts may need to start very early and be staggered over many hours. Some common areas may need to be divided and used as classroom spaces.

III. Summary

There is a substantial cost to the Town of Stoughton whether or not it passes the debt exclusion. The South School will close. The Wilkins will remain open and either serve elementary or preschool students, depending on the vote. The Town is redistricting all elementary school students and facing a choice between funding a new, expanded elementary school project or adding temporary modular classrooms at three sites.

*A full ESBIWG FAQ with more detailed information will be forthcoming soon.

Estimated cost/benefit table to accommodate ~600 Stoughton District Elementary Students

Proposed Project	If Project Passes	Options if Project Fails		
Description	New Elementary School (50-yr plan)	Modulars at Dawe, Gibbons, Hansen (10-yr plan)	South School Base Repair (50-yr plan)	South School Add-Renovation (50-yr plan)
Primary Costs	\$66 million (Town) [\$47 million covered by MSBA]	\$22-\$30 million (purchased modular classrooms)	\$45 million (estimated to bring to code—without addition) AND \$5-\$10 million rented modular classrooms during construction	\$78 million (bring to code + addition) AND \$5-\$10 million rented modular classrooms during construction
Potential Secondary Costs	\$5-\$10 million interim modular classrooms if the South isn't able to remain opened throughout construction.	\$30-45 million (Wilkins base repair to bring to code for elementary school)	\$30-45 million (Wilkins base repair to bring to code for elementary school)	\$30-45 million (Wilkins base repair to bring to code for elementary school)
Results	Constructed to last 50 years	10-year temporary fix	50-year South School fix/10 years until Wilkins base repair required	50-year South School fix/10 years until Wilkins base repair required
	Suited to educational and safety needs	Worse learning & safety environment	No improvement to learning & safety environment	Inadequate learning & safety environment
	Room for expanded enrollment	Overcrowding addressed	Overcrowding gets worse	Overcrowding remains
	All elementary students from Wilkins and portions of all other elementary students affected by redistricting	All students affected by redistricting	Many students affected by redistricting	Many students affected by redistricting
	Possibility for use of Wilkins as pre-school (costs undetermined)	Modulars displace playgrounds; children's lunch times vary widely	Reduced academic space; hallways, bathrooms, ramps expand to meet code; lunchtime variance	Addition only replaces academic space lost from base repair