

South Portland Middle School Project – Summary Statement for Maine DOE Concept Submission

The new South Portland Middle School will provide our grade 5-8 students an efficient, effective and sustainable learning environment designed to feel small and personal while ensuring access to multiple and varied opportunities to learn, grow and achieve.

For more than fifteen years South Portland has been developing plans to address the needs of its aging middle schools. Mahoney, a grand building constructed in 1923-24, has undersized classrooms, problematic handicapped accessibility and limited potential to reconfigure during a renovation because of the type of construction. Though Memorial, which opened in 1967, was constructed more recently, it has significant issues with intrusion of water and is costly to maintain and operate. For different reasons, both buildings are at the end of their useful lives as schools based upon their condition and ability to meet the educational needs of our students now and into the future.

While both schools have served South Portland well, their current conditions do not lend themselves to flexibility or the educational program we seek as is detailed in the Educational Specifications submitted as part of this project. Costly changes would be required in order to bring these facilities up to current building code and even then our new versus renovation analysis showed that these rebuilt facilities would not meet educational standards. For example even after an expensive and extensive renovation, the great majority of the classrooms at Mahoney Middle School will remain well below state standards for size of rooms.

Further, based on the amount of renovation work required at the schools, it would not be possible to keep students in the current schools while renovations are being performed throughout the buildings and on the site. Students would be displaced and moved to other school facilities in the district during construction causing hardships in those learning environments and added costs for student transportation as well as prolonged construction schedules due to phasing of the work.

This project will positively impact education in South Portland and will provide for a District and City solution to both meet current needs and to better prepare for future enrollment. A new consolidated school building is the most responsible path forward. Changing the school department's grade configurations from 6-8 to 5-8 creates room for additional Pre-Kindergarten classrooms at the current elementary schools and helps with much needed space for the growing Special Education and English Language Learner (ELL) populations, leading to better support for all South Portland students. As we begin to see changes in housing development in South Portland, particularly on the west side of the city, we will be better prepared should enrollment increase if several large projects move forward.

The plan to build a new consolidated middle school has been based on detailed analysis following the state's guidelines, educational adequacy, comparative cost data, building committee analysis, and community input. We are putting forward a plan that we believe will serve the needs of all South Portland students for decades to come.

On behalf of the citizens of South Portland, and most directly our students, faculty and staff, I thank the Maine Department of Education for its continued support of this project.

Sincerely,

Ken Kunin
Superintendent of Schools
South Portland School Department