



**EVANSTON/SKOKIE  
SCHOOL DISTRICT 65**

Every Child, Every Day, Whatever it Takes

**TO:** School Board  
**CC:** District 65 Cabinet Team  
**FROM:** Dr. Angel Turner, Interim Superintendent  
**DATE:** January 22, 2024  
**RE:** Approval of 5th Ward School Resolution

**Objective:**  Information  Discussion  Follow-up  Decision

## BACKGROUND

At the December 18, 2023 Regular Meeting, the School Board continued its discussion regarding planning for our new 5th Ward School. At this time, the administration also presented an initial schematic design and preliminary estimated budget. The Board reached a unanimous initial consensus to plan for a two-story K-5 school serving 600 students at an estimated cost of \$48.4 million.

The return of a new state-of-the-art school to Evanston’s Fifth Ward exemplifies both necessary historic and critical investment within the community. Should the Board approve the Resolution being presented this evening, it will reaffirm our commitment to returning a neighborhood school to Evanston’s Fifth Ward community for the first time in almost 60 years.

Since the closing of Foster School in 1967, students who reside in the Fifth Ward consequently experienced a disproportionate burden including the loss of a neighborhood school, increased busing and accompanying environmental hazards, reduced sense of community, and lack of access to before and after school programming not shared by other students residing in the District who had access to walkable neighborhood schools.

On March 14, 2022, the Board authorized the previous District administration and its architects to pursue construction of a Kindergarten through Eighth Grade (K-8) school on Foster Field at an anticipated cost of \$40 million. As brought forward by the current administration in October 2023, based on significant comprehensive site design plan revisions and other unforeseen costs, the original estimate in cost for the K-8 school rose to an estimated total cost of \$65 million.

Since that time the Board determined it was too costly for the District to undertake given its structural deficit and need for significant budget cuts in the upcoming academic years. It was determined that establishing a school in the Fifth Ward for students in grades Kindergarten through Fifth grade (K-5) balances the necessity of constructing a school in the Fifth Ward that is walkable for neighborhood students with the District’s funding limitations.

With input from educators, staff, and administrators, the state-of-the art school building will be approximately 84,400 square feet and is intended to include the following

- 24 classrooms
- dedicated spaces and storage for arts and special classes (drama, music, art, band/orchestra, STEM)
- a cafetorium with a stage and a dividable gymnasium with bleachers to provide flexible large space functionality
- a focus on the needs of primary students for proximate access to bathrooms, the playground, and the arts and special classrooms
- a central location on the first floor for the school library
- the inclusion of a sensory room
- flexible and accessible intervention/small group spaces
- age appropriate outdoor playground spaces
- flex multi-purpose room on the second floor to allow for school-age childcare, fitness, fine arts, school and community events, morning childcare, recess inside, and flexibility for future programmatic growth.
- LEED Silver sustainability features

**BUDGET AND FINANCING**

The following matrix describes a proposal for the K-5, 600 student building. This includes all construction costs, estimated +soft costs (eg. furniture and technology, architectural fees, construction manager, permit fees), and contingencies as it relates to cost escalation due to inflation.

While the majority of the construction costs will be covered with the lease certificate proceeds and investment income earned (\$44M), additional funding (\$4.4M) will be needed to cover the difference in the overall cost.

If required, the District will use its unreserved fund balance. If the District decides to sell an underutilized building, the proceeds from that sale will be used to replenish the fund balance.

| <b>Design Proposal</b> | <b>Lease Certificates</b> | <b>Interest on Lease Certificates*</b> | <b>Other Sources**</b> | <b>Total Cost</b>     |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>K-5</b>             | <b>\$40 Million</b>       | <b>\$4 Million</b>                     | <b>\$4.4 Million</b>   | <b>\$48.4 Million</b> |

*\* The interest income includes the amount already earned and estimated future interest income.*

*\*\*Other sources may include unreserved fund balances and/or proceeds from a school building sale.*

Starting with the FY25 budget, the annual cost of lease certificate payments of \$3.2 million will be processed from the operating budget. The District will develop an operational efficiency plan over the next couple of months to address this added expense and the District's current structural deficit.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

To avoid additional project delays and help mitigate rising costs, it is the Administration's recommendation that the Board formally approve the Resolution being presented tonight.

Overall it is recommended that the Board continue its discussions regarding the need to more holistically address the District's declining student enrollment and building utilization, the ongoing need for significant budget cuts in the upcoming academic years, as well as ongoing maintenance and capital needs for our aging buildings. These topics should continue to be addressed at public Board meetings as planning for the new 5th Ward School proceeds.