
Background Information of the GES/PES Feasibility Study and Committee

1. What is the GES/PES Feasibility Study, and what is the goal of the GES/PES Feasibility committee?

The GES/PES Feasibility Study was launched by the Region 15 Board of Education in June 2024 to explore the best long-term plan for Gainfield Elementary School (GES) and Pomperaug Elementary School (PES)—the district's two oldest schools.

The goal of the study is to evaluate the long-term costs and benefits of multiple facility options in order to determine the most effective and sustainable path forward for our students, staff, and community.

The Feasibility Study Committee was created to take a thoughtful, community-focused look at what these schools need today and what will best serve students and families in the years ahead.

To accomplish this, members of the committee:

- Reviewed the current condition of both schools, including accessibility, building systems, and classroom space.
- Explored different options, renovation, addition, or new construction, and compared costs, educational benefits, community impact, and long-term value for each option.
- Considered how each option would impact learning environments, operating costs, and community investment.
- Worked to ensure the process remained open, transparent, and informed by community input.

Ultimately, the study is about planning responsibly for the future and finding a solution that is educationally sound, financially sustainable, and reflective of the priorities of Region 15.

2. Why weren't Gainfield Elementary School (GES) and Pomperaug Elementary School (PES) included in the most recent bond project?

The previous bond focused on addressing the most immediate facility priorities across the district at that time (PHS Culinary Arts Space, Auditorium, Pool, Storage Building, Tennis Courts, RMS Lockers, MMS Media Center). While GES and PES were not part of that bond, their significant facility needs were well recognized. The decision to exclude them was made with the understanding that a dedicated study and long-term plan would be required to address the scope, age, and complexity of these two oldest schools.

The current GES/PES Feasibility Study was launched specifically to explore those needs in depth and determine the most effective and cost-efficient path forward for both buildings

3. Why is Region 15 considering this project now?

Region 15 is pursuing this project now because several urgent and strategic factors have aligned:

Aging buildings require costly repairs.

Both PES and GES face significant deterioration, outdated systems, and expensive maintenance needs that will only increase over time.

Debt capacity is opening.

The district has completed bond payments from prior major projects (including LMES), allowing existing debt service funds to be **reallocated to help offset the cost** of new school construction.

Two valuable state grant opportunities are currently available.

Connecticut is offering **increased reimbursement** for districts that include early childhood spaces and district special education programs. These incentives **may not remain available** in future years.

Growing demands for preschool and elementary space.

Increasing demands for preschool services, and space constraints across all elementary schools make it necessary to plan proactively.

4. Who was involved in the GES/PES Feasibility study?

The Feasibility Committee included district leaders, town officials, educators, community representatives, and Region 15's architectural partner, Tecton Architects. Together, they analyzed data, explored design options, and gathered public input.

Board Chair (ex- officio) (non – voting): Ms. Manzo

Central Office Administrators (non-voting): Joshua Smith, Superintendent and Joe Martino, Director of Finance

Board of Education Members: Heather Dwyer, Heather Rodgers, Sally Romano

Southbury Town Officials: Jason Van Stone and John Michaels

Middlebury Town Officials: Ed St. John and Vin Cipriano

GES Principal: Jon Romeo

PES Principal: Stephanie Furman

PES Teacher: Lynne Dolan

GES Teacher: Christina Hubbard

PTO Community Members: Jason Andrews and Molly Mandje

5. Were multiple firms considered for the GES/PES Feasibility Study, and what experience did the selected firm bring to the project?

Yes. The Region 15 Board of Education issued a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) and received multiple bids from qualified architectural firms. Each proposal was carefully reviewed based on experience, project approach, cost, and familiarity with school construction and state reimbursement processes. The Committee interviewed 4 of the applicants.

After thorough evaluation, and multiple rounds of interviews, Tecton Architects was selected to lead the GES/PES Feasibility Study. Tecton brings extensive experience in K–12 educational planning and design, having partnered with numerous districts across Connecticut on renovation, addition, and new

construction projects that balance educational goals, long-term costs, and community priorities. Their expertise in conducting comprehensive feasibility assessments ensures that Region 15's study reflects accurate cost analysis, space planning, and design options that can guide informed decisions for the future of Gainfield and Pomperaug Elementary Schools.

6. How was the community involved in the GES/PES Feasibility Study?

Region 15 engaged families, staff, and residents through a series of three **Community Conversations** held on **March 13, 2025, April 10, 2025, and May 22, 2025**. Each session offered building tours, project updates, presentations, and multiple opportunities for interactive feedback.

Community Conversation #1 – March 13, 2025 (Gainfield Elementary School)

“Conditions, Utilization & Thinking Big!”

 [Community Conversation #1 Presentation](#)

Key highlights included:

Project Goals: Reviewing renovation and new construction possibilities to ensure safe, modern, and equitable learning spaces.

Critical Needs: Both PES and GES face aging systems, space limitations, and accessibility challenges

Community Input: Participants shared priorities, concerns, and ideas through live polling, group dialogue, and Mentimeter surveys.

Community Conversation #2 – April 10, 2025 (Pomperaug Elementary School)

 [Community Conversation #2 Presentation](#)

Key Highlights included:

Options Under Review: Renovations, two new schools, or one combined new school.

Case Studies: Madison's consolidated Neck River Elementary and Simsbury's phased Latimer Lane renovation.

Community Concerns: Maintaining a small-school feel, construction impacts, cost, and school culture.

Community Conversation #3 – May 22, 2025 (Long Meadow Elementary School)

 [PES/GES Community Conversation #3 Presentation](#)

Key highlights included:

Recap of Themes: Culture, consolidation, traffic, sustainability, cost considerations, and preserving a “small school feel.”

Building Walkthroughs: Tours of Long Meadow and Middlebury Elementary informed discussion of space and program needs.

Options Reviewed: Renovate-as-new vs. new construction; new builds offer greater efficiency and less disruption.

7. As a result of community input and conversations, what were the top 3 options recommended by the committee and presented to the BOE?

Top Three Options Identified:

Recommendation 1- Most preferable: Combined new PK–5 school (~1,008 students, dependent on identifying an available property)

Recommendation 2 - Should an appropriate property not be available: Two new schools or existing property (PES & GES, ~504 students each with added Pre-K)

Recommendation 3 - Should the logistics of building on the PES site prove too difficult: Two new schools (New PES Site TBD and New GES Current Site)

8. Why was Recommendation 1 (one combined school) for ~1,000 students deemed not viable?

The proposal to build a single new PK–5 school serving approximately **1,008 students** on a new site was not pursued for the following reasons.

Key Details:

Total Project Cost: \$147 million

Estimated District Cost: \$78 million

Design Intent: A large, purpose-built elementary school

Why wasn't it pursued:

After extensive site analysis, Region 15 determined that **no suitable property** in Southbury could support a facility of this size.

- **Multiple** privately owned properties were pursued but unavailable.
- **Pierce Hollow Village (State-owned):** Recently rezoned for affordable housing and would require additional legislative action. The topography creates challenges to large scale construction. Location could impact school zones and transportation as it is not centrally located.
- **IBM property (228 acres):** A portion may be usable, but steep grades and shared-access challenges limit practicality. The use of the property for a new school would also impact Southbury's tax revenue.
- **Town-owned land:** There is no town-owned property of the size and topography suitable to accommodate a large, combined school.

Because of these factors, a **single new combined school (Option 3d in the presentations)** was **ultimately deemed not feasible** for the district.

October 27, 2025 BOE Presentation

9. What is the status (as of November 2025) of Recommendation #2 (Two new schools on the existing PES & GES sites)?

Recommendation #2 proposes constructing two new PK–5 schools, one at the existing PES site and one at the existing GES site, each designed for approximately 504 students with added Pre-K capacity if no suitable new property becomes available.

As of November 2025, this option remains **under evaluation**, with several important **questions and logistical challenges** still being analyzed:

- **Construction Access:**
Can contractors safely and efficiently reach the buildable portions of the PES site without disrupting daily school operations?
- **Septic System Installation:**
Can a new septic system be designed and installed while the current school remains in full operation, and what temporary or phased measures would be required?
- **Construction Staging and Materials Management:**
Is there sufficient space on the PES property to stage, store, and move construction materials and equipment throughout the project?
- **Traffic Impact on Main Street:**
How can the design of a new PES building and site layout meaningfully improve traffic flow and reduce congestion along Main Street?

These issues require further technical study before a determination can be made, so Recommendation #2 remains in an active feasibility and problem-solving phase.

10. What due diligence is Region 15 conducting for the viability of Recommendation #3 (a new PES on a new site and a new GES on the existing site)?

Recommendation #3 is being explored if building a new PES on the existing PES property proves too difficult or too disruptive, and can only move forward if Region 15 identifies a feasible new property for the future site of Pomperaug Elementary School. To assess viability, the district is completing an extensive due diligence process that examines ownership, site conditions, infrastructure, environmental factors, and long-term feasibility.

Because this recommendation depends on the availability of a suitable new property for PES, the district is conducting extensive due diligence to evaluate whether any land in Southbury can support a new PK-5 facility.

Current properties reviewed include:

- **Privately Owned Properties**
Multiple privately owned parcels were pursued, but none were available for purchase. Properties that met size requirements were either not for sale, or the owners declined interest and were unwilling to engage further.
- **Pierce Hollow Village (State-Owned Land)**
Although recently rezoned for affordable housing, this parcel would require additional legislative action before it could be used for a school. Its topography and potential archaeological concerns further complicate large-scale development.
- **IBM Property (228 acres)**
A portion of the lower area may be usable, but it has steep grades, difficult access, and potential shared access issues with an industrial zone. Additionally, using this parcel could impact Southbury's future tax revenue. This lower section is still under review, but topography, access, and cost implications must be better understood.
- **Town-Owned Land (415 Roxbury Road)**
This town-owned property is currently under active and detailed review, with preliminary indication of possible sewer and water availability, but further due diligence such as environmental review, surveying, wetlands delineation, geotechnical testing, and utility feasibility is required to determine whether the site can support a new PK-5 facility.

If the site is viable, the Town of Southbury would need to sell the property to Region 15, and there is a formal process with the Town that would need to be followed.

- **Other Town-Owned Properties**

The Volpe–Rosen property was examined but removed from consideration due to access limitations, location constraints, and challenging topography.

Cost Considerations:

Region 15 has not yet researched any potential land acquisition costs. This step will only occur after a property is confirmed to be a feasible option for a new school site.

Determining Renovation or building new Schools Review of Existing School Conditions and Enrollment:

Accessibility, Building Infrastructure, and Learning Spaces

11. How were the existing buildings assessed — and what specific challenges or limitations were identified?

To understand the condition of GES and PES, Tecton Architects conducted detailed on-site walkthroughs of both buildings as part of the Feasibility Study Committee’s January 30, 2025, presentation. The goal was to document building conditions, identify critical infrastructure issues, and determine where each school falls short of modern educational and accessibility standards.

January 30, 2025, FSC Presentation

PES slides 12-20 GES slides 22-31

12. What did the Feasibility Study reveal about the conditions at Pomperaug Elementary School (PES)?

PES, built in 1967, is now 58 years old and serves approximately 395 students in grades K–5. While the school continues to provide a strong educational experience, the building’s age and layout present several challenges that impact daily operations, safety, and instructional flexibility.

Key Findings from the Building Assessment

Traffic and Site Circulation:

The school’s location and site layout create traffic congestion on Main Street, particularly during arrival and dismissal times. The existing drop-off and pick-up loop does not allow for smooth circulation, leading to backups that extend into public roadways.

Modular Classrooms:

PES relies on modular classrooms to meet space needs. These temporary units are aging and deteriorating, lack the same comfort and safety features as permanent classrooms, and are located far from the main entrance.

Building Systems and Safety:

Portions of the building have low ceiling heights and no sprinkler system, limiting the ability to modernize spaces or meet current safety and building code standards.

Instructional Space Limitations:

The school has insufficient space for small-group learning, support services, and all-school gatherings. In some cases, corridors and vestibules are being used as makeshift instructional areas, which limits privacy and flexibility for students and teachers.

The findings at PES highlight the need for modern, flexible learning environments and site improvements that address traffic safety, accessibility, and educational programming.

PES – The building offers about 4% more space than required, but aging systems and structural limitations still hinder modern instructional flexibility.

Even though some spaces meet or exceed minimum state standards, the overall building configuration limits flexibility and efficiency. Core instructional and shared areas, especially classrooms, art, and cafeteria spaces, are undersized or constrained by the building's 1960s design.

13. What did the Feasibility Study reveal about the conditions at Gainfield Elementary School (GES)?

GES, built in 1941, is the oldest school in Region 15 and currently serves approximately 324 students in grades K–5. While the school has a strong sense of community and continues to support student learning the building’s age and layout present significant challenges related to accessibility, infrastructure, and educational space.

Key Findings from the Building Assessment

Accessibility Challenges:

GES was built long before current accessibility standards were established. The building includes **multiple levels with no elevators**, making it difficult for students, staff, or visitors with mobility needs to move throughout the school. This also limits the district’s ability to reconfigure classrooms or program spaces without major renovation.

Aging Infrastructure:

Many of the building’s essential systems, including the roof, plumbing, electrical wiring, windows, and septic system, are at, near, or beyond end-of-life. These aging components contribute to higher, maintenance costs, inconsistent energy efficiency, and reliability issues that can disrupt operations.

Program and Support Spaces:

Spaces for Art, Music, and other specialized programs are undersized and outdated, making it challenging to deliver instruction in environments that support modern learning. The kitchen facilities are also inadequate to meet current food service and storage needs.

Building Layout and Functionality:

The interior layout reflects the era in which the school was built, with smaller classrooms, narrow corridors, and limited flexibility for collaborative or small-group learning. The configuration also complicates supervision and circulation during arrival, dismissal, and emergency procedures.

The assessment at GES underscores the need for major investment to address accessibility, safety, and aging infrastructure. The building provides approximately 9% more space than required but remains the oldest and least efficient in terms of layout and energy use.

Even though some spaces technically meet minimum square footage requirements, the overall building configuration limits flexibility and makes it difficult to adapt classrooms or support spaces for 21st-century learning.

14. How do long-term enrollment projections, state space standards, and the Facilities Master Plan impact Region 15’s planning for GES and PES?

According to enrollment projections shared at the January 30, 2025 Feasibility Study Committee presentation (slides 6–10), student enrollment across the district is expected to remain stable to moderately growing over the next decade. The main driver of building these schools now was driven by

some of the upcoming repair needs to the aging buildings – and determining whether it was a wise use of taxpayer dollars to repair vs replace.

Enrollment Slide

Evaluation of Renovation, Additions, and New Construction Options

15. What are the main reasons for choosing new construction instead of renovating the existing schools?

Region 15 is pursuing new construction because it offers improved safety and security, more efficient, and future-ready solutions than renovating aging facilities. A new school can be purpose-built, efficient, and inclusive, with spaces intentionally designed for collaboration, accessibility, safety, and modern instructional needs that are aligned with the district's long-term educational goals. Key reasons include:

- **Mechanical systems and building structures are at or near end-of-life**, requiring extensive and costly replacements.
- **Modular classrooms remain in use at both schools** and are also at end-of-life, signaling ongoing space shortages that renovation cannot fully resolve.
- **Improved safety and security** can be achieved more effectively through a new building designed with modern standards and site planning.
- **Optimized learning spaces**- new construction allows for flexible, collaborative, and accessible environments aligned with 21st-century instructional needs.
- **Greater financial efficiency**—a new building is more energy-efficient and avoids the long-term cost of maintaining aging infrastructure.
- **Ability to address long-term facility challenges proactively**, rather than layering repairs onto buildings with inherent structural limitations.
- **Operational continuity**—the proposed plan allows Region 15 to **keep both existing schools fully operational during construction**, ensuring uninterrupted learning while new facilities are built and before any demolitions occur.
- **Addresses deterioration directly**, rather than investing in extensive repairs that still leave the district with outdated layouts and constraints.

These factors, outlined in the **January 30, 2025 Feasibility Study Committee Presentation (Slide 32)**, demonstrate that new construction is the most responsible long-term investment for students, staff, and taxpayers.

• January 30, 2025, FSC Presentation (slide 32)
