



State College Area School District

Districtwide Facilities Master Plan Steering Committee / Community Forum Park Forest Middle School Tuesday, January 6, 2026 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Fisher convened the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

Mr. Straub, Principal of Crabtree, Rohrbaugh and Associates, provided an overview of the plans for the new Park Forest Middle School, explaining that current efforts are focused on stormwater management, site development, and traffic flow while final approvals are underway. He emphasized that both the building design and traffic patterns are intentionally flexible to accommodate future district needs and that the facility includes multiple levels of security, allowing for lockdown of the building and individual areas as needed. Mr. Straub shared a schedule update indicating that construction is anticipated to begin in mid-May, with an estimated 30-month construction period and students expected to move into the new school in January 2029.

PFMS Project Q&A Summary

Q: Will sound support systems be included in classrooms?

A: The question was raised, but no final answer was provided; follow-up is needed.

Q: Are there federal, state, or OSHA requirements for the project?

A: Yes. The project follows Department of Education bidding requirements, including prevailing wage, OSHA, and safety and security standards.

Q: Will students be able to shadow or participate in construction?

A: Possibly, but this would be a district decision. It is more challenging at the middle school level than at the high school level.

Q: Have students participated in similar projects before?

A: Yes. Students have visited past Physical Plant projects, and an annual project allows student involvement.

Q: How will water and stormwater be managed at the new site?

A: The site's slope allows for improved stormwater controls that meet current requirements, and plans are being coordinated with the township.

Q: Will there be project agreements to support local contractors?

A: This is still under review and must comply with state requirements.

It was noted that tuba sinks are requested at all schools.

Mr. Fisher provided an overview of the district's approach to updating elementary playgrounds as part of the facilities master planning process, explaining that playgrounds were evaluated alongside building and athletic infrastructure with an emphasis on long-term budgeting, equity, and common design themes across schools. He noted that feedback from the 2019 Playground Master Plan, elementary principals, the board, and community surveys informed a preliminary

framework focused on more durable, inclusive, and adaptable play spaces, addressing lessons learned from recently installed playgrounds. Key concepts include improved sight lines, integrated adaptive play, durable surfacing, open play areas, climbing features, basketball elements, and safer, more accessible layouts. A preliminary 10-year schedule was shared, with Ferguson Township Elementary proposed first due to stormwater needs, followed by other schools as priorities evolve. Mr. Fisher emphasized that the plans are a starting point and invited continued feedback from parents, PTOs, students, and the community before final designs are presented to the board for approval.

Playground Q & A

Q: Has an assessment been done to ask the 5th graders or students directly?

A: Not yet. Principals have been consulted, and student feedback will be gathered.

Q: Materials on the ground—will the new surfaces get slippery when wet?

A: No. The rubberized surface has texture and can be brushed off, making it usable even in winter.

Q: Can we include recess aides and teachers in feedback?

A: Yes. Questionnaires have already been sent to principals, and teachers and paras will be canvassed for input.

Q: K–2 students need very different equipment from 3–5; how is that handled?

A: Open spaces help address age differences, but ideas from teachers are welcome.

Q: How does playground layout work at other elementary schools?

A: Depends on space; some schools have multiple areas (like primary and intermediate), while others are constrained.

Q: What type of basketball rims will be installed?

A: Single rims.

Q: Do 6th graders have recess?

A: Yes. They have basketball hoops, soccer, and other activities.

Q: Are GAGA pits being considered?

A: Yes, GAGA pits may be considered if they fit the site.

Q: How are current playground needs addressed while planning future designs?

A: Immediate needs like shade or safety hazards are addressed case-by-case. The priority list is fluid.

Q: With the new design, what will change for middle schoolers' playground experience (e.g., wall-ball)?

A: Common themes will be included where appropriate; individual equipment may differ by school. Focus is on durability, safety, and maintainability.

Q: Are there any safety or security accommodations?

A: Yes. Cameras are being added, and SROs will advise on fencing or barriers as needed.

Q: Is a partially covered playground being considered?

A: Not currently, but it may be considered for future designs.

Q: Are imaginative play structures being considered (pirate ships, playhouses, "little cities")?

A: Yes, imaginative play options will be considered as part of the common themes.

Q: How are swings handled, given limited space requirements?

A: Swings are included, but they require large footprints due to clearance standards.

Q: Should we visit community parks to see successful playground surfaces or designs?

A: Yes. Parks like CRT, Burnell Rd., and the one near the airport have surfaces and equipment to reference.

Q: Equipment color issues—like dye transfer onto clothing—are they considered?

A: Yes, past issues will inform future equipment selection.

Q: Will there be an ongoing focus group with PTOs, principals, and teachers?

A: Not continuously, but themes are gathered before each school's renovation. Feedback will be checked from newly completed playgrounds to learn what worked and what didn't.

Small Group Breakout Notes

1. Music-making areas
2. Make sure to keep completed playground folks in the loop to offer feedback
3. Playground - pretend vehicles (like at Holmes Foster)
4. Zipline?
5. Gaga pits, especially at PFMS
6. More swings
7. Consideration for more varying ages/grade levels
8. Significant black top areas for play
9. Adaptive equipment

Mr. Fisher adjourned the meeting at 6:51 p.m.

Annette Winningham
Recording Secretary