



Report of the Superintendent

February 19, 2026

*Leading us
in the
Pledge of Allegiance...*

From Bedwell Elementary School

Claire Dandola

Clare Duff

Oliver Martin

Owen Perret

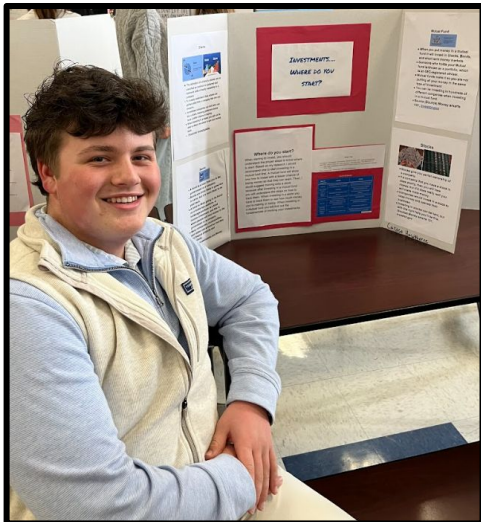


In The News...

BMS Research Symposium 2026

Special thanks to:

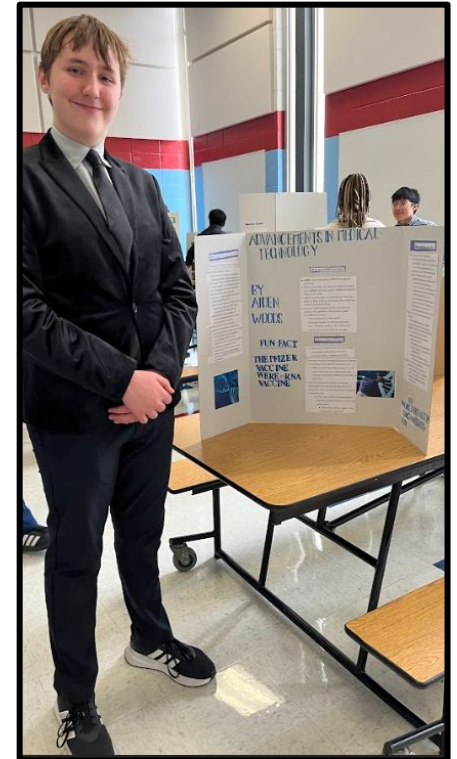
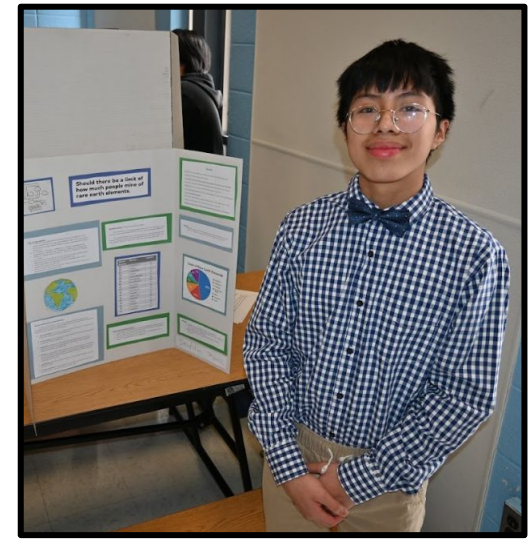
*Brett Cox, Pilar Medina
Dawn Russo, Jessica Tynan
and Danielle McGovern*

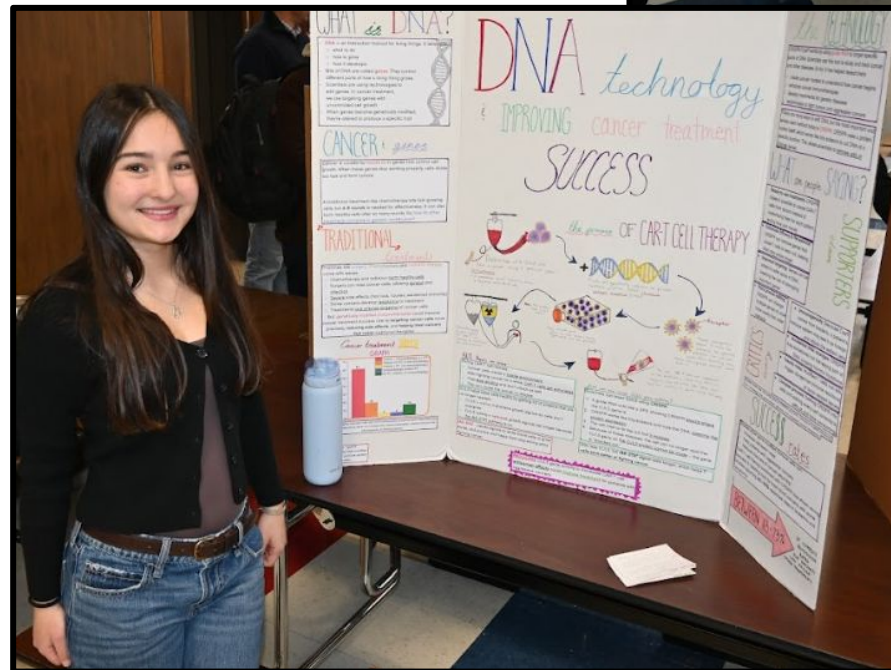
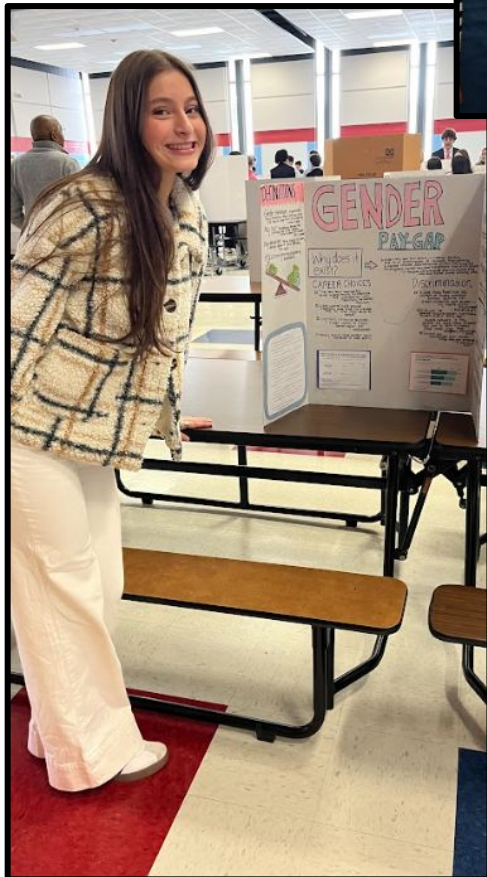
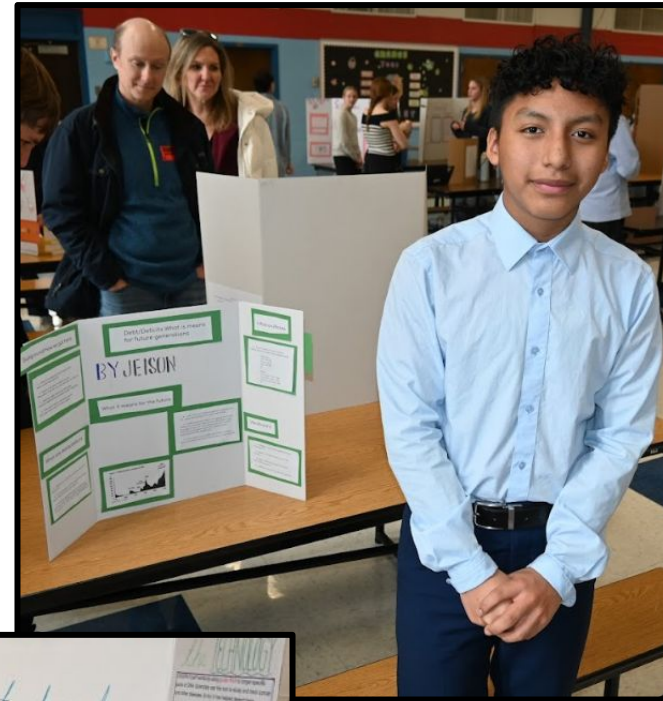
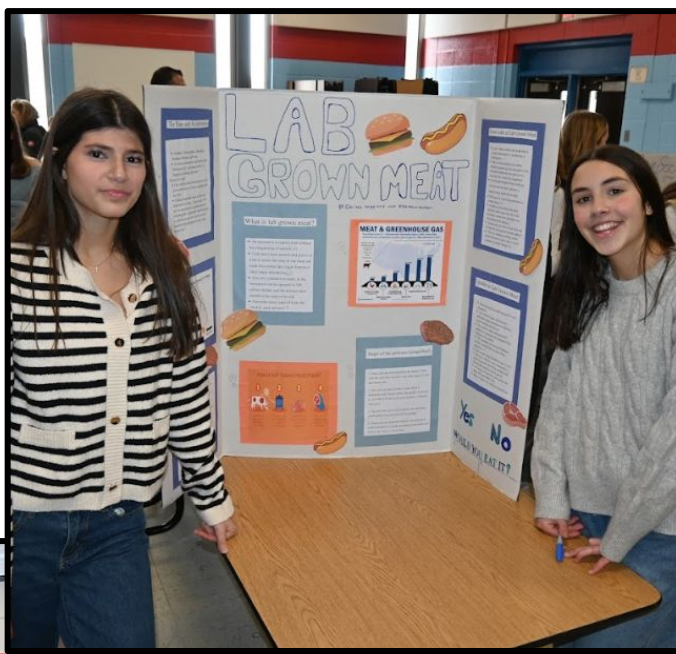


On February 10, 2026, the entire eighth grade class at Bernardsville Middle School hosted a Research Symposium. The event was the culmination of a literacy initiative run by Brett Cox, Pilar Medina, Dawn Russo, Jessica Tynan and Danielle McGovern.

Students spent the month of January expanding their repertoire of research skills. As part of a non-fiction reading unit, objectives included understanding and analyzing arguments in a text, as well as making real world connections. Using research questions they wanted to explore, students brainstormed and chose their own topics, beginning with broad ideas and narrowing their focus. Topics such as AI, health and medicine, freedom of speech, climate change, and economics were of high interest to the 8th graders.

There was high energy and excitement as parents and community members came together to support and engage with the students. They presented their organized information with visuals while enhancing their public speaking skills. "It was an amazing event; it showcased the efficacy of our curriculum, the passion of our teachers, and the strong critical thinking skills of our students," shared Dr. Coleen Butler, Assistant Superintendent.





**BMS
Research
Symposium**

Our Student Representatives

Bernardsville Middle School

Darcy Canberg

&

Miles Olechnowicz

representing Student Council

Bernards High School

Nolan Baker

Sophia Fazel-Sarjui

» MARCH 2026 REFERENDUM PUBLIC PRESENTATION

DISTRICT-WIDE FACILITIES
RENOVATION PROGRAM

 SOLUTIONS
ARCHITECTURE
FRANK A. MESSINEO • AIA



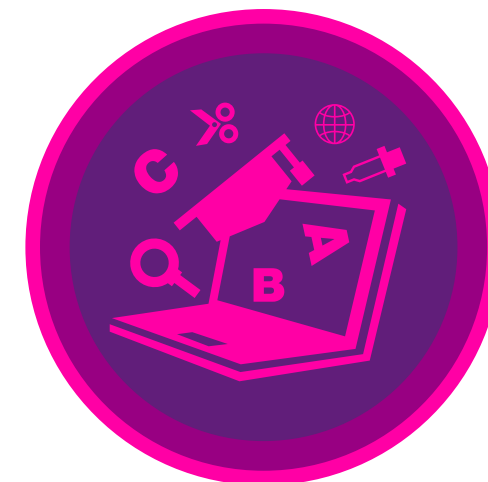
*Upgrading our Facilities to Support our
Educational Programs*

THE DISTRICT LEADERSHIP SOUGHT TO..

- » Work with the Architect, school administration and staff to **IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE** needed facility improvements.
- » Consider ways to **IMPROVE** existing school facilities with projects that ensure safe and functional schools.
- » Consider ways to **IMPROVE** the student experiences with projects that directly impact students.
- » Consider ways to make the recommended improvements while taking advantage of **DEBT SERVICE ROLLING OFF**, so that there would be a **NET NEUTRAL TAX IMPACT** for all Somerset Hills Communities.



» REFERENDUM PRIORITIES



ENHANCED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

- » Educational programs drive the need to update facilities that support the academic, social, emotional, wellness and creative opportunities available to them.



STUDENT & STAFF SAFETY

- » It is crucial to ensure that our schools have physical security systems to protect our students & staff.



KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH OPERATIONS

- » So much of what keeps school facilities running smoothly is the condition of the systems and infrastructure “behind the scenes.” The roofing, windows, heating systems, tech network, and much more are at the core of keeping a building running. Although they go unnoticed in day to day use, it is crucial to keep these systems in good condition.

» WHAT WE ARE PROPOSING



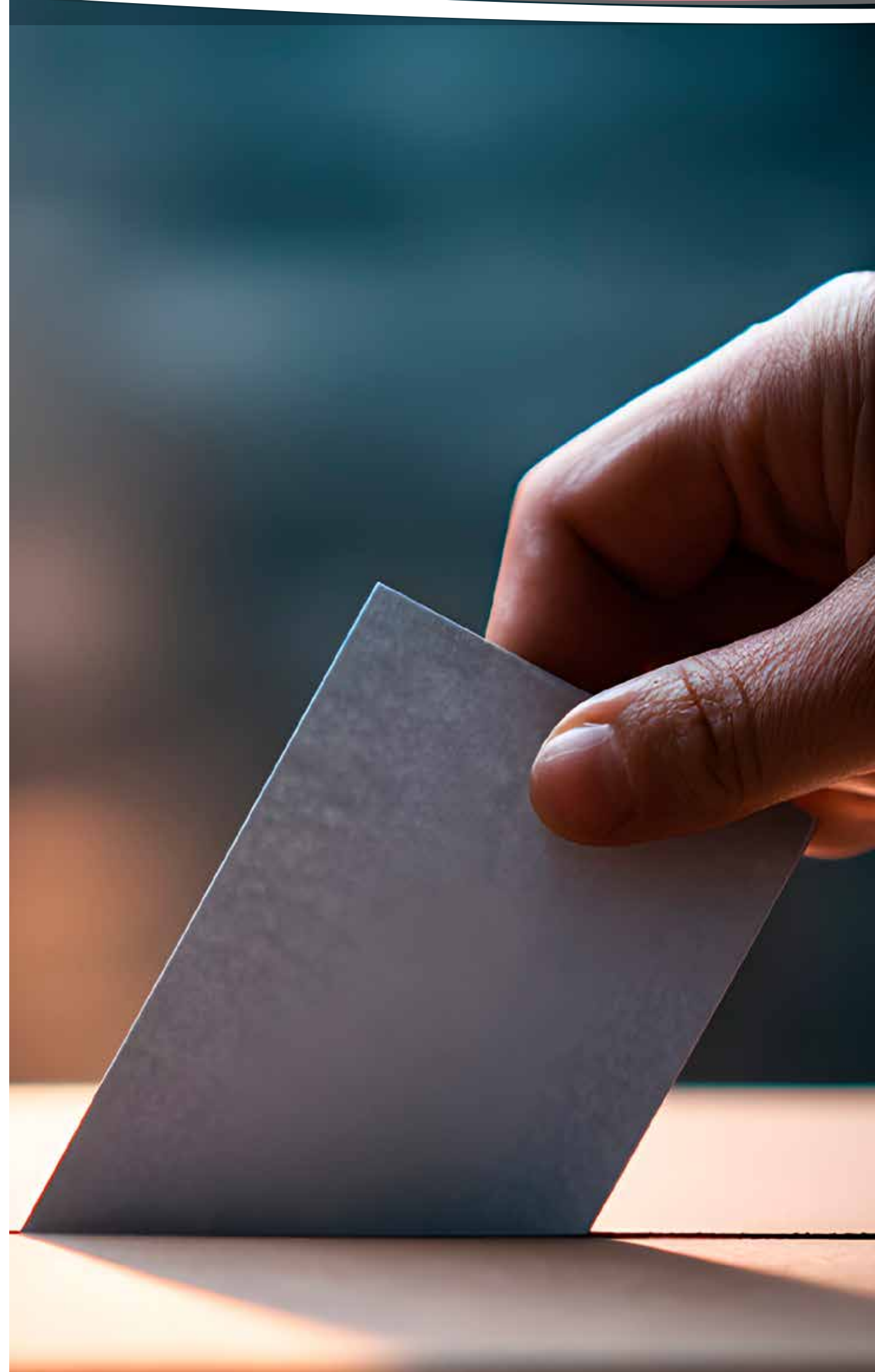
The Somerset Hills School District is requesting funding for a District-wide facilities renovation program to include **EDUCATIONAL CLASSROOM RENOVATION PROJECTS AS WELL AS CAPITAL RENOVATION PROJECTS AND SECURITY UPGRADES** via a Referendum vote on March 10th, 2026.

» GENERAL FUND OPERATING BUDGET

- » The school district's general operating fund covers day-to-day expenses: salaries/benefits, supplies, utilities, educational supplies, maintenance, and other operating expenses. The general fund operating budget has a 2% local tax levy cap, which makes addressing large scale capital projects within that budget extremely difficult.



» BOND REFERENDUM



A BOND REFERENDUM is a community vote whereby the Board is asking the voters to authorize the borrowing of money (through the issuance of bonds) to finance various capital projects.

» REASONS WHY THE BOARD DECIDED TO PURSUE A REFERENDUM



- » These eligible projects received 29.8% of debt service aid because they are being financed by the issuance of bonds. The Board would not have received any aid if financed within the Board's general fund operating budget.
 - » Opportunity to bring taxpayer money back to the community.
- » A bond referendum allows the Board to spread the costs over the useful life of the projects, which spreads the costs over current and future taxpayers that will benefit from the improvements.
- » Bond payments are outside of the 2% general operating fund tax levy, so it will enable the district to spend its annual budget on education, and not on capital projects.

» WHY NOW?

- » In spite of the 2% tax levy cap, the Board of Education and Administration have successfully addressed many facility needs within the operating budget.
- » We are dealing with aging schools:
(AVG. AGE = 59 YEARS OLD)
- » SHSD facilities have original roofing systems, doors, and other infrastructure items that have reached the end of their life expectancy.

WE NEED TO DO MORE...

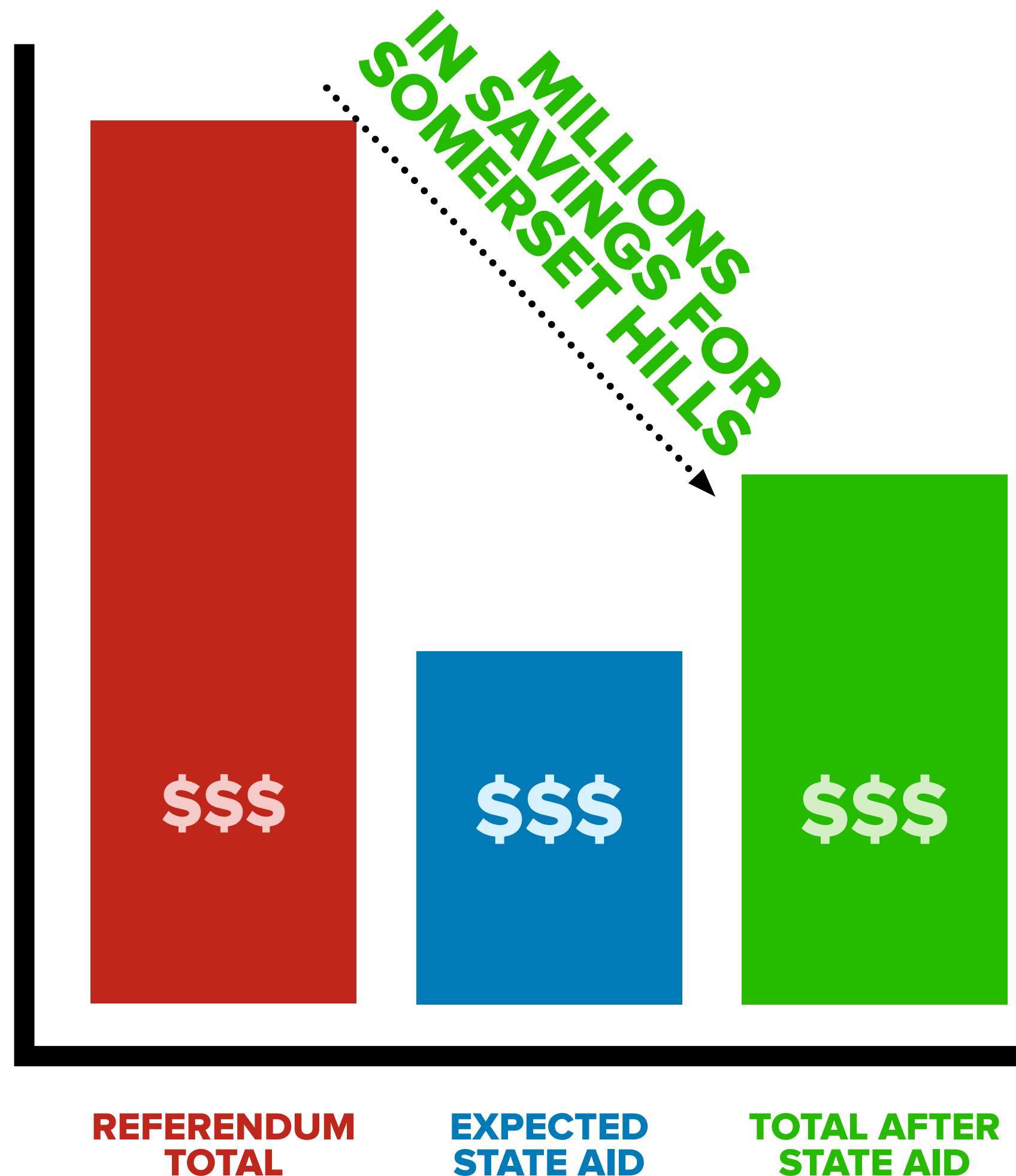


»» WHY NOW?



- » The District has **EXPIRING DEBT** which will result in savings over the 20 year bond.
- » The District is looking to replace the existing debt as a continued investment to fund these projects, which will enhance the districts facilities.
- » By allowing the school District to finance these substantial facilities improvements over many years, the cost is spread over the many generations who will use the facilities.

» STATE AID IS APPROVED



CURRENT DEBT SERVICE PAYMENTS WILL BE ENDING IN MARCH OF 2026

This will offset the new debt being assumed as a continued investment under the targeted March 2026 Referendum.

STATE AID IS APPROVED!

- » The District has been approved for \$11.3 million in financial assistance from the state.
- » **29.8% SAVINGS** on projects
 - Must be funded through a **REFERENDUM**
 - Must be tied to **EDUCATION OR MAINTENANCE**
- » Debt Service Aid from the state helps to pay down the bond and this helps reduce the impact on the taxpayer.

THE PROCESS

» HOW DID WE GET HERE?

SUMMER 2024 FACILITIES EVALUATION

The District commissioned Solutions Architecture to provide a District-wide facilities audit. Representatives from Solutions Architecture and our Consultant Engineers, met with the Administration and visited each school to 3-D Scan the buildings, review, evaluate and identify facilities improvements that needed to be entertained.

NOV. 2024 - JAN 2025 EVALUATE NEEDS

The District began exploring a potential referendum to address projects identified in the Facilities Audit while considering retiring debt service. Solutions Architecture met with administration, the superintendent, and staff to assess educational needs and evaluate classroom renovations aimed at improving efficiency and providing critical upgrades.

FEBRUARY 2025 PREPARATION

Solutions Architecture prepared conceptual designs for classroom and other educational renovations and established budgets associated with the projects that considered taking advantage of up to 34% in Debt Service Aid and the Debt Service Roll Off.

FEBRUARY 2025 ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The completed, DISTRICT-WIDE FACILITIES AUDIT is presented to the Administration and Board, the recommendations were reviewed and discussed. The report identified an order of magnitude of some \$75.7MM worth of Educational & Capital improvements for the (4) buildings.

MARCH - MAY 2025 FINALIZE DOE SUBMISSION

SA secured District/ Board approval for the projects while addressing financial considerations to ensure a community-supported referendum. SA also prepared DOE applications to maximize eligible debt service aid and is awaiting approval of the educational and capital project plans.

» RECENT DISTRICT PROJECTS



THE DISTRICT CONTINUES TO COMPLETE PROJECTS OUT OF CAPITAL RESERVE:



- Media Center Renovations at the Middle School
- Performing Arts Center: Lighting & Sound Upgrades
- Synthetic Turf Field at the High School Stadium
- Running Track and Field Events Upgrades
- Athletic Sports Lighting
- Lower Field Renovation
- Tennis Court Upgrades / Resurfacing

**Unfortunately, the District cannot complete a significant amount of work out of their capital budget and still stay below the 2% cap.*

**Capital projects are completed without debt service aid.*

PROPOSED PROJECTS

»» PROJECT CATEGORIES



Arts



Learning



Wellness



Safety



Operations

ENHANCED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS



STUDENT & STAFF SAFETY



KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH OPERATIONS



FACILITIES ENHANCE LEARNING

»» OUR REFERENDUM PRIORITIES



KEY PROJECTS CREATE EXCITING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND DIRECTLY IMPACT OUR CHILDREN:

- » Science Labs - Chemistry, Biology, Physics
- » S.T.E.M. Labs and Technology Classroom Space
- » Media Center Upgrades / Renovations
- » Kindergarten Classroom Renovations
- » Special Education / STARS Program
- » Creation of a Culinary Arts Classroom
- » Visual Arts Classroom Renovations



CAPITAL PROJECTS ALL SCHOOLS



» DISTRICT-WIDE CAPITAL PROJECTS



- Upgrade and expand camera systems and implement school notification & lockdown system (All Schools)
- Provide secure vestibule and lockdown capabilities (doors & hardware) (Elementary School)
- Provide ballistic window film (All Schools)
- Provide much needed replacement of leaking & deteriorated roofing sections (All Schools)
- Replace building-wide fire alarm systems (Middle School and Elementary School)
- Bleacher replacements (ADA Compliance) (High School - Main and Lower Gymnasium)
- Enhance the school community through school spirit and branding by installing graphics at core spaces such as cafeterias, multipurpose rooms, gymnasiums and corridors (All Schools)



EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS ALL SCHOOLS



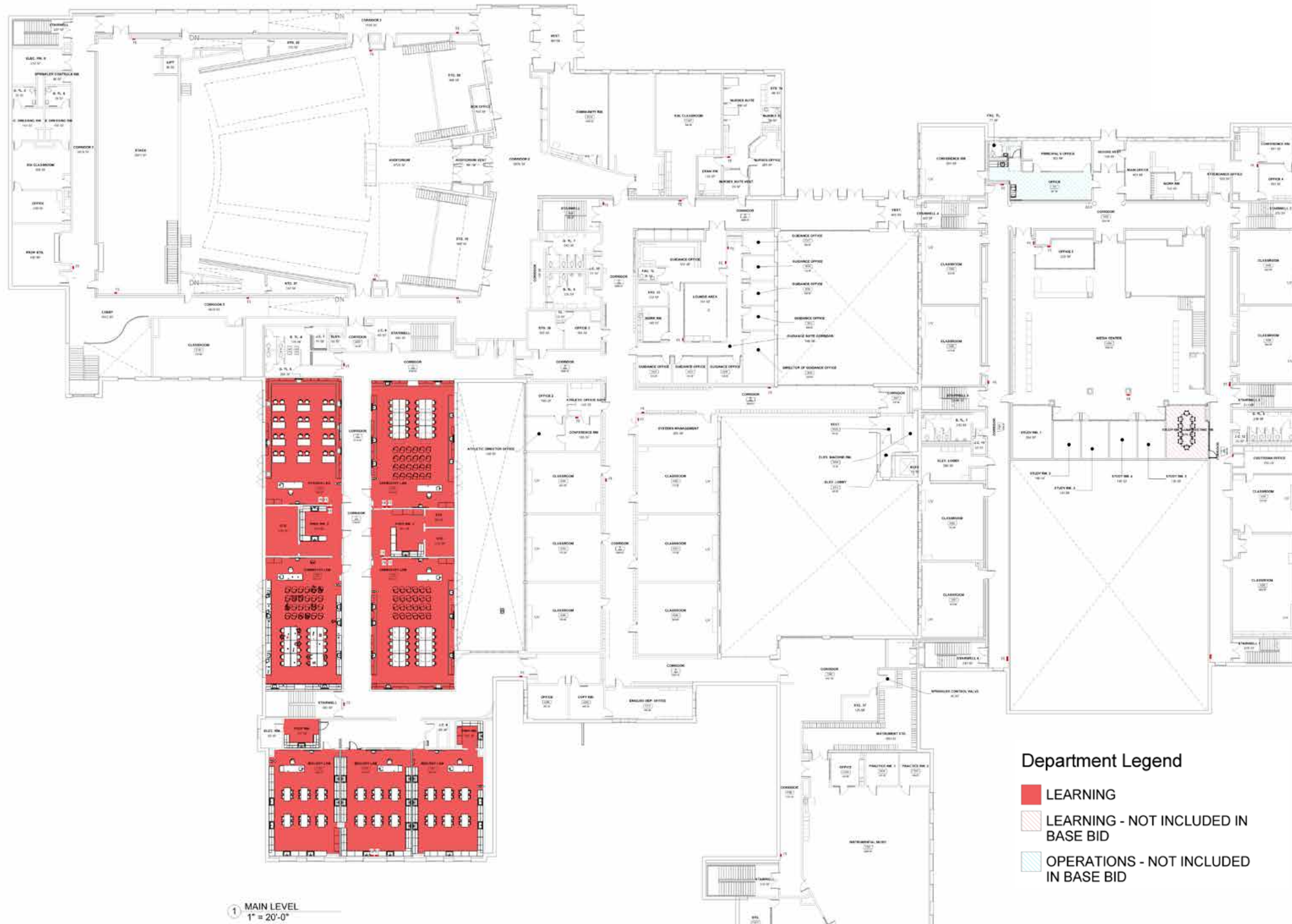


INTERIOR CAFETERIA LEVEL



- Renovate STARS Program space and add Culinary Arts Classroom
- Create (3) equal sized, (1) Biology & (2) Physics Labs
- Move S.T.E.M. / Manufacturing / Technology Lab into Existing Art Classroom Space adjacent to woodshop.
- Renovate (1) Classroom + Storage Rooms into (2) History Classrooms
- Move Visual Arts + 2D Art into existing Technology classroom space

» BERNARDS HIGH SCHOOL

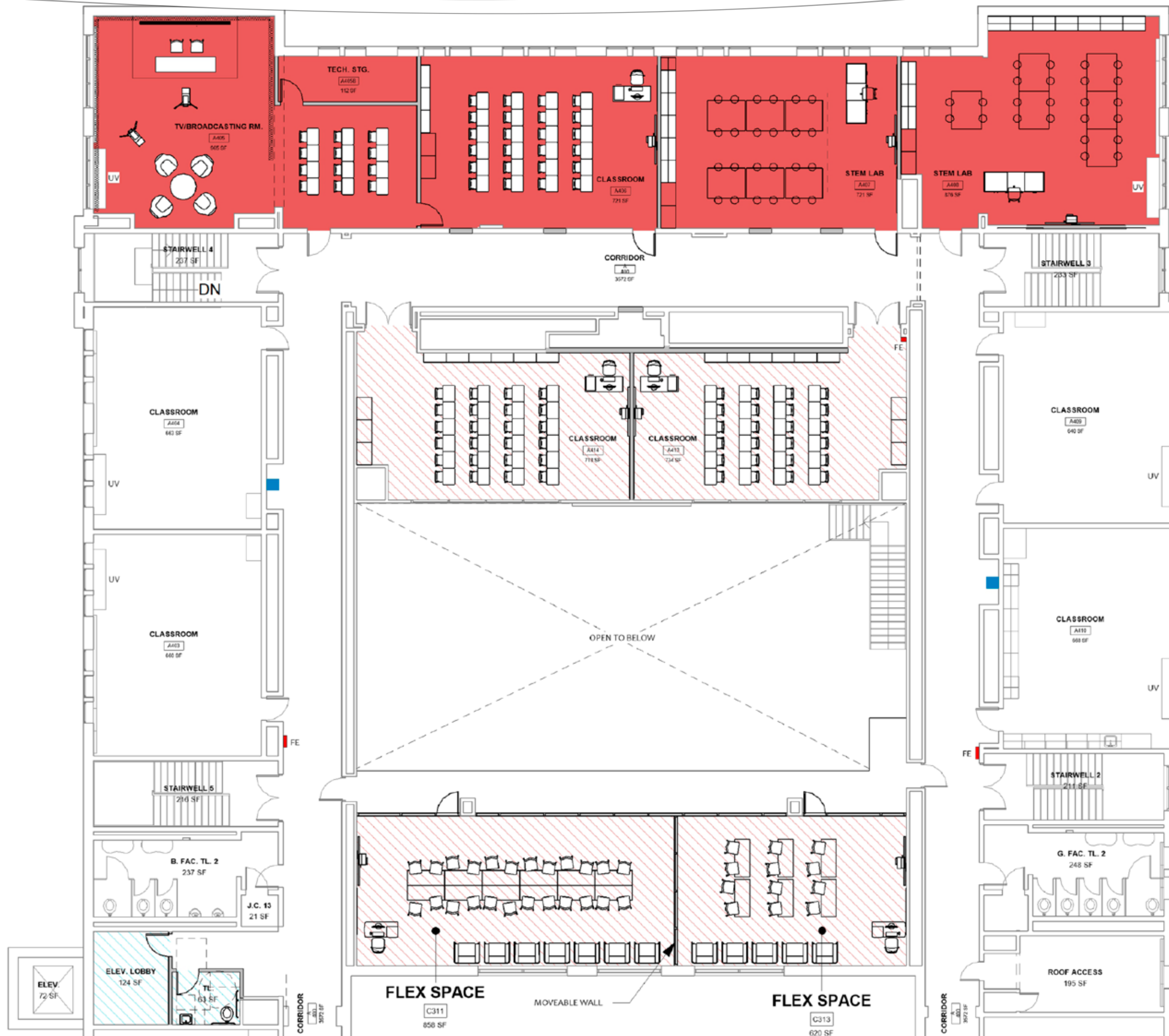


INTERIOR MAIN LEVEL

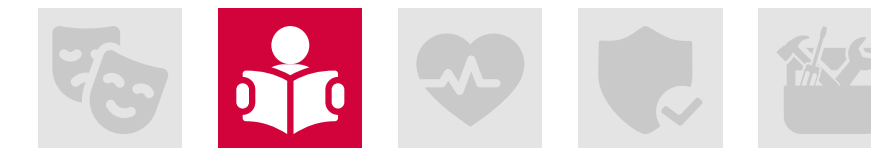


- Renovate (3) Chemistry Labs and Prep Rooms + (1) Physics Lab
- Create (3) equal sized, Biology Labs with new Prep Rooms

» BERNARDS HIGH SCHOOL



INTERIOR SECOND FLOOR



- Renovate existing TV and Technology Rooms to create a new Broadcasting Studio
- Renovate (2) Classrooms and an Office to create (2) New STEM Classrooms and (1) New General Classroom



EXISTING SCIENCE LABS & CLASSROOMS ARE OLDER AND INEFFICIENT, THEY LACK FLEXIBILITY - ROOF LEAKS ARE PERVASIVE



**SCIENCE LABS - REIMAGINED
FLEXIBLE FURNISHINGS, CHANGEABLE LAYOUTS
GREATER SUPPORT FOR CURRICULUM**



EXISTING ART AND 2-D ART CLASSROOMS ARE OLDER AND INEFFICIENT, THEY WILL BE RENOVATED INTO NEW TECHNOLOGY, ROBOTICS AND MANUFACTURING LABS



**EXISTING ART CLASSROOMS - REIMAGINED
FOR ROBOTICS, TECHNOLOGY AND
MANUFACTURING LABS**



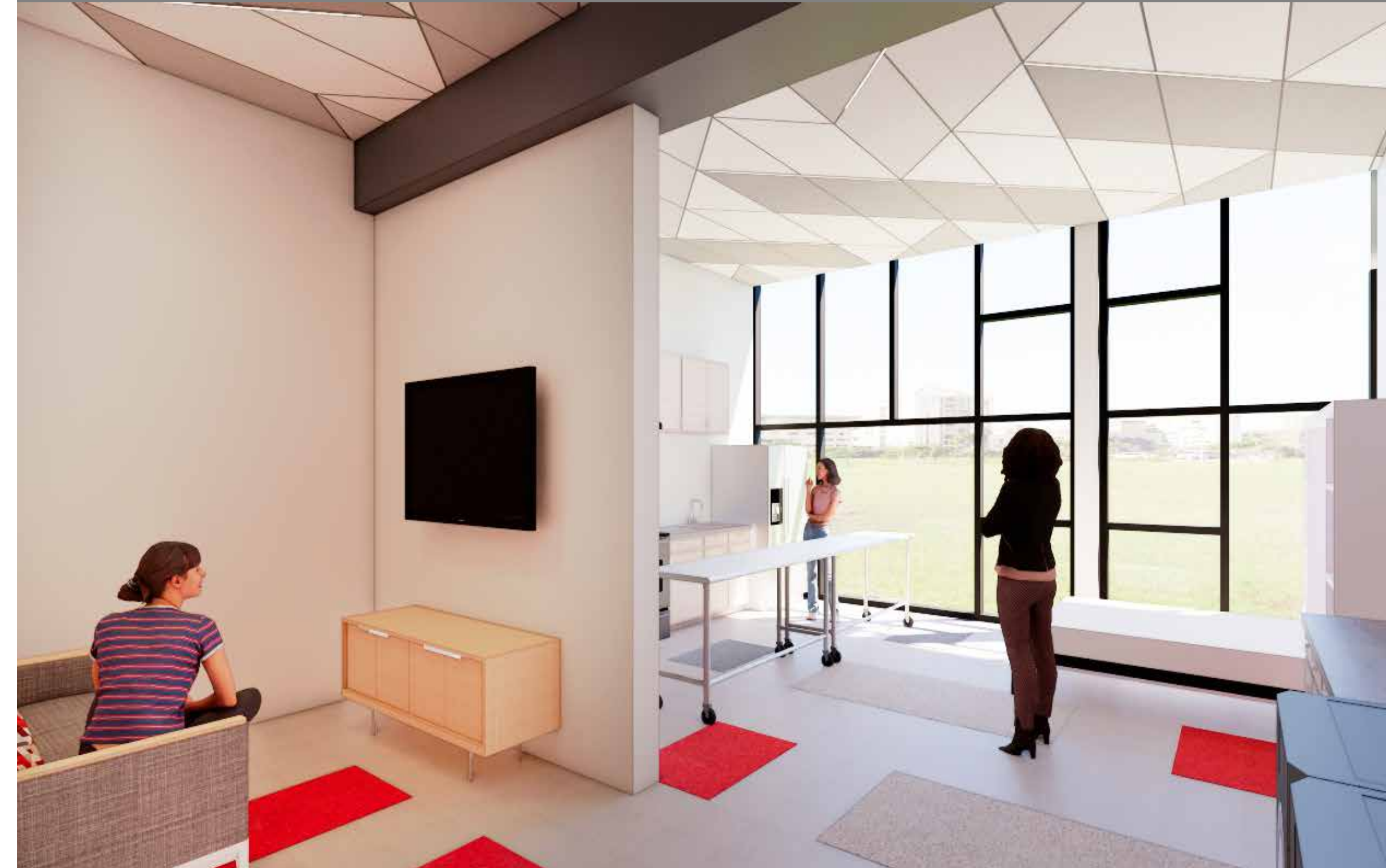
EXISTING TECHNOLOGY LAB AND ROBOTICS CLASSROOM WILL BE RENOVATED FOR ART CLASSROOMS TO ALLOW ROBOTICS AND MANUFACTURING TO MOVE TO THE OLD ART ROOMS



**ART CLASSROOMS - REIMAGINED
FLEXIBLE FURNISHINGS, CHANGEABLE LAYOUTS
GREATER SUPPORT FOR CURRICULUM**



EXISTING HOME LIVING AND STUDENT STORE WILL BE RENOVATED FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY AND LAYOUT AND TO CREATE A NEW CULINARY ARTS CLASSROOM



**NEW STARS PROGRAM, STUDENT STORE, CULINARY ARTS - REIMAGINED
FLEXIBLE FURNISHINGS, CHANGEABLE LAYOUTS, AND NEW CLASSROOM
SPACES WHICH ALLOW THE CURRICULUM TO GROW**

BERNARDSVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL



INTERIOR MAIN LEVEL



- Renovate several existing classrooms and office spaces to create (3) appropriate sized Science Labs + (2) General Classrooms in the same corridor.

1 SECOND FLOOR PLAN - PROPOSED
1/16" = 1'-0"

Room Legend

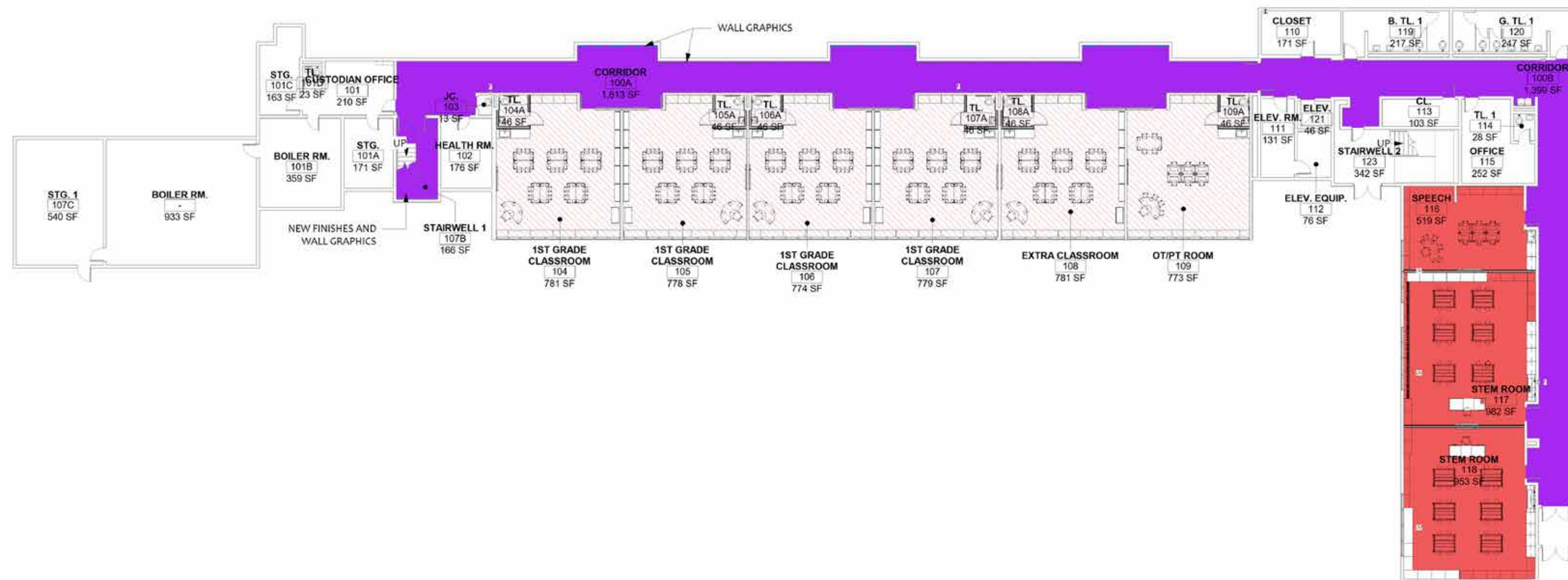
- LEARNING
- OPERATIONS - NOT IN BASE BID



**EXISTING SCIENCE LABS ARE OLDER AND INEFFICIENT -
ROOF LEAKS ARE PERVASIVE**

SCIENCE LABS REIMAGINED.

BEDWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



INTERIOR LOWER LEVEL



- Renovate (3) existing classrooms to create (2) Larger STEM Lab Rooms and (1) Speech Classroom
- Renovate existing corridor and stair tower including graphics to create a brighter and more inviting environment.

»» BEDWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



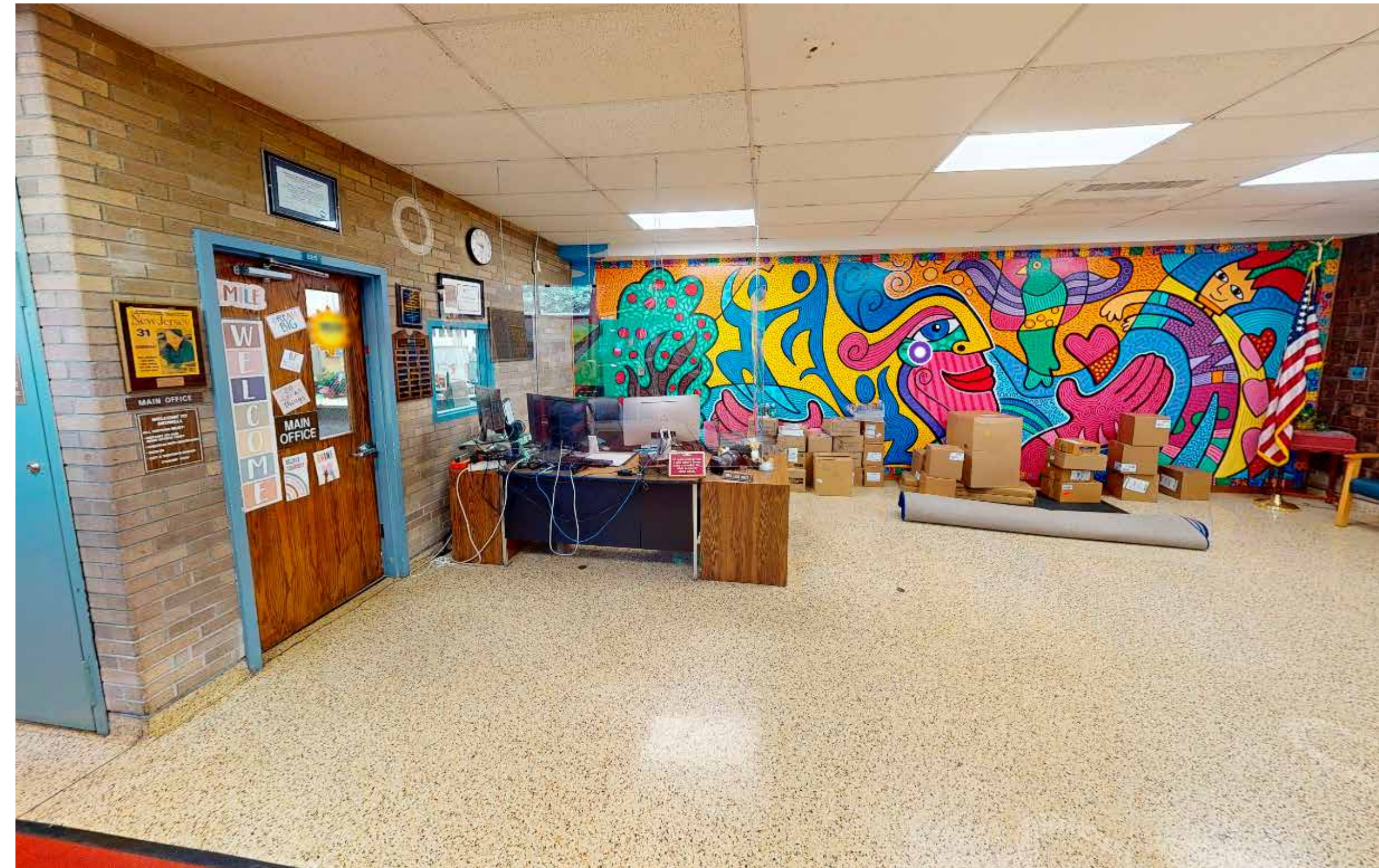
INTERIOR FIRST FLOOR LEVEL



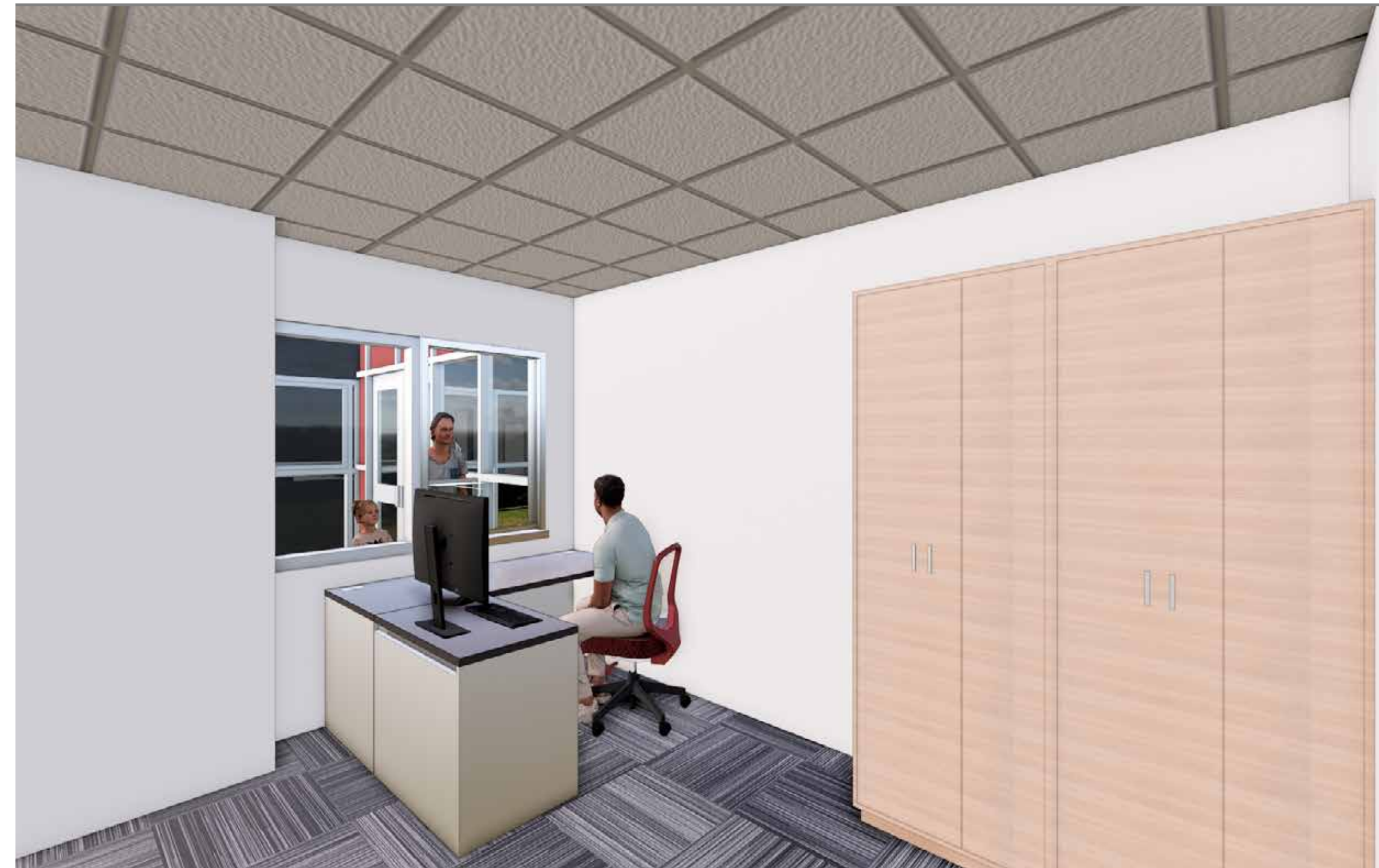
- Kindergarten renovations with ADA toilets
- Media Center renovations
- Secure Visitor's Vestibule - Office
- Access corridor for Kindergarten



EXISTING SECURE VESTIBULE REQUIRED PEOPLE TO ENTER SCHOOL IN ORDER TO BE VETTED



SECURITY PERSONNEL ARE EXPOSED IN THE HALLWAY TO VET VISITORS



A NEW SECURITY OFFICE TIED INTO THE SECURE VESTIBULE WILL ALLOW A MORE SECURE WAY VETTING OF VISITORS PRIOR TO PROVIDING ACCESS INTO THE BUILDING



EXISTING MEDIA CENTER IS DATED - HAS AN INTERIOR CLASSROOM WHICH CAN ONLY BE ACCESSED BY GOING THROUGH THE LIBRARY - NEEDS RENOVATION



MEDIA CENTER REIMAGINED - INTERIOR CLASSROOM TO BE MOVED TO CORRIDOR



EXISTING STEM LAB IS UNDERUTILIZED - CLASSROOM NEEDS UPGRADES TO SUPPORT THE NEW CURRICULUM



STEM LAB REIMAGINED

»» LET'S RECAP . . .



BERNARDS HIGH SCHOOL WILL RECEIVE . . .



- Annex Wing Renovations - STARS Program + Culinary Arts Lab renovations
- Science lab renovations- STEM, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Robotics & Technology
- TV Broadcasting Studio renovations
- Partial roofing system replacement
- Upgrade existing security system
- Installation of ballistic safety film on all lower level windows
- ■ Enhance the school community through school spirit and branding by installing graphics at core spaces such as cafeterias, multipurpose rooms, gymnasiums and corridors.

»» LET'S RECAP . . .



BERNARDSVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL WILL RECEIVE . . .



- Science lab renovations- General Science classrooms
- Partial roofing system replacement
- Upgrade existing security system
- Installation of ballistic safety film on all lower level windows
- Enhance the school community through school spirit and branding by installing graphics at core spaces such as cafeterias, multipurpose rooms, gymnasiums and corridors.

»» LET'S RECAP . . .



BEDWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WILL RECEIVE . . .



- Renovation of Kindergarten classrooms including updating for ADA Accessible Toilets
- Construct an exterior corridor which will provide direct access to second KG Classroom rather than having to walk through one to get to the other.
- Construct new security office to tie into secure vestibule *(ineligible for state aid)*
- Upgrade existing security system
- Installation of ballistic safety film on all lower level windows
- Partial roofing system replacement
- Enhance the school community through school spirit and branding by installing graphics at core spaces such as cafeterias, multipurpose rooms,

PROJECTED COSTS

» PROJECTED COSTS: RENOVATIONS / UPGRADES



REFERENDUM BUDGET BREAKDOWN

| PROJECT | TOTAL PROJECT COST | DEBT SERVICE AID | FINAL COST AFTER DEBT SERVICE AID |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| BERNARDS HS RENOVATIONS | \$ 21,962,755 | \$ 6,586,924 | \$ 15,375,831 |
| BERNARDSVILLE MS RENOVATIONS | \$ 6,834,941 | \$ 2,134,500 | \$ 4,700,441 |
| BEDWELL ES - RENOV / ADDITIONS | \$ 9,226,561 | \$ 2,623,425 | \$ 6,603,136 |
| TOTAL - REFERENDUM | \$ 38,024,257 | \$ 11,344,849 | \$26,679,408 |

29.8% DEBT SERVICE AID APPROVED

ESTIMATED TAX IMPACT

» TAX IMPACT SHOULD REFERENDUM PASS...

CURRENT DEBT SERVICE PAYMENTS DECLINE AFTER MARCH OF 2026

THESE PROJECT COSTS REPLACE A PORTION OF THOSE DEBT SERVICE PAYMENTS

CAPITAL & EDUCATIONAL RENOVATIONS

Including classroom renovations and alterations as well as facilities Infrastructure projects like roofing and security enhancements.

| | AVG. ASSESSED HOME (\$975,586) | AVG. ASSESSED HOME (\$1,293,740) | AVG. ASSESSED HOME (\$956,693) |
|--|---|---|---|
| TOTAL PROJECT COST: \$ 38,024,257 STATE AID: \$ 11,344,849 = \$26,679,408 | BERNARDSVILLE BOROUGH TAX IMPACT WILL DECREASE OVER THE LIFE OF THE 20 YEAR BOND | FAR HILLS BOROUGH TAX IMPACT WILL DECREASE OVER THE LIFE OF THE 20 YEAR BOND | PEAPACK-GLADSTONE BOROUGH TAX IMPACT WILL DECREASE OVER THE LIFE OF THE 20 YEAR BOND |

- » Originally targeted to be a net neutral tax impact - average tax impact will in fact be reduced.
- » Costs projections based upon a 4.00% interest rate over 20 years; costs may fluctuate slightly prior to bond sale.

» CURRENT VS FUTURE TAX IMPACT...

CAPITAL & EDUCATIONAL RENOVATIONS

Including classroom renovations and alterations as well as facilities Infrastructure projects like roofing and security enhancements.



TOTAL PROJECT COST:
\$ 38,024,257
STATE AID:
\$ 11,344,849
=
\$26,679,408






| BERNARDSVILLE BOROUGH AVG.ASSESSED HOME (\$975,586) | FAR HILLS BOROUGH AVG. ASSESSED HOME (\$1,293,740) | PEAPACK-GLADSTONE AVG. ASSESSED HOME (\$956,693) | OVERALL TAX IMPACT |
|---|---|---|--|
| EXISTING TAX IMPACT \$836 PER YEAR | EXISTING TAX IMPACT \$340 PER YEAR | EXISTING TAX IMPACT \$531 PER YEAR | TAX IMPACT \$705 PER YEAR |
| NEW AVG. TAX IMPACT \$527 PER YEAR | NEW AVG. TAX IMPACT \$214 PER YEAR | NEW AVG. TAX IMPACT \$335 PER YEAR | NEW AVG. TAX IMPACT \$444 PER YEAR |

- » Originally targeted to be a net neutral tax impact - average tax impact will in fact be reduced.
- » Costs projections based upon a 4.00% interest rate over 20 years; costs may fluctuate slightly prior to bond sale.

»» WHAT DOES MY VOTE MEAN?

F.A.Q.



| BOND PROPOSAL | IF YOU VOTE | YOU GET |
|---|--|---|
| <p>TOTAL PROJECT COST: \$ 38,024,257</p> <p>STATE AID: \$ 11,344,849 = \$26,679,408</p> | <p>YES</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> | <p>Educational & Capital Projects at Somerset Hills School District at a reduced tax impact over the life of the bond.</p> <div data-bbox="1979 949 3032 1183"><p>Arts Learning Wellness Safety Operations</p></div> |
| | <p>NO</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> | <p>EXISTING FACILITIES REMAIN AS THEY ARE...</p> |

» POLLING TIME & LOCATIONS

F.A.Q.



POLLS OPEN 6:00 AM-8:00 PM

| Borough | District(s) | Polling Location | Address |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Bernardsville | Districts 1, 2, & 7 | Bernardsville Public Library | 1 Anderson Hill Road |
| | Districts 3, 4, 5, & 6 | St. Bernard's Church | 88 Claremont Road |
| Far Hills | All Districts | Far Hills Municipal Building | 6 Prospect Street |
| Peapack-Gladstone | All Districts | Peapack-Gladstone Municipal Building Gym | 1 School Street |

FACTS +

F.A.Q.S

Frequently Asked Questions

»» SOME FACTS . . .



- » We have been approved for \$11,344,849.00 in state aid.
- » The District and their finance team have carried a 4.00% interest rate for all tax impact calculations - and the goal was to maintain a net neutral tax impact.
- » There have been significant increases in the construction industry due to material cost increases, shipping increases, material shortages, and expanded schedules – we still need to work within the original budget numbers and will need to adjust accordingly.

» CAN MORE BE SPENT?

F.A.Q.



Q: Can more money be spent than the amount approved in the question?

A: No. The cost of the referendum projects cannot exceed the amount approved by the voters. The amount approved by the voters includes a reasonable budget under which to complete the work as well as required contingencies to address unforeseen conditions and construction issues.



Q: Why can't the Board stockpile (save) monies that can be used to pay for these types of projects rather than go out for Referendum?

A: Unfortunately, while the Board is allowed to allocate funds through its capital reserve, they can only be saved within the state imposed cap; therefore it is not possible to carry over the monies that would be necessary to complete a Capital Projects Program of this magnitude.

Referendum is our District's one and best opportunity to bring our facilities up to current standards.

» PROJECTS THAT DIDN'T MAKE THE CUT...

F.A.Q.



OF THE PROJECTS EVALUATED FOR THE REFERENDUM, WHICH ONES WERE REMOVED IN ORDER TO CREATE A REASONABLE BUDGET?

- Media Center Flex-Classrooms at Upper Level - HS
- Media Center Study Room #6 Renovations - HS
- Renovated Main Office Work Area - HS
- Renovated Classrooms A414 & A413 - HS
- 40,050 sq.ft. of deteriorated Roofing Sections - HS
- Unisex Toilet Room Add & Renovations - HS
- Renovated Main Office Work Area - MS
- Renovated Classroom #152 - MS
- 25,575 sq.ft. deteriorated Roofing Sections - MS
- Toilet Room Add & Renovations - MS
- Renovations to 1st Grade Classrooms including ADA Toilet Room Renovations - ES
- Alterations to Special Sessions Suite - ES
- Renovated Main Office Work Area - ES
- 41,050 sq.ft. of deteriorated Roofing Sections - ES
- Construct an Elevator & Stair Tower Addition to provide ADA Accessibility to Olcott Admin Bldg.





Q: What will happen to the children before, during and after construction work?

A: Safety, Security and superior education are just three of the variables we take into consideration when planning District operations. In most cases, construction and renovations will be scheduled to be completed during the summer months or at other times when students are not in the schools. When school is in session, students will be separated from work at all times, this way, students can attend classes with minimal disruption.



Q: How will my taxes be impacted if I'm part of the NJ Senior Tax Freeze Program?

A: If you are currently participating in the NJ Senior Tax Freeze Program, your taxes will remain unaffected by this Bond Referendum.

- » If the Bond Referendum Passes - your taxes remain the same.
- » If the Bond Referendum Fails - your taxes remain the same.
- » The initial tax increase will be paid, but reimbursed at the end of the year.



Q: When would the work begin and when will it be completed?

- A:**
- » The schedule for implementation of the projects will be carefully reviewed & crafted into a detailed timeline that works best for the School District.
 - » While some projects could begin construction as early as summer of 2026, given the timing of a March Referendum, we would determine our ability to strategically bid projects at appropriate times.
 - » Projects that require more time to design & develop will begin later in the 2026 year or the summers of 2027 thru 2028.
 - » Allowing for flexibility of scheduling allows us to bid at the most appropriate times resulting in the best pricing for projects.



For further information and to keep updated on the District-Wide Facilities Renovation Program Referendum, please scan the QR Code to the left or visit the district website: www.shsd.org/about-us/referendum

Please send questions to: referendum@shsd.org

SOLUTIONS ARCHITECTURE | FRANK MESSINEO, AIA

fm@solutions-arch.com | www.solutions-arch.com

973-484-4800 (OFFICE) | 201-618-0606 (CELL)

In The News...

Trapping a Trophy



Although the snow delayed their competition by two days, the BHS Technology Club was intently focused on January 29, 2026 when they competed at Passaic County Technical Institute in Wayne, NJ and took home a first place trophy!

In the first of their four scheduled competitions in the 2025-2026 school year, six students from Bernards High School competed against nine other teams from schools throughout northern New Jersey. Participants were charged with making a “Mars Rover” or a vehicle that could travel down a sloped surface with different textures and materials, without any human intervention. While the decline slope was an initially smooth surface, it turned sandy, then bumpy, and ended with a wind component. For this competition, students were not privy to any elements of the task ahead of time, and BHS did an outstanding job thinking on their feet, addressing challenges head on, pivoting accordingly.

Preston Chen, Aanya Gupta, Daniel Richardson, Brooke Schnabolk, Matt Todd, and Dheirya Tyagi worked together with high energy and team spirit, while each letting their own skill sets shine through. They were given a window of three hours to design and create. They utilized problem-solving strategies as they constructed their vehicle with materials such as small pieces of wood and foam. What perhaps clinched the win was their main power source... a mouse trap! “I was excited to see the students build upon lessons I taught two years ago in class. They knew how to harness the kinetic energy from the spring of the trap to create momentum and forward motion,” said Kevin Koch, BHS Technology Education Teacher and Technology Club Advisor.

“It was great working with this group. Everyone contributed something different to the project, and it was especially rewarding to guide some of the newer club members through their first STEM competition,” shared Dheirya Tyagi.

The Technology Club is open to all students in all grade levels at Bernards High School. Lucian Spiteri and Dheirya Tyagi serve as Co-Presidents and there are currently 35 club members. The students meet four times a month during lunch periods set by the club officers. During these meet-ups they work on various STEM projects, competition materials, and any self-interest technology-related projects. This club is known to support student-driven ideas and often provides resources to their peers, allowing their well thought out ideas to come to fruition.

On February 25th, Bernards High School will host its own STEM Competition on campus with 12 schools attending. Staff, administrators, and Board of Education members have volunteered their time to serve as judges. Senior members of the club have spent three months organizing what will be a stellar event. While specific details cannot be divulged, there will be events that hit benchmarks in engineering, physics and mathematics. It is sure to be a memorable day for all involved!

In The News...

Hope and Humanity Prevail



With the goal of combating antisemitism, Bernardsville Middle School welcomed a panel of nine guests on February 3, 2026. A blending of history and present day, middle school students heard about the Jewish experience from descendants of Holocaust survivors, as well as from a group of their peers.

The event began with a powerful presentation by Mara Berger. Through an incredible collection of family photographs, some dating back to the 1930s, Berger told the story of her grandmother Irma Jacobovici. Seventh and eighth grade students were amazed to hear numerous anecdotes depicting spirit, determination, and optimism in a time period otherwise filled with atrocities and despair. Berger detailed one story where her grandmother was caring for her own ill sister in Auschwitz. At risk to himself, a French prisoner outside the gates of the compound was able to smuggle medicine to Irma which saved her sister's life. Berger regaled another example of how women in the concentration camp with her grandmother, despite quite literally starving, would share recipes with one another. Their humanity was not lost or stolen; woven into the fabric of their being, they chose to live with hope and faith. During the hour presentation, students heard many tales of resilience including a Holocaust survivor's response to being asked what she would say to Hitler if given the chance now. She responded with the analogy of her life to a garden.

Through her survival, seeds were planted and her family has grown steadily throughout the generations. She would need not do more than show a photograph since a picture speaks a thousand words. It is clear that his mission was unsuccessful as her family, along with other Holocaust survivors, have not only survived, but flourished.

Following Berger's presentation, the 7th grade had breakout sessions with *Students to Students*, an offshoot of the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ. Led by high school counterparts, BMS students heard firsthand accounts of what it is like to be Jewish today. They provided an overview of the Jewish identity, their personal perspectives, and information about various facets of Judaism such as holidays, shabbat, and what it means to keep kosher. They spoke candidly about stereotypes and addressed common misconceptions. The breakout sessions hit home as BMS students not only learned about unique differences, but saw an abundance of similarities. The day was interactive, with open dialogue and laughter in abundance. Students were able to see how *anyone* can be an UPstander and how *everyone* has the potential to make a difference in another's life.

In addition to connecting to the curriculum, through the historical fiction unit in 7th and an upcoming Holocaust unit in 8th, BMS students were able to connect in relatable and meaningful ways. As they reflected on the experience, one student shared that their main takeaway was "how the Jewish people have and continue to persevere with dignity and hope" and while being Jewish may be represented differently based on ethnic, cultural or religious denominations, they represent "community and belonging." These are concepts we can all identify with around the globe, and we place importance on celebrating and accepting all cultures. Special thanks to BMS teacher Brett Cox, who planned and organized the event.

In The News... **And the forecast is...**

With winter comes “winter weather” and the majority of elementary school children hoping for a snow day (or two)! Bedwell students were lucky enough to not only have the recent snowstorm drop 18 inches on Bernardsville, but they also had the opportunity to learn from a well-known meteorologist, John Marshall.

Organized by Principal Scott Wolfe and 3rd grader teacher Sarah McShane, Marshall was invited to visit the campus on February 6, 2026. This was an exciting continuation of the 3rd grade fall science curriculum where the Next Generation Science Standards focused on understanding weather patterns, describing regional climates, and analyzing natural hazards.



During the assembly, Marshall taught about why seasons change, the water cycle, and various types of precipitation. He explained different cloud types such as cirrus, cumulus, stratus, and nimbus. He detailed the process of observing and predicting weather, as well as some tools involved such as the thermometer, wind vane, anemometer, barometer, weather balloon and rain gauge. The attentive audience was eager to discuss tips like how counting seconds between lightning and thunder helps to determine how far away a storm is. Marshall also expanded upon natural disasters such as blizzards, tornadoes and hurricanes which students had learned about with their classroom teachers. Drawing upon his years delivering the forecast in New York City for Fox Weather, CBS2 and WNBC Ch. 4, Marshall explained how a green screen is used and students were amazed. The assembly provided many interactive opportunities which the students loved!

Overall, the weather unit afforded students numerous hands-on activities. They enjoyed trips to the Bedwell garden this past Fall, where they utilized the rain gauge and wind vane while tracking temperatures and weather patterns.

They also took part in a STEM challenge where they were tasked with building a house using limited materials that could withstand the forces of a tornado or hurricane, with strong winds simulated by a fan. Next up across the third grade, students will be launching into motion and matter in science, followed by the Structures of Life unit that includes ecosystems, traits, and life cycles.

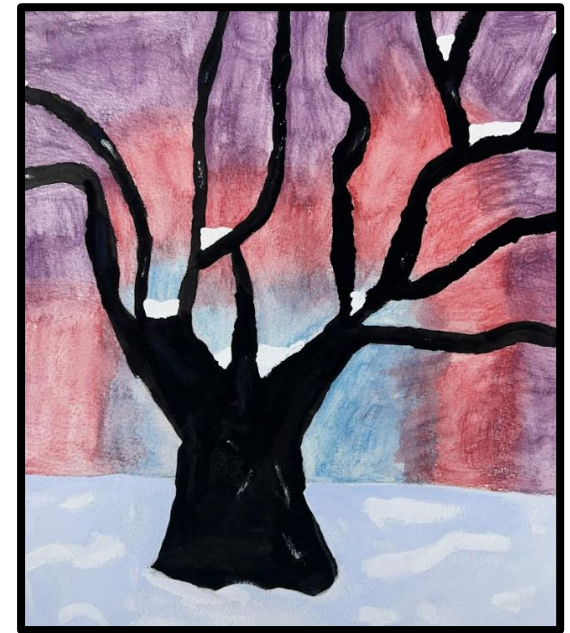
Combining classroom learning with a cameo by an expert in the field, one thing is for sure... once spring arrives and you find yourself wondering if an umbrella is needed, you can feel confident in asking a Bedwell 3rd grader!



What terrific samples of artwork created by students in Terri Johnson's Bedwell art classes!

In The News...

Art Matters!



Día De Los Muertos Masks
Starry Night Landscapes
Cardboard Cubism
Jim Dine Hearts
Snowy Trees
Rainbow Caterpillars



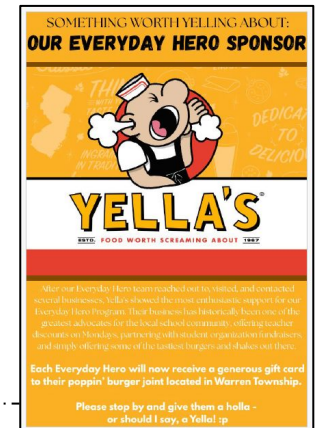
Lucie Robles, a senior at Bernards High School, was recognized by the school as the “Everyday Hero” for February.

Nominees for the monthly Everyday Hero Program are students who have a positive influence on the student body through exemplary qualities. Selected students inspire others, are responsible and respectable and have a commitment to peers and the school community. Students are nominated by one or more teachers, selected by the Everyday Hero committee, and announced schoolwide by either Principal Scott Neigel or Assistant Principal Mike Corbett.

Lucie’s kindness radiates outward, brightening the day of anyone she encounters, and creates a sense of belonging wherever she goes. Lucie has a strong sense of self and is deeply committed to serving both her school and local community. She volunteers with local organizations and consistently looks for ways to give back. At BHS, Lucie founded and leads the school’s chapter of *The Hidden Opponent*, an organization dedicated to raising awareness and reducing stigma around athlete mental health; under her leadership, the program has grown exponentially and now provides resources, safe spaces, and meaningful opportunities for students to engage in open conversations about mental health and well-being. She is also the president of the *Girl Up Club*, where she leads initiatives, collaborates with school and community organizations, and fosters an environment in which female students can thrive. In the Peer Leadership program and advisory board, Lucie is truly a “leader of leaders” who guides others with compassion, positivity, and purpose while helping to create inclusive spaces and successful events. Lucie is driven by a genuine desire to make the world a better place, caring deeply for everyone and everything around her...no matter how big or small the impact!

Congratulations to February’s Everyday Hero, Lucie!

A BIG thank you to **YELLA'S** in Warren Township, our Everyday Hero program sponsor. Their business continues to be an enthusiastic advocate for our school community by offering teacher discounts, partnering with student organization fundraisers, and now for our Everyday Heroes by awarding them with a generous gift card each month!



In The News...

BHS Everyday Hero



Lucie Robles

Winter Sports Snaps

Congrats to
Aaliya Pattanaik
for her
1st place
results at the
Montclair Freshman
Sophomore
Tournament!



“Swim team season has concluded with the Girls team making it to the State Sectional Semifinals and the Boys team making it to Quarterfinals.

We still have 5 swimmers who will be competing in the Meet of Champions on February 28th!”

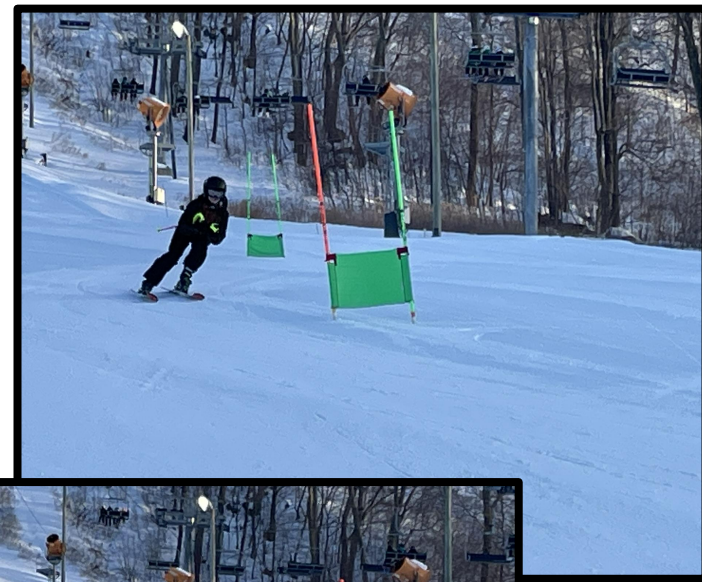
~Coach Doug Voight



Winter Sports Snaps



“The Hockey team has been fortunate to play in some cool rinks this year,” shared Coach Dan Spautz. “We had a game outdoors at Essex Hunt and also played inside the American Dream Mall!”



“The Ski Race team is looking forward to the final weeks of the season with strong performances by multiple members of the team on both the varsity and junior varsity levels.”

~ Coach KC Lister

In The News...

Calling BHS students!



Get ready to jumpstart your summer! Whether you're looking to earn some extra cash, gain professional experience, or give back to your community, the **Summer Job Fair** is the place to be.

The Somerset Hills Education Foundation has an incredible lineup of locals ready to meet you, offering a wide variety of pathways to success:

Paid Positions: Earn while you learn with roles in hospitality at Pendry Natirar, cinema operations at United, or outdoor maintenance at Somerset Hills Country Club.

Internships: Build your resume with hands-on roles like creative design at Lily and the Rose Design LLC, marketing with J Walker Salon Group, or environmental work at Willowood Arboretum.

Mentorships: Get expert guidance in specialized fields! Explore cyber education with The Cyber Cave, dive into behavioral health with CIC for Prevention and Recovery, or shadow a professional in dentistry at Maxine P. Vu, DDS.

Volunteer Matches: Make a difference and earn service hours with the Historical Society of the Somerset Hills, Matheny, or as a Nature Camp CIT with New Jersey Audubon.

Opportunities await... so [click here!](#)

Regionalization Study 2026

Key Points

Advisory and Steering Committee: Met on January 29, 2026

Provided feedback to Study Consultant regarding the areas of study that are most important to the Districts: curriculum, instruction, student achievement and governance among the most prevalent.

Regionalization Study 2026

Key Points

Study Consultants: Now begin their work and both Districts will update their communities as appropriate throughout the process.

Student Safety Data System Report: Period 1

| School Name | Incidents ** | Other Incidents Leading to Removal | Restraint/ Seclusion | HIB Alleged | HIB Trainings | HIB Programs |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 030-BES | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 040-BMS | 13 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |

| School Name | Incidents ** | Other Incidents Leading to Removal | Restraint/ Seclusion | HIB Alleged | HIB Trainings | HIB Programs |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 020-BHS | 13 | 30 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| District | ** | ** | ** | ** | 1 | 2 |



Stay Informed



[Messages from the Superintendent](#) (Third Thursday of every month and as needed)

[District News](#) (ongoing)

[Superintendent Reports](#) (posted after each Board meeting)

[Board Briefs](#) (Monday following each Board Meeting)

[Pathways](#) (Every other month)

[YouTube Channel](#) (ongoing)

School Friday Folders (Every Friday, except winter/spring break)

