SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

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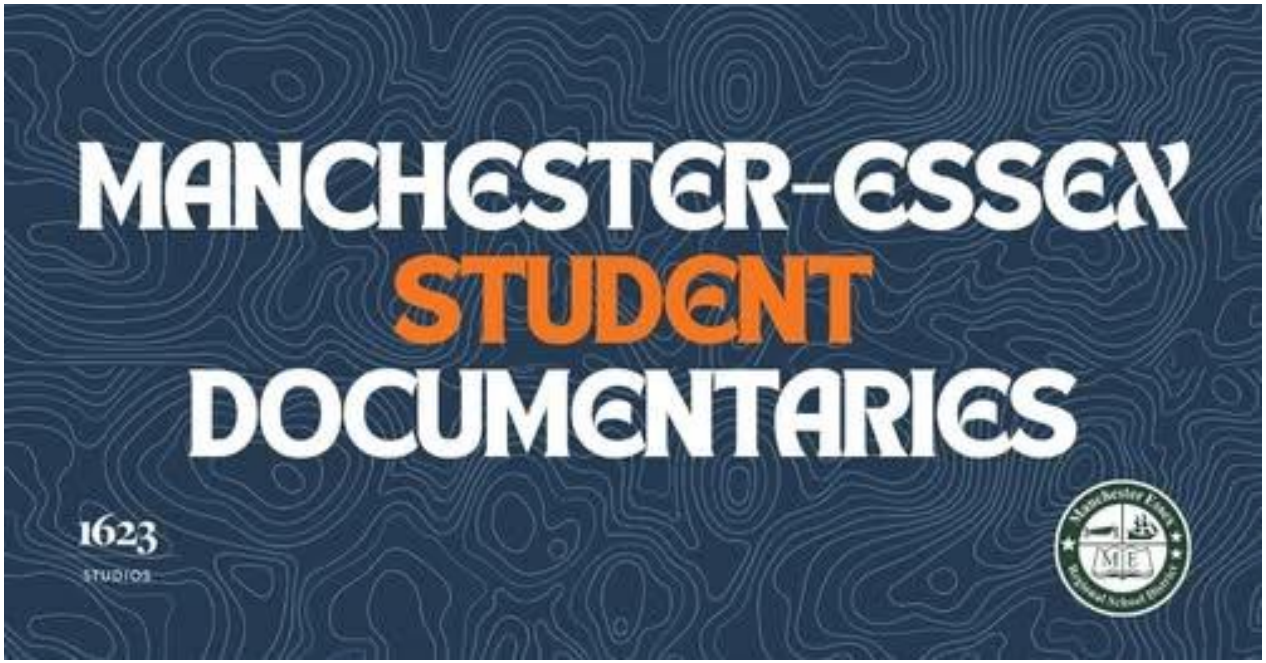
Recognition & Appreciation

Congratulations to Cast & Crew of the 5th Grade Play

Congratulations Class of 2026 off on SCORE

~Julie Sgroi & High School Update

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE



SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

General Updates

MCAS Underway

FY26 Snow Removal Budget

Transportation Contract

North Shore Special Education Consortium Annual Budget

- Passed w/ 9.4% tuition Increase – accounted for in our budget
- Regional Transportation Project continues

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Essex Elementary School Building Project

- The project is entering an exciting stage of the feasibility study
- Team is narrowing down options and set to identify one Preferred Schematic for more in dept design (PSR Phase)
  - This will become the proposed design that will go to voters for approval next fall.
- Upcoming community engagement opportunities include:
  - **Community Meeting – April 16, 6:00pm @ EES**

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

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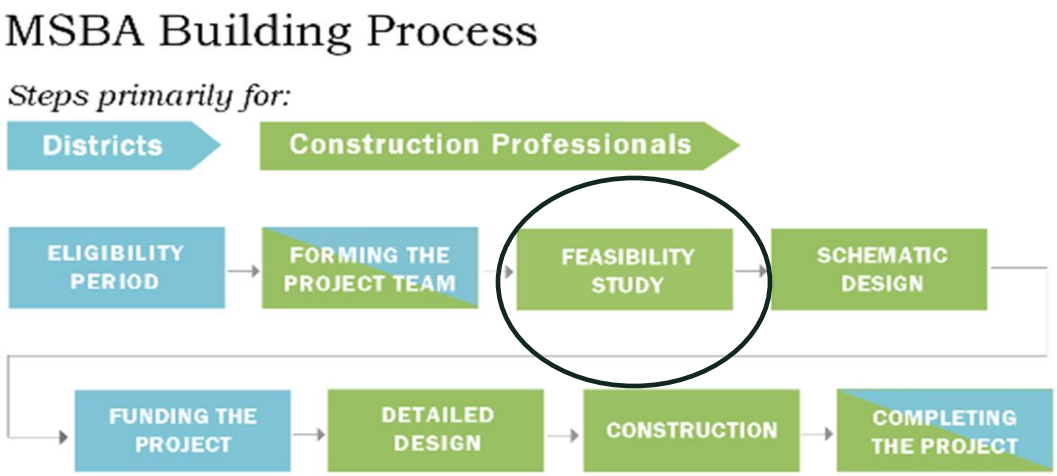
SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Essex Elementary Building Project

- ✓ Forming the Project Team Phase
  - Owner's Project Manager on Board – Dore & Whittier
  - Designer on Board – JCJ Architecture

- ➢ Feasibility Study
  - *PDP (Preliminary Design Program)*
  - ➢ ***PSD (Preferred Schematic Design)***
  - *MSBA Approval*



FY27 BUDGET UPDATE

Town of Essex pursuing two overrides:

- **Town:** $268,000
- **School:** $185,727

- Potential $500K FY27 MERSD shortfall if unsuccessful

- Focus Tonight: *Planning our approach*

FY27 BUDGET UPDATE

Why This Is Not Unique to MERSD

Across Massachusetts Districts

- **Special Education Costs**
  Continued growth, particularly out-of-district placements
- **Transportation Costs**
  Regional districts disproportionately impacted
- **State Funding Pressures**
  - Chapter 70 formula no longer aligned to actual costs
  - UGGA (Unrestricted Government Aid) declining as a share of the state budget
- **Local Impact**
  - Increasing reliance on overrides to maintain services

NSSRT

North Shore Superintendents' Round Table

NSSRT 2025-2026 Legislative Priorities: Strengthening the Future of Massachusetts Schools

Sustainable & Equitable Chapter 70 Funding

The Chapter 70 Formula is Outdated

The current state funding formula fails to reflect the actual costs of mandated educational services, placing an unsustainable burden on local communities.

Reliance on Property Tax Overrides

Many districts must regularly pass property tax overrides to cover essential costs like basic wages and healthcare.

ACTION: Modernize and Stabilize

Priority should be placed on updating the formula to keep pace with inflationary pressures and provide a minimum of **$150** per student in aid for FY27.

Special Education Costs & Stability

Soaring Out-of-District (OOD) Expenses

Costs for specialized transportation and out-of-district placements are among the top financial concerns that local budgets cannot absorb.

FY27 Advocacy for 90% Reimbursement

M.A.S.S. is advocating for the Special Education Circuit Breaker to be fully funded at a 90% reimbursement rate for both tuition and transportation.

EXAMPLE: Explore Cost-Sharing Models

Proposed legislation (S.2864) seeks to explore shared expenses between educational, clinical, and social service sectors to manage comprehensive placement costs.

Transportation Equity & Capital Needs

The Municipal Funding Gap

While regional districts receive some aid, municipal districts currently receive zero state support for mandated transportation services.

Deferred Infrastructure Projects

Critical school capital needs are being postponed as districts focus all available resources on basic operational survival.

ACTION: MSBA and and Municipal Aid

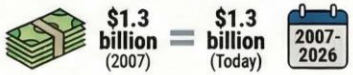
NSSRT requests extending transportation cost support to municipal districts and increasing resources for school infrastructure through the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

Unrestricted Government Aid (UGGA)

UGGA Share of State Budget Halved

Vital local aid has plummeted from 4.8% of the State budget in FY07 to just 2.1% today.

Funding Stagnant for 20 Years



UGGA remains stuck at approximately $1.3 billion, the same actual dollar amount provided in 2007, despite the state budget more than doubling.

RESULT: Impact on Healthcare and Taxes

Stagnant aid forces real estate tax hikes and makes it harder to cover healthcare costs, which have increased over 250% since 2007.

Acknowledging Recent Successes

75% Circuit Breaker Funding
Successful adjustment to fund the Special Education Circuit Breaker transportation at 75%.

Universal Meals Program
Continued legislative support for the Universal School Meals Program ensures students are fed and ready to learn.

Supplemental Chapter 70 Support
Gratitude for additional Chapter 70 funding provided in recent supplemental budgets to address immediate fiscal needs.

FY27 BUDGET UPDATE

Guiding Questions for Discussion:

- Are we still confident that the current budget represents a reasonable and responsible plan?
- As we look ahead to the override vote, which approach does the Committee want to take:
  - stay the course and address any needed adjustments following the vote, or
  - develop a contingency plan and outline potential options in advance
- If reductions are ultimately needed, what types of impacts would we consider acceptable?