

Belfast Central School District
Proposed 2026 Capital Improvement Project

Project Overview and Background

Belfast Central School District is committed to maintaining safe, efficient, and functional facilities that support student learning, staff effectiveness, and community use. As a small, rural school district, Belfast must carefully balance ongoing facility maintenance with the responsible use of taxpayer resources. The proposed 2026 Capital Improvement Project invests in essential infrastructure, building systems, transportation operations, and instructional environments.

The District's 2024 Building Condition Surveys (BCS) (see Main Building BCS and Bus Garage BCS), conducted on December 27, 2024, by the architectural and engineering firm CPL, identified infrastructure needs and recommended improvements to preserve the functionality and long-term viability of District facilities.

The proposed project focuses on four priority areas:

1. Replacement of aging boilers and heating equipment.
2. Replacement of the existing bus maintenance lift.
3. Installation of air conditioning in elementary classrooms.
4. Replacement and improvement of the auditorium parking lot.

These improvements are not cosmetic enhancements or expansions of District facilities. Instead, they are necessary investments in existing infrastructure designed to address aging equipment, improve safety, meet changing environmental and regulatory expectations, and reduce the risk of more costly emergency repairs.

1. Replacement of Boilers and Heating Equipment

2024 Building Condition Survey – Main Building, page 38, Section 87

The District's heating system is critical to daily school operations, especially given the extended periods of cold weather in Western New York. Reliable heating is essential to maintaining safe and appropriate instructional conditions throughout the school year.

According to the 2024 Building Condition Survey:

- The last major reconstruction or replacement of the main building's heat-generating systems occurred in 2009, making these systems approximately 17 years old in 2026.
- The survey identified an expected remaining useful life of five years for the heating equipment, with additional comments indicating approximately five to ten years of remaining service life, depending on the equipment.
- The building relies on boiler-based heating systems to provide heat throughout its instructional and support spaces.

The proposed boiler replacement proactively addresses the age and anticipated service life of the existing equipment. As heating systems age, the potential for mechanical failures, increased maintenance needs, and reduced operating efficiency grows.

A major heating system failure during the winter months could disrupt educational programming, create unsafe or uncomfortable conditions in the building, and require costly emergency repairs or temporary heating solutions.

Replacing the aging boilers through a planned capital project will allow the District to modernize its heating infrastructure, improve system reliability, and potentially increase energy efficiency. It also provides an opportunity to incorporate updated technology and controls that may improve the District's ability to manage heating demand and operating costs.

Rationale: Replacing the approximately 17-year-old heating equipment before a major failure is fiscally responsible, protects the District's facilities, maintains uninterrupted educational operations, and ensures students and staff have a reliable heating system for years to come.

2. Replacement of Bus Maintenance Lift

2024 Building Condition Survey – Bus Garage, page 46, Section 110

The District's transportation program plays a vital role in providing students with access to educational opportunities. As a rural school district with limited public transportation options, Belfast relies heavily on its school bus fleet to transport students safely and consistently.

The District's bus garage inspects, maintains, and repairs school vehicles. The existing bus lift is essential equipment that enables transportation personnel to perform necessary mechanical inspections and repairs.

The 2024 Building Condition Survey records the following:

- The existing vehicle lift was installed in 2008, making it approximately 18 years old in 2026.
- The survey determined an expected remaining useful life of five years.
- The survey specifically recommends: "Replace bus lift."

The lift's age raises concerns about long-term reliability, maintenance needs, and the ability to safely service the District's transportation fleet. During the summer of 2026, the BCS District used funds from its Repair Reserve to complete necessary repairs to the existing bus lift, maintaining safe operation and ensuring continued service for District vehicles. While these repairs addressed immediate operational and safety concerns, they were intended as a short-term solution rather than a permanent replacement for the aging equipment.

Bus lifts handle substantial loads and are used repeatedly. Maintaining reliable lifting equipment is essential to providing a safe working environment for transportation employees and to ensuring that vehicles can be properly inspected and repaired.

A lift failure could disrupt routine bus maintenance, delay necessary repairs, and prompt the District to seek outside maintenance services, possibly increasing operating expenses and reducing transportation operations efficiency.

Replacing the lift will allow the District to continue servicing school vehicles on-site while providing transportation personnel with updated, dependable equipment.

Rationale: Replacing the approximately 18-year-old bus lift directly addresses a need identified in the 2024 Building Condition Survey. This improvement is necessary to support employee safety, efficient fleet maintenance, and the continued reliability of student transportation services.

3. Installation of Air Conditioning in Elementary Classrooms

2024 Building Condition Survey – Main Building, pages 39–40, Sections 88–89

Appropriate classroom temperatures are essential to creating a safe, healthy, and productive learning environment. In recent years, excessive heat has become an increasing concern for schools, particularly in classrooms without mechanical cooling.

Elementary students are especially vulnerable to uncomfortable classroom conditions because of their age and developmental needs. Excessive classroom temperatures can disrupt student concentration and engagement and limit teachers' ability to provide effective instruction.

The 2024 Building Condition Survey identifies the following:

- The District's elementary classrooms currently do not have air conditioning.
- New York State law (§ 409-N of the Education Law) establishes official temperature regulations and heat-safety standards for public schools and BOCES facilities across New York.
- The District must update facilities to abide by the temperature control requirements for classrooms.
- The survey specifically recommends continuing unit ventilator upgrades to include cooling in the remaining classrooms.
- The survey also recommends adding fan-filter units to remaining classrooms as part of ventilation improvements.

These findings show that the District has already begun addressing classroom cooling and ventilation needs, but additional instructional spaces still lack comparable improvements.

The proposed project would install air conditioning in elementary classrooms that currently lack adequate mechanical cooling. This improvement is especially important given New York State's heightened focus on classroom temperatures and the requirements intended to protect students and staff from excessive heat.

Adding classroom air conditioning will help the District maintain more consistent instructional conditions during the warmer periods at the beginning and end of the school year. It will also reduce the risk of classroom disruptions or relocations caused by excessive heat.

In addition, improved temperature control may benefit students with disabilities and those whose individual medical, sensory, or developmental needs make them more sensitive to heat.

Rationale: Installing air conditioning in elementary classrooms addresses a documented need identified in the 2024 Building Condition Survey, advances the District's ongoing efforts to improve instructional

environments, and supports compliance with evolving New York State classroom-temperature requirements. The project will provide more consistent, comfortable, and equitable learning conditions for elementary students and staff.

4. Replacement of Auditorium Parking Lot

2024 Building Condition Survey – Main Building, page 13, Section 55

The auditorium parking lot is an important access point for students, staff, families, and community members attending school activities and events.

In addition to supporting daily school operations, the District regularly uses the auditorium for concerts, musical productions, presentations, ceremonies, and other community events. The condition of the parking lot directly affects visitors' safety, accessibility, and overall experience.

The 2024 Building Condition Survey documents the following:

- The pavement category was last identified as having undergone limited reconstruction in 2020.
- The survey indicates an expected remaining useful life of five years.
- The survey recommends that approximately 22,000 square feet of auditorium parking lot pavement be replaced with a new standard-duty pavement section.

Although the survey lists 2020 as the most recent major reconstruction or replacement year for the building's pavement category, it does not establish that the auditorium parking lot was fully reconstructed in that year. The survey's specific recommendation to replace the auditorium parking lot demonstrates the need for additional work at this location.

A deteriorating parking surface can create uneven pavement, standing water, and other hazards that increase the risk of slips, trips, falls, and vehicle damage. Repeated freeze-thaw cycles in Western New York can accelerate pavement deterioration, making timely improvements especially important.

The proposed replacement would allow the District to address pavement conditions, improve drainage where needed, and establish a more durable parking surface that can support school and community use.

The improvement also supports the District's ongoing resolve to maintain welcoming, accessible facilities for families and community members.

Rationale: Replacing the auditorium parking lot addresses a specific recommendation from the 2024 Building Condition Survey. The project will improve safety, preserve accessibility, reduce ongoing pavement maintenance concerns, and support the continued use of the District's auditorium as an important school and community resource.

Summary of Documented Facility Needs

The following information is drawn from the District's 2024 Building Condition Surveys, with equipment ages calculated as of 2026.

Project component	Survey information	Identified need
Boiler replacement	Last major replacement: 2009; approximately 17 years old	Aging heating equipment; five-year estimated remaining useful life
Bus lift replacement	Last replacement: 2008; approximately 18 years old	Explicit recommendation to replace; five-year estimated remaining useful life
Elementary air conditioning	Cooling systems last updated in 2021; upgrades remain incomplete	Extend mechanical cooling to remaining classrooms
Auditorium parking lot	Pavement category last updated in 2020	Replace approximately 22,000 sq. ft.; five-year estimated remaining useful life

The remaining useful life figures are estimates recorded during the 2024 survey, not guarantees of when equipment or pavement will fail.

Overall Project Justification and Fiscal Responsibility

The Belfast Central School District recognizes the importance of upkeeping its facilities while remaining mindful of the financial impact on local taxpayers. The District developed the proposed Capital Improvement Project around identified infrastructure needs rather than discretionary building enhancements.

Each project component addresses an existing facility or operational need documented through the District's formal Building Condition Survey process. The proposed improvements focus on maintaining critical systems, protecting students and employees, improving learning conditions, and preserving facilities essential to school and community operations.

By addressing building needs through a capital improvement project, the District can plan improvements deliberately and cost-effectively rather than responding to equipment failures and deteriorating conditions with unanticipated emergency expenditures.

The project also reflects the District's long-term commitment toward preserving and caring for its existing facilities. Rather than expanding buildings or adding unnecessary space, the District is prioritizing modernization and replacement of infrastructure that supports current educational programs and operations.

The proposed 2026 Capital Improvement Project will use \$250,000 from the District's Capital Reserve to maximize the amount of construction completed, while also not increasing the tax levy for the project.

The proposed 2026 Capital Improvement Project invests in the safety, reliability, efficiency, and long-term sustainability of Belfast Central School District facilities. Addressing these needs now will help protect the community's investment in its school buildings, reduce the risk of future operational glitches, and ensure the District can continue to provide safe, appropriate instructional environments for students, staff, and the Belfast community.