

Essex Elementary School Building Project

A long-term investment in our schools and communities

A new school is proposed at the existing Essex Elementary site, 12 Story Street. It would complete the District's long-term school facilities plan, following the regional middle high school and Manchester Memorial.

Why a new school

Opened in 1957, Essex Elementary has aging systems, limited accessibility, and spaces that make teaching and student services more difficult. A new school would address the building and site needs together.

What the project provides

- Classrooms with nearby spaces for small-group teaching and student support.
- Accessible classrooms and therapy spaces, plus dedicated art, music, world language, library, and project spaces.
- Improved drainage, separate bus and parent routes, safer walking routes, and accessible outdoor play areas.

Benefits for both towns

The school is planned for 250 K–5 students and 30 preschool students. Preschool and district special education programs serve children from both towns. Shared spaces, a field, play areas, and a walking path support community use.

A lasting solution

The Building Committee unanimously selected new construction after studying repair, renovation, and school configuration alternatives. The approximately $53 million repair option would not qualify for state assistance and would retain educational and layout limitations. That feasibility estimate is not a detailed project budget.



School stays on site during construction

Students would move into completed spaces as work progresses. Construction is planned for spring–summer 2028 through December 2030. Move dates will be confirmed as planning progresses.

Cost funding and next steps

Project funding	Estimate
Total project budget	$95,351,985
State grant	$20.9 million
Shared by the towns	$74.4 million

Financing costs are additional. The budget covers building and site work, professional services, equipment, and unexpected costs. It includes $3.6 million in cost reductions.

How state funding works

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) offers an anticipated 36.84% reimbursement of eligible, approved costs. This does not apply to the full budget. State rules limit which costs qualify and how much is reimbursed.

Formal state funding approval is targeted for December 9, 2026. The state grant must reduce the amount paid by local taxpayers.

How the towns share the cost

Town	Share	Local cost estimate
Manchester-by-the-Sea	66.64%	$49.6 million
Essex	33.36%	$24.8 million

The estimated annual tax impact is $84 per $100,000 of assessed property value in Manchester and $118 per $100,000 in Essex. Actual costs depend on assessed value, borrowing, and interest rates. Payments change over time.

The vote sets a maximum project budget before the grant is applied. Borrowing would occur in stages.

Local Authorization

November 16, 2026: Town Meetings in both towns consider project borrowing authorization.

Questions about the project?

Scan for frequently asked questions, designs, and funding details.

You can also visit the District's Essex Elementary School Building Project website.

- https://www.mersd.org/essex-elementary-school-building-project

Email Questions to: essexsbc@mersd.org