

Pierce Building Project and Town Override
A resource provided by the Pierce PTO

**Pierce Building Project:
Providing an Equitable, Accessible, and Optimal Learning Environment
for All Students and Teachers**

CLICK HERE →

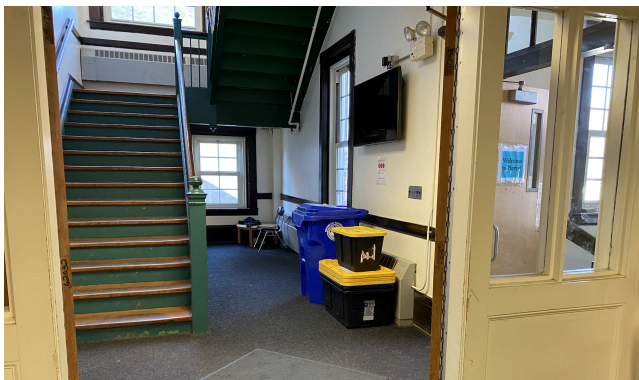
☰ Pierce School Building Project - FAQ

**An updated, comprehensive 26 page document
addressing common questions and clarifications**

Source: [Public Schools of Brookline, FAQ](#)

**Pierce School 2023: Is this a school of the 21st century?
Are fixing these issues luxury requests?**

Non-handicap accessible building



Few building doors/landings allow for safe entrance of a wheelchair. Once inside, a wheelchair cannot navigate to all parts of the building.

Classrooms with no dividing walls



Photo: Background and foreground: 2 classrooms divided by furniture
*Students in grades 2-8 all experience classrooms that are not fully enclosed.

Classrooms sharing teaching space at the same time

Learning spaces in the hallways



Two ELE (English Learner Education) teachers conduct classes at the same time in one classroom. Foreground/Background: Note that the desks face opposite directions for focal points on 2 different teachers.



Circled: Math Center next to a community gathering area and in a high traffic crossing point between school sections

There are many learning spaces in hallways and open areas including Speech-Language Therapy, English Learner Education, Literacy and Math Centers, Special Education, and individual and small group support

PLEASE NOTE:

Question 1 (Pierce Debt Exclusion) and Question 2ab (Town Operating Override) are **BOTH** significantly important

to the functioning, excellence, and equity across Brookline's schools,
to maintaining the numbers, quality, and breadth of teacher and staff positions in the district,
and to sustaining exceptional educational programs in Brookline.

KEEP READING TO LEARN

- What YES votes on Questions 1 and 2ab will do to Brookline Schools
- What NO votes on Questions 1 and 2ab will do to Brookline Schools

CONTENTS

- [Voter information](#)
- [Ballot Question #1 - Shall the Town Rebuild Pierce School?](#)
- [What are the current conditions of Pierce and why the current proposed design?](#)
 - [Tour the School - See tour dates](#)
- [What happens if there is a "Yes" vote on Question 1?](#)
- [What happens if there is a "No" vote on Question 1?](#)
- [What is the swing space plan for grades K-5?](#)
- [What is the swing space plan for grades 6-8?](#)
- [Ballot Question #2a - Funding for School and Town Services](#)
 - [What happens if there is a "Yes" vote on Question 2a?](#)
 - [What happens if there is a "No" vote on Question 2a?](#)

- [Helpful links](#)
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Voter information

- Register to vote or check your registration status [HERE](#) (Last day to register is April 22)
- For general voting information, click [HERE](#). This page includes information about voting by, early voting (Last day is April 28) and May 2nd [Polling Locations](#).

Not eligible to vote? Voting is not the only way to support the Pierce community. By staying informed and spreading the word about the upcoming vote and its impact on Pierce School, you can make a difference! Want to be involved in spreading the word? Contact pierce.pto@gmail.com for information.

[Go back to Menu](#)

Ballot Question #1: Shall the Town Rebuild Pierce School?

Summary of Question 1: This question would approve funding for the town to rebuild the Pierce school, which would address the structural and educational deficiencies of the current school, including classrooms that do not meet current educational standards, facilities that do not meet ADA requirements, and overcrowding issues. Approval of the ballot question will allow the town to move forward with building a new Pierce school that addresses these concerns and improves the learning environment for the Brookline Village community.

What happens with a Yes vote? Scroll down.

What happens with a No vote? Scroll down.

For official language as it will appear on the ballot, go here:

<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/View/40932/Ballot-Question-Information-Mailing>

[Go back to Menu](#)

What are the current conditions of Pierce and why the current proposed design?

Pierce School was originally built as a 3 section (3 homerooms per grade) school. Now a 4 section school, the instructional spaces and overall facilities inadequately fit this larger student population. The open classroom concept (rooms without walls) which permeates much of the school provides a suboptimal learning environment for students with sensory processing difficulties, anxiety, hearing loss, and other developmental and educational needs. Last renovated in 1974 - nearly 50 years ago - the aging structure has flaws, damage, maintenance issues and outdated plumbing, heating, and electrical systems that are difficult to remedy only using repair measures and pose ongoing safety and security concerns. In addition, the buildings are not ADA compliant, meaning that students in

need of physical accommodations and handicap access are unable to enroll at Pierce school, and must attend a school outside of their neighborhood. Similarly, teachers with such needs must seek work elsewhere.

CLICK HERE →

☰ Pierce School Building Project - FAQ

Starting on Page 7, read about all the possible designs explored, why the current design was selected and found to be the most cost-effective means to providing a school that

- fits the population and needs of a 4-section school
- is handicap accessible
- meets building codes
- provides appropriate learning spaces for all students and teachers
- Integrates the needs of the Town of Brookline (parking garage, environmental standards, and other important factors given Pierce's location in a densely populated area that is also near many municipal buildings)

This section includes discussion as to why simply repairing or renovating the buildings will not achieve all of the above needs to make Pierce a 4-section school with 21st century standards.

TOUR THE SCHOOL

The PTO was planning to host school tours, but another entity - [Yes for Brookline](#) - already scheduled tours of Pierce School. We encourage you to attend a tour and see the facilities with your own eyes:

[Link to Pierce School tour dates and RSVP form](#)

CAN'T TAKE A TOUR? WATCH THIS VIDEO

[Pierce School Building Project: Current Conditions](#)

INFORMATION FROM SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

[March 2023 PTO Forum: Principal Yadoff's Presentation](#)

In these slides, made for presentation to the Pierce school community, Principal Yadoff highlights the current conditions of the Pierce School, the history and process of the Pierce Building Project, the design of the new building, and next steps, following an approved or rejected debt exclusion override. **Photos and images included.**

INFORMATION FROM THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

[Pierce School Building Project - Overview](#)

This page includes current and historical information spanning several years - presentations, slides, reports, data, etc. - on the Pierce School Building Project

CLICK HERE →

☰ Pierce School Building Project - FAQ

**An updated, comprehensive 26 page document
addressing common questions and clarifications**

Read about design choices, cost evaluations, state funding, and much more.

INFORMATION FROM THE BROOKLINE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The Brookline Parents Organization hosted a Q & A Forum with School Committee members, David Pearlman and Mariah Nobrega, on the Pierce School project and ballot question View the forum:

[Highlights](#)

This abridged 10 minute summary of the forum answers these questions:

- (0:00) What were the options and why is the current proposal the only option that makes sense
- (3:44) The importance of right-sizing Pierce
- (4:47) Energy efficiencies and lower operating costs
- (7:11) Renovation is a false choice: Rebuilding Pierce is the only prudent option

[Go back to Menu](#)

What happens if there is a Yes vote on Question 1?

If Question 1 about the Pierce Renovation is approved, the project will move forward, in which case next steps would include:

- Site visits by staff to both sites review spaces and draft room maps.
- Creation of a parent committee to help plan for bus transportation to and from Fisher Hill for grades 6-8, and drop off and pick up routines for both sites.
- Ordering of packing materials for staff; creation of packing and labeling systems, including scheduling of packing time, organization of volunteers, etc.
- Extensive work this summer to build thoughtful, student centered schedules that can transition mid year to a split campus with minimal disruption.
- Ongoing planning and communication for site use, including scheduling family site visits prior to February relocation.

Source: First Friday Principal's Update (April 7, 2023)

Parent input will be sought and will influence how Pierce School will choose to make use of swing space and approach logistics. Your voice matters - stay tuned this late spring, summer, and onward to stay engaged and share your thoughts!

[Go back to Menu](#)

What happens if there is a No vote on Question 1?

A No vote will mean that

- The Pierce School will NOT be rebuilt nor renovated

Hypothetically, after a failed vote, the town might
get back to the drawing board
and make new plans for Pierce School

REALISTICALLY, there is NO PLAN B for a failed vote

- The **grounds and facilities will remain “as is” with no changes being made to the building for the foreseeable future.** The current conditions of Pierce School, as highlighted above, will be the school that current and future enrolled students get for many years, likely for the entirety of the current students' tenure at the school.
- All students and teachers of Pierce School will continue learning and teaching in a suboptimal educational environment
- Many students with disabilities and special needs will continue to be required to go to a school that is outside of their neighborhood and apart from siblings who are at Pierce
- Students with disabilities and special needs who do enroll at Pierce will continue learning in a suboptimal educational environment. As it is now, there are families within the Pierce district who choose to enroll their students at other Brookline schools because those schools better meet the needs of their children.

Why is there no Plan B?

Why not just renovate the school?

Or wait to make a better plan?

From the [Pierce School Building Project - FAQ](#)

What happens if the project is not approved?

[The MSBA's Failed Vote Policy can be found HERE.](#)

According to the MSBA's Failed Vote Policy, it is likely that a new Statement of Interest (SOI) would need to be submitted and the entire process would need to begin again, but only if the MSBA chose to invite the Pierce School into the program again.

- If reapplying for MSBA funding, the project would likely push out 6 to 10 years.
- If proceeding without MSBA funding with the same design, the project would lose state funding, but could proceed into Design Development as soon as the project is approved by the Town.
- If proceeding without MSBA funding with a NEW design, the project would push out 2 to 3 years.

An average of 4% escalation should be added per year the project is pushed out.

- Given the stipulations from the MSBA, if the Town of Brookline does not approve the project and a new vote - under MSBA protocol - is not allowed, **the town will lose \$38 million in state funds**
- If the town wanted to move forward with the Pierce Building Project without state funds, the town would need to approve holding a new vote for the same design, but now with a **higher cost** to the town due to state funding loss. Then the voters would have to approve it.
- If the town chose to pursue an alternative design, the process would be complicated and take time:
 - The renovation-only option had an estimated cost of \$137 million. No schematic design currently exists for that approach, which was rejected because the existing buildings, when brought up to current codes, could not accommodate the needs of Pierce's school program:
 - Any such renovation approach would require down-sizing Pierce (from an approximately 725 4-section enrollment to an approximately 550-student 3-section school). This approach means endorsing required redistricting of hundreds of kids. Redistricting will likely lead to a debate on whether that is the right "Plan B", versus some other option/approach.
 - From there, and even if and when Brookline voters could achieve consensus, the town would have to hire architects to design that project, which will require town money and years of work and public process. In the meantime, construction costs will be increasing by 4% or more per year (recently, it has been 7% per year) - hence, \$137 million is not a real price tag with a renovation.
- Also see [Highlights from Pierce Building Q & A with the Brookline Parent Organization](#)
 - (Timestamp 7:11) Renovation is a false choice: Rebuilding Pierce is the only prudent option

The Cost of a No Vote

- As stated above, a No vote will cost a loss of \$38 million in state funding
- Little savings for a lesser school: If question 1 passes, the town's portion of the project cost is \$172 million to build a school that meets the population and education needs of all students. If Question 1 fails, and *if* the town approves a renovation approach, it will cost upwards of \$137 million and require a reduction in school population in an already densely populated area.

- More money and further delay for something we can pay less for now. If the town decides that it will move forward only with a rebuild and not a renovation, the cost for a rebuild will only increase each year, will likely not have state funding, will still need a town vote (and if that fails, then more time will elapse and costs will keep rising), and the building design will likely not be much better than the one we have now. It will just be more expensive.

The priceless cost of a No vote will fall on the children and teachers. Year after year, students will be denied enrollment at Pierce School or will continue their education in a challenging learning environment which includes classrooms without walls, safety and security hazards, loss of instructional time due to a poor layout for a K-8 school, and teachers who, instead of spending 100% of their innovation and creativity on educational endeavors, will continue to spend a significant portion of their efforts on making their classroom spaces and schedules simply function.

[Go back to Menu](#)

What is the swing space plan for grades K-5?

Lower Pierce (K-5) at Old Lincoln School 194 Boylston Street

Current: Pierce Classrooms, grades 2-5 are open concept without doors nor complete wall enclosures



Photo: Grade 2 classroom. Grade 2 classrooms, known as the second grade tower, have open sides and are stacked one on top of another, connected by this stairwell. The noise from all 4 classrooms (and the adjacent school hallways) echo up and down the cavernous cement structure.

Swing Space: Old Lincoln School, recently improved with \$3.5M in renovations is built as a complete school with updated classrooms and facilities



New Pierce: A rebuilt Pierce School will provide equitable access to all students and optimal learning spaces



- During construction work at Pierce School, grades K through 5 are planned to be located at the Old Lincoln School, a former Brookline K-8 school located at 194 Boylston Street, approximately 0.5 miles from Pierce School (estimated to be about a 10 minute walk).

- The Old Lincoln School has been used as swing space for almost every Brookline school and town construction project, and was recently improved with \$3.5M in renovations. The bright classrooms are updated and have walls and doors. There is a small playground nearby, a gym, a library, a cafeteria, and a mix of large small group teaching spaces. The below photos were taken during use of the site for students of the Florida Ruffin Ridley School.



- PSED programs will be operated from Old Lincoln School and Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) will be addressed/accommodated as part of planning for the site.
- Detailed plans for allocation and programming of space within the building and transportation have not yet been developed, but such plans will be fleshed out after the Pierce project is approved. Planning will be led by Pierce administrators and teachers, with input from town staff and Pierce families between May 2023 and February 2024.

Click below to learn more details about the Pierce relocation:

[March 2023 Pierce Relocation FAQ](#)

[January 2023 Pierce Project Update - Relocation Planning](#)

[Go back to Menu](#)

What is the swing space plan for grades 6-8?

Upper Pierce (6-8) at Newbury College 150 Fisher Avenue

Current: Middle school grades (6-8) travel outdoors between 3 buildings, in all weather, contributing to lost instruction time. Below: 2 classrooms made out of converted office space and separated by bulletin boards. Noise is a challenging factor.	Swing Space: The Newbury College site has individual enclosed classroom. At this campus, Pierce School can create a learning environment that focuses specifically on the needs and nurturing of the middle school student.	New Pierce: A rebuilt Pierce School will provide equitable access to all students and optimal learning spaces 
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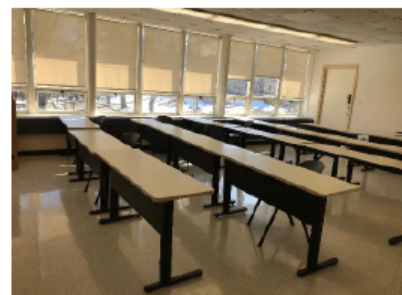


- During construction work at Pierce School, grades 6, 7 and 8 are planned to be located at the Academic Center building on the former Newbury College campus, near Runkle and Heath schools and Fisher Hill Reservoir Park.
- The town will provide transportation. In the morning, the plan is to run 2 trips - an early bus and a later bus. For students who arrive before school breakfast, the goal is to make extra help and clubs available at that early time.* After school there will be a bus right at dismissal and a later bus. The school anticipates that the bus plans will accommodate all students who want to be bused. Bus routes and other details will be determined in connection with other planning, as discussed below.

**If Question 2a does not pass, these extra opportunities will likely be cut.*

Click here: [What happens if there is a “No” vote on Question 2a?](#)

- The Academic Center building was built in 1957, expanded in 1997 to add a library, and includes classroom, library, cafe, and office space. It is currently used by the building department, which will continue to have office space there.



- The recently-completed Fisher Hill Reservoir Park is adjacent to the school building and will be used for recess and outdoor gym classes. Photos of the park (including a photo of the park sign with a site plan) are included below.



- Detailed plans for allocation and programming of space within the building and transportation have not yet been developed, but such plans will be fleshed out after the Pierce project is approved. Planning will include evaluation of options for indoor gym and lunch spaces within the building.
- Planning will be led by Pierce administrators and teachers, with input from town staff and Pierce families between May 2023 and February 2024. Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) will be addressed/accommodated as part of planning for the site.

Click below to learn more details about the Pierce relocation:

[March 2023 Pierce Relocation FAQ](#)

[January 2023 Pierce Project Update - Relocation Planning](#)

[Go back to Menu](#)

Ballot Question #2ab - Funding for School and Town Services

Question 2A: This question would provide additional funding through an operating override for town and school expenses. Due to Prop 2½, in which property taxes can only increase by 2½% each year, the town faces a structural deficit in which our operating costs exceed our annual revenues. Without an operating override, the town will not be able to maintain current service levels.

For official language as it will appear on the ballot, go here:

<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/View/40932/Ballot-Question-Information-Mailing>

What happens if there is a “Yes” vote on Question 2ab?

- A Yes vote will allow the town to continue to fund needed school and municipal expenses, including class sizes, current teaching and staffing levels, maintenance of town roads, and rodent control measures.

What happens if there is a “No” vote on Question 2ab?

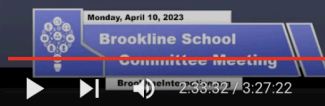
- A No vote will result in significant teacher and staff reductions and programmatic cuts on the school side, as well as deferral of needed maintenance and improvements and staff cuts, on the municipal side.
- At the April 20, 2023 School Committee meeting, Superintendent Guillory presented on the impact of a failed override. [Link to meeting recording](#). See below for highlights from that meeting.

If override fails, unprecedented cuts to education

	FY24	FY25	FY26
Town Allocation	\$127,002,815	\$131,648,054	\$135,674,677
PSB Projected Budget	\$131,864,685	\$138,196,490	\$144,726,604
INITIAL GAP	-\$4,861,870	-\$6,548,436	-\$9,051,927
Programmatic Adjustments	\$1,850,000	\$1,950,000	\$2,950,000
SUBSEQUENT GAP	-\$3,011,870	-\$4,598,436	-\$6,101,927
Student Services Support	-\$240,000	-\$251,520	-\$263,593
CUTS IF OVERRIDE FAILS	-\$3,251,870	-\$4,849,956	-\$6,365,520
Budget underfunded by:	3.7%	4.75%	6.25%

\$1.85M in programmatic adjustments taken by PSB that are already in the FY24 budget (rises to \$2.95M in FY26) - will be taken whether override passes or fails

\$3.25M in cuts that also must be made if override fails (nearly doubles to \$6.37M in FY26)



"If the override fails, we just need to be clear there will be unprecedented cuts to the education that we're delivering here in the Public Schools of Brookline."

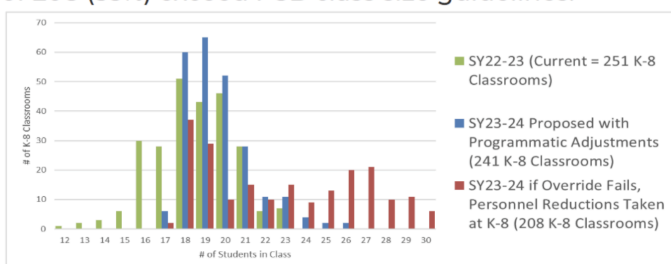
- Superintendent Guillory

"What [Dr. Guillory] showed...was not just a \$3.25M cut but a \$6M+ cut over three years. So we're not talking about 'oh a little bit of class size growth' and 'a little bit of program reductions'...it's tremendous and it's devastating...these are really award-winning excellent programs and the idea that we would even have to contemplate this is really devastating."

- Mariah Nobrega,
School Committee Finance Chair

Impact on K-8 Class Size of Failed Override (\$3.25M reduction = 43 FTEs = 33 classrooms)

Severe Impacts. Class sizes range from 17-30, average 22.8. 68 of 208 (33%) exceed PSB class size guidelines.



Consequence: reduced ability for in-class "Tier 1" support (academic and socioemotional), with direct impacts on Tier 2/3 support

For K-8 classrooms - Cutting Teacher Positions

43 Full Time Employees (FTEs) will be cut, meaning a reduction of 33 classrooms and an increase in class sizes

Impact on Programs of Failed Override (\$3.25M reduction = 43 FTEs)

- Because of the federal/state mandates, partial list of programs likely to be impacted are listed below
- No one program is large enough to address gap, multiple programs impacted
- Partial list of programs that may be impacted:
 - Athletics (9-12) - 3.5 FTE
 - Career and Technical Education (9-12) - 9.23 FTE
 - Libraries and Educational Technology (K-12) - 24 FTE
 - Performing Arts (K-12) - 27.07 FTE
 - Visual Arts (K-12) - 17.54 FTE
 - World Language (K-8) - 27.3 FTE

Consequence: reduced programming, larger class sizes (particularly at HS)

For school programs: Cutting Teacher and Staff Positions

43 Full Time Employees (FTEs) will be cut, meaning reduced programming and larger class sizes, particularly in the high school

"I want everybody who's watching this and everybody who's listening to understand the impacts of this...**this is a complete gutting of our Public Schools. This takes our entire Public School system down to the bare bones.** That is not why people move to Brookline, so if you are listening and you value your home values you should be watching these numbers carefully and to the advisory committee who's listening, I want you to look at these numbers. This is what you're recommending, this is what you're pushing!...This is the reality of

	what you're talking about, this is what you're encouraging Brookline to do, this is not why people move to Brookline." - Nancy Rhei Gorer, School Committee Member
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[Go back to Menu](#)

Helpful Links

In addition to the links mentioned throughout the subsections of this page, these links may be helpful:

For general voting information, click [HERE](#)

[Link to Town of Brookline Ballot Question Information Mailing](#)

[Brookline League of Women Voters](#)

[VOTE 411.org](#)

Operating Override and Debt Exclusion Calculator:

<https://apps.brooklinema.gov/assessors/odesearch.asp>

[Go back to Menu](#)