

FAQs



FOR WILMINGTON SCHOOLS

Frequently Asked Questions

We know there are a lot of questions (*and misinformation*) swirling regarding the new school, so we are here to help! Have more questions? Want to talk to someone directly? Email us at YesForWilmingtonSchools@gmail.com.

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About the Proposed School

1. Why does Wilmington need a new school?

The Wildwood (built in 1955), Woburn Street (built in 1963), and North Intermediate (built in 1962) schools are each over 60 years old and in need of major repairs and updates. These buildings were not designed for modern teaching, accessibility, or safety standards. A new consolidated PreK–5 school offers a long-term solution that supports student learning, improves building efficiency, and addresses long-standing facility challenges. See a [summary of existing building issues](#) here (with pictures!).

2. What are the specific school issues that need addressing?

1. Core facility and infrastructure challenges, including:
 - a. **Aging buildings** with outdated HVAC, plumbing, and electrical
 - b. **Leaking roofs**, poor site **drainage**, and exterior shells with little or no insulation
 - c. **Windows** are drafty, damaged, and clouded – contributing to energy loss and poor comfort
 - d. **No active fire suppression systems** in any buildings
2. Safety, accessibility, and environment, including:
 - a. **Inadequate security measures**: insufficient controlled entry and lack of infrastructure to support active shooter protocols
 - b. **Accessibility deficiencies**, from entrances and bathrooms to corridors and classrooms
 - c. **Poor indoor environments**: minimal light, unreliable temperature control, and poor air circulation
3. Educational and program limitations, including:
 - a. **Little or no space** for specialized instruction, therapy, or 21st-century learning models such as multi-tiered learning
 - b. Shared multi-use rooms **disrupt focus and limit privacy** for services like testing or counseling

Bottom line: Many of these schools were built 60+ years ago. They no longer support modern education – creating safety concerns, limiting teaching options, and increasing maintenance burdens. They're now a barrier to delivering high-quality learning environments. Want more details (including pictures)? This is a great resource that [documents issues across all three schools](#).

3. Why does this project include more than Wildwood?

Consolidating schools has been part of the plan from the beginning. While Wildwood was identified as the highest-need building, the Town has long considered a broader solution:

- **2017:** The Facilities Master Plan recommended consolidating elementary schools.
- **2021–2022:** MSBA presentations and a [Special Town Meeting article](#) Wilmington voters approved included exploring PreK–3 and PreK–5 consolidation options.
- **2023:** After public meetings, surveys, and forums, the Wildwood School Building Committee found strong community support for a single PreK–5 school to replace **Wildwood, Woburn Street, and North Intermediate.**
- This approach also maximizes **state funding**, as the MSBA prioritizes school consolidation.

4. Why combine the three schools into one?

1. **Improves educational consistency** and reduces disruptive transitions between schools.
2. **Simpler logistics:** Families with multiple children across different grades benefit from one drop-off/pick-up location and one calendar of events.
3. Allows for **operational efficiency**.
 - a. **Shared resources:** Facilities (e.g., libraries, gyms, cafeterias) and support staff (e.g., counselors, nurses, specialists) can be shared across all grades, **reducing duplication and cost.**
 - b. **One leadership team** driving consistency across grade-levels, streamlining communication, policies, and decision-making.
 - c. **Fewer costly systems to maintain:** One efficient HVAC system, One roof, etc.
4. Reduced project costs and funding.
 - a. It qualifies Wilmington for **significantly more reimbursement** from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), which supports projects that combine outdated facilities. Contribution from MSBA is 62 million.
 - b. The PreK-5 consolidation will **actually cost less** than building a new Wildwood and repairing Woburn Street and North Intermediate schools.
 - i. New consolidated PreK-5 cost estimate: 173M - 62M = 111 million
 - ii. New Wildwood and renovated Woburn/North: 134.7 to 149 million
 - iii. Overall **cost savings** for the consolidated project: **24.7 million**

5. Where will the new school be built?

Behind the existing North Intermediate School. Once the new school is complete, the old North building will be taken down.

6. How old are the current schools?

- Wildwood: built in 1955 (older than the Town Hall, which is currently being replaced)
- Woburn Street: built in 1963
- North Intermediate: built in 1962

7. When would the new school open?

If approved, the new school is estimated to open in Fall 2028.

Cost, Taxes, and State Reimbursement

8. What's the total cost of the new school project?

The total cost is currently estimated at \$173 million. This includes construction, furniture, project management, and contingency funds for unforeseen issues. Note that the MSBA will be reimbursing \$62 million. **This brings the actual cost to \$111 million for Wilmington.**

9. What would the cost be if we replaced Wildwood and repaired the Woburn and North Intermediate schools instead?

The total estimated cost for replacing Wildwood and just repairing Woburn and North Intermediate (with no improvements to space needs or support for education) is at least \$134.7 million. In comparison, the proposed PreK-5 school cost to Wilmington is estimated to be \$111 million. **Overall cost savings for one consolidated project is 24.7 million.**

10. Will this raise my property taxes?

Yes, it will temporarily raise taxes through a **debt exclusion**. The MSBA reimbursement of \$62 million will significantly lower the cost to the town. A calculator will be provided to estimate the impact on your household. 👉 You can calculate the [tax impact for you here](#)

11. Why is the gym 12,000 square feet?

The gym is designed as a **shared community space**, supporting not only school activities but also town events, recreation programs, and other public uses. Its 12,000 square feet match the combined gym space of the three existing schools, ensuring continued access and functionality for both students and the broader Wilmington community. Athletic leadership documented that current gym space in Wilmington is insufficient to meet the community's demand and without the 12,000 sq ft gym, Wilmington would lose gym space.

12. How has the Town of Wilmington involved the community in planning the Wildwood school project?

The Town of Wilmington has provided **extensive and ongoing opportunities** for public input throughout the Wildwood school building project.

Since residents approved the feasibility study in March 2022, residents have been invited to participate in a wide range of outreach activities:

- [4 Days of Community-wide Educational Visioning \(Sept - Oct 2023\)](#), open to all, participants included a mix of town leaders, teachers, community members set the goals and strategic vision for this project
- [Seven public forums](#) (Nov 2023 – Jun 2025), hosted in-person, virtually, and in hybrid formats to review enrollment options, site selection, school design options, costs, timelines.
- [50+ School Building Committee meetings](#), open to the public with hybrid access, published agendas, and recorded presentations.
- **6+ post mailed community updates**, delivered in water bills, town topics, etc
- Multiple **event-based surveys and in-person outreach**, including Fun on the Fourth, Senior Center and other forums to gather direct feedback.
- A deliberate decision in August 2024 to **postpone a key committee vote** to October 1, allowing for more community feedback and discussion.
- A **mailed community-wide survey** in September 2024, sent to all households with responses accepted online through October 1, 2024.
- Regular **communications via WCTV, the Wilmington Apple, Town Crier, district newsletters, and project website updates**, including video tours, Q&A segments, and meeting recaps.

Through these combined efforts - spanning over **three years**, multiple formats, and all major demographic groups - the Town has ensured that residents have had **every opportunity to stay informed, ask questions, and share input** on the future of Wilmington's elementary school facilities.

Voting Information

13. What are the voting dates?

1. **Special Town Meeting:** Saturday, **September 13, 2025** (in-person only)
 - Requires a **two-thirds majority** of people in attendance to vote "Yes"
2. **Ballot Vote:** Tuesday, **September 16, 2025** (early and absentee voting available)
 - Requires a **simple majority** to vote "Yes"

Both votes must pass for the school project to move forward.

14. Why are there two votes?

- The **Special Town Meeting vote** authorizes the project and financing plan. The in-person vote is required by town law.
- The **ballot vote** approves the **temporary property tax increase** (debt exclusion) required to fund the project – this is mandated by state law.

15. How long will the town meeting last?

There's no set length, but past meetings (like for the high school) lasted about **1–1.5 hours**. Residents can motion to **end debate** and call for a vote once discussion is sufficient.

16. Will there be childcare and family options during the town meeting?

Bringing kids? No problem – there are multiple options:

1. **Drop-off childcare** for ages 4+ (run by CARES).
👉 [Register here](#) by **September 5th** so that staffing can be secured
2. **Family-friendly rooms** with live video and audio feeds (parents stay with children)
3. Feel free to bring them into the standard meeting area

Bring **nut-free snacks**, water, and quiet activities.

17. How do I know if I'm registered to vote?

[Check your registration status here](#)

18. What do I do if my voter status is registered, but inactive?

It means that you're registered and able to vote, but you'll need to bring your state ID to vote at the Special Town Meeting and ballot vote.

19. When is the voter registration deadline, and how do I register?

You must be registered to vote by **September 3, 2025**.

👉 [Register to vote](#)

Other Common Questions

20. What happens if we don't get the required majorities at both votes?

- Wilmington **risks \$62 million in state reimbursement** (MSBA)
- All costs fall on **local taxpayers** – and will likely be higher
- **Wildwood students** stay in split/shared space
- **Planning starts over** for North Side elementary schools
- Needed work at **West Side schools** is pushed further out

21. What happens to the MSBA funding if the new school project is voted down?

If the town does not approve funding for the proposed PreK–5 school within the MSBA's required 120-day window, the project will not move forward, and the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) will consider the town to have **declined the funding opportunity**.

Within 10 business days of a failed vote, the town must submit:

- The certified vote results
- An explanation of why the vote failed
- A plan and timeline for next steps

The MSBA may review the town's plan, but they are **not obligated** to extend the funding window or keep the project active. In most cases, the town must **start over** by submitting a new Statement of Interest (SOI) during the next MSBA application cycle.

This means:

- The town **loses access** to the current MSBA reimbursement (which covers \$62 million of eligible costs)
- Any future school project must **start from the beginning**, entering a competitive process with no guarantee of re-acceptance
- The process could take **many years**. In other towns, delays of **5 - 10 years** have occurred following a failed vote
- Associated **increased cost per sq ft** due to inflation, rising construction costs, etc.

In short, a “no” vote is not just a delay. It's a reset that puts state funding at risk and leaves students, teachers, and families with aging school buildings and no clear path forward.

22. What about the West side of town?

The Town Manager has shared that once pension obligations (~\$14 million annually) end around 2035, Wilmington will have enough budget capacity to fund a West Side school project **without** needing a debt exclusion (i.e. temporary tax increase).

23. What happens to Woburn Street and Wildwood if we consolidate to a new PreK–5 school at the North site?

If a new PreK–5 school is built at the North site, the Woburn Street and Wildwood School buildings would first need to be formally returned to the town by the School Department. After that, a Reuse Committee – appointed by the Select Board – would study potential future uses for the buildings and make a recommendation to the board.

The Select Board would then decide whether to keep the building for municipal use, demolish it, or pursue other options. Leasing or selling land would require the Town Manager to 1st declare the property surplus, and then **it would need to be approved by Residents** by a Town Meeting vote.

At this time, the Town Manager has noted he is **not in favor of selling these properties**, citing the town's ongoing need for municipal space. However, the final decision would follow this public process and involve multiple opportunities for community input. Hear it directly from the Town Manager: <https://youtu.be/hJxrt0Nqsxk?t=5016>

24. Hasn't the town already invested a lot in the North?

Over the past 10 years, about **\$2.3 million** has been spent on maintenance and upgrades at North, including:

- Roof replacement – \$640,000
- Windows (partially MSBA-funded) – \$719,000
- Boiler – \$474,000
- Split AC units (partially CARES-funded) – \$60,000
- LED lighting – \$145,000
- Fire alarm updates – \$247,000

While that may seem substantial, it averages just **\$230K per year** – a small fraction of the cost it would take to renovate and expand the building to modern standards.

Think of it like an old car: maintenance keeps it running for a while, but eventually, replacing it becomes the more practical and cost-effective option.

25. Who supports this project?

The project has strong support from multiple groups:

- **The Wilmington School Committee**, which voted unanimously to advance the project.
- **The Wilmington Select Board**, which approved moving the project forward to Town Meeting and the Special Election.

- **The School Building Committee**, made up of educators, town officials, and community members, which selected the new PreK–5 school at the North site as the preferred option after a thorough, multi-year review.
- **Wilmington Teachers' Association** “proudly supports a YES vote for the new elementary school! We strongly believe that our working conditions are your children’s learning conditions! Vote Yes to ensure Wilmington’s students have a clean and safe place to learn and grow!”
- **The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA)**, which approved the project for state funding, committing **\$62 million** in reimbursement.
- **Local educators and school staff**, who have highlighted the need for modern, safe, and efficient learning spaces.
- **Community members and parents**, many of whom have expressed support through forums and letters (see links to Letter to the Editor below):
 - [Former School Committee MJ Byrnes Explains Why A YES Vote Is Needed For New School](#) (July 18)
 - [School Committee Member Michael Mercaldi Explains Why He's Supporting The New School Project & Why You Should Too](#) (July 26)
 - [School Committee Members Bryson & Fennelly Urge A YES Vote In This “Once-A-Generation Decision”](#) (Aug 4)
 - [Former School Committee Member Melissa Plowman Urges A “Yes” Vote, Explains Why Consolidating Three Schools Into One Is A Good Thing](#) (Aug 18)
 - [School Committee Member Stephen Turner Urges A “YES” Vote, Gets To The Heart Of The Matter](#) (Aug 24)

This project reflects **years of public input** and collaboration among town leaders, educators, state partners, and residents.