

## Massachusetts School Building Authority

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### Next Steps to Finalize Submission of your FY 2023 Statement of Interest

Thank you for submitting an FY 2023 Statement of Interest (SOI) to the MSBA electronically. **Please note, the District's submission is not yet complete if the District selected statutory priority 1 or priority 3.** If either of these priorities were selected, the District is required to mail the required supporting documentation to the MSBA, which is described below.

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION FOR SOI STATUTORY PRIORITIES #1 AND #3:** If a District selects Statutory priority #1 and/or priority #3, the District is required to submit additional documentation with its SOI.

- If a District selects statutory priority #1, Replacement or renovation of a building which is structurally unsound or otherwise in a condition seriously jeopardizing the health and safety of the school children, where no alternative exists, the MSBA requires a hard copy of the engineering or other report detailing the nature and severity of the problem and a written professional opinion of how imminent the system failure is likely to manifest itself. The District also must submit photographs of the problematic building area or system to the MSBA.
- If a District selects statutory priority #3, Prevention of a loss of accreditation, the SOI will not be considered complete unless and until a summary of the accreditation report focused on the deficiency as stated in this SOI is provided.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** In addition to the information required above, the District may also provide any reports, pictures, or other information they feel will give the MSBA a better understanding of the issues identified at a facility.

If you have any questions about the SOI process please contact the MSBA at 617-720-4466 or [SOI@massschoolbuildings.org](mailto:SOI@massschoolbuildings.org).

## Massachusetts School Building Authority

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School District    Manchester Essex Regional

District Contact    TEL:

Name of School    Essex Elementary

Submission Date    4/13/2023

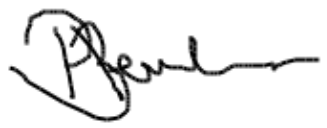
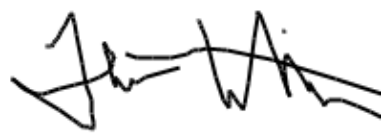

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### SOI CERTIFICATION

To be eligible to submit a Statement of Interest (SOI), a district must certify the following:

- The district hereby acknowledges and agrees that this SOI is NOT an application for funding and that submission of this SOI in no way commits the MSBA to accept an application, approve an application, provide a grant or any other type of funding, or places any other obligation on the MSBA.
- The district hereby acknowledges that no district shall have any entitlement to funds from the MSBA, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 70B or the provisions of 963 CMR 2.00.
- The district hereby acknowledges that the provisions of 963 CMR 2.00 shall apply to the district and all projects for which the district is seeking and/or receiving funds for any portion of a municipally-owned or regionally-owned school facility from the MSBA pursuant to M.G.L. c. 70B.
- The district hereby acknowledges that this SOI is for one existing municipally-owned or regionally-owned public school facility in the district that is currently used or will be used to educate public PreK-12 students and that the facility for which the SOI is being submitted does not serve a solely early childhood or Pre-K student population.
- Prior to the submission of the SOI, the district will schedule and hold a meeting at which the School Committee will vote, using the specific language contained in the "Vote" tab, to authorize the submission of this SOI. This is required for cities, towns, and regional school districts.
- Prior to the submission of the SOI, the district will schedule and hold a meeting at which the City Council/Board of Aldermen or Board of Selectmen/equivalent governing body will vote, using the specific language contained in the "Vote" tab, to authorize the submission of this SOI. This is not required for regional school districts.
- The district hereby acknowledges that current vote documentation is required for all SOI submissions. The district will use the MSBA's vote template and the required votes will specifically reference the school name and the priorities for which the SOI is being submitted.
- The district hereby acknowledges that it must upload all required vote documentation on the "Vote" tab, in the format required by the MSBA. All votes must be certified or signed and on city, town or district letterhead.
- The district hereby acknowledges that this SOI submission will not be complete until the MSBA has received all required supporting documentation for statutory priority 1 and statutory priority 3. If statutory priority 1 is selected, your SOI will not be considered complete unless and until you provide the required engineering (or other) report, a professional opinion regarding the problem, and photographs of the problematic area or system. If statutory priority 3 is selected, your SOI will not be considered complete unless and until you provide a summary of the accreditation report focused on the deficiency as stated in this SOI. The documentation noted above must be post-marked and submitted to the MSBA by the Core Program SOI filing period closure date.

**LOCAL CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER/DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT/SCHOOL COMMITTEE CHAIR  
(E.g., Mayor, Town Manager, Board of Selectmen)**

| <b>Chief Executive Officer *</b>   | <b>School Committee Chair</b>   | <b>Superintendent of Schools</b>   |
|--|---|--|
| Pamela Beaudoin  | Theresa Whitman   | Pamela Beaudoin  |
| Superintendent   |   |  |
|  |  |  |
| (signature)  | (signature)   | (signature)  |
| Date   | Date  | Date   |
| 4/13/2023 1:46:12 PM   | 4/13/2023 3:29:42 PM  | 4/13/2023 1:56:24 PM   |

\* Local chief executive officer: In a city or town with a manager form of government, the manager of the municipality; in other cities, the mayor; and in other towns, the board of selectmen unless, in a city or town, some other municipal office is designated to the chief executive office under the provisions of a local charter. Please note, in districts where the Superintendent is also the Local Chief Executive Officer, it is required for the same person to sign the Statement of Interest Certifications twice.

## Massachusetts School Building Authority

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School District    Manchester Essex Regional

District Contact    TEL:

Name of School    Essex Elementary

Submission Date    4/13/2023

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### Note

The referenced Facilities Report/Habeeb Report can be found at <https://www.mersd.org/Page/1759>

Please advise if this should be submitted electronically or hard copy sent.

Thank you.

### The following Priorities have been included in the Statement of Interest:

1.  Replacement or renovation of a building which is structurally unsound or otherwise in a condition seriously jeopardizing the health and safety of school children, where no alternative exists.
2.  Elimination of existing severe overcrowding.
3.  Prevention of the loss of accreditation.
4.  Prevention of severe overcrowding expected to result from increased enrollments.
5.  Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility.
6.  Short term enrollment growth.
7.  Replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with state and approved local requirements.
8.  Transition from court-ordered and approved racial balance school districts to walk-to, so-called, or other school districts.

### SOI Vote Requirement

I acknowledge that I have reviewed the MSBA's vote requirements for submitting an SOI, which are set forth in the Vote Tab of this SOI. I understand that the MSBA requires votes from specific parties/governing bodies, in a specific format using the language provided by the MSBA. Further, I understand that the MSBA requires certified and signed vote documentation to be submitted with the SOI. I acknowledge that my SOI will not be considered complete and, therefore, will not be reviewed by the MSBA unless the required accompanying vote documentation is submitted to the satisfaction of the MSBA. All SOI vote documentation must be uploaded on the Vote Tab.

**SOI Program:**            Core

**Potential Project Scope:**            Potential New School

**Is this a Potential Consolidation?**            No

**Is this SOI the District Priority SOI?**            Yes

**School name of the District Priority SOI:** 2023 Essex Elementary

**Is this part of a larger facilities plan?** Yes

**If "YES", please provide the following:**

**Facilities Plan Date:** 11/15/2022

**Planning Firm:** Habeeb & Associates Architects

**Please provide a brief summary of the plan including its goals and how the school facility that is the subject of this SOI fits into that plan:**

The Manchester Essex Regional District (MERSD) was formed in 2000 by the Towns of Manchester-by-the-Sea and Essex, Massachusetts. Following regionalization, MERSD evaluated its facility priorities, and based on building conditions, determined that the first facility requiring attention would be the regional middle high school (MSHS). MERSD's MSHS was built in partnership with the MSBA and completed in 2010. Following the completion of this project, MERSD turned its attention to its elementary facilities, one in each town, and contracted with Habeeb & Associates Architects (H&A) in 2013 to conduct an independent Facilities Condition Assessment (FCA) to document the condition of both elementary schools. Based on the findings of the 2013 FCA, MERSD submitted Statements of Interest (SOIs) to MSBA for both schools in 2015. The 2013 FCA findings made clear that the needs and investment required at the Manchester Memorial Elementary School (MMES) were much more significant compared to Essex Elementary School (EES), and as a result, MMES was determined to be MERSD's priority SOI. The MSBA accepted MMES into its pipeline and a new elementary school was constructed and completed by the 2021-2022 school year. MERSD is currently in MSBA's Closeout phase for the MMES project.

Knowing that EES is now approximately 66 years old, MERSD commissioned an update of the FCA for EES, which was completed during the 2022-2023 school year. MERSD has continued to use its operating budget and preventative maintenance practices to maintain EES to the fullest extent possible. MERSD earned 1.93% out of a maximum possible 2.0% incentive reimbursement points from MSBA for the MMES project, based on the District's preventative maintenance practices, which, for EES include annual inspections by external contractors of the roof, boiler, HVAC system, grease traps, playground, kitchen equipment, wheelchair lift and fire alarms as well as frequent ongoing internal maintenance by MERSD's maintenance supervisor, a position added via budget restructuring, in order to more efficiently maintain key facility assets and infrastructure.

Additionally, the District has used its General Fund budget, Stabilization reserve funds, and the State's Green Communities Grant program (in partnership with the Town of Essex), to invest more significantly in certain key facility areas at EES in a best effort to extend the useful life of the building and strive for programmatic equity for students. Investment examples include:

new digital HVAC controls and other energy efficiency measures (e.g., steam trap replacement, LED lighting conversion) totaling nearly \$578K through the Green Communities Grant, updated security systems (\$47K)

new playground (\$400K)

updated Project Adventure courses infrastructure (\$16K)

student and staff technology upgrades (\$170K upgrade of classroom interactive teaching panels, in addition to ongoing operating investments in modern computer device technology),

a new fire alarm system (\$169K)

reconfiguration of outmoded locker room spaces into speech-language space (\$70K)

asphalt repair to sidewalks and recreational play surfaces (\$34K)

new burner assembly for 2008 boiler (\$44K)

Replacement of rotted wood in courtyard, around windows, on accessible ramps and surrounding playground (\$27K)

Despite these significant investments, the recent FCA makes clear that due to the age of the building, significant infrastructure investments are necessary across all aspects of the building, including site, envelope, interiors, mechanical systems and interiors. Many of these investments are needs within the next five years with an estimated cost of \$18.8 million, based on recent market pricing, suggesting that a systemic solution is necessary, rather than a piecemeal approach. A systemic solution would require MERSD to bring the building up to code in certain grandfathered areas, leading to a total estimated cost of remediation of \$28.7 million, based on the detailed FCA cost analysis. A copy of the 2022-2023 updated FCA from H&A is attached to our SOI submission.

**Please provide the current student to teacher ratios at the school facility that is the subject of this SOI: 19 students per teacher**

**Please provide the originally planned student to teacher ratios at the school facility that is the subject of this SOI: 19 students per teacher**

**Does the District have a Master Educational Plan that includes facility goals for this building and all school buildings in District? Yes**

**If "YES", please provide the author and date of the District's Master Educational Plan.**

Yes, the District has a Master Educational Plan. The MERSD Strategic, District, and School Improvement plans in conjunction with our capital improvement plan informed by the Habeeb Report serve as the educational master plan. Drafted by MERSD Leadership Team with the guidance of the Strategic planning committee and input from community stakeholders, the plan was approved by the School Committee in the Fall of 2022. The plan can be reviewed by visiting the MERSD website at [www.mersd.org](http://www.mersd.org) Quick Lin

**Is there overcrowding at the school facility? No**

**If "YES", please describe in detail, including specific examples of the overcrowding.**

**Has the district had any recent teacher layoffs or reductions? Yes**

**If "YES", how many teaching positions were affected? 5**

**At which schools in the district? All**

**Please describe the types of teacher positions that were eliminated (e.g., art, math, science, physical education, etc.).**

To address a decline in enrollment MERSD reduced full-time equivalent positions by attrition. Elementary Classroom and Specialist Teacher Consolidations [art, music, tech, library] K-6 World Language

**Has the district had any recent staff layoffs or reductions? No**

**If "YES", how many staff positions were affected? 0**

**At which schools in the district?**

**Please describe the types of staff positions that were eliminated (e.g., guidance, administrative, maintenance, etc.).**

**Please provide a description of the program modifications as a consequence of these teacher and/or staff reductions, including the impact on district class sizes and curriculum.**

Consolidation of specialist staff [art, music, library, tech / interventionist ] now shared between two elementary schools.

**Please provide a description of the local budget approval process for a potential capital project with the MSBA. Include schedule information (i.e. Town Meeting dates, city council/town council meetings dates, regional school committee meeting dates). Provide, if applicable, the District's most recent budget approval process that resulted in a budget reduction and the impact of the reduction to the school district (staff reductions, discontinued programs, consolidation of facilities).**

MERSD utilizes a collaborative approach to budget planning and works cooperatively with Boards of Selectman and Finance Committees in both Essex and Manchester. Through monthly meetings, we provide one another with on-going progress reports on our planning process and outlook. In October, principals, with input from faculty, formulate and submit school-based budgets that reflect staffing, program, and facility needs. Budgets are then synthesized into the MERSD budget proposal presented for public input. Under the Manchester Essex Regional Agreement, the district presents a tentative budget and holds a public hearing for feedback in December; it is considered the first draft budget. A second public hearing is held in January prior to the submission of the budget in the first week of February. Final budget approval is at the Manchester and Essex town meetings in April and May. The FY24 budget represents what the district believes is needed to maintain quality and position the schools for continual improvement of the educational program and student achievement. For the past four years, MERSD has used reserve funding, intended for capital needs, to keep town assessments within the levy limit, particularly for Essex whose apportioned share has escalated due to enrollment patterns. This year our budget request discontinues the use of reserves for operating revenue. As a result, the annual assessment is higher than in a typical year, and it will require the Town of Essex to seek a proposition 2.5 override to address the revenue gap. The boards are aware and in support of our SOI submissions, and leadership in both towns are committed to addressing Essex Elementary facility needs as it is the third and final building replacement. As such, they are prepared to bring forward the funding request for a feasibility study should we be accepted into the pipeline. For more information: [www.mersd.org](http://www.mersd.org) Quick Link: Budget

## General Description

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**BRIEF BUILDING HISTORY: Please provide a detailed description of when the original building was built, and the date(s) and project scopes(s) of any additions and renovations (maximum of 5000 characters).**

Essex Elementary was built in 1957 and expanded with an addition in 1975. The addition included the library and gymnasium which added 13,400 square feet to the original 42,200 square foot facility. Building construction predated the 2000 formation of the regional school district and was designed to serve students in grades K-8. With the formation of the Manchester Regional School District and subsequent construction of a regional middle high school, students in grades 6-8 from the Town of Essex were migrated to the regional middle high school facility (MSHS). The Regional Agreement stipulates that elementary-aged students shall be guaranteed the opportunity to attend elementary school in their town of residence with the exception made for special education programs. As a result, the facility serves grades K-5 for students residing in Essex and districtwide special education programs (SWING and ACE) for elementary-aged students from both member towns. Prior to beginning the MMES project in partnership with MSBA, MERSD solicited community input via a districtwide survey, which confirmed that residents overwhelmingly preferred to retain an elementary school in each member town, instead of consolidating elementary schools into a regional facility.

**TOTAL BUILDING SQUARE FOOTAGE: Please provide the original building square footage PLUS the square footage of any additions.**

55600

**SITE DESCRIPTION: Please provide a detailed description of the current site and any known existing conditions that would impact a potential project at the site. Please note whether there are any other buildings, public or private, that share this current site with the school facility. What is the use(s) of this building(s)? (maximum of 5000 characters).**

Essex Elementary School (EES) sits on 9.9 acres, which is ample space for the existing K-5 program. All bituminous parking areas, access drives, rear play area behind the gymnasium and walkway pavements are approximately 40 years old, compared to a typical useful life of twenty years, and have been patched or sealed as needed, but not replaced. Per the most recent facility conditions assessment (FCA) provided by Habeeb & Associates (H&A), the entire pavement should be replaced in 3-5 years with an estimated cost of \$191K. Paved site areas also have minimal storm drainage, directed towards either a retention pond southeast of the building or adjacent to lawns, which serve as fields for school sports. The playing field has extremely poor drainage, and a new drainage system was recommended in the Habeeb Report in the next 3-5 years at an estimated cost of \$374K. An engineering study of the site could help to clarify the challenges, potential remedies, and cost for this item. The school is also surrounded by wetlands and any work near the wetlands needs prior approval by the Town of Essex Conservation Commission.

In addition to being the sole elementary school for Essex, EES is a community facility. It is used daily for after-school childcare, run in partnership with the YMCA. The gymnasium is a practice site for the Manchester Essex Middle High School athletics program. In the winter, the Manchester Essex Youth Basketball program uses the school gym on a regular basis, as it is the only indoor basketball court in town. Spring and fall youth soccer programs utilize the fields. Essex Elementary School is a community center and hosts several town gatherings such as the annual holiday pancake breakfast, it serves as the official site of all town meetings, and the Essex Elementary playground is a hub for informal community gatherings.

**ADDRESS OF FACILITY: Please type address, including number, street name and city/town, if available, or describe the location of the site. (Maximum of 300 characters)**



12 Story Street, Essex, MA 01929 /The facility is centrally located in the Town of Essex, a few blocks away from the town center, where the Town Hall and public safety buildings are located.

**BUILDING ENVELOPE: Please provide a detailed description of the building envelope, types of construction materials used, and any known problems or existing conditions (maximum of 5000 characters).**

Roofing is constructed out of EPDM single-ply fully adhered membrane with rigid insulation. The main portion is approximately 25 years old, and the portion over Side B of the building is approximately 20 years old. MERSD contracts with an external provider to conduct routine roofing inspections, and recent reports have found that lead-coated copper cap flashings at all brick wall-to-roof transitions need significant repair or replacement. Flashing heights are low and new insulation will be above flashings when the membrane is replaced. Cantilevered concrete roof slab exterior soffit areas and vertical fascia edges on the building perimeter are exposed, leading to moisture penetration and spalled concrete at bottom drip edges. Per the FCA, a new roof is needed within 3-5 years with an estimated cost of \$3.4M.

The main floor structure is concrete slab on grade and rib-pan concrete slab above the ground floor. Exterior walls are 8" CMU with 4" brick veneer (no cavity or insulation). There is minor face brick veneer cracking and signs of water intrusion near the gym. Masonry repairs to the veneer, per the FCA, should take place within 3-5 years with an estimated cost of \$104K. The windows are wood framed, many have original single pane glazing, and some dual pane windows show condensation. This causes rooms to be extremely uncomfortable and drafty and is also extremely inefficient from an energy use perspective. These are in need of replacement, with many original to the building and past their useful lifespan and should be replaced per the FCA in 1-2 years. The wood trim and sills are also original and many are rotted. Total cost for window replacement, including trim and sills, is estimated at \$1.5M. With window replacement, blinds and shades will also need replacement, which could add an estimated \$57K to the project cost. Skylights throughout the building are also beyond their useful life with deteriorated sealants and condensation patches, with an estimated replacement cost of \$47K.

The exterior doors are aluminum storefront and or hollow metal. Some doors have begun to corrode and per the FCA should be replaced, in the next 3-5 years at a potential cost of \$31K. The siding is T1-11 plywood, warped and peeled, and shows signs of decay. Based on the building's age, it is assumed that exterior paint may contain lead and would need to be abated. The estimated cost to replace painted siding in 3-5 years is \$105K.

**Has there been a Major Repair or Replacement of the EXTERIOR WALLS?** NO

**Year of Last Major Repair or Replacement:(YYYY)** 1957

**Description of Last Major Repair or Replacement:**

Walls are original to the building with no major repair. Although replacement is not required in the next few years, the walls have little to no insulation and the cost to upgrade to energy code would be significant, above \$1 million per the FCA.

**Roof Section** A

**Is the District seeking replacement of the Roof Section?** YES

**Area of Section (square feet)** 48138

**Type of ROOF (e.g., PVC, EPDM, Shingle, Slate, Tar & Gravel, Other (please describe)**

EPDM

**Age of Section (number of years since the Roof was installed or replaced)** 25

**Description of repairs, if applicable, in the last three years. Include year of repair:**

Roofing is constructed out of EPDM single-ply fully adhered membrane with rigid insulation. The main portion is approximately 25 years old, and the portion over Side B of the building is approximately 20 years old. MERSD contracts with an external provider to conduct routine roofing inspections, and recent reports have found that lead-coated copper cap flashings at all brick wall-to-roof transitions need significant repair or replacement. Flashing heights are low and new insulation will be above flashings when the membrane is replaced. Cantilevered concrete roof slab exterior soffit areas and vertical fascia edges on the building perimeter

are exposed, leading to moisture penetration and spalled concrete at bottom drip edges. Per the FCA, a new roof is needed within 3-5 years with an estimated cost of \$3.4M.

#### **Roof Section B**

**Is the District seeking replacement of the Roof Section?** YES

**Area of Section (square feet)** 7000

**Type of ROOF (e.g., PVC, EPDM, Shingle, Slate, Tar & Gravel, Other (please describe))**

EPDM

**Age of Section (number of years since the Roof was installed or replaced)** 20

**Description of repairs, if applicable, in the last three years. Include year of repair:**

Roofing is constructed out of EPDM single-ply fully adhered membrane with rigid insulation. The main portion is approximately 25 years old, and the portion over Side B of the building is approximately 20 years old. MERSD contracts with an external provider to conduct routine roofing inspections, and recent reports have found that lead-coated copper cap flashings at all brick wall-to-roof transitions need significant repair or replacement. Flashing heights are low and new insulation will be above flashings when the membrane is replaced. Cantilevered concrete roof slab exterior soffit areas and vertical fascia edges on the building perimeter are exposed, leading to moisture penetration and spalled concrete at bottom drip edges. Per the FCA, a new roof is needed within 3-5 years with an estimated cost of \$3.4M.

#### **Window Section A**

**Is the District seeking replacement of the Windows Section?** YES

**Windows in Section (count)** 500

**Type of WINDOWS (e.g., Single Pane, Double Pane, Other (please describe))**

Wood framed with original (66 year old) single pane glazing and steel operable vent sash. Some wood window walls are retrofitted with 2nd pane or insulated glazing. Aluminum storefront frames and insulated glazing are on building addition.

**Age of Section (number of years since the Windows were installed or replaced)** 66

**Description of repairs, if applicable, in the last three years. Include year of repair:**

None

### **MECHANICAL and ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS: Please provide a detailed description of the current mechanical and electrical systems and any known problems or existing conditions (maximum of 5000 characters).**

The school only has one functioning gas-fired steam boiler that was installed in 2008. This unit has begun to experience operating interruptions, which are managed through the operating budget for facility maintenance. MERSD believes that having a backup boiler would align with best practice to avoid interruptions in instructional delivery, should an outage occur during the heating season. An additional boiler, working with the 2008 boiler, would also help extend the useful life of the 2008 unit. The FCA recommended addition of a new boiler within 1-2 years at a cost of \$325K but to avoid instructional interruptions, MERSD intends to proceed with this project before a more systemic building solution can be initiated. This exemplifies investments that are immediately necessary throughout EES, but not ideal or cost effective on a stand-alone basis, given the need for a building wide systemic solution. Ultimately, continuity of operations may necessitate additional, piecemeal immediate investments that, from a financial efficiency standpoint, would be better suited to include in a future (ideally near-term), systemic building project.

Individual classroom unit ventilators are original to the building and are not efficient and cause inconsistent heat into the rooms, despite the recent introduction of a new, building-wide digital control solution. Servicing these units has become increasingly problematic, as many essential parts are no longer available. There are also 4 Air Handling Units that service the gym, cafeteria, and basement area, which were installed in 1975. All rooftop exhaust fans appear to be original. Per the FCA, based on the useful life and condition of the units, the entire system should be replaced in 3-5 years at a cost of \$2.2M.

Except for natural gas service, which is about 20 years old, other service lines into and out of the building are believed to be original and at least 66 years old, including water and sanitary. Although no known issues exist with these systems, given their age, replacement will become necessary at some point in the future, with costs estimated in the FCA to exceed \$300K. The hot water boiler in the building is approximately 16 years old and will need replacement in the next 3-5 years at an estimated cost of \$33K.

The electrical system consists of 800 Amp 120/208-volt 3 phase service. Main service and disconnect panel and distribution wireways appear to be original. Sub-panels were added with the 1975 building addition. Building usage is near maximum for the present system and a replacement cost is estimated at \$650K. The cost of replacing electrical wiring and sub-distribution system, in an electrical upgrade, is estimated in the FCA at \$1.1 million.

#### **Boiler Section 1**

**Is the District seeking replacement of the Boiler?** YES

**Is there more than one boiler room in the School?** NO

**What percentage of the School is heated by the Boiler?** 100

**Type of heating fuel (e.g., Heating Oil, Natural Gas, Propane, Other)**

Natural Gas

**Age of Boiler (number of years since the Boiler was installed or replaced)** 15

**Description of repairs, if applicable, in the last three years. Include year of repair:**

One of the two boilers was replaced in 2008. A BMS along with programmable thermostats was installed in 2017 and 2021 at a total cost of \$275K to replace the old pneumatic system throughout the building so the HVAC system can be scheduled with occupied and non-occupied settings to reduce the load on the boiler. Nevertheless, efficiency of the new system is limited by dated steam tramp technology (recently upgraded as well at a cost of \$36K) and unit ventilators that struggle to maintain even temperatures. Heating delivery is also negatively impacted by single pane windows throughout the building.

**Has there been a Major Repair or Replacement of the HVAC SYSTEM?** YES

**Year of Last Major Repair or Replacement:(YYYY)** 2008

**Description of Last Major Repair or Replacement:**

One of the two boilers was replaced in 2008. A BMS along with programmable thermostats was installed in 2017 and 2021 at a total cost of \$275K to replace the old pneumatic system throughout the building so the HVAC system can be scheduled with occupied and non-occupied settings to reduce the load on the boiler. Nevertheless, efficiency of the new system is limited by dated steam tramp technology (recently upgraded as well at a cost of \$36K) and unit ventilators that struggle to maintain even temperatures. Heating delivery is also negatively impacted by single pane windows throughout the building.

**Has there been a Major Repair or Replacement of the ELECTRICAL SERVICES AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM?** NO

**Year of Last Major Repair or Replacement:(YYYY)** 1957

**Description of Last Major Repair or Replacement:**

None

#### **BUILDING INTERIOR: Please provide a detailed description of the current building interior including a description of the flooring systems, finishes, ceilings, lighting, etc. (maximum of 5000 characters).**

Floor structure: concrete slab-on grade and rib-pan framed slab above ground floor.

Floor finishes: vinyl 9x9 tiles in corridors classrooms. These non-ACM tiles have been identified to contain black mastic according to the 2023 AHERA report. The cost to replace the tiles is approximately \$1.3M. There is wood flooring in the gym and cafetorium, and carpet in various staff areas, media center, and K classrooms. All carpeting is past its useful life and the condition suggests that replacement is necessary with an estimated cost of \$65K. Epoxy painted concrete is present on ramps and in locker/bathrooms in the building addition.

Wall finishes: mostly painted concrete block. Glazed block and ceramic tile dado walls in the bathrooms.

Ceiling finishes: exposed metal deck in gym, exposed concrete in mechanical and storage room. Entire building addition and corridors of classroom wings and cafetorium are 2x4 acoustic tile ceilings. The staff area, lobby main corridor and classrooms have 1x1 acoustic tile ceilings. Many ceiling tiles are cupping, mismatched or discolored and full building replacement is required but would be costly. All but one bathroom each for staff, and boy and girl students are not HP accessible.

Interior lighting was converted to LED between 2018 and 2019, through the MA Green Communities Grant program, in partnership with the Town of Essex, at a total cost of \$267K. Emergency lighting is approximately 12 years old.

Much of the kitchen equipment is original to the building, and other equipment is in excess of 30 years old. Repairs can be challenging, given the lack of available parts inventory. This limits options for cooking operations and meal preparation at the school. The school lacks an ANSUL fire suppression system.

**PROGRAMS and OPERATIONS: Please provide a detailed description of the current grade structure and programs offered and indicate whether there are program components that cannot be offered due to facility constraints, operational constraints, etc. (maximum of 5000 characters).**

The Manchester Essex elementary schools employ a broad- range of teaching methodologies that strive to balance the best of progressive methodology with tried-and-true traditional approaches. Our curriculum and instructional program are designed to support our mission, vision, and core values. To that end we provide a rigorous core curriculum that is complemented by a rich program of experiential and exploratory learning experience designed to utilize an interdisciplinary approach that creates connections between learning and the real world. Overall, MERSD elementary level curriculum and instruction is delivered in a single classroom model with the elementary classroom teacher responsible for the delivery of all core content instruction. All classroom lessons are differentiated based on formative assessment data and whole group, small group, and individual work is integrated into all lessons with an increasing number of lessons relying on anywhere, anytime access to technology and a flexible learning environment. In addition to general differentiated instruction, students receive a variety of support services that are provided through inclusion and push-in services whenever possible.

EES is the smallest of two MERSD elementary schools. Per the regional agreement, students in grades K-5 are entitled to attend elementary school in the town in which they reside unless they are a special education student requiring specialized programming. Grades K-5 are organized into two sections per grade level; art, music, library, and technology are weekly specials with dedicated classroom spaces, and physical education meets twice per week in the gymnasium. EES is a Title I School (poverty rate 21%) and serves a diverse range of students. EES houses our district-wide Students with Integrated Goals (SWING) and Academic and Communication Enhancement (ACE) substantially separate special education programs, and the English Language Learner (ELL) program.

While we can physically accommodate our current student population and critical program needs, the age and condition of the facility limit the scope of the academic program in both general and special education. The end-of-life facility results in frequent disruptions of the educational program, challenges our ability to meet state regulations, and limits the scope of the academic program in both regular and special education. Primarily impacted are instructional opportunities for students and teachers. Outdated learning spaces that do not support flexible learning, extreme swings in building temperatures, leaking windows, basement level classrooms, absence of kindergarten lavatories and lack of handicap accessibility throughout the building, acoustically unsound learning spaces, limited and large group gathering space, and no small group learning spaces or project rooms, are all barriers to our program and current best practice instruction.

**Substandard Physical Plant Impact on Program & Special Education**

Moderate special education support services are delivered in two classrooms, one severely undersized, limiting the number of students that can be supported at any given time. This undersized space houses both a special education teacher and a paraprofessional which contributes to a noisy and distracting environment for the delivery of

individual and small group tutorials. Appropriate educational space is not available due to an inadequate number of small group learning spaces available in an outdated building.

Occupational and physical therapy occurs in a basement area with damp and musty conditions. This space abuts the boiler room and is accessed by walking through the art classroom which does not allow for student privacy. This undersized space restricts the amount and type of equipment utilized and limits the number of students that can be served during a class period. Speech and Language services are delivered in a converted locker room space in an attempt to create small group learning spaces.

Handicap accessibility deficits include door construction, parking and ramp access, water fountains, bathroom facilities, lockers, classroom sinks which do not meet current MAAB/ADA code.

EES has no appropriate dedicated, private rooms for state mandated student evaluations by the special education department.

EES has no space for de-escalation, in-school suspensions, or time outs for both general and special education students.

EES does not have appropriate science laboratory space for the older grades to conduct experiments which significantly limits the school's ability to implement its STEM curriculum. Experiments are done in the classrooms, which are carpeted, leading to cleanliness and safety issues.

EES does not have adequate large group space. Performances and school assemblies are held in the dated "cafetorium." This limits the number and type of school performances for student.

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**EDUCATIONAL SPACES: Please provide a detailed description of the Educational Spaces within the facility, a description of the number and sizes (in square feet) of classrooms, a description of science rooms/labs including ages and most recent updates, a description of the cafeteria, gym and/or auditorium and a description of the media center/library (maximum of 5000 characters).**

EES has 12 core academic spaces, of which 2 serve Kindergarten, averaging 1,200 square feet (sf) and 10 serve grades 1-5, averaging 936 sf. Kindergarten rooms do not have toilets. Grade 1-5 classrooms have 1 sink per classroom, which are not accessible. EES has 4 special education classrooms, averaging 936 sf, and 1 small group reading room of 936 sf. There is one technology room at 936 sf. The art classroom serving 25 students with 1,980 sf, is located in the basement, adjacent to the mechanical room, which is below grade, and can be musty and damp. There is one music classroom at 936 sf. There are no stand-alone science rooms/labs. The media center is 2,830 sf.

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**CAPACITY and UTILIZATION: Please provide the original design capacity and a detailed description of the current capacity and utilization of the school facility. If the school is overcrowded, please describe steps taken by the administration to address capacity issues. Please also describe in detail any spaces that have been converted from their intended use to be used as classroom space (maximum of 5000 characters).**

As noted, EES was originally designed as a K-8 facility. While there is no overcrowding, many substandard spaces are being used in ways that do not match the original design intent. The art classroom and occupational and physical therapy classrooms are in the basement, adjacent to mechanical room spaces, and below grade, leading to mustiness and dampness. Self-contained special education classrooms, which serve elementary students from both towns, do not contain toilets. The music room is not adequately sized for classes and practice spaces. Storage is in a modular addition that is over 20 years old with water intrusion at the connection to the main building and from the aging roof. The modular addition is also showing issues with uneven flooring. Metal student lockers are not accessible. The gym area includes a boys' and girls' locker room, which is no longer in use. A portion of this space has been converted for use by the school's speech-language pathologist. The CMU walls of the gymnasium are showing evidence of water intrusion and the exterior brick wall throughout the building has little to no insulation, making the building thermally inefficient. The medical suite has a toilet, but it does not meet accessibility

standards. Given the presence of non-ambulatory students in the SWING program, a more modern facility and enhanced outdoor recreational facilities would better serve the physical needs of students and program.

**MAINTENANCE and CAPITAL REPAIR: Please provide a detailed description of the district’s current maintenance practices, its capital repair program, and the maintenance program in place at the facility that is the subject of this SOI. Please include specific examples of capital repair projects undertaken in the past, including any override or debt exclusion votes that were necessary (maximum of 5000 characters).**

The boiler, HVAC systems, grease traps, playground kitchen equipment, roof, wheelchair lift and fire alarm systems are checked by professional contractors each year to ensure proper operation. Maintenance staff perform regular inspections on all items and perform minor repairs, as well as changing the filters to all AHU. The District employs a facility “ticketing” system, whereby staff can send in needs for maintenance that are prioritized, tracked and closed by the facilities department. As part of each year’s budgeting process, building principals meet with the facilities manager to identify “small capital” (i.e., \$5-25K) projects that are prioritized together with the Director of Finance & Operations, and budgeted pending funding availability to take place typically over the summer when school is not in session. Additionally, the district uses its FCA, maintenance staff and contractor inspections to identify and prioritize larger capital investment projects (>\$25K typically) that can be funded through the District’s stabilization and other reserve funds.

Over the past five years, the district has completed many facility capital projects at EES including:

- New Playground (\$400K)
- New BMS on all unit vents, boiler and AHU (\$275K)
- Steam trap replacement building-wide (\$36K)
- LED lighting upgrades, building-wide (\$267K)
- New pull-down shades for all classrooms (\$26K)
- New camera and burglar alarm system for better security and protection (\$47K)
- New fire alarm system (\$169K)
- New burner assembly for boiler (\$44K)
- Sidewalk asphalt repair, blacktop recreational area sealcoating and basketball installation repair (\$34K)
- Replacement of rotted wood in courtyard, around window sills, on accessible ramps, and surrounding playground (\$27K)
- Reconfigure locker room space into Speech-Language space (\$70K)

Each of these repairs was funded within the district’s operating budget or Stabilization reserve funds. There has been no debt issued to cover maintenance of EES facility needs. The District will use the recent Habeeb Report FCA to further develop our capital plan and prioritize maintenance projects.

## Priority 5

***Question 1: Please provide a detailed description of the issues surrounding the school facility systems (e.g., roof, windows, boilers, HVAC system, and/or electrical service and distribution system) that you are indicating require repair or replacement. Please describe all deficiencies to all systems in sufficient detail to explain the problem.***

Per the FCA, due to the building's age, significant infrastructure investments are necessary across all aspects of the building, including site, envelope, interiors, mechanical systems and interiors. Many of these investments are needs within the next five years with an estimated cost of \$18.8 million, based on recent market pricing, suggesting that a systemic solution is necessary, rather than a piecemeal approach. A systemic solution would also require MERSD to bring the building up to code in certain grandfathered areas, leading to a total estimated cost of remediation of \$28.7 million, based on the detailed FCA cost analysis. A copy of the 2022-2023 updated FCA from H&A is attached to our SOI submission.

From a site perspective, bituminous parking areas, access drives, rear play area behind the gymnasium and walkway pavements are approximately 40 years old, compared to a typical useful life of twenty years, and have been patched or sealed as needed, with investments over the past five years totaling \$34K although a full replacement, which is needed, has not yet occurred. Per the most recent facility conditions assessment (FCA) provided by Habeeb & Associates (H&A), the entire pavement should be replaced in 3-5 years with an estimated cost of \$191K. The paved site areas also have minimal storm drainage, directed towards either a retention pond southeast of the building or adjacent to lawns, which serve as fields for school sports. The playing field has extremely poor drainage, and a new drainage system was recommended in the Habeeb Report in the next 3-5 years at an estimated cost of \$374K. An engineering study of the site could help to clarify the challenges, potential remedies, and cost for this item. The school is also surrounded by wetlands and any work near the wetlands needs prior approval by the Town of Essex Conservation Commission.

With regard to building envelope, the main portion of the EPDM single-ply membrane roof is approximately 25 years old; a portion over Side B of the building is approximately 20 years old. MERSD contracts with an external provider to conduct routine roofing inspections, and recent reports have found that lead-coated copper cap flashings at all brick wall-to-roof transitions need significant repair or replacement. Flashing heights are low and new insulation will be above flashings when the membrane is replaced. Cantilevered concrete roof slab exterior soffit areas and vertical fascia edges on the building perimeter are exposed, leading to moisture penetration and spalled concrete at bottom drip edges. Per the FCA, a new roof is needed within 3-5 years with an estimated cost of \$3.4M.

Additionally, the windows are wood framed. Many have original single pane glazing, and some dual pane windows show condensation. This causes rooms to be extremely uncomfortable and drafty and is also extremely inefficient from an energy use perspective. These are in need of replacement with many original to the building and past their useful lifespan and should be replaced per the FCA in 1-2 years. The wood trim and sills are also original (1957) and rotted although MERSD has invested in wood replacement throughout the building, the total cost for window replacement, including trim and sills, is estimated at \$1.5M. With window replacement, blinds and shades will also need replacement, which could add an estimated \$57K to the project cost. Skylights throughout the building are also beyond their useful life with deteriorated sealants and condensation patches, with an estimated replacement cost of \$47K. Siding throughout the building is T1-11 plywood, warped and peeled, and shows signs of decay. Based on the building's age, it is assumed that exterior paint may contain lead and would need to be abated. The estimated cost to replace painted siding in 3-5 years is \$105K. Walls are original to the building, and although replacement is not required in the next few years, the walls have little to no insulation and the cost to upgrade to energy code would be significant, above \$1 million per the FCA. There is minor face brick veneer cracking and signs of water intrusion near the gym. Masonry repairs to the veneer, per the FCA, should take place within 3-5 years with an estimated cost of \$104K.

Mechanical and Electrical Systems further contribute to the time-sensitive need for a systemic building solution. There is currently only 1 working boiler, installed in 2008, which has begun to experience operating interruptions. MERSD believes adding a backup boiler would align with best practice to avoid interruptions in instructional delivery, should an outage occur during the heating season. An additional boiler, working with the 2008 boiler, would also help extend the useful life of the 2008 unit. The FCA recommended addition of a new boiler within 1-2

years at a cost of \$325K but to avoid instructional interruptions, MERSD intends to proceed with this project before a more systemic building solution can be initiated. This exemplifies investments that are immediately necessary throughout EES, but not ideal or cost effective on a stand-alone basis, given the need for a building wide systemic solution. Ultimately, continuity of operations may necessitate additional, piecemeal immediate investments that, from a financial efficiency standpoint, would be better suited to include in a future (ideally near-term), systemic building project.

Individual classroom unit ventilators are original to the building and are not efficient and cause inconsistent heat into the rooms, despite the recent introduction of a new, building-wide digital control solution. Servicing these units has become increasingly problematic, as many essential parts are no longer available. There are also 4 Air Handling Units that service the gym, cafeteria, and basement area, which were installed in 1975. All rooftop exhaust fans appear to be original. Per the FCA, based on the useful life and condition of the units, the entire system should be replaced in 3-5 years at a cost of \$2.2M.

Except for natural gas service, which is about 20 years old, other service lines into and out of the building are believed to be original and at least 66 years old, including water and sanitary. Although no known issues exist with these systems, given their age, replacement will become necessary at some point in the future, with costs estimated in the FCA to exceed \$300K. The hot water boiler in the building is approximately 16 years old and will need replacement in the next 3-5 years at an estimated cost of \$33K.

The electrical system consists of 800 Amp 120/208-volt 3 phase service. Main service and disconnect panel and distribution wireways appear to be original. Sub-panels were added with the 1975 building addition. Building usage is near maximum for the present system and a replacement cost is estimated at \$650K. The cost of replacing electrical wiring and sub-distribution system, in an electrical upgrade, is estimated in the FCA at \$1.1 million.

Much of the kitchen equipment is original to the building, and other equipment is in excess of 30 years old. Repairs can be challenging, given the lack of available parts inventory. This limits options for cooking operations and meal preparation at the school. The school lacks an ANSUL fire suppression system.



**Priority 5*****Question 2: Please describe the measures the district has already taken to mitigate the problem/issues described in Question 1 above.***

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A new BMS was installed in 2017 and 2021 for \$275K in partnership with the Town of Essex through the MA Green Communities Grant, so the HVAC system can be scheduled with occupied and non-occupied settings to reduce the load on the boiler. Nevertheless, efficiency of the new system is limited by dated steam tramp technology (recently upgraded as well at a cost of \$36K) and unit ventilators that struggle to maintain even temperatures.

A maintenance plan is completed every year on the boiler to provide proper operation prior to the heating system. MERSD was able to salvage a burner assembly from the Memorial Elementary School (which was recently reconstructed in partnership with MSBA) and installed it on the EES 2008 boiler to extend its useful life.

The roof is inspected every year and recent repairs include repairing 20 failed patches and flashing conditions on all roof sections and repair 30 failed patches over edge metal laps on all roof sections. Repairs to the rotted sills and frames are planned to be addressed in the summer of 2023. MERSD has replaced rotted wood in the courtyard around some windows and on accessible ramps and surrounding the playground (\$27K) over the past several years.

Asphalt repairs have been to sidewalks and recreational play surfaces over the past several years (\$34K).

Despite these significant investments, the recent FCA makes clear that due to the age of the building, significant infrastructure investments are necessary across all aspects of the building, including site, envelope, interiors, mechanical systems and interiors. Many of these investments are needs within the next five years with an estimated cost of \$18.8 million, based on recent market pricing, suggesting that a systemic solution is necessary, rather than a piecemeal approach. A systemic solution would also require MERSD to bring the building up to code in certain grandfathered areas, leading to a total estimated cost of remediation of \$28.7 million, based on the detailed FCA cost analysis. A copy of the 2022-2023 updated FCA from H&A is attached to our SOI submission.

## Priority 5

***Question 3: Please provide a detailed explanation of the impact of the problem/issues described in Question 1 above on your district's educational program. Please include specific examples of how the problem prevents the district from delivering the educational program it is required to deliver and how students and/or teachers are directly affected by the problem identified.***

The age and condition of the facility limits the scope of the academic program in both regular and special education. Outdated learning spaces that do not support flexible learning, extreme swings in building temperatures, leaking windows, basement level classrooms, absence of kindergarten lavatories and lack of handicap accessibility throughout the building, acoustically unsound learning spaces, limited and large group gathering space, and no small group learning spaces or project rooms, are all barriers to our program and current best practice instruction.

### **Substandard Physical Plant Impact on Program Delivery**

- Limited climate control which creates safety issues for students with identified disabilities and prevents summer programming for students with special needs.
- Outdated unit ventilators do not properly regulate heat in classrooms. Despite recently upgraded digital controls, excessive temperature swings interrupt instruction. Students at times need to wear coats in classrooms. Temperature problems also present safety and health concerns.
- Rainwater leaks into the building requiring the school to put out buckets in hallways and create the potential for hazardous slips, and water damage inside the building. Leaks also present a hazard to educational technology.
- Handicap accessibility deficits door construction, parking and ramp access, water fountains, bathroom facilities, lockers, classroom sinks do not meet current MAAB/ADA code.
- Moderate special education support services are delivered in two classrooms, one severely undersized, limiting the number of students that can be supported at any given time. This undersized space houses both a special education teacher and a paraprofessional. Three to four staff members share resource room space, which contributes to a noisy and distracting environment for the delivery of individual and small group tutorials. Appropriate educational space is not available due to an inadequate number of small group learning spaces available in an outdated building.
- Occupational and physical therapy occurs in a basement area regularly impacted by damp and musty conditions. This space abuts the boiler room and is accessed by walking through the art classroom which does not allow for student privacy. This undersized space restricts the amount and type of equipment utilized and limits the number of students that can be served during a class period.
- Speech and Language services are delivered in a converted locker room space in an attempt to create small group learning spaces.
- English Language Learning instruction takes place in a converted storage space that is inadequate in square footage and lacks appropriate furniture. There is no available space to relocate this program.
- EES has no appropriate dedicated, private rooms for state mandated student evaluations by the special education department.
- EES has no space for de-escalation, in-school suspensions, or time outs for both general and special education students.
- EES does not have appropriate science laboratory space for the older grades to conduct experiments which significantly limits the school's ability to implement its STEM curriculum. Experiments are done in the classrooms, which are carpeted, leading to cleanliness and safety issues.
- EES does not have adequate large group space. Performances and school assemblies are held in the dated cafetorium. This limits the number and type of school performances for students and families.
- Security measures, considered common in all schools today, are either missing or retrofitted in less than efficient ways. A lack of door alarms, signals for open doors, PA system accessible by all classrooms/office spaces, and an emergency direct-call button to the local police/fire are all cause for concern, particularly when these safety measures are in place in other district schools.
- Antiquated and broken kitchen equipment results in less variety in menu items, point of service choices and farm-to-table nutrition initiatives. Nutrition instruction is limited by these representational choices.

**Priority 5**

***Question 4: Please describe how addressing the school facility systems you identified in Question 1 above will extend the useful life of the facility that is the subject of this SOI and how it will improve your district's educational program.***

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Based on the facility condition assessment conducted by Habeeb & Associates, addressing the school facility systems would extend the useful life of the space at a projected preliminary cost of \$28.75M. Although, this would not address some of the needs of the educational deficiencies the school has. However, a new elementary school has a projected cost of \$32M as per the Habeeb Report and would address the schools' educational needs.

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**Please also provide the following:**

**Have the systems identified above been examined by an engineer or other trained building professional?:**  
YES

**If "YES", please provide the name of the individual and his/her professional affiliation (maximum of 250 characters):**

Habeeb & Associates Architects

**The date of the inspection:**      9/13/2022

**A summary of the findings (maximum of 5000 characters):**

An attached copy of the full Habeeb Report will be provided.

## Priority 7

***Question 1: Please provide a detailed description of the programs not currently available due to facility constraints, the state or local requirement for such programs, and the facility limitations precluding the programs from being offered.***

The Manchester Essex elementary schools employ a broad-range of teaching methodologies that strive to balance the best of progressive methodology with tried-and-true traditional approaches. Our curriculum and instructional program are designed to support our mission, vision, and core values. To that end, we provide a rigorous core curriculum that is complemented by a rich program of experiential and exploratory learning experiences designed to utilize an interdisciplinary approach that creates connections between learning and the real world. Project-based, authentic learning is a key strategic priority for MERSD. Inherent in this approach are long-range, multi-disciplinary investigations and/or projects. The final outcomes of a project-based learning experience vary in nature and are frequently used to display information regarding the in-depth study of the topic and/or problem.

The structure of the classrooms, with their lack of storage and/or counter space, inability to accommodate a large number of students and lack of flexible workspaces, hinder the integration of project-based learning across the curriculum. Teachers struggle to find spaces in which ongoing projects can remain undamaged and readily available to students as they continue with these long-range projects. Outdated learning spaces that do not support flexible learning, extreme swings in building temperatures, leaking windows, basement level classrooms, absence of kindergarten lavatories and lack of handicap accessibility throughout the building, acoustically unsound learning spaces, limited and large group gathering space, and no small group learning spaces or project rooms, are all barriers to our program and current best practice instruction.

- Science instruction lacks the robust engagement the discipline offers. Lack of a designated space, no counter space in classroom areas, limited large group spaces and no flexible seating means that instruction is limited, lacking experimentation, particularly on experiments that continue over many school days. Again, storage impacts instruction with materials related to science stored in an on-site, attached modular.
- Program limitations arise throughout the building because of the antiquated structure of the learning spaces. A lack of instructional materials storage has resulted in the addition of an attached storage modular as well as the use of a basement space impacted by mustiness and dampness. Space to work on and store ongoing projects restricts project-based learning opportunities. With no counters, shelves or additional storage in the classrooms, the outcomes for long term projects are often limited to paper or two-dimensional products. Students can frequently be found spread out in hallways (not designed as flexible learning space) to work on group projects with shared resources, threatening the ability of safe traverse through the hallways.
- Of primary concern for our instructional program is the inclusion of all students. Acoustically, the structure and construction of several instructional spaces make proper acoustics a challenge, particularly for those students with hearing and/or attention concerns. The gymnasium, one of the few large area gathering spaces, is one such learning space. Hearing and understanding directions are particularly challenging in this space. Due to safety concerns, large visual displays such as smartboards are also not available for instructional modifications to make up for this acoustical challenge.
- Physically, the OT/PT space and the Art room are located in the basement. This area is made available through a ramp that requires careful thought and supervised use for students with physical handicaps. Services for students with physical disabilities are located in the basement PT/OT space, requiring travel down the ramp to access services. Students and staff must pass through the art classroom to access the PT/OT space, disrupting learning as well as serving to identify students in need of these services. This location is susceptible to mustiness, dampness, and cold, particularly in the spring and fall when the heat in the building is not on. For art materials, these conditions often lead to waste and an inability to store materials necessary for instruction. Not only are these spaces unappealing to students due to the submerged position of the classroom but also, they are unsafe and/or unable to get important notifications as interference occurs when employing the walkie-talkie communication systems used throughout the building. Walkie-talkies are used to call for additional support for dysregulated students as well as dismissal announcements. Particularly troubling is that students who are dysregulated are

often found using the sensory equipment in the PT/OT space. In the event of the need for additional personnel to support a student, communication often fails if the call is made to, or intended for, staff located in this space. Emergency communications are also restricted in this manner.

- Increasingly, students with physical disabilities, and even those with in-the-moment childhood injuries, such as a broken leg, find using the bathrooms a challenge. While all students report feeling “unsafe” in the bathrooms because of a lack of privacy related to the old stall fixtures and acoustics within, students in wheelchairs, crutches or that require toileting, are at an even more heightened disadvantage. The single bathroom found in the nurse’s office is not ADA compliant. Only one bathroom, attached to a classroom, allows enough privacy and space for toileting a student. Any child in a wheelchair must use a designated staff bathroom due to space constraints.
- The social-emotional programming found at the school and district level has been enhanced since the pandemic shutdown. With the SEL needs of students on the rise, the need for a flexible, appropriate counseling space is paramount. Office space exists for the school adjustment counselor; however, the office is undersized for any service group size larger than one individual. Group meetings must be scheduled in conjunction with openings in other larger office spaces and/or classrooms. This fluidity in movement threatens privacy as well as requiring the counselor to shift her instructional materials consistently to accommodate instruction.
- Offering opportunities to our students as a collective learning community strengthens the social emotional learning of the district and of the school. Community meetings and school-wide presentations are restricted by the lack of risers and ease of access to the stage, which is part of the cafeteria. Due to the multi-use nature of this space, time restrictions also impact the ability to gather as a school-wide learning community. No other performance space is available in the building.

**Priority 7**

***Question 2: Please describe the measures the district has taken or is planning to take in the immediate future to mitigate the problem(s) described above.***

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The District has used its General Fund budget, Stabilization reserve funds, and the State's Green Communities Grant program (in partnership with the Town of Essex), to invest more significantly in certain key facility areas at EES in a best effort to extend the useful life of the building and strive for programmatic equity for students. Investment examples include:

- new playground (\$400K)
- updated Project Adventure courses infrastructure (\$16K)
- student and staff technology (\$170K in one-time upgrades of classroom interactive teaching panels, in addition to ongoing operating investments in modern computer device technology),
- a new fire alarm system (\$169K)
- reconfiguration of outmoded locker room spaces into speech-language space (\$70K)
- asphalt repair to sidewalks and recreational play surfaces (\$34K)
- new burner assembly for 2008 boiler (\$44K)
- replacement of rotted wood in courtyard, around windows, on accessible ramps and surrounding playground (\$27K)

The facility constraints that impact the program are related to the overall construction, design, and age of the building. Despite these significant investments, the recent FCA makes clear that due to the age of the building, significant infrastructure investments are necessary across all aspects of the building, including site, envelope, interiors, mechanical systems and interiors. Many of these investments are needed within the next five years with an estimated cost of \$18.8 million, based on recent market pricing, suggesting that a systemic solution is necessary, rather than a piecemeal approach. A systemic solution would require MERSD to bring the building up to code in certain grandfathered areas, leading to a total estimated cost of remediation of \$28.7 million, based on the detailed FCA cost analysis. A copy of the 2022-2023 updated FCA from H&A is attached to our SOI submission.

**Priority 7**

***Question 3: Please provide a detailed explanation of the impact of the problem described in this priority on your district's educational program. Please include specific examples of how the problem prevents the district from delivering the educational program it is required to deliver and how students and/or teachers are directly affected by the problem identified.***

As the oldest building in the Manchester Essex Regional School District, the inequities of instructional approach, programmatic offerings, up-to-date accommodations, and resource management are stark. Essex Elementary School houses the elementary ELL student population and two sub-separate special education programs. Additionally, EES has the highest percentage of high-risk students in the district. The inequities in facilities with their elementary peers at the Manchester Memorial Elementary School, its district sister school, result in a significantly different educational experience. Lack of project rooms, science labs, flexible use spaces, appropriate performance spaces, and spaces large enough to accommodate multiple classroom groups hinders the collaboration among grade levels and classrooms as well as robust, engaging, real-life instructional connections. Lack of storage and counter space in classrooms restricts the instructional practices that teachers can employ daily to engage students.

While we can physically accommodate our current student population and critical program needs, the age and condition of the facility limit the scope and delivery of the academic program in both general and special education. The end-of-life facility results in frequent disruptions of the educational program, challenges our ability to meet state regulations, and limits the scope of the academic program in both regular and special education. Primarily impacted are instructional opportunities for students and teachers, both in regular and in special education. Outdated learning spaces that do not support flexible learning, extreme swings in building temperatures, leaking windows, basement level classrooms, absence of kindergarten lavatories, lack of handicap accessibility throughout the building, acoustically unsound learning spaces, limited and large group gathering space, and no small group learning spaces or project rooms are all barriers to our program and current best practice instruction.

**Substandard Physical Plant Impact on Program & Special Education Compliance:**

- Limited climate control which creates safety issues for students with identified disabilities and prevents summer programming for students with special needs.
- Outdated unit ventilators do not properly regulate heat in classrooms. Despite recently upgraded digital controls, excessive temperature swings interrupt instruction. Students at times need to wear coats in classrooms. Temperature problems also present safety and health concerns.
- Rainwater leaks into the building requiring the school to put out buckets in hallways and create the potential for hazardous slips, and water damage inside the building. Leaks also present a hazard to educational technology.
- Handicap accessibility deficits: door construction, parking and ramp access, water fountains, bathroom facilities, lockers, and classroom sinks do not meet the current MAAB/ADA code.
- Moderate special education support services are delivered in two classrooms, one severely undersized, limiting the number of students that can be supported at any given time. This undersized space houses both a special education teacher and a paraprofessional which contributes to a noisy and distracting environment for the delivery of individual and small group tutorials. Appropriate educational space is not available due to an inadequate number of small group learning spaces available in an outdated building.
- Occupational and physical therapy occurs in a basement area regularly impacted by damp and musty conditions. This space abuts the boiler room and is accessed by walking through the art classroom which does not allow for student privacy. This undersized space restricts the amount and type of equipment utilized and limits the number of students that can be served during a class period.
- Handicap accessibility deficits door construction, parking and ramp access, water fountains, bathroom facilities, lockers, classroom sinks do not meet current MAAB/ADA code.
- Speech and Language services are delivered in a converted locker room space in an attempt to create small group learning spaces.
- EES has no appropriate dedicated, private rooms for state mandated student evaluations by the special education department.
- EES has no space for de-escalation, in-school suspensions, or time outs for both general and special education students.

- EES does not have appropriate science laboratory space for the older grades to conduct experiments which significantly limits the school's ability to implement its STEM curriculum. Experiments are done in the classrooms, which are carpeted, leading to cleanliness and safety issues.
- EES does not have adequate large group space. Performances and school assemblies are held in the dated "cafetorium." This limits the number and type of school performances for students and families.
- Security measures, considered common in all schools today, are either missing or retrofitted in less than efficient ways. A lack of door alarms, signals for open doors, PA system accessible by all classrooms/office spaces, and an emergency direct-call button to the local police/fire are all cause for concern, particularly when these safety measures are in place in other district schools.
- Antiquated and broken kitchen equipment results in less variety in menu items, point of service choices and farm-to-table nutrition initiatives. Nutrition instruction is limited by these representational choices.



