

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING QUESTION OF THE WEEK



Week 4:

**What are the Major Deficiencies
of the Current Foster School?**

Built in 1951, the current Foster Elementary School has outlived its useful life and no longer meets the needs of Hingham students, teachers, and staff. Overall, the current school building presents many challenges that negatively impact the ability for teachers to deliver, and for children to access, the required curriculum in an environment that supports and promotes learning.



The issues are long-standing - the 2006 School Facilities Study recommended the pursuit of a project to address the then-existing issues that negatively impacted the delivery of curriculum. Despite a 2008 renovation that extended the building's useful life by ten years, major deficiencies include:

Undersized key spaces in the building, such as the cafeteria and gymnasium, are too small to accommodate the student population and do not comply with current space requirements. The media center is now part of the library, reducing library program space. Foster is the only elementary school in Hingham that cannot accommodate an all-school assembly or event.

Lack of direct hallway access. Several classrooms have no direct hallway access, requiring children to interrupt classroom learning as they pass through one classroom to access the hallway or restrooms.

Lack of adequate ventilation and air circulation. A number of classrooms lack windows to provide natural light, adequate ventilation, and air circulation, creating a substandard learning environment. Last year, due to space and ventilation concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, first and second grade students were relocated off-site to a leased former school building in Weymouth.



Aging mechanical systems and poor design. The inability to control temperature fluctuations - and heat system failures during winter - have led to the evacuation of students and disruption of classes and learning time. Indoor room temperatures can range from 50 to 88 degrees Fahrenheit, on the same day, in different parts of the building. The electrical system dates to 1951 and is overtaxed for 21st. century needs, such as computers and printers. Old pipes are corroding, resulting in continual leaks, slip hazards, and forced relocations of students and staff. The heating, plumbing, and electrical systems require constant repairs, which have become more frequent and more costly in recent years. Critical maintenance is accomplished through access doors built into classroom floors, which disrupts learning.

Aging windows make it harder to maintain indoor temperatures supporting learning. Many windows that could not be replaced during prior renovation work allow heat to escape and cold to infiltrate the building causing inefficient utility use and higher than expected costs.

