

Ten-Year Elementary Facilities Plan Update PHASE TWO



March 2018

Message from the Superintendent of Schools to the South Windsor Community:

I am pleased to provide a very exciting update of our progress with the Ten-Year Elementary Facilities Plan. As you will see in the following pages, the design team has been hard at work preparing renderings of the new Philip R. Smith and Eli Terry schools. The building concepts are beautiful and I hope these early renderings spark your interest and excitement as we make our way through a variety of milestones leading up to breaking ground in the winter of 2019.

Although I have sent countless communications regarding the ten-year plan since its adoption in 2013, this newsletter marks the first time I am writing to our community about increasing enrollment. South Windsor, like most Connecticut towns, has been experiencing declining enrollment for over a decade. That trend has shifted, and we are now experiencing an unexpected spike in our K-5 enrollment. I place this dynamic under the heading of "a good problem to have."

I characterize this as a "good" problem because it demonstrates that families are moving to South Windsor for our schools, albeit at a rate faster than the experts predicted. We have a product families want: an outstanding school system with high quality programs and incredibly talented and dedicated educators. I use the word "problem," however, because this increase in enrollment has brought its challenges. While I am proud that so many families are flocking to our community, it doesn't mean that I haven't lost a few nights of sleep to work on thoughtful solutions. We are adding temporary space at Pleasant Valley to address its rise in student enrollment, and we are moving the preschool program out of Orchard Hill to address its rise in K-5 enrollment. The superintendent's proposed FY2019 operational budget is driven almost exclusively by the impact of higher than expected K-5 enrollment on our schools. More information about increasing enrollment can be found on page 4 of this newsletter.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not address the role of school security in our school construction process. The horrific and tragic events in Parkland, Florida have re-ignited conversations about school safety, including how school security factors into the design of our new buildings. In 2013, under the guidance of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection/Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DESPP/DEMHS), the state adopted new school design safety standards. These standards were introduced as our architects were designing the new Orchard Hill. At the time the Orchard Hill project was being designed, we were not required to adhere to the new standards. However, knowing that the new standards would apply to Phase Two, we chose to proactively and voluntarily incorporate them so that our Phase One school would be consistent with the safety standards required for the future Phase Two buildings.

Some parents and community members have inquired as to whether we should hold a public forum with a question and answer period about specific school safety protocols. It is important that families understand that if any school system were to herald its strengths or expose its weaknesses, it could unwittingly undermine its overall security. Further, it is commonplace and best practice for school districts to refrain from discussing or publishing their security protocols to avoid such information getting into the wrong hands.

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I want to reassure parents and community members that thoughtful conversations are occurring at many levels across the district, including with school-based emergency response teams, the central office incident command team, the police and fire departments, and the Board of Education. We are also engaged in conversations with the architects and school security design experts as we plan for these two new schools. My role as superintendent of schools requires me to strike a balance between keeping the public informed and using discretion when it is in the best interest of our children. When there is school safety information that is appropriate to share, parents can expect it to come directly from their school principal or the superintendent of schools through School Messenger or the district website.

I am aware that some South Windsor residents are commenting regularly on social media about their views on school security. Social media can be a powerful vehicle when used responsibly, and I am not dissuading individuals from commenting regarding social changes they may want to see in our country. I am, however, speaking specifically about the use of social media or other public forums as a vehicle to discuss local school security measures. This approach is worrisome as I fear that well-meaning residents may be unwittingly undermining our children's safety.

I encourage all of you to communicate responsibly with school or district leaders as opposed to communicating with the unknown forces that troll the internet. If anyone has an observation as to what may be a real or perceived weakness in our school security, you should contact the building principal directly. Pointing out weaknesses on social media is irresponsible, even if unintentional. Conversely, you will not hear me boast about our school security protocols because over-stating the strength of a school district's security posture can draw the attention of those who may wish our children harm. I have to balance my desire to reassure parents with my responsibility to be guarded and thoughtful about my words. This is not a new message from me. In fact, the following is an excerpt from the letter I wrote to parents five years ago after the tragedy in Newtown:

“One week ago, school communities and parents across the nation watched in disbelief as the heart-breaking tragedy unfolded in Newtown. ...Over the past week, there has been a national and local conversation about school safety. We live in a world with an insatiable appetite for information and we have become dependent upon the immediacy that the internet provides. There are times when this immediacy and accessibility of information is extremely beneficial and times when it is counterproductive. The national conversation is essential and must continue beyond the days and weeks following this tragedy. Naturally, there is also a local conversation; with the press, politicians, parents and the public all wanting to know with specificity how South Windsor schools prepare for and respond to threats to the safety of our learning communities. As this community knows, I am extremely committed to clear, direct open lines of communication with all of the aforementioned stakeholders, but I must be cautious and thoughtful when it comes to school security.”

On February 16, I sent a letter to families following the heartbreaking tragedy in Parkland, Florida (a copy is attached as an addendum to this newsletter). I know these are uncertain times and I understand how heavy this inconceivable epidemic of gun violence in schools is weighing on the hearts and minds of our community. I want to thank our community for partnering with us in our joint commitment to keep our children safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "KATE CARTER". The letters are cursive and fluid, with the first name "KATE" in all caps and the last name "CARTER" in all caps.

Kate Carter, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

EARLY RENDERINGS OF PHASE TWO SCHOOLS



ELI TERRY ELEMENTARY

- A 66,586 square foot K-5 elementary school will be built on the **Eli Terry** campus.
- Construction is expected to begin in winter 2019 and be completed in summer 2020.
- Eli Terry students will remain in the original Eli Terry building while their new school is being built, and move to their new Eli Terry facility in August 2020.
- The existing Eli Terry building will be demolished during the summer of 2020.



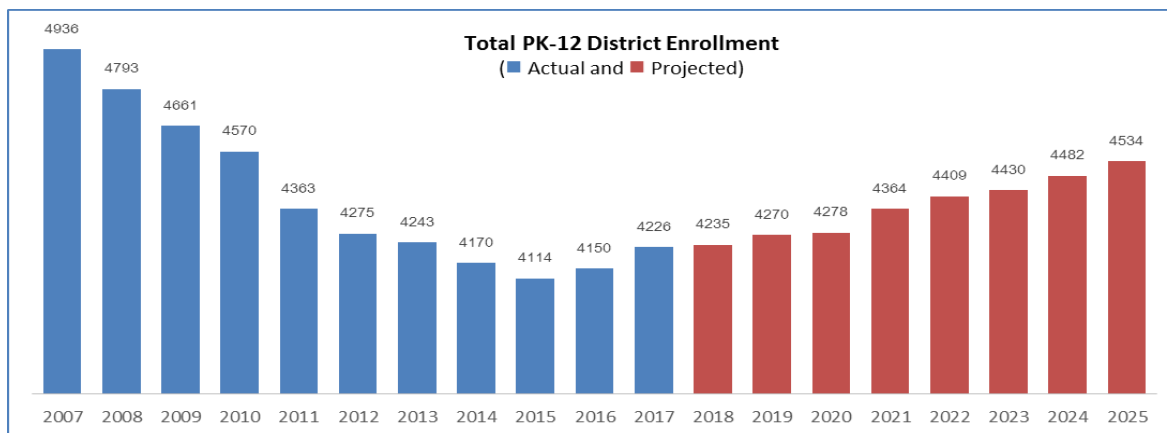
PHILIP R. SMITH ELEMENTARY

- A 58,243 square foot K-5 elementary school will be built on the site of the existing **Philip R. Smith** building.
- The original Philip R. Smith building will be razed prior to construction.
- Construction is expected to begin in winter 2019 and be completed in summer 2020.
- Philip R. Smith staff and students will be temporarily relocated to the former Orchard Hill building located at 350 Foster Street until construction is complete.
 - PRS staff will move to the swing space location in July 2018.
 - PRS students will attend the swing space location for two school years beginning in August 2018, and remain there until the new school building opens in August 2020.
- The former Orchard Hill building will be called "Philip R. Smith School" while it is occupied by the PRS community.



RESPONDING TO CHANGE: ENROLLMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

In the Superintendent's FY2019 budget presentation to the Board of Education in January, it was reported that South Windsor Public Schools has transitioned from a district of declining enrollment to a district whose enrollment is projected to continue increasing. While the most significant growth is occurring at the elementary level, the graph below depicts the overall trend of increasing enrollment districtwide.

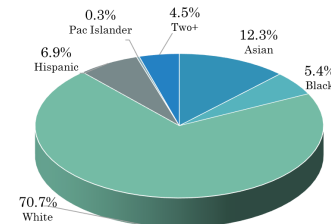


As you can see in the charts to the right, in just a short amount of time there has been a notable change in our district's demographics, as seen when comparing our current senior class with our current kindergarten class. Our population of white students has declined from 71% to 54%, and our population of Asian students has increased from 12% to 26%. The rise of Asian families is a reflection of what demographers call "affinity grouping." This occurs when people of like cultural backgrounds seek residency in locations where there is a convergence of that particular culture or ethnicity. This dynamic has brought a richness to our South Windsor tapestry and should be celebrated. But it must also be studied and understood because it has significant implications for our long-term facility planning.

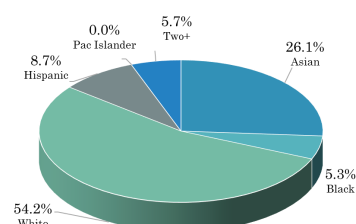
The emergence of an affinity group in South Windsor has brought about an unexpected increase in our elementary enrollment, an increase that could not have been forecast by the traditional methodologies that demographers use to forecast school enrollments. For example, in Orchard Hill the highest 8-year enrollment projection (used for school construction projects) now calls for 98 more students than our demographer, Milone & MacBroom, forecast just one year ago. We see the same pattern in Pleasant Valley, with the highest 8-year enrollment projected to be 68 students more than what was forecast just one year ago. The dynamic at Orchard Hill and Pleasant Valley is being driven by specific housing stock within their districts. At this time, the enrollment projections for Phase Two schools, Eli Terry and Philip R. Smith, remain on course.

When the Ten-Year Facilities Plan was created five years ago, each phase was purposely staggered so we could be responsive to changes such as the ones we are seeing due to increased enrollment. In response to the unexpected and changing space needs of our schools, the district is implementing a variety of solutions. In order to accommodate the increased K-5 enrollment in the Orchard Hill district, effective with the 2018-2019 school year, the district's preschool program will move to space in the nearby Timothy Edwards Middle School (TEMS) building. The preschool and special education staff have been working closely with TEMS administration to make this a smooth transition. At Pleasant Valley, we will be installing four modular classrooms onto the existing building to support the school's current needs until a new building can be constructed in Phase Three.

**Current SWHS Seniors
Class of 2018**



**Current Kindergarteners
Class of 2030**

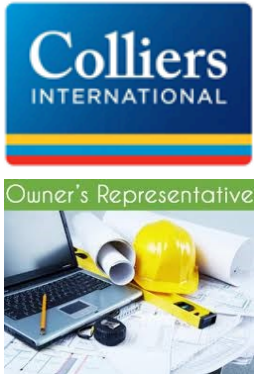


PHASE TWO PROJECT PROFESSIONALS



Architect. Moser Pilon Nelson Architects (MPN) has been selected by the Public Building Commission as the design architect for Phase Two. The project team includes Hugh Pearson, David Symonds, Nick Ficaro, Shawn Buckley, and Kristen Giuffrida.

MPN is a multi-disciplined firm that offers architectural, planning and interior design services. Founded in 1980, the Wethersfield-based firm's philosophy is to provide outstanding client service while incorporating innovative and cost-effective design solutions. For more information on MPN, please visit their website: <http://mpn-arch.com>.



Owner's Representative. Colliers International has been selected by the PBC as the Owner's Representative for Phase Two. Marc Sklenka will serve as the Project Executive, Chuck Warrington will serve as the Senior Project Manager, and Sean Jensen will serve as Project Manager.

From project conception through project closeout, Colliers will provide project management assistance, technical and financial analysis, advocacy, and oversight to ensure each of the new facilities reflect the requirements of the educational specifications. In their role as Owner's Rep, Colliers will protect the interests of the town of South Windsor by ensuring that newly created spaces conform to the ed specs; managing and reducing costs; maximizing value by providing value management options; reviewing design documents to avoid high cost change orders; preserving the project schedule by establishing critical milestones throughout the design and construction process; and ensuring construction quality control by confirming proper design and use of construction materials and equipment. For more information on Colliers, please visit their website at www.colliers.com/en-us.



Construction Manager. Gilbane Building Company has been selected as the construction manager for Phase Two. A construction manager plans, coordinates, budgets, and supervises construction projects from early development through completion. Under the supervision of Karie A. Kratz, Operations Manager for the Connecticut Business Unit, Gilbane will be the on-site project manager from groundbreaking to occupancy. Gilbane attends all PBC meetings, and will work closely with architects, the owner's rep and district staff during all of the remaining phases leading up to construction and occupancy.

Gilbane was founded in 1873 as a family-run carpentry and general contracting business. Gilbane is a recognized leader in the construction industry, and is one of the largest providers of construction management services in Connecticut. They were ranked as a top contractor in Connecticut by *Engineer News Record New York* 2014. For more information about Gilbane, please visit their website at <https://www.gilbaneco.com/>.

KEEPING THE COMMUNITY INFORMED

On December 6, 2017, a community informational session was held for abutting property owners of the Eli Terry and Philip R. Smith Elementary Schools. The purpose of this meeting was to provide neighbors and abutters to each campus with accurate information regarding the proposed siting of these new facilities. The session also provided an opportunity to meet members of the project team, including the project architect, owner's representative project manager, and the construction manager. Members of the Public Building Commission, Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools, school district staff, and town staff were present as well.

On January 16, 2018, Dr. Carter hosted a meeting for Philip R. Smith families to review details regarding the upcoming move and transition to the former Orchard Hill "swing space" location. Beginning in August 2018, PRS students and staff will be relocated to 350 Foster Street for the next two school years. Later this spring, students will take a field trip to their new location so they can familiarize themselves with the school layout. An Open House for families will also be held at the new location in June. PRS staff will move to the swing space location in July, and students will begin the 2018-2019 school year there in August. Details regarding transition activities will be communicated to families by Mrs. Dixon, and available on the PRS website.

As Eli Terry students and staff will remain in their current building while the new school is being built, an information session for Eli Terry families is planned later in the Fall 2018.

SCG049 FILED WITH DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

On May 19, 2017, the SCG049 grant applications for both projects were filed with the State of Connecticut's Department of Administrative Services. The SCG049 form is required for school construction projects. It provides data and information regarding a proposed project, including but not limited to: rationale for the project, cost information, financing information, nature of work to be undertaken, square footage details, projected enrollment, and the grade level range of students included in the project. *(Source: www.ct.gov, SCG049 guidelines)*

The timeline for the state's review and approval of these types of grant applications is 12 months. During this time, the district is permitted to gather information and start the design process for the project. Construction, however, will not occur until after approval is received from the state.

SITE PREPARATIONS

While the official groundbreaking of the new schools is not anticipated to occur until early 2019, you may begin to see some limited activity on school campuses. In the coming months, we will be conducting geotechnical site exploration, wetlands identification, and survey work on or around Philip R. Smith and Eli Terry.

Mr. Federici (Eli Terry principal) and Mrs. Dixon (PRS principal) have been apprised of the expected activity. The majority of work by site professionals is expected to occur after school hours and over periods of school vacation. Our director of facility operations, Patrick Hankard, will work closely with the design teams to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to maximize safety at all times.

PHASE TWO MILESTONES TO-DATE

6/2016	Development of Educational Specifications for Eli Terry (ET) and Philip R. Smith (PRS) schools
6/2016	Commencement of Early Site Services
6/2016	Development of Enrollment Analysis and Redistricting Plans
8/2016	Early Site Services Completed for ET and PRS sites
9/2016	Refreshed Elementary Facilities Ten-Year Timeline approved by the Board of Education
10/2016	Educational Specifications for ET and PRS schools approved by Board of Education
10/2016	Project Budgets for ET and PRS schools approved by Board of Education
3/2017	Town referendum passed
3/2017	Public Building Commission appointed by Town Council to manage project
7/2017	Moser Pilon Nelson (MPN) selected by PBC to serve as architect for ET and PRS
7/2017	Colliers International selected by PBC to serve as owner's representative for ET and PRS
8/2017	Joint Meeting of Public Building Commission and Board of Education held with architects to obtain feedback on interior and exterior concepts for ET and PRS
8/2017	MPN begins holding meetings with classroom teachers, administrators and support staff to discuss instructional programming needs
10/2017	Gilbane Building Company selected by PBC to serve as Construction Manager for ET and PRS
11/2017	Commissioning Agent selected by PBC
12/2017	Informational session for neighbors and property abutters
1/2018	Schematic Design approved by PBC
1/2018	Meeting with PRS families regarding transition to swing space

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Visit our website to learn more:

www.southwindsorschools.org/elementaryfacilities



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NEWSLETTER ADDENDUM:
FEBRUARY 16, 2018 LETTER TO FAMILIES

February 16, 2018

Dear Families:

It is with a heavy heart that I am writing to families following the horrific and tragic school shooting in Parkland, Florida, an event that has become unfathomably commonplace in our country. I know our community joins me in keeping the victims and their families in our thoughts as they navigate this unimaginable grief. As the news coverage unfolds throughout the weekend, your children will undoubtedly have questions and experience a range of emotions. Please know our staff, particularly school counselors, school psychologists, and social workers, will be ready to support your children as they return to school on Tuesday. Please be sure to contact your child's teacher, counselor, or principal if you feel your child is in need of specialized support. As your superintendent of schools my heart is filled with profound sadness, but my head remains focused on keeping our children physically and emotionally safe.

While we already have school security protocols in place, as do all districts across the country, I want to assure you that we continually re-examine these protocols and make improvements. Our school security and safety plan is submitted to the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Homeland Security annually. We continue to make investments in our infrastructure such as cameras and point of entry systems. We have a strong and positive relationship with the South Windsor Police Department and South Windsor Fire Department, and will continue to partner with them when refining our school safety procedures.

Over the past eight years I have occasionally been asked by parents if I can guarantee their child's safety. I have never wavered from what is the only honest response: no, I cannot guarantee it. It would be disingenuous to suggest that there are not forces beyond our control. What I can guarantee is that we are committed to doing everything within our control to keep our kids safe. The caring adults who serve your children on a daily basis consider it a privilege to have your trust and support. We protect that which you cherish most and we take that responsibility seriously.

The following is an excerpt from a parent letter I wrote five years ago after the heartbreaking tragedy in Newtown:

On Monday, I visited all of our seven schools. I saw parents' faces lined with worry, teachers masterfully mask their pain in front of their students, adult tears instantly replaced with a smile to protect the innocence of our young and unknowing learners. I saw older students demonstrating compassion as they tried to identify ways to help a community in their unimaginable grief. I saw our younger children laughing, playing, learning, questioning, problem-solving, singing and skipping. I have had the privilege of attending an elementary school concert every night this week. The voices of our young learners offered a healing quality to the grandparents, parents and siblings in the audience. All of us have been reminded of the fragility of life. This reminder should bolster our commitment to each other and our willingness to show kindness to one another.

The theme from the aforementioned paragraph is as important today as it was five years ago. We must not let our disbelief over this seemingly unstoppable epidemic of violence, nor our despair over so many young lives lost, diminish our capacity for kindness. We live in uncertain times and although it is becoming increasingly difficult, we must, for our children's sake, continue to find the good in this world. In addition to the multitude of security protocols, drills, training and vigilance that take place in our schools every day, we will also work equally hard to ensure that our schools continue to be places of love, laughter, and learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "KATE CARTER". The letters are slightly slanted and connected in a cursive-like style.

Kate Carter, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools