District: Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District
School Name: Dighton Elementary School
Recommended Category: Preferred Schematic
Date: October 21, 2026

Recommendation

That the Executive Director be authorized to approve the Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District (the "District"), as part of its Invitation to Feasibility Study, to proceed into Schematic Design to replace the existing Dighton Elementary School and construct a new facility serving 515 students in Kindergarten through grades 4, plus Pre-Kindergarten, on the site of the existing Dighton Elementary School which is shared with the existing Dighton Middle School. MSBA staff has reviewed the Feasibility Study and accepts the District's Preferred Schematic.

District Information	
District Name	Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District
Elementary Schools	Dighton Elementary School (PK-4) Palmer River Elementary School (PK-4)
Middle Schools	Dighton Middle School (5-8) Dorothy L. Beckwith Middle School (5-8)
High School	Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School (9-12)
Priority School Name	Dighton Elementary School
Type of School	Elementary School
Grades Served	PK-4
Year Opened	1953
Existing Square Footage	68,500
Additions	Addition – 1998 Renovation – 2015 Renovation – 2016
Acreage of Site	23.4 acres
Building Issues	The District identified deficiencies in the following areas: – Electrical systems – Accessibility In addition to the physical plant issues, the District reported that the existing facility does not support the delivery of its educational program as well as existing and projected overcrowding.
Original Design Capacity	Unknown
2025-2026 Enrollment	447 students
Agreed Upon Enrollment	515 students
Enrollment Specifics	The District and MSBA have mutually agreed upon a design enrollment of 515 students for grades K-4, for a project that will serve grades PK-4.
Total Project Budget – Debt Exclusion Anticipated	Yes

MSBA Board Votes	
Invitation to Eligibility Period	December 13, 2023

Invitation to Feasibility Study	February 26, 2025
Preferred Schematic Authorization	On October 28, 2026 Board agenda
Project Scope & Budget Authorization	District is targeting Board authorization on April 28, 2027
Feasibility Study Reimbursement Rate (Incentive points are not applicable)	55.63%

Consultants	
Owner's Project Manager (the "OPM")	Skanska USA Building, Inc.
Designer	Arrowstreet, Inc.

Discussion

The existing Dighton Elementary School is a 68,500 square feet facility located on a 23.4-acre site and currently serves students in Kindergarten through grades 4, plus Pre-Kindergarten. The original school building was constructed in 1953 with three additions totaling 18,000 square feet, including a Pre-Kindergarten wing, a library and a gymnasium wing, completed in 1999. Additionally, there was a roof replacement in 2016 as well as HVAC renovations and an addition of modular classrooms and solar canopies in 2018.

The District's Statement of Interest ("SOI") identified numerous deficiencies in the existing facility associated with outdated electrical systems; accessibility issues; and overcrowding. The SOI also identified deficiencies in the existing spaces and notes that the spaces within the facility are not conducive to delivering the District's educational program.

In conjunction with its consultants, the District performed a comprehensive assessment of the existing conditions and the educational program and received input from educators, administrators, and facilities personnel. Based on the findings of this effort, the District and its consultants initially studied twelve (12) preliminary options that included: one (1) code upgrade option, five (5) addition/ renovation options, and six (6) new construction options. The following is a detailed list of the preliminary options considered.

Option	**Description of Preliminary Options**
Option 1A	Code upgrade at the existing Dighton Elementary School with an estimated total construction cost of $58.7 million, and an estimated total project cost of $76.3 million.
Option 2A	Phased renovation and two-story addition at the existing Dighton Elementary School with an estimated total construction cost of $95.5 million, and an estimated total project cost of $125.5 million.
Option 2B	Phased renovation and three-story addition at the existing Dighton Elementary School with an estimated total construction cost of $96.6 million, and an estimated total project cost of $125.6 million.
Option 2C	Phased renovation and two-story addition at the existing Dighton Elementary School with an estimated total construction cost of $101.1 million, and an estimated total project cost of $131.4 million.

Option 2D	Phased renovation and two-story addition at the existing Dighton Elementary School with an estimated total construction cost of $99.6 million, and an estimated total project cost of $129.6 million.
Option 2E	Phased renovation and three-story addition at the existing Dighton Elementary School with an estimated total construction cost of $100 million, and an estimated total project cost of $130.1 million.
Option 3A	A two-story new construction scenario proposed to be built on the footprint of the existing Dighton Elementary School building with an estimated total construction cost of $98.4 million, and an estimated total project cost of $127.9 million.
Option 3B	A two-story new construction scenario proposed to be built between the existing Dighton Elementary School and Dighton Middle School with an estimated total construction cost of $91.5 million, and an estimated total project cost of $119 million.
Option 3C	A two-story new construction scenario proposed to be located between existing Dighton Elementary School and Dighton Middle School with an estimated total construction cost of $92.2 million, and an estimated total project cost of $120 million.
Option 3D	A three-story new construction scenario proposed to be located between existing Dighton Elementary School and Dighton Middle School with an estimated total construction cost of $93.5 million, and an estimated total project cost of $121.6 million.
Option 3E	A two-story new construction scenario proposed to be located west of existing Dighton Middle School with an estimated total construction cost of $90.6 million, and an estimated total project cost of $117.8 million.
Option 3F	A three-story new construction scenario proposed to be located west of existing Dighton Middle School with an estimated total construction cost of $90.2 million, and an estimated total project cost of $117.3 million.

As a result of this analysis, the District determined that from this list, “Option 1A”, “Option 2A”, Option 3B”, and “Option 3C” were considered for further evaluation, and the following eight (8) options were eliminated from further evaluation:

- “Option 2B” and “Option 2E” due to the estimated high costs, anticipated project durations, and need for temporary modular classrooms. Additionally, a three-story building design was not viewed as favorable due to the associated age of the students and the suitability of a large-scale building within the surrounding community. Furthermore, “Option 2E” was not desired by the District due to the proposed location of the new classroom wing and proximity to the main road and abutters.

- “Option 2C” and “Option 2D” due to the high estimated costs. In addition, the District did not view the proposed location of the new classroom wing to be favorable, given the close proximity to the main road and neighboring properties.

- “Option 3A” due to its anticipated impact on students and staff during construction. This option would also require the use of temporary modular classrooms resulting in higher estimated construction costs compared to the other new construction options.

- "Option 3D" was eliminated as a three-story building design was not viewed as favorable due to the associated age of the students and the suitability of a large-scale building within the surrounding community

- "Option 3E" due to unresolved site access challenges on the western portion of the property, which may impact nearby wetlands and introduce additional permitting and project risks. Additionally, it is anticipated that this option would also result in higher enabling costs and could result in increased long-term maintenance obligations associated with the larger open space area.

- "Option 3F" due to its proximity to wetlands, which could present additional challenges and result in higher costs.

However, subsequent to the evaluation of preliminary options, the District developed iterations for "Option 2A", "Option 3B", and "Option 3C", resulting in two (2) additional addition/renovation options (referred to as "Options 2A.1 and 2A.2"), and (3) additional new construction options (referred to as "Options 3B.1, 3B.2 and 3C.1"). As a result of further review and analysis of this revised list, the District determined that "Option 1A", "Option 2A.1", "Option 3B", and "Option 3C.1" were considered for further evaluation and the following (4) options were eliminated from further evaluation:

- "Option 2A" due to its higher estimated costs compared to other addition and renovation options, and extended construction duration. Additionally, the District determined that this option would not provide flexibility to improve site traffic circulation and cause significant disruption to the current educational program.

- "Option 2A.2" (Phased Renovation and Two-Story Addition at the Existing Dighton Elementary School) due to its proximity to abutting properties on the east side of the site and limited construction access adjacent to the proposed classroom wing. This option also requires temporary modular classrooms during construction, would not improve on-site traffic circulation, and is anticipated to result in significant disruption to students and school operations.

- "Option 3B.1" (Two-Story New Construction Between the Existing Elementary and Middle Schools) due to its substantially higher estimated cost compared to the other new construction alternatives and the need for temporary modular classrooms during construction. Although this option creates additional space for a Central Green, the District preferred other alternatives that offered more compact building layouts, reduced circulation distances, and greater overall efficiency.

- "Option 3C" because this option requires the need for temporary modular classrooms during construction, resulting in increased costs and disruption to school operations.

MSBA staff and the District agreed to explore the following four (4) options for further development and consideration in the final evaluation and development of preliminary design pricing as presented below including: one (1) code upgrade option, one (1) addition/renovation option, and two (2) new construction options.

Summary of Preliminary Design Pricing for Final Evaluation of Options

Option (Description)	Total Gross Square Feet	Square Feet of Renovated Space (cost*/sq. ft.)	Square Feet of New Construction (cost*/sq. ft.)	Site, Building Takedown, Haz Mat. Cost*	Estimated Total Construction ** (cost*/sq. ft.)	Estimated Total Project Costs
Option 1A: (Code Upgrade)	68,500	68,500 $744/sq. ft.	N/A	$20,890,553	$71,854,553 $1,049/sq. ft.	$93,410,919
Option 2A.1: (Addition/ Renovation)	92,250	44,000 $790/sq. ft.	48,250 $900/sq. ft.	$20,812,531	$98,997,531 $1,073/sq. ft.	$128,696,790
Option 3B: (New Construction)***	***92,250***	***N/A***	***92,250 $790/sq. ft.***	***$21,923,200***	***$94,800,700 $1,028/sq. ft.***	***$123,240,910***
Option 3C.1: (New Construction)	92,250	N/A	92,250 $790/sq.ft	$21,594,884	$94,427,384 $1,024/sq.ft.	$122,755,599

** Marked up construction costs*
*** Does not include construction contingency*
******District's Preferred Schematic***

The District selected "Option 3B" as the Preferred Schematic to proceed into Schematic Design, as the District determined this option best meets the District's educational program requirements and long-term vision. Additionally, this option offers the opportunity to provide a flexible learning environment organized around grade level learning neighborhoods, collaborative breakout spaces, and appropriately located student support areas, supporting the District's educational delivery methods.

The District determined that "Option 3B" is also anticipated to provide significant site and campus benefits, including ample outdoor recreation and play areas and a central green space that creates a campus connection between the elementary and middle school. The proposed site plan is anticipated to improve traffic circulation by separating bus circulation from parent pick-up and drop-off, while also proposing to providing an efficient framework for future expansion to accommodate evolving educational needs over time. Additionally, this option is anticipated to provide a shorter construction duration and eliminate the need for temporary modular classrooms, further supporting the District's goal of delivering an efficient and adaptable campus.

"Option 1A" was not selected by the District primarily because this option did not adequately address the District's educational program requirements and does not address overcrowding concerns. Additionally, the District determined that this option would not improve site circulation and is anticipated to result in significant disruption to ongoing education during construction.

"Option 2A.1" was not selected by the District because this option would require substantial demolition and reconstruction, retaining about half of the existing school, while adding a large new addition. The District determined that this option would also require more complicated phasing, longer construction duration, and undesirable disruption to students and staff during construction.

"Option 3C.1" was not selected by the District because of its disadvantageous site configuration, construction logistics, and undesirable community impact. Additionally, the District determined that this option did not meet the site circulation goals compared to the preferred option.

The District presented its proposed Preferred Schematic to the MSBA Facilities Assessment Subcommittee ("FAS") on September 16, 2026. At the meeting, members discussed the following items:

- Appreciation of the District's Educational program and the updates made since the original submission;
- Importance of continued input from faculty and staff who contributed to the Educational Program as the design progresses;
- Appreciation for the thoughtful use of the existing greenhouse for the program delivery and considerations for its potential relocation as part of the proposed project;
- The distribution of Special Education spaces and the DESE review process during Schematic Design;
- The location of the main entrance and visual connection to the central green;
- Clarification of the proposed site circulation and consideration for opportunities to optimize the experience for parents, students and visitors and the location/approach to the entry plaza and main entrance;
- Site constraints, access and circulation, and associated considerations during phased construction; and
- The importance of geotechnical investigations and suggestion to thoroughly examine the existing infrastructure on site to ensure coordination with geothermal well installation.

MSBA staff reviewed the conclusions of the Feasibility Study and all other subsequent submittals with the District and found:

1) The options investigated were sufficiently comprehensive in scope, the approach undertaken in this study was appropriate, and the District's Preferred Schematic is reasonable and cost-effective and meets the needs identified by the District.

2) The District has submitted an operational budget for educational objectives and a capital budget statement for MSBA review.

3) The District's Special Education submission will be subject to final review and approval by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as part of the Schematic Design submittal, which is prior to executing a Project Scope and Budget Agreement.

4) Subject to Board approval, the MSBA will participate in a project that includes spaces that meet MSBA guidelines, except for variations previously agreed to by the MSBA. All proposed spaces will be reviewed during the Schematic Design phase.

5) As part of the Schematic Design phase, the District will work with the MSBA to determine a mutually agreeable methodology to differentiate eligible costs from ineligible costs.

Based on the review outlined above, staff recommends that the Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District be approved to proceed into Schematic Design to replace the existing Dighton Elementary School and construct a new facility serving 515 students in Kindergarten through grade 4, plus Pre-Kindergarten, on the site of the existing Dighton Elementary School which is shared with the existing Dighton Middle School.