MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors, Massachusetts School Building Authority
FROM: James A. MacDonald, First Deputy Treasurer, Chief Executive Officer
Mary L. Pichetti, Executive Director, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
DATE: October 21, 2026
RE: Recommendation to Revise MSBA Space Summary Guidelines

This memorandum presents proposed revisions to MSBA Space Summary Guidelines for Core Program projects. As outlined in this memorandum, proposed revisions to the MSBA's Space Summary Guidelines are recommended to be effective on or after January 1, 2027. Information regarding staff recommendations was presented and discussed at the Facilities Assessment Subcommittee meetings on May 20, 2026, and September 30, 2026.

Background

The MSBA's Space Summary Guidelines include the following (12) categories:

1. Core Academic
2. Special Education
3. Art & Music
4. Vocations & Technology (which is only applicable to middle and high schools)
5. Health & Physical Education
6. Media Center
7. Auditorium & Drama (which is only applicable to high schools)
8. Dining & Food Service
9. Medical
10. Administration & Guidance
11. Custodial & Maintenance
12. Other

The categories above are made up of individual room types that vary by school type (elementary school, kindergarten-grade 8 school, middle school, high school, and regional vocational technical high school). The current MSBA Space Summary Guidelines include a total of (44) room types for elementary schools distributed among (10) categories; (51) room types for middle schools distributed among (11) categories; and (64) room types for high schools distributed among (12) categories. Please refer to 'Appendix A' for more information regarding the existing room types.

The MSBA Space Guidelines serve as one of the tools to assess eligibility within proposed Core Program projects. The MSBA Space Summary templates use an enrollment-based methodology for determining the overall building area; therefore, an overall square footage will vary by school type and enrollment.

For the Core Academic and Special Education categories, and for the category referred to as "Other", the MSBA reviews and evaluates proposed room types individually to determine eligibility. Core Academic spaces that exceed the applicable guidelines may be considered reimbursable variations based on a district's educational program, utilization, staffing, scheduling, instructional activities, student activities, and the appropriateness and justification of the proposed space(s). Special Education spaces are subject to review and approval by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), in addition to MSBA review, to confirm alignment with the District's educational program and exclusive use for Special Education purposes. The category referred to as "Other", typically includes spaces unique to individual districts such as district central offices, which are ineligible for reimbursement, and pre-kindergarten classrooms, which are reviewed individually for eligibility.

For the remaining categories, the MSBA determines eligibility based on the total square footage proposed within each category and is compared to the applicable MSBA Guidelines. Spaces that result in an overall category exceeding the MSBA Guidelines are generally considered ineligible for reimbursement, while districts proposing spaces below the Guidelines are asked to provide information and justification that confirms that for the proposed square footage, in certain circumstances, is sufficient to deliver a district's educational program. An exception to this practice involves the MSBA's Gymnasium policy, which allows the MSBA to consider additional teaching stations within a Gymnasium based on the design enrollment and/or the educational program. It should be noted that the MSBA is not proposing adjustments to MSBA's current Gymnasium policy, Auditorium policy, or MSBA's Science Technology and Engineering learning space guidelines as part of this review.

Discussion

The primary objective of this analysis was to determine if the MSBA's Space Summary Guidelines continue to appropriately reflect common space needs in MSBA funded school projects and if revisions and/or adjustments are necessary based on the resulting data and analysis.

MSBA staff conducted a comprehensive analysis and review of recently approved Core Program projects to assess the extent to which proposed spaces deviate from the current MSBA Space Summary Guidelines and to identify trends associated with eligible and ineligible square footage. This analysis included a total of (51) new construction projects in the MSBA's Core Program that received MSBA Board approval for Project, Scope, and Budget between 2020 and 2025. The projects consist of (31) elementary schools, (10) middle schools, and (10) high schools.

For each Space Summary Guidelines category, the analysis considered the following:

- The square footage proposed by school districts compared to MSBA's current Space Summary Guidelines (this was done for overall categories and individual room types);
- MSBA's participation in the proposed spaces;
- The impact that student enrollment had on the need for square footage beyond MSBA Guidelines;
- The potential cost impact to both the MSBA and participating districts; and,
- Feedback from the MSBA's Post Occupancy Evaluation program.

Review and Analysis of Recently Approved New Construction Core Program Projects

The review and analysis examined actual programming trends across recently approved projects and provided an opportunity to identify recurring space needs, common deviations from MSBA's Guidelines, and areas where the current MSBA Space Summary Guidelines may benefit from greater flexibility within categories.

Of the (51) Core Program projects included in this analysis, Table 1 below indicates the percentage of building area proposed per category and by school type. This table illustrates that the Core Academic and Special Education categories make up a combined 60% of elementary school building area; 55% of middle school building area; and 43% of high school building area.

The remaining categories make up a combined 40% of elementary school building area; 45% of middle school building area; and 57% of high school building area.

Table 1: Overall Percentage of Proposed Building Area per Category by School Type

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Core Academic	45%	43%	35%
Special Education	15%	12%	8%
Art & Music	5%	5%	5%
Vocations & Technology	N/A	4%	12%
Health & Physical Education	10%	10%	16%
Media Center	4%	5%	4%
Auditorium /Drama	N/A	N/A	6%
Dining & Food Service	11%	10%	6%
Medical	1%	1%	1%
Administration & Guidance	4%	3%	4%
Custodial & Maintenance	3%	2%	1%
Other	2%	5%	2%

Of the (31) elementary schools reviewed as part of this analysis, districts proposed overall square footage exceeding the MSBA Guidelines on average by 25%; and the MSBA considered 96% of that variation eligible for reimbursement.

Of the (10) middle schools reviewed as part of this analysis, districts proposed overall square footage exceeding the MSBA Guidelines on average by 16%; and the MSBA considered 92% of that variation eligible for reimbursement.

Of the (10) high schools reviewed as part of this analysis, districts proposed overall square footage exceeding the MSBA Guidelines on average by 26%; and the MSBA considered 91% of that variation eligible for reimbursement.

Evaluating Potential Adjustments to MSBA's Space Summary Guidelines

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the above referenced (51) recently approved Core Program projects, and discussions during the Facilities Assessment Subcommittee meetings on May 20, 2026, and September 30, 2026, staff recommend the following adjustments to the MSBA's Space Summary Guidelines:

Table 2: Proposed Space Summary Guideline Adjustments by School Type

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Core Academic	**No Proposed Changes to Existing Room Types** **Proposes New Room Types** Teacher Planning Area Kindergarten Toilet Room	**No Proposed Changes to Existing Room Types** **Proposes New Room Types** Teacher Planning Area	**No Proposed Changes to Existing Room Types** **No Proposed New Room Types**
Special Education	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Self-Contained Special Education Classroom **Proposed New Room Types** Special Education Office Special Education Conference Room Special Education Team Chair Office OT/PT Room OT/PT Storage Speech & Language Room	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Self-Contained Special Education Classroom **Proposed New Room Types** Special Education Office Special Education Conference Room Special Education Team Chair Office OT/PT Room OT/PT Storage Speech & Language Room	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Self-Contained Special Education Classroom **Proposed New Room Types** Special Education Office Special Education Conference Room Special Education Team Chair Office OT/PT Room OT/PT Storage Speech & Language Room
Art & Music	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Music Classroom **Proposed New Room Types** Art Storage Music Storage	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Music Practice / Ensemble **Proposed New Room Types** Art Storage Music Storage	**No Changes to Existing Room Types** **Proposed New Room Types** Art Storage
Vocations & Technology	**Not Applicable**	**No Proposed Changes to Guidelines**	**No Proposed Changes to Guidelines**
Health & Physical Education	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Gym Storeroom **No New Room Types Proposed**	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Gym Storeroom **No New Room Types Proposed**	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Gym Storeroom **No New Room Types Proposed**
Media Center	**No Proposed Changes to Guidelines**	**No Proposed Changes to Guidelines**	**No Proposed Changes to Guidelines**
Auditorium & Drama	**Not Applicable**	**Not Applicable**	**No Proposed Changes to Guidelines**

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Dining & Food Service	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Kitchen **Proposed New Room Types** Quiet / Small Café Dining & Food Service Office Kitchen Storage Servery	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Kitchen **Proposed New Room Types** Quiet / Small Café Dining & Food Service Office Kitchen Storage Servery	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Kitchen **Proposed New Room Types** Quiet / Small Café Dining & Food Service Office Kitchen Storage
Medical	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Medical Suite Toilet **Proposed New Room Type** Examination Room / Isolation Room	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Medical Suite Toilet **Proposed New Room Type** Examination Room / Isolation Room	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Medical Suite Toilet **No New Room Types Proposed**
Administration & Guidance	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Supervisory / Spare Office Guidance Office Assistant Principal's Office **Proposed New Room Types** Student Support Office School Safety Office Mother's / Wellness Room	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Supervisory / Spare Office Guidance Office **Proposed New Room Types** Student Support Office School Safety Office Mother's / Wellness Room	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Supervisory / Spare Office Guidance Office **Proposed New Room Types** Student Support Office School Safety Office Mother's / Wellness Room
Custodial & Maintenance	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Custodian's Storage **No New Room Types Proposed**	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Custodian's Storage Custodian's Workshop **No New Room Types Proposed**	**Revisions to Existing Room Types** Custodian's Storage Custodian's Workshop Storeroom **No New Room Types Proposed**
Other	**No Proposed Changes to Existing Room Types** **Propose New Room Type** Pre-Kindergarten Toilet Room	**No Proposed Changes to Existing Room Types** **Propose New Room Type** Pre-Kindergarten Toilet Room	**No Proposed Changes to Existing Room Types** **Propose New Room Type** Pre-Kindergarten Toilet Room

The MSBA Space Summary template generates building area guidelines based on student enrollment; therefore, the overall square footage in the current guidelines and the impact of the proposed adjustments will vary by school type and enrollment. The following tables (3-5) illustrate several scenarios of school types with varying enrollments to indicate the potential resulting impact to overall building area net square footage (nsf).

Table 3: Elementary Schools (Grades K-5)

	300 students	600 students	900 students
Current Guidelines (nsf)	38,165	62,755	84,850
Proposed Guidelines (nsf)	44,845	70,580	96,155
Difference (nsf)	**6,680 (18%)**	**7,825 (12%)**	**11,305 (13%)**

Table 4: Middle Schools (Grades 6-8)

	600 students	900 students	1,200 students
Current Guidelines (nsf)	71,535	98,475	123,625
Proposed Guidelines (nsf)	78,915	107,565	133,875
Difference (nsf)	**7,380 (10%)**	**9,090 (9%)**	**10,250 (8%)**

Table 5: High Schools (Grades 9-12)

	900 students	1,200 students	1,500 students
Current Guidelines (nsf)	120,803	150,365	177,738
Proposed Guidelines (nsf)	127,923	158,095	186,878
Difference (nsf)	**7,120 (6%)**	**7,730 (5%)**	**9,140 (5%)**

Staff has determined that the proposed Space Summary Guidelines adjustments better align with the space needs and programming practices demonstrated in recently approved Core Program projects, while continuing to provide an enrollment-based methodology for determining the overall building area. These adjustments are anticipated to provide greater clarity in the programming of eligible spaces while preserving the MSBA's review and analysis of individual room types, educational program needs, utilization, and other applicable eligibility requirements. MSBA staff will continue to review each proposed project and associated space summary in conjunction with the district's education program and project details to determine eligibility of proposed spaces.

For additional information regarding the existing and proposed room types within the MSBA's Space Summary Guidelines, please refer to 'Appendix A'.

Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive analysis of (51) new construction projects in the MSBA's Core Program that received MSBA Board approval for Project, Scope, and Budget between 2020 and 2025 as well as discussions during the Facilities Assessment Subcommittee meetings on May 20, 2026, and September 30, 2026, staff recommend the following adjustments to MSBA's Space Summary Guidelines.

- Apply adjustments to (9) of the (12) space summary categories, which include the following:
    - Revisions to (9) existing room types for elementary schools; (9) existing room types for middle schools; and (9) existing room types for high schools. These revisions will also be applied to the kindergarten-grade 8 school and regional vocational technical high school space summary templates.
    - Addition of (19) new room types for elementary schools; (18) new room types for middle schools; and (14) new room types for high schools. These revisions will also be applied to the kindergarten through grade 8 school and regional vocational technical high school space summary templates.

- The updated Space Summary Guidelines will apply to all staff recommendations presented to the MSBA Board of Directors on or after January 1, 2027 for Core Program projects seeking approval to proceed into Schematic Design or Project Scope and Budget.

APPENDIX A

MSBA Space Summary Guidelines – Current & Proposed Room Types

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Core Academic	**Current Room Types (4)** • Kindergarten Classroom with Toilet • General Classroom (Grades 1-6) • STE Room (Grades 3-6) • STE Storage **New Room Types Proposed (2)** • **Teacher Planning Area** • **Kindergarten Toilet Room**	**Current Room Types (7)** • General Classroom • Small Group Seminar • STE Room (Grades 5-6) • STE Storage Room • Science Classroom / Lab (Grades 7-8) • Prep Room • Central Chemical Storage Room **New Room Types Proposed (1)** • **Teacher Planning Area**	**Current Room Types (6)** • General Classroom • Teacher Planning • Small Group Seminar • Science Classroom / Lab • Prep Room • Central Chemical Storage Room **No New Room Types Proposed**

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Special Education	**Current Room Types (4)** • **Self-Contained Special Education Classroom*** • Self-Contained Special Education Toilet Room • Resource Room • Small Group Room **New Room Types Proposed (6)** • **Special Education Office** • **Special Education Conference Room** • **Special Education Team Chair Office** • **OT/PT Room** • **OT/PT Storage** • **Speech & Language Room**	**Current Room Types (4)** • **Self-Contained Special Education Classroom*** • Self-Contained Special Education Toilet Room • Resource Room • Small Group Room **New Room Types Proposed (6)** • **Special Education Office** • **Special Education Conference Room** • **Special Education Team Chair Office** • **OT/PT Room** • **OT/PT Storage** • **Speech & Language Room**	**Current Room Types (4)** • **Self-Contained Special Education Classroom*** • Self-Contained Special Education Toilet Room • Resource Room • Small Group Room **New Room Types Proposed (6)** • **Special Education Office** • **Special Education Conference Room** • **Special Education Team Chair Office** • **OT/PT Room** • **OT/PT Storage** • **Speech & Language Room**

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Art & Music	**Current Room Types (4)** • Art Classroom • Art Workroom with Storage & Kiln • **Music Classroom / Large Group*** • Music Practice / Ensemble **New Room Types Proposed (2)** • **Art Storage** • **Music Storage**	**Current Room Types (4)** • Art Classroom • Art Workroom with Storage & Kiln • Band / Chorus • **Music Practice / Ensemble*** **New Room Types Proposed (2)** • **Art Storage** • **Music Storage**	**Current Room Types (7)** • Art Classroom • Art Workroom with Storage & Kiln • Band • Chorus • Ensemble • Music Practice • Music Storage **New Room Types Proposed (1)** • **Art Storage**

*Indicates adjustments to existing MSBA Space Summary Guidelines.

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Vocations & Technology	**Not Applicable**	**Current Room Types (1)** • Technology / Engineering Rooms **No New Room Types Proposed**	**Current Room Types (1)** • Technology / Engineering Rooms **No New Room Types Proposed**

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Health & Physical Education	**Current Room Types (3)** • Gymnasium • **Gym Storeroom*** • Health Instructor's Office (w/ Toilet) **No New Room Types Proposed**	**Current Room Types (4)** • Gymnasium • **Gym Storeroom*** • Health Instructor's Office (w/ Toilet) • Locker Rooms (with Toilets) **No New Room Types Proposed**	**Current Room Types (7)** • Gymnasium • PE Alternatives • **Gym Storeroom*** • Locker Rooms (w/ Toilets) • PE Storage • Athletic Director's Office • Health Instructor's Office (w/ Toilet) **No New Room Types Proposed**

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Media Center	**Current Room Types (1)** • Media Center / Reading Room **No New Room Types Proposed**	**Current Room Types (1)** • Media Center / Reading Room **No New Room Types Proposed**	**Current Room Types (1)** • Media Center / Reading Room **No New Room Types Proposed**

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Auditorium & Drama	**Not Applicable**	**Not Applicable**	**Current Room Types (5)** • Auditorium • Stage • Auditorium Storage • Make-up / Dressing Rooms • Controls / Lighting / Projection **No New Room Types Proposed**

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Dining & Food Service	**Current Room Types (5)** • Cafeteria / Dining • Stage • Chair / Table / Equipment Storage • **Kitchen*** • Staff Lunch Room **New Room Types Proposed (4)** • **Quiet / Small Café** • **Dining & Food Service Office** • **Kitchen Storage** • **Servery**	**Current Room Types (5)** • Cafeteria / Dining • Stage • Chair / Table / Equipment Storage • **Kitchen*** • Staff Lunch Room **New Room Types Proposed (4)** • **Quiet / Small Café** • **Dining & Food Service Office** • **Kitchen Storage** • **Servery**	**Current Room Types (5)** • Cafeteria / Dining • Chair / Table Storage • Scramble Serving Area • **Kitchen*** • Staff Lunch Room **New Room Types Proposed (3)** • **Quiet / Small Café** • **Dining & Food Service Office** • **Kitchen Storage**

*Indicates adjustments to existing MSBA Space Summary Guidelines.

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Medical	**Current Room Types (3)** • **Medical Suite Toilet*** • Nurse's Office / Waiting Room • Examination Room / Resting **New Room Type Proposed (1)** • **Examination Room / Isolation Room**	**Current Room Types (3)** • **Medical Suite Toilet*** • Nurse's Office / Waiting Room • Examination Room / Resting **New Room Type Proposed (1)** • **Examination Room / Isolation Room**	**Current Room Types (4)** • **Medical Suite Toilet*** • Nurse's Office / Waiting Room • Examination Room / Resting • Interview Room **No New Room Types Proposed**

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Administration & Guidance	**Current Room Types (12)** • General Office / Waiting Room • Teacher's Mail & Time Room • Copy Room • Records Room • Principal's Office w/ Conference Area • Principal's Secretary / Waiting • **Assistant Principal's Office*** • **Supervisory / Spare Office*** • Conference Room • **Guidance Office*** • Guidance Storeroom • Teacher's Work Room **New Room Types Proposed (3)** • **Student Support Office** • **School Safety Office** • **Mother's/Wellness Room**	**Current Room Types (14)** • General Office / Waiting Room • Teacher's Mail & Time Room • Copy Room • Records Room • Principal's Office w/ Conference Area • Principal's Secretary / Waiting • Assistant Principal's Office - AP1 • Assistant Principal's Office - AP2 • **Supervisory / Spare Office*** • Conference Room • **Guidance Office*** • Guidance Waiting Room • Guidance Storeroom • Teacher's Work Room **New Room Types Proposed (3)** • **Student Support Office** • **School Safety Office** • **Mother's/Wellness Room**	**Current Room Types (16)** • General Office / Waiting Room • Teacher's Mail & Time Room • Copy Room • Records Room • Principal's Office w/ Conference Area • Principal's Secretary / Waiting • Assistant Principal's Office - AP1 • Assistant Principal's Office - AP2 • **Supervisory / Spare Office*** • Conference Room • **Guidance Office*** • Guidance Waiting Room • Guidance Storeroom • Career Center • Records Room • Teacher's Work Room **New Room Types Proposed (3)** • **Student Support Office** • **School Safety Office** • **Mother's/Wellness Room**

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Custodial & Maintenance	**Current Room Types (7)** • Custodian's Office • Custodian's Workshop • **Custodian's Storage*** • Recycling Room / Trash • Receiving & General Supply • Storeroom • Network / Telecom **No New Room Types Proposed**	**Current Room Types (7)** • Custodian's Office • **Custodian's Workshop*** • **Custodian's Storage*** • Recycling Room / Trash • Receiving & General Supply • Storeroom • Network / Telecom **No New Room Types Proposed**	**Current Room Types (7)** • Custodian's Office • **Custodian's Workshop*** • **Custodian's Storage*** • Recycling Room / Trash • Receiving & General Supply • **Storeroom*** • Network / Telecom **No New Room Types Proposed**

Category	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Other	**Current Room Types (1)** • Pre-Kindergarten Classroom with Toilet **New Room Types Proposed (1)** • **Pre-Kindergarten Toilet Room**	**Current Room Types (1)** • Pre-Kindergarten Classroom with Toilet **New Room Types Proposed (1)** • **Pre-Kindergarten Toilet Room**	**Current Room Types (1)** • Pre-Kindergarten Classroom with Toilet **New Room Types Proposed (1)** • **Pre-Kindergarten Toilet Room**

*Indicates adjustments to existing MSBA Space Summary Guidelines.