

ELSMERE CAPITAL PROJECT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR FAMILIES

Elsmere PTA Meeting October 13, 2026

AT A GLANCE

Elsmere will close from July 1, 2027, through February break 2028 for a \$7 million renovation, and students will relocate for that period. Superintendent Jody Monroe shared the preliminary plan at the October 13 PTA meeting and asked families for feedback.

- **Grades 1–5** move with their teachers to a dedicated, separate wing of Bethlehem Central Middle School (BCMS).
- **Incoming kindergarten and the Connections program** move to Slingerlands or Eagle; the location should be decided by the November or December Board meeting.
- **Specials, staff, and school routines** continue; before/after care (Schools Out) is being licensed at BCMS.
- **Still being decided:** busing for kindergarten, lunch, recess, nursing, and whether kindergarten and Connections return to Elsmere in February.
- **Families can help** by registering incoming kindergartners now and sending questions to the Elsmere Stakeholder Committee.

WHAT'S BEING DONE AT ELSMERE

Elsmere's share of the voter-approved \$60 million districtwide capital project is about \$7 million, or 11.7% of the total. Voters approved the project on February 3, 2026. Elsmere, built in 1927, will be fully renovated in a single phase rather than over three years like most other schools.

- **Classrooms:** 13 classrooms fully renovated
- **Library Media Center:** renovated and modernized
- **Air conditioning:** added to 2nd-floor classrooms, the gym, the LMC, and the cafeteria
- **Bathrooms:** renovated
- **Building systems:** full boiler plant replacement and a new fire alarm system
- **Safety and access:** new doors (cafeteria, gym, loading dock, storage), ADA ramp and handrail replacement, new stairs from the cafeteria to the playground, and a fence and gate along Herrick Ave.

WHY THE BUILDING MUST CLOSE

Closing Elsmere for one stretch replaces three straight years of classroom-by-classroom disruption. The building contains asbestos, which must be removed before any construction can start.

- **The original plan** was summer abatement followed by work in phases, with some classrooms closed and some students moved to other elementary schools each year.
- **One closure instead** limits the disruption to less than one school year. The district also considers it the most efficient and cost-effective approach.
- **The end date moved** from December to February break 2028 to give contractors enough time.
- **If work runs long:** with the building empty, contractors have full access and can run two shifts to stay on schedule.

WHERE STUDENTS WILL BE IN 2027–28

Every Elsmere student keeps their Elsmere teachers; staff moves with students to support the transition. These plans are preliminary.

Group	Location	What families should know
Grades 1–5	BCMS, lower back wing near the gardens and fields	Sectioned off from the middle school, which uses the upper level. Secured entrance with its own principal and main office. Specials stay the same: PE twice a week; art, music, and library once a week.
Incoming kindergarten	Slingerlands or Eagle	Smaller elementary setting with in-classroom bathrooms. Both kindergarten classes will be in the same building.
Connections program	Slingerlands or Eagle	An elementary setting that supports individualized programs and services.

Inside the BCMS wing:

- Classrooms for grades 1–5, plus extra rooms for specials
- Restrooms with toilets and sinks at the same heights as Elsmere's
- The current counseling suite for reading, speech, and social work
- Bus drop-off at the elementary entrance, and a separate parent drop-off near the cafeteria

- Much of Elsmere's own child-sized furniture, moved over from the current building

Effect on the middle school: Middle school houses, student schedules, and class sizes stay the same. BCMS teachers whose classrooms are usually in the wing where Elsmere will be housed will share classrooms with other BCMS teachers, taking turns using a classroom for a particular subject, during the temporary relocation. This arrangement works with the middle school period schedule. Middle schoolers will not use the lockers in the elementary wing.

DECISIONS STILL IN PROGRESS

The district is working through daily logistics with each department; these are the current thinking, not final answers.

Area	Current thinking
Before/after care	Schools Out has applied for a license to run before- and after-care at BCMS.
Busing, grades 1-5	Students are picked up as they are now and taken to BCMS; the ride should be about the same length.
Busing, kindergarten	Not yet decided. The Transportation Director prefers the shortest possible ride, possibly separate routes, depending on driver capacity.
Drop-off and traffic	Little impact expected in the morning; some added afternoon traffic because of overlapping dismissal times.
Breakfast and lunch	Likely in classrooms, since BCMS lunches run most of the day. A covered pavilion with power can be used in good weather; shared cafeteria time is being explored.
Recess	Open fields are available but no playground equipment. Nick Insognia, Director of Operations and Facilities, is looking at options.
PE, music and specials	Outdoors as much as possible; shared BCMS gym time; the BCMS cafeteria when it is free. Grades 4-5 band and orchestra may use BCMS music spaces or the auditorium.

Area	Current thinking
Nursing	Not yet decided. One idea: BCMS nurses cover the wing and the Elsmere nurse goes with Connections.
Traditions	Events like Trunk or Treat and Field Day can continue in available spaces, possibly combined with BCMS students.

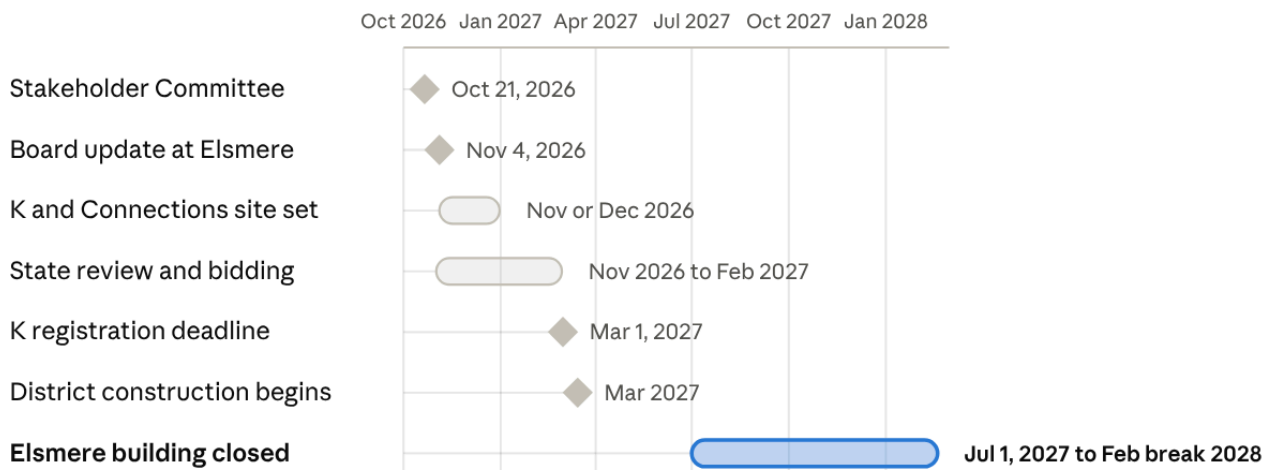
Nick Insognia, Director of Operations and Facilities, has led school relocations during construction in a previous district.

KEY DATES

The next family touchpoints are the October 21 Stakeholder Committee meeting and the public November 4 Board meeting at Elsmere.

Elsmere closes July 1, 2027 and reopens after February break 2028

Key dates for Elsmere families, October 2026 to February 2028



Elsmere key dates · Oct 2026 to Feb 2028

Districtwide Phase 1 construction starts in March 2027 at other schools; Elsmere's work begins when the building empties on July 1.

WHAT FAMILIES ASKED AT THE MEETING

The superintendent asked for family input on two open questions; the rest were answered in part.

Feedback wanted:

- **Should incoming kindergartners stay together** as an Elsmere cohort, or join the host school's kindergarten classes? Families with an older Elsmere child would also be split between two buildings.
- **Should kindergarten and Connections return to Elsmere in February**, or stay at the host school for the full year? One parent supported a February return, so children re-enter with the teacher and classmates they already know.

Other questions:

- **Will the wing feel confined?** Parents worried about classes spending long days in one room. Ideas raised: rotating spaces, cross-class team teaching, double classrooms with partitions, and using the hallway, pavilion, and fields.
- **Can families see the space?** Yes. A family visit to the BCMS wing is planned, with timing to be set; a short video may come first. Parents asked for it as early as possible.
- **Is one boys' and one girls' restroom enough?** Additional restrooms are a short walk away in the older part of BCMS and could serve older grades.
- **Will the new classrooms end heat-related early dismissals?** Air conditioning on second floors and in the library, cafeteria, and gym is expected to prevent them. Renovated classrooms are being prepared so air conditioning can be added later.
- **Will cubbies move into classrooms?** Yes. Renovated classrooms get built-in cubbies with spaces for coats and boots.
- **Can the PTA plan with BCMS?** Yes. The BCMS principal will help coordinate joint activities, and BCMS counselors suggested buddy and transition activities, especially for rising fifth graders.
- **Will school hours stay the same?** Yes. Elementary school hours will remain the same.

HOW TO STAY INFORMED AND HELP

Send questions and ideas to the superintendent or any Elsmere Stakeholder Committee member; the committee meets regularly with district staff and reports back to the school community.

Member	Role	Email
Andrew Baker	Principal	abaker1@bethlehemschools.org
Joanne Sericolo	Teacher	jsericolo@bethlehemschools.org
Lindsey Mooney	Teacher	lmooney@bethlehemschools.org
Kate Burmaster	Parent	mckenna.kam@gmail.com
Lisa Decker	Parent	lisamcelheny@gmail.com
Lauren Pierce	Parent	laurencpierce89@gmail.com

- **Website and FAQ:** The district is creating a page on the Elsmere transition with a running FAQ.
- **Survey:** a short survey for families and staff is under consideration, around the November 4 Board meeting.
- **Register kindergartners early.** Class sections are set from March 1 registrations. Last year, more than 60 children registered late, about three classes' worth, too late to add sections. Registration is now open year-round; please tell neighbors with preschoolers.