

Elsmere Elementary Relocation Planning Meeting - Oct. 21, 2026

Project timeline and planning updates

- Project documents have been submitted to the New York State Education Department (SED), and the architect and construction manager indicated (in a separate meeting) that the project remains on schedule.
- The current anticipated completion date is February 2028, although the construction manager raised the possibility of finishing earlier. No revised completion date has been established or announced.
- Additional planning meetings are scheduled with transportation, food services, special-area supervisors, special education staff, and middle school administrators/staff.
- The district is continuing to assess available space, enrollment projections, and building logistics before finalizing room assignments and program locations.
- A project update is planned for the November 4 Board of Education meeting, to be held at Elsmere.

Kindergarten and Connections program placement

Potential placement

- **Kindergarten** students may be housed at Slingerlands Elementary. This is a preliminary direction, not a final decision.
- **Connections** program may be housed at Eagle Elementary. This is a preliminary direction, not a final decision.
- The rationale includes available classroom space, transportation efficiency, building layout, accessibility, and the specialized nature of the Connections program.
- Enrollment projections, including the number of incoming kindergarten students, must be reviewed before the district can confirm the plan.
- Parents expressed a strong preference for keeping the kindergarten cohort together, if possible, and returning students to Elsmere at the same time as their peers when the building reopens.
- The group discussed maintaining two kindergarten sections if enrollment permits, rather than splitting students into different locations or creating an arrangement that complicates their eventual return.
- For Connections students, the district will consult special education staff and consider whether students should return to Elsmere midyear or remain in their temporary placement for the rest of the year. Flexibility may be appropriate depending on student needs and adjustment.

Relocation of Grades 1-5 to BCMS

Classroom setup and instructional spaces at BCMS

- The middle school visit helped stakeholders that the temporary space is larger and brighter than anticipated. The group identified several opportunities to use existing middle school facilities rather than conducting every activity in the relocated classrooms.

Special-area instruction

Art, music, physical education, and library activities may take place in existing middle school facilities when schedules and space permit.

- Library: The middle school library may be able to accommodate Elsmere classes, although book collections, materials, storage, and the librarian's workflow will require additional planning.
- Physical education: Options include outdoor spaces, available gym time, and potentially the swimming pool. Scheduling and supervision will need to be worked out.
- Music: Music rooms will likely be available, as well as lesson space.

Announcements and bells

- The district will investigate whether middle school bells and announcements can be silenced in the Elsmere wing, while ensuring emergency communications remain available. A separate announcement system was also discussed. It was suggested that for the daily announcements, Elsmere could use the MS TV studio.

Lockers

- Existing hallway lockers will be available for elementary students to store coats and backpacks, reducing clutter in classrooms.

Handwashing

- The availability of sinks, sanitizer, and child-accessible washing facilities needs to be assessed, particularly given the frequency of handwashing among younger students.
- One science classroom is outfitted with sinks.
- Could portable sinks and/or hand sanitizer be made available?

Health services, bathrooms, and supervision

These emerged as some of the most important unresolved operational issues.

Nurse/Health Services

- Parents and staff strongly favored “satellite” nursing station close to the relocated classrooms, rather than requiring young or ill students to navigate the middle school to reach the main nursing office.
- Potential locations include the science classroom with a sink near the bathrooms, or the room positioned next to the bathrooms. The district must consult nursing leadership about staffing, privacy, room requirements, and appropriate facilities for students who need assistance changing clothes or lying down.

Bathrooms

- Staff expressed particular concern about younger students sharing bathrooms and hallways with older middle school students. Questions include proximity, supervision, student privacy, and the volume of trips young children make throughout the day.
- District will explore hiring a hall monitor to supervise students.
- The district will explore whether an aide or part-time staff member could help monitor bathrooms, hallways, transitions, and other shared areas.

Emergency drills

- The preliminary view was that Elsmere and the middle school should coordinate drills and conduct them together as one building.

Classroom packing, storage, and the move

Staff identified the packing process as a major source of anxiety and asked for clear directions well before the end of the school year.

Key suggestions and potential next steps included:

- Begin packing early: Allow teachers to pack completed instructional units and materials as early as practical, rather than leaving everything until the final days of school.
- Provide packing supplies: Arrange for boxes to be available well in advance.
- Standardize the process: Establish consistent box types, labeling conventions, inventories, and instructions so materials can be sorted and moved efficiently.
- Separate materials by destination: Clearly distinguish materials going to the middle school from items that will remain in storage until Elsmere reopens.
- Explore early classroom consolidation: The district is considering whether some middle school classrooms can be cleared early, allowing Elsmere materials to be moved into those rooms before construction begins.
- Determine storage arrangements: The possibility of using storage pods or designated rooms needs further investigation, including whether separate storage areas are necessary for materials that will not be used during the temporary relocation.
- Plan for shared spaces: The library, basement, shared instructional materials, and other non-classroom areas also need detailed packing and relocation plans.

- Staff also suggested a teacher-focused giveaway or sale of usable classroom materials, books, and furniture that are no longer needed. This could reduce the volume of items to be moved while keeping useful materials in the school community and potentially raising money for the PTA.

Food Services

The district will meet with the food services director to develop a plan for meals during the temporary relocation.

Breakfast

- A preliminary idea is a grab-and-go model, similar to the high school's approach, allowing students to collect breakfast as they enter and bring it to their classroom or designated eating space.
- Grab-and-go received positive feedback from staff and parents, but it has not been finalized.

Lunch

- The district will determine whether students will receive elementary-style meals and how meals will be distributed.
- The group discussed using a larger classroom or the double classroom as a designated lunch space, potentially with portable or folding tables.
- The space could serve other instructional or small-group purposes outside lunch hours.
- Outdoor eating areas, including the pavilion and picnic tables, may provide additional flexibility during good weather.
- The group emphasized the value of giving children a change of environment rather than eating in their regular classrooms every day.

Recess and outdoor activities

The group agreed that the middle school grounds offer substantial outdoor space, but the district needs to determine how to make recess engaging and age-appropriate.

Ideas discussed included:

- Renting or acquiring temporary playground equipment.
- Using existing facilities, including the Gaga ball pit, where appropriate.
- Providing balls, chalk, and other low-cost activities.
- Exploring the use of accessible paved areas for games such as four square.
- Considering additional recess monitors to help supervise activities and ensure students have equitable opportunities to participate.
- The district will investigate equipment options and determine what staffing is feasible. Participants noted that some outdoor areas are farther from the relocated classrooms and would require additional supervision and planning.

Transportation

Transportation remains an important area for further planning, particularly for kindergarten families and households with children attending multiple schools.

- The district will work with transportation staff to explore whether kindergarten students can have shorter bus routes and pickup times that are reasonably close to those of their siblings.
- The group recognized that a small difference in pickup times may be manageable for families, while a substantially longer gap (20+ min) could create difficulties.
- Specific bus routes and individual pickup times will not be available until the district's normal routing process in August.
- The district will investigate whether early drop-off or supervised waiting arrangements could help parents who need to bring children to different schools at different times.
- A supervised space where students could arrive early and potentially eat breakfast was discussed as one possible solution.
- The district will also consider how transportation arrangements will change again when students return to Elsmere.

School traditions and community connections

Parents emphasized that the relocation should preserve as much of Elsmere's identity and community life as possible.

Specific priorities included:

- Continuing the buddy program and relationships between grade levels.
- Maintaining assemblies and schoolwide gatherings.
- Preserving familiar traditions and activities, including seasonal celebrations like Trunk or Treat, where feasible.
- Keeping kindergarten students connected to the Elsmere community, even if they are temporarily housed at another elementary school.
- Ensuring that the temporary move does not unnecessarily disrupt students' relationships with classmates and the broader school community.
- The group generally felt that many traditions could continue by adapting how and where activities take place. Participants also noted that the relationships teachers build with students will be central to making the year successful.

Communication

The group discussed ways to help families understand the temporary relocation and feel comfortable with the plan.

- Offer a building tour: A parent event at the middle school was suggested, potentially coordinated with the PTA, so families can see the space firsthand. A Saturday event in November was one possibility.

- Create a video: A short video showing the classrooms and hallway space could help families visualize the temporary setting.
- Maintain a central information source: The district will continue updating its project webpage and sharing information through ParentSquare.
- Make information easy to find: A recurring link or button in school newsletters was suggested so families can return to the project information without searching through old messages.
- Provide a dedicated kindergarten registration communication: A separate message about kindergarten registration was recommended, given the volume of information families receive.
- Continue parent and staff feedback: The district will use the working question document and future meetings to identify concerns, answer questions, and share updates.
- Participants reported that they had not heard significant concerns about the accessibility of current project communications, but agreed that information should be repeated and kept easy to locate.

Summary

The meeting was constructive and generally reassuring. Seeing the middle school space in person helped ease concerns about the size and suitability of the temporary classrooms. Participants were optimistic that students could have a positive experience and that most Elsmere traditions could continue.

Three priorities emerged most clearly:

- **Prioritize the student experience:** Keep kindergarten cohorts together if possible, preserve school traditions, and maintain students' connections to the Elsmere community.
- **Resolve practical details early:** Bathroom supervision, nursing access, classroom packing, storage, food service, and transportation need concrete plans well before the move.
- **Communicate early and often:** Give staff time to prepare, help families visualize the temporary setting, and keep updated information in one easy-to-find location.

The discussion also reinforced the importance of involving teachers and parents as planning continues. Many of the concerns raised were specific and solvable, but they will require coordination across departments.