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PRESS RELEASE

MSAD 54 to hold Groundbreaking Event for the New Margaret Chase Smith Community School

Date/Time: August 17th, 2023 at 10:00 AM

Location: 40 Heselton Street, Skowhegan Maine

What: Groundbreaking Event for new Consolidated Elementary School

Agenda: School Officials and Guests will speak briefly about the project and its benefits to our kids and community, followed by a groundbreaking shovel ceremony with pictures.

Who is invited: Everyone in our community, especially our students are encouraged to attend.

Note: Along with snacks and refreshments for all in attendance, areas for younger students will be available (sandboxes, etc.) for play. Additionally, Ceremonial hard hats will be provided for all students who attend the event.

Architects: [Stephen Blatt Architects](#), Portland Maine

Construction Company: [Landry / French Construction](#), Scarborough Maine

New School Website: <https://www.msad54.org/building-project>

Project Information:

In 2019 MSAD 54's North Elementary School was identified as #2 on the state Major Capital Construction list, one of five district schools identified on the list for potential repair or replacement. The district hired Stephen Blatt Architects early in 2020 to do a comprehensive analysis of the District and North Elementary School to examine options (renovation, new construction, consolidation of schools, etc.). That analysis resulted in a recommendation that the district move to combine all or part of four elementary schools in a comprehensive approach that was both fiscally responsible to taxpayers and would provide significant educational benefits to our students and communities.

MSAD 54 serves the communities of Canaan, Cornville, Mercer, Norridgewock, Skowhegan, and Smithfield

District Demographics:

+/- 2400 students

87% Poverty (2019-20 ED534)

23% Special Education

MSAD 54's current district composition is as follows:

Bloomfield Elementary School: Grades 1-3

Canaan Elementary School: Grades PK-6

Margaret Chase Smith Elementary School: Grades 4-5

Mill Stream Elementary School: Grades PK – 6

North Elementary School: Grades PK-K

Skowhegan Area Middle School: Grade 6 (Skowhegan only), Grades 7-8 (all students)

Skowhegan Area High School & Marti Stevens Learning Center: Grades 9-12

Somerset Career & Technical Center: Grades 9-12

Purpose: MSAD 54's building composition has long created instructional challenges for students, including lack of continuity of instruction, numerous transitions for students/staff which has created educational and instructional inefficiencies over time. Currently our Skowhegan students can have up to 7 building transitions as they move through schools. In addition to transitions, numerous challenges were identified as part of this process, including challenges to provide consistent programming between buildings, lack of collaboration, access to staff and resources, to name a few. In addition to providing a state-of-the-art quality learning environment for students for years to come, the MSAD 54 elementary building project does the following:

- Consolidates all or parts of four elementary schools.
- Is part of a larger District comprehensive plan, including transitioning all 6th grade students to the middle school (fall 2023).
- Creates continuity of instruction for ALL District students.
- Closes two elementary schools and repurposes one to support Special ED/Alternative students.
- Moves students into buildings from roughly 20 portable classrooms.
- Supports the District effort to expand to daily universal full-day Pre-K programming through our partnership with KVCAP.
- Creates equity of services and dedicated space for special education and Title I students
- Utilizes current school sites to avoid urban sprawl and to continue the history of District in-town schools.
- This project includes over **\$4,440,572** in local funding to support District initiatives including more early childhood space, after school Programming, and an expanded school gymnasium.

- At present the fundraising committee (A partnership between the district, KVCAP, and community leaders) has raised just over \$2.7 million dollars to support the project and minimize the local impact to property taxes.
- Outside of this major capital construction project, the district is leveraging a significant amount of state and federal funding for capital projects to support the district's PK-12 plan.
- Allows the District to fully incorporate and expand programming for early childhood (Educare beyond the walls) for kids age 6 weeks to 3 years of age.
- Allows the District to capture roughly \$500,000 annually in operational costs and efficiencies.

The new Elementary School in Skowhegan will serve young people from 6 weeks of age through grade 5, something MSAD 54 has done for years in separate locations. The school will serve as a learning center for high school students and pre-service teachers by moving the current Somerset Career and Technical Center early childhood program at North Elementary school into the new

building. This new school includes space to support state funded Child Development Services (CDS), to provide services for our youngest learners. This new building will support state and district initiatives and the consolidation/economy of scale will allow for consistent comprehensive supports for students that couldn't previously occur with the limited space in the current district building configuration.

The MSAD 54 elementary building project is an efficient consolidation of schools that has included numerous stakeholders throughout the process. The form and function of the design is born from hours and hours of feedback from our staff and community. In addition to ongoing conversations through the building committee, our parent advisory groups, and in our traditional parent forums, the district has held more than a dozen public informational meetings over the past three years, including two meetings that included straw poll votes (May 2021, April 2022) - each of which were supported by the community unanimously, as well as a District-wide referendum on the project (June 2022) which was supported overwhelmingly by our communities. Staff feedback and involvement has been integral in shaping the concept design and function of spaces in the building. The collaborative process which included stakeholders at the table from conception to site selection and through concept approval to final design and construction, has led to a well-thought out building and educational program.

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