Educational Specifications
Elementary Schools Master Plan
Phase I
Salem School District
January, 2010
This initial report is presented to the Salem School Board for its consideration toward planning the first phase of a comprehensive master plan to renovate/expand Salem’s school facilities to meet the needs of Salem’s K-12 students for many years to come.

Committee Membership:

Almeida, Rick   Architect
Appleton, Sharon  Support Staff
Baroni, Gino   Owner’s Project Manager
Breen, David   Owner’s Project Manager
Carpinone, Kim  Parent
Delahanty, Michael  Superintendent of Schools
Drobot, Chris   Architect
Hamlin, Steve   Parent
Harper, Joan   Parent
Hatch, Jeff   Parent
Juranovits, Patricia  Parent
Morgan, Peter   Salem School Board
Murray, George   Assistant Principal
Roderick, Kevin  Parent
Wildfeuer, Jeff   Parent
Wilkins, Janice  Principal
Wilson, Jennifer  Parent
Report of the Committee

For eighteen months a Facilities Committee worked with an Owner’s Project Manager, Trident Advantage Group, and an architecture firm, Lavallee/Brensinger Associates, to develop a school renovation and expansion plan that addresses the space and systems deficiencies in our elementary and middle schools. All these facilities were constructed prior to 1970 and lack the space required by today’s academic standards. For example, our elementary schools have cafeteria spaces that double as gymnasiums. Reading support programs, special education programs and their related services, guidance services, and testing/examining tasks are all completed in substandard spaces such as hallways, the tops of stairwells, and converted storage closets. Throughout the process, committee members discussed the schools’ current conditions and programs. As a result, the committee has developed a feasible plan to renovate the forty plus year old facilities. In doing so, it is our fervent hope that the operational and educational specifications outlined within this document will serve the needs of our children for many years to come.

The members of the committee completed the following tasks:

- Reviewed programs
- Analyzed class size data
- Recommended maximum enrollment guidelines
- Outlined specific kindergarten programming specifications

The school board and the committee established specific principles early. To the extent possible, academic programs are to continue. It was important to members of the committee that programming not suffer but be enhanced. Committee members want an educational program that offers opportunities for all students.

Our school facilities exist as places for students to learn. Student achievement, the most important function of a school, is affected by the physical environment. How well students learn now will impact how they read, write, listen, compute, solve problems, and essentially conduct themselves as citizens. It is an expectation that our school environments are safe, healthy, positive, conducive to learning, and flexible in accommodating student learning needs.

A school facilities’ audit conducted in August of 2005 identified more than $6,000,000 in systems deficiencies that were to be addressed over seven to nine years. The Board set forth a plan to address electrical systems, heating and ventilation systems, asbestos ceiling and floor tile, parking and traffic patterns, and plumbing problems. The school buildings were all constructed between 1925 and 1967 and have been in regular use for all those years. With the exception of some additions to our middle school and expansions to three of our elementary schools, no substantial work has been done to any of the schools. Further, the goal of investing at least $1,000,000 annually in capital repairs has never been realized due to other priorities. Consequently, before the deficiencies identified in the first audit will be completed, another audit is likely to
identify new systems’ needs. That our facilities are utilized by so many different school and community groups is yet another factor in the need to address our facilities.

The educational specifications that are included with this document will serve two purposes. First, the specifications must be filed with the New Hampshire Department of Education by the Salem School Board in the process of applying for reimbursement by the state for school building aid. Second, the document serves to allow the Board, committee members, and other educators a method of describing the district’s educational activities and their implications for necessary learning spaces. The operations guide and the specifications have assisted the design professionals who were charged with the specific responsibility of planning the renovations and expansions of our elementary schools and middle school.

**General Principles**
- Sustain high quality programs.
- Utilize the facility in ways that are consistent with sound educational practice.
- Meet the facility standards outlined by the state of New Hampshire.
- Provide a facility that operates at an optimal 90% utilization rate.
- Ensure that opportunities are provided to all students.

**Specific Goals**
- To sustain or improve the current level of program opportunities so students will focus upon academic advantages.
- To accommodate kindergarten programming.
- To provide a healthy learning environment for students and staff that minimizes environmental distractions.
- To retain current staff and attract quality faculty in the future so that we ensure the best academic setting for students.
- To provide related services facilities that ensure the dignity of all participants.
Section I

Educational Specifications

Need/Rationale/Process

Salem’s six elementary schools and its middle school all were built prior to 1970. A facilities audit completed in 2005 identified several million dollars of systems deficiencies the district would have to address through 2014. Further, the School Board contracted with H. L. Turner Group of Concord, NH to complete a Selected Building Analyses and Services Evaluation Report. This report includes electrical studies including load analyses, piping evaluations, boiler combustion and efficiency testing, boiler supply load analyses, structural evaluations, and IAQ studies. The information helped clarify each school’s infrastructure needs and assisted in the development of project bid specifications.

Despite annual requests to include as much as a million dollars in capital improvement costs in the operating budget, the dollar amount applied to such projects rarely exceeded $550,000. The School Board realized the pace of improvements would necessitate another audit before the first series of deficiencies were corrected. Simultaneously, the district was planning the transition to a Salem-only high school as the community of Windham began to build its high school. With more than $3 million in identified infrastructure problems at Salem High School alone, a renovation/expansion plan was developed and proposed to voters. The plan was designed to address space deficiencies and systems problems, but voters soundly rejected the plan. Before revisions to the plan could be completed and another proposal brought to voters, the New Hampshire legislature began to discuss mandatory kindergarten. The School Board contracted with Dr. Mark Joyce, Executive Director of the New Hampshire School Administrators Association (NHSAA), to develop a Grade 1 – 8 facilities needs assessment. This assessment was expected to provide baseline information for a committee charged with planning the necessary expansion/renovation of each elementary school and the middle school. The NHSAA report was also expected to provide several options to address our facility problems.

Facilities Committee members reviewed enrollment projections, building capacities, and space deficiencies identified in the NHSAA report. Gino Baroni, principal with Trident Advantage Group here in Salem, and a Facilities Committee member, served as Owner’s Project Manager as the committee discussed the possible options for addressing space deficiencies and inadequacies in each of the schools. Of importance was the recognition that special education programs, literacy support programs, and ELL programs, as examples, all were introduced as requirements after the schools were constructed. Furthermore, the committee understood the need to address kindergarten space needs.

The committee considered several options:

• building a free standing kindergarten facility on school district owned land;
• renovating an existing elementary school as a kindergarten only facility;
• constructing a new K-5 elementary school and closing one existing neighborhood school;
• leasing/purchasing and renovating space in a vacant commercial building;
• renovating and expanding each of the six elementary schools;
• closing one elementary school and expanding each of the five remaining schools

Committee members also considered simple one or two classroom additions to each of the elementary schools solely for the purpose of housing kindergarten.

At the end of fifteen months of deliberation, review, discussion, community forums, and reflection, committee members unanimously agreed to retain the neighborhood concept and renovate/expand all six elementary schools. The School Board accepted the committee’s recommendations. With the School Board’s endorsement and support, committee members and the Owner’s Project Manager began working with Lavallee/Brensinger Architects of Manchester, New Hampshire. The architects reviewed all the plans and reports that had been developed since 2005, toured the schools, and talked with administrators and others. After several months and quite a few iterations, a master plan identified space needs to accommodate educational programming including related special education services, unified arts, security concerns, fire code violations, and kindergarten.

The Salem School Board accepted the master plan and determined that a phasing process would best serve the community. The sequencing includes addressing the three largest elementary schools first in order to take advantage of attractive interest rates, low construction costs, and available state aid. The next phase, expected in 2011 or 2012, will address the final three elementary schools. Following the renovation/expansion of all elementary schools, the Board will review and modify plans for renovating Salem High School. Finally, the district will address the plans developed to renovate and expand Woodbury Middle School. The Facilities Master Plan is expected to be completed in ten to twelve years.

Salem is in Rockingham County and encompasses a total of 24.8 square miles. The New Hampshire communities bordering Salem are Pelham and Windham to the west, Derry to the north, and Atkinson to the east. To the south are the Massachusetts communities of Methuen and Haverhill. The lure of a “tax-free” environment attracts people to Salem, a community with the third highest property valuation in the state with a tax burden that is 43 from the bottom among 231 communities in New Hampshire.

According to the Rockingham Planning Commission, Salem has approximately 29,500 residents or approximately 1,193 people per square mile, the sixth highest in New Hampshire. This indicates a 4.9% increase over the 2000 U. S. census figure. and the Commission projects growth to reach 33,350 by the year 2020. Of course, population growth will be determined by strategies of the office of planning and development and the planning board, the growth of business and its residual employment potential, the effectiveness of the schools, and the completion of projects such as the widening of Interstate 93. In a Delphi Study of the I-93 widening project completed for the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, and using a blended average allocation
(PBAA) of each panelist’s conjecture, the study concluded that by the year 2020 the population of Salem will grow to 39,587 if the widening project is completed and to 37,774 if the project is not completed. Whether considering the Rockingham Planning Commission projections or those of the Delphi Study, it is easy to assume that the community will see steady growth over the next decade.

Salem serves as an employment and business center with more than 320 retail establishments and 90 restaurants. There are also 100 wholesale trade establishments and more than 130 businesses classified as professional, scientific, and technical services. According to the 2000 census, Salem’s median household income is $58,090. Almost 88% of the population holds a high school degree or higher. Salem’s recent unemployment rate in our labor market area was 9.7% in September, 2009.

Salem has a full-service municipal office building, fire department, police department, schools, and entertainment facilities. Further, Salem is ideally situated to satisfy a number of cultural, educational, and recreational interests. It is only thirty minutes from historic Boston and is an equal driving time to the Atlantic coastal region of New Hampshire. Within two hours, one can be in the lakes and mountain region enjoying any number of recreational pursuits. It is a short four and one-half hour drive to New York City and an equal distance to the city of Montreal in Canada. Domestic air travel is available at the Manchester Airport, approximately 20 miles north, and at Boston’s Logan Airport approximately 30 miles south. Bus service via a new bus terminal located off Exit 2 of Interstate 93 provides hourly service south to Boston and North to Manchester.

In addition to an elected School Board, Salem elects a Board of Selectmen and a Municipal Budget Committee. The tradition of a deliberative session or town meeting for both town and school matters has been modified with the impact of Senate Bill 2, which includes a provision for ballot voting for financial matters. Salem is growing in its diversity, however, almost 95% of the current population is white. The strongest rate of commercial and residential growth occurred during the 1960s with the development of Interstate 93. With access to Boston and its vicinity so much easier, the population surged. During this increase in population, Salem built its current high school and three of its six elementary schools. In 2002, the labor force was 19,127 with 13,332 of these workers coming from surrounding communities. More than 70% of Salem’s work force commutes out of town.

A wide range of housing options is available. Current real estate listings include more than eighty options that range from a single family home selling for $900,000 to a two bedroom one bath condominium selling for $135,000. There are ninety-two lots in six separate subdivisions either currently under construction or pending. In addition, there is a twenty-two unit duplex development and one four unit apartment building currently planned for construction. Salem enjoys a favorable tax rate of $22.06 at 58% valuation, though with a heavy burden placed on the property owner any improvements to the schools will only be done with a general consensus from a large supportive constituency.
Salem’s student enrollment has grown over the past fifteen years from a low of 3,542 students in 1990 to 4995 in October of 2009. Though this last number represents a combination of Salem and Windham high school students, by excluding Windham, we would have an enrollment of 4,675 or 1,133 more than 1990. K-12 enrollment projections for the next several years indicate a student population in 2012 of approximately 4400.
Section II

The People and Programs to be Housed

The planned renovations for the six elementary schools and the middle school address the following issues: lack of space; aged infrastructure; poor configuration of spaces for contemporary programs; safety/code and site improvements. The additions, renovations, and infrastructure upgrades mitigate the constraints that currently negatively affect student achievement and hinder faculty teaching quality. When implemented, special education students will no longer have their programs delivered in substandard room spaces; students who require learning support, such as Title I and ELL, will no longer be housed in closets and hallways; and safety code improvements will improve the well being and safety of students, faculty, and the general public.

The first phase of the master plan, and the proposed renovation project planned for 2010, will address the needs of Barron, Lancaster, and North Salem Schools. These are the largest of the six elementary schools and will allow us to remove six of the nine temporary classrooms provided for the addition of a kindergarten program before the community begins paying the lease costs scheduled to begin in 2012. Barron school has an overall capacity of 390 students but a functional capacity of 351 using a 90% efficiency factor. The current school enrollment is 374. Lancaster School has an overall capacity of 385 students but a functional capacity of 347 using a 90% efficiency factor. The current enrollment is 304, but Lancaster also houses two specific special needs programs that require more per square foot space than required by an average classroom. North Salem School has an overall capacity of 385 students but a capacity of 347 students based on a 90% efficiency factor. The school’s current enrollment is 389 students.

Programs that will be adequately and appropriately accommodated in each of the three schools include Art, Music, and Physical Education; Speech and Language, Physical Therapy, and Occupational Therapy; ELL Programs; Title I Reading and Other Reading Assistance; Reading Specialist space; and a room for Guidance and Counseling services. Further, we will regain all library space that has been sacrificed to accommodate needed space for several support service programs. Nurses’ offices will be renovated to accommodate private areas for ill students and examinations as well as sufficient space for completing clerical tasks.

Our grade K through five academic curriculum programs, which include Reading, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Unified Arts will not be affected by the school renovation project. We currently meet or exceed the curriculum standards for school approval and will maintain at least that level of program delivery. Due to the recent introduction of Kindergarten, we have included programming and curriculum information for that program as a supplement to our documentation. With a wireless connection infrastructure in each of the schools, technology enhancements will include enlarged room capacities to make more possible the use of web-based instructional supports.

Our renovation and expansion project include separate multi-purpose rooms for school wide and recreational programs. The current cafeteria/gymnasium does not provide adequate space for all the activities competing for time. Our current spaces are scheduled from as early as 7:30 a.m. with before school care programs through 9:00 p.m. with community groups such as youth basketball, scouts, and adult volleyball. Two of the separate multi-purpose rooms, one at Barron School and one at North Salem School, will provide official game gym floor capacity in order to accommodate the growth of youth recreational sports in the community. With no other facilities available for such purposes, the schools provide space for organized play. Currently,
only the high school and middle school have space with sufficient dimensions for official activity. Two more spaces in our elementary schools will reduce the current competition among a plethora of school and community interests.

The location of school kitchens approximate to student play areas was also a consideration when designing student space. With a separate cafeteria/multi-purpose room, student safety is not compromised as it is now with physical education activities so close to food preparation areas. Further, the space will allow a full range of scheduling for physical activities and not be restricted to non-food service times of the day.

The custodial staff manages the existing building area as well as the school grounds. This area includes temporary classrooms at each of the three school sites. Our maintenance plan will accommodate the upkeep and protection of the renovated and expanded facilities.