



# IEA Elementary Building Project Statement

*Supported by a majority vote of the IEA Fall 2022*

The Ipswich Educators Association supports the Ipswich School Committee's decision to address the expired life of its town's elementary buildings. Because of their grave state of disrepair, we believe that it is neither realistic nor educationally responsible to continue to make the adjustments that we have made on behalf of our students for many years. It is the charge of the School Committee to determine the configuration and location of any new building(s). Therefore, our input and opinion, regarding the Ipswich Elementary Building Project(s), will solely center on our professional knowledge, expertise, and experience as educators.

We know that in order to provide a rigorous, relevant and engaging education for the students of Ipswich Public Schools, we need the following: a learning environment where health and safety is paramount, and a learning environment ready to support the innovation, community, and joy of learning we have come to expect of Ipswich Public Schools.

## Health and Safety

We know that in order to learn, take academic risks, play, and grow, children must first be healthy and safe. Healthy learning spaces have clean air, regulated temperatures, and consistent maintenance to ensure the space does not negatively affect its occupants. Safe learning spaces have secure entrances to both indoor and outdoor learning spaces and well established evacuation procedures for all floors and spaces within the building(s). Proper learning spaces are appropriately outfitted for all elementary classes, specialists, supports, and therapies; are conducive to the learning that is expected to occur within; and, are respectful of student privacy. To ensure longevity, Ipswich's future learning environment(s) must be designed with the most contemporary ideas and sustainable materials, so that Ipswich students continue to realize the potential environmental impact of their decisions. Therefore, the project(s) should be created in an environmentally conscious manner that both students and educators can be proud of.

## Innovation

Students are inspired in spaces where they learn and create. When educators and students have access to physical spaces that allow for opportunities beyond the traditional four walls of a classroom, learning is less constrained, more student-driven, and more importantly, is inspired by creativity and curiosity. This project(s) must think beyond the current models of education. It must harness powerful and accessible technology that has the capacity to serve, grow, and change in an ever changing world. Additionally, we believe that elementary learning in Ipswich would be enhanced by including a versatile place for industrial arts, computer programming, and STEAM project-based activities that could support educator projects, guest presenters, or residencies. Space(s) which values innovation and enables teachers to engage in research-based teaching practices that encourage students to develop real-world problem solving and critical thinking skills essential for 21st century learners.

### Community

Elementary schools have been long regarded as the heart of a community. Ipswich Elementary Schools are no exception. Within school(s), a strong sense of community and collaboration is built through smaller cohorts with small class sizes and clusters of teaching teams. Community is grown through shared experiences like special programs and presentations in spaces that afford communal gathering and which further enhances learning opportunities. Community is sustained and valued because it shows an inherent respect and care for one another. Additionally, we know that community is enhanced by access to a community closet, laundry services, and basic hygiene needs. Our elementary community needs space that would allow for the enrichment, support, and partnership with outside organizations that service student need (i.e. Open Door, Girls Inc, Change is Simple, Ipswich Museum, Audubon, Trustees).

### Joy of Learning

As educators we strive to develop a joy and love of learning in our students. We know excitement for learning is found in larger, student-driven projects of interest which can be stored for continued work. Additionally, love of learning can be found when we encourage the diverse learning styles and needs of students with space available to meet those needs; whether it be a quiet meditative space, music lab, or maker space. Elementary learning space(s) must include adaptable spaces which meet developmentally appropriate needs for all students pre-kindergarten through grade five. These learning spaces, both indoor and outdoor, must be accessible for all students to get the play they need and deserve.

We, members of the Ipswich Educators Association, are a dedicated, passionate, and talented group of people who love the students and families we serve. Composed of educators, registered behavior technicians, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, board certified behavior analysts, guidance counselors, nurses, and paraprofessionals, our expertise is diverse and our knowledge is vast. **It is with admiration and care for Ipswich that we say with conviction: our elementary schools have reached the end of their life expectancy, and something must be done.**