

# Town of Strong Public Hearing

*Studying withdrawal from the  
school district*

4.28.25





- Housekeeping
- What's the ask?
- What this is NOT
- Why now?
- What we do know
- What we don't know
- Resident Q&A
- Read your references
- **Vote May 8 @ the town office**

A wooden sign with the word "AGENDA" in a bold, sans-serif font. The sign is made of light-colored wood and is set within a circular frame made of two concentric wooden rings. The background is a dark blue wall. The sign is positioned on the right side of the image, partially overlapping a dark teal curved shape at the top and a dark teal curved shape at the bottom.

AGENDA



# Housekeeping

1

This is a public hearing and all are welcome to observe.

2

Strong residents participate in the Q&A.

3

Materials will be posted on the Town of Strong website.



# Understand the ask:

May we conduct a formal study  
to see if it's feasible for Strong  
to leave the school district?





# What this is *NOT*

This is **NOT** the vote to withdraw from MSAD 58. That would happen at the end of a 22-step process.

It **IS** a vote to approve our initial research into leaving the district.

Doing this will give us access to add'l data we need to make an informed decision.



**WE CAN STOP THE  
PROCESS AT ANY  
POINT.**





# Why explore this now?


The school board is researching scenarios to **CLOSE** schools because the district needs to consolidate.

We can research if it's feasible to keep our school **OPEN** by becoming independent.

Knowledge is  
**POWER**







**What we  
*DO* know**



**Student  
Enrollment  
Keeps  
Declining**







# We can't ignore the trends.

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According to the ME Education Policy Research Institute, Maine has one of the lowest student-to-school ratios in the country, and MSAD 58 is no exception.

The Maine Department of Education says last year there were **10K fewer students** enrolled in Maine public schools than in 2014.

## MSAD 58 Enrollment

April 17, 2025

	PES			KES			DMRMS			MTA			MSAD 58 TOTAL		
GRADE															
Pre K	16			12									Pre K	28	
K	14			17									K	31	
1	23			15									1	38	
2	21			15									2	36	
3	24			19									3	43	
4	21			17									4	38	
5							38								
6							34								
7							33								
8							36								
ELEMENTARY			119			95			141						
9										57					
10										53					
11										47					
12										55					
SECONDARY												212			567

LAST YEAR 4/11/24	
ELEMENTARY	370
SECONDARY	213
MSAD 58 TOTAL	583

GRADE	Pre K	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
10/01/2023															587
9/19/2024	26	29	38	36	39	41	38	34	34	35	56	55	48	58	567
10/17/2024	26	30	38	36	40	39	38	34	34	35	54	55	48	56	563
11/21/2024	26	30	38	36	41	39	38	34	34	35	54	55	48	55	563
12/19/2024	27	30	39	36	43	38	38	34	34	35	54	54	46	54	562
01/16/2025	27	30	39	36	43	38	38	34	34	36	54	54	46	54	563
02/13/2025	28	31	38	36	43	38	38	34	33	36	54	54	46	54	563
03/19/2025	28	31	38	36	43	38	38	34	33	36	57	54	46	54	566
04/17/2025	28	31	38	36	43	38	38	34	33	36	57	53	47	55	567
2033/34 Projections	28	28	29	29	31	28	32	29	34	32	22	45	41	42	450

Source: NESDEC MSAD58 Enrollment Projections

RESIDENT STUDENTS		424
AVON		58
KINGFIELD		89
PHILLIPS		129
STRONG		148
		424

TUITION STUDENTS		114
CARRABASSETT		9
EUSTIS		14
HIGHLAND		1
FREEMAN		46
LEXINGTON		5
MADRID		11
SALEM		25
OTHER*		3

SUPT AGREEMENTS		29
NEW PORTLAND		26
OTHER*		3

1 year decrease: 16 pupils.

TOTAL	567
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\*to protect sensitive student information some residency statuses have been combined

HOMESCHOOL		58
Phillips		18
Avon		12
Kingfield		9
Strong		19

10 yr decrease: 137 pupils.  
23% less than 2023

- In 2014, MSAD 58's total preK-12 enrollment was **740**.
- By 2023, it was **587**.
- In 8 years (by 2033), NESDEC projects another 23% decrease, leaving just **450** pupils districtwide.



# Our schools are under capacity

	Mt. Abram High School	Day Mountain Middle School (Strong)	Phillips Elementary School	Kingfield Elementary School
Current Operating Capacity	512 pupils	264 pupils	239 pupils	239 pupils
24/25 Enrollment	212 pupils	141 pupils	119 pupils	95 pupils
Projected 33/34 Enrollment*	150 pupils	127 pupils	100 pupils	73 pupils

\*Assuming current configuration. All preK pupils in Kingfield and similar split between PES and KES K-4.  
Sources: NESDEC MSAD Enrollment Projection Report, 2023. NESDEC MSAD 58 Facilities Report, 2021.

# Why enrollment matters



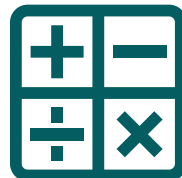
**When the student population *decreases*, the cost per pupil *increases*.**

For example, according to the ME Dep't of Education, MSAD 58's per pupil spending in 2023/24 was \$21,151. (The statewide average was \$20,139). And our costs continue to climb.



**Maine's school funding formula is based largely on enrollment.**

When enrollment declines so does our state funding, putting more pressure on our towns to fund the school budget locally.



**Enrollment is a key factor in Maine's school construction funding model.**

To qualify for the major school construction grant, districts must show an enrollment need. In 8 years, MSAD 58's total enrollment (450) will still be below Mt. Abram's operating capacity (512).



**Maine's  
school  
infrastructure  
is failing  
statewide**





# The DOE can't keep up with demand.

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The Maine Department of Education has insufficient funds to support its backlog of major school construction projects.

96 schools made the most recent priority list, and only 3-5 are expected to get funded. Some schools have been on the waitlist for 10+ years.





# It's about time.

Applications for Maine's Major Capital School Construction grants only open every 7 years, and the recent deadline just passed in August 2024.

*Even if enrollment numbers improved, the earliest MSAD 58 could apply for this funding is **2031**.*

In the meantime...

**\$4.5 million** of the district's needed building repairs are safety, performance and integrity issues with components or systems that have already broken or are at the end of their life expectancy.\*

\*Source: MSAD 58 Facilities Assessment 2024-2025

# No budget for big repairs

In the months since the facilities study was done, the Phillips HVAC system failed, becoming the district's latest safety, performance and integrity issue with a cost estimate of \$500K.

*The proposed school budget does not allocate any funds to begin covering these priorities, regardless of which school they are in.*

If any other major systems fail within this next year, we could be faced with:

- Costly emergency repairs (and possibly relocating pupils elsewhere)
- Draining the district's \$616K capital reserve account for repairs
- A referendum vote to take on substantial debt service



# The real costs over time



Operating Costs: \$221,045

Immediate Repairs: \$21,100  
3 Yr Replacements: \$2,954,100\*  
5 Yr Replacements: \$4,493,200  
10 Yr Replacements: \$9,008,700

**GRAND TOTAL: \$16,477,100**



Operating Costs: \$129,879

Immediate Repairs: \$15,000  
3 Yr Replacements: \$945,800  
5 Yr Replacements: \$2,075,400  
10 Yr Replacements: \$3,434,200

**GRAND TOTAL: \$6,470,400**



Operating Costs: \$114,507

Immediate Repairs: \$986,900  
3 Yr Replacements: \$1,667,400  
5 Yr Replacements: \$2,369,600  
10 Yr Replacements: \$3,984,900

**GRAND TOTAL: \$9,008,800**



Operating Costs: \$142,202

Immediate Repairs: \$96,000  
3 Yr Replacements: \$264,200  
5 Yr Replacements: \$2,710,600  
10 Yr Replacements: \$4,453,200

**GRAND TOTAL: \$7,524,000**

\*Estimates are based on the Facility Condition Index (FCI) Analysis, which is calculated by dividing the anticipated needs of each respective time period by the current replacement value. This provides a more accurate comparison of keep-up costs between facilities. SOURCE: MSAD 58 Facilities Assessment 2024-2025.



# Important Note:

*If we agree to debt  
service then leave  
the district, we are  
still required to pay  
our share.*



- 1 Maine's school funding formula is based on enrollment, and with the most students in the district, Strong's allocation is \$2,770,164\*.
- 2 Three years ago the district reconfiguration split our youngest children between two other schools, and it didn't work. We have the power to **bring them home**.
- 3 Strong would regain local control of our children's overall educational experience, from curriculum to staffing, policies and upkeep of their school building.
- 4 RSU9 has already confirmed they have room for our high school students should they want the choice to attend Mt. Blue.
- 5 We can work with neighboring towns like Phillips & Avon to form an Alternative Organizational Structure (AOS) to share administrative staff.

\*Source: ED279 Report for MSAD 58



What we  
*DON'T* know



# The Unknowns

There are many variables we will not know unless we start a formal fact-finding mission.







# Next Steps



Read the references.



Ask questions.



VOTE Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup> at the Strong Town Office.



# CONNECT

## Strong Town Office



207-684-4002



[www.strong-maine.com](http://www.strong-maine.com)



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