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## Dearborn School in Roxbury eyes overhaul to add grades 9-12, STEM focus

Posted by Matt Rocheleau

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(Boston Schools)

Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Schools Superintendent Carol R. Johnson, and State Treasurer Steve Grossman join representatives of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization and other partners at a community meeting in early March to sign a feasibility study agreement for the renovation and expansion of the Dearborn Middle School.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A two-year study is underway to determine how to renovate and expand the Henry Dearborn Middle School in Roxbury, in an overhaul that could cost tens of millions. One idea is to reinvent it as a grade 6-12 school with curriculum focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

(Massachusetts School Building Authority)  
The Dearborn School building opened in 1912.

The Dearborn school opened on Greenville Street 100 years ago.

Once a plan is chosen, the Massachusetts School Building Authority would reimburse the Boston Public School district for at least 74 percent of the total project cost, officials said. That rate could increase to a maximum of 80 percent. The city school department would fund the remaining costs.

Matt Donovan, a spokesman for the school building authority, said it is preliminary to comment on cost and other projections.

Matthew Wilder, a spokesman for the Boston school system, also declined to disclose detailed estimates, but did say the project is expected to cost tens of millions of dollars.

He said the project is "very much in the preliminary stage" and that further details about the undertaking will be "based on what the needs of the students will be," which the ongoing study plans to find out.

Jose Duarte, who has been the principal at Dearborn since 2009, said the project is currently estimated to cost about \$60 million and construction could start as soon as spring 2014.

"Your mouth just drops when you see the potential things they can do" to modernize the school, said Duarte, who joined Dearborn after serving for nine years as the headmaster of English High School.

He said construction is projected to take about 18 months, during which the school would relocate to yet-to-be-determined site.

Duarte said current projections call for the school's enrollment to reach about 550 once it adds high school grades.

The school currently enrolls about 250 students in sixth through eight grades – a figure that has been declining in recent years.

In spring 2010, the state Department of Education designated the school as underperforming, making it one of about a dozen schools in Boston and 35 statewide assigned to receive additional funding to help reverse consistently subpar standardized test scores.

Since it was awarded about \$1.3 million to fund its three-year turnaround effort, the Dearborn has met or exceeded every academic goal, the school district says. The school day has been lengthened and the curriculum and staff have seen changes.

For years, neighboring residents and members of local organizations, educational groups, nonprofits and churches have sought ways to help the school turn around its academic performance and improve the aging building.

"This has been almost exclusively driven by the community," Duarte said. "The community has pushed it, the community has supported it, the community has owned it."

The school's growing list of partners includes: the Roxbury Presbyterian Church, Trinity Church Boston in Copley Square, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, the Trust Project, Northeastern University, MathPower, Massachusetts 2020, the Boys and Girls Club, the Boston Celtics, Fidelity and Raytheon.

The proposal to overhaul the Dearborn school was voted into the state school building authority's capital pipeline in Jan. 2010, Donovan said.

The feasibility study is expected to be complete by Feb. 2014.

To see copies of study agreement documents, [click here](#) and [here](#).

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