

# Community Update



Members of the Dolores School District's Design Advisory Group discuss how best to redesign the District's campus to improve health, safety and classroom environments for students and faculty.

## District considering bond issuance to provide matching funds for BEST grant to update campus and buildings

The Dolores School District RE-4A educates more than 700 students each year from preschool through 12th grade and is a district of choice for many families in Montezuma County. This year, in-district students represented just under 69 percent of enrollment, with out-of-district students making up the other 31 percent.

Because of Colorado's school choice and funding laws, the District receives per-pupil funding for all students, no matter if they come from inside or outside the district. The District's steady enrollment and high attendance from outside its boundaries are due to the high-quality education provided here.

### Commitment to Academic Success

The District has a state performance ranking of "accredited," and the high school was awarded the "Governor's Distinguished Award" in 2019 for demonstrating tremendous growth in student assessments and participation.

The District has an average graduation rate of 89.5 percent, with about 20 percent of graduates each year



Learn more about Dolores School District's Facility Master Plan:  
[doloresschools.org/building-committee](https://doloresschools.org/building-committee)

pursuing post-secondary educational opportunities. In recent years, however, testing scores for District students have dropped, partly due to declining facilities and reduced ability to provide higher level academic programming within the existing buildings.

### District Facilities Master Plan

The District assembled a Design Advisory Group to update its Facilities Master Plan in 2022. The group was composed of the school board members, district administrators and teachers, town officials, parents and community members, supported by an architecture firm that specializes in school campuses and buildings.

The Design Advisory Group approved an updated Facilities Master Plan last year as part of preparing an

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# District focused on campus safety and updated classrooms and learning environments

application for a state of Colorado Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) grant.

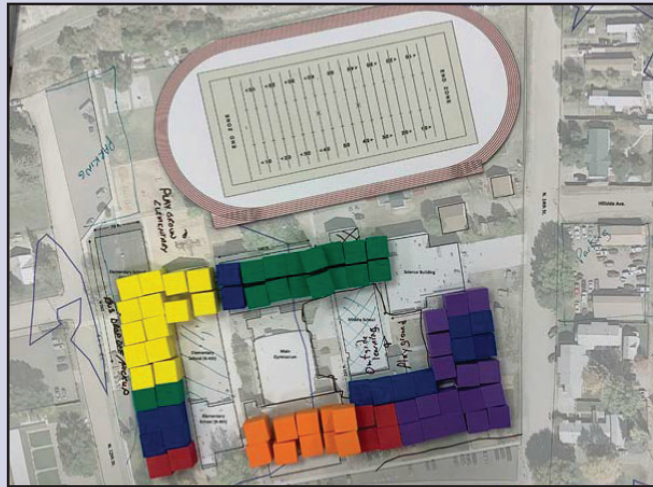
The plan identifies concerns on the present campus and sets guidelines for facility upgrades and replacements, with a focus on enhancing safety, security and quality of education. The plan also lays out a vision for the District's long-term growth on its current campus, with a commitment to keeping the schools as part of the Town of Dolores.

## Campus and Buildings Present Academic and Safety Challenges

The District's school buildings present significant academic, operational and safety challenges for students and faculty. The District has four school buildings—elementary, middle and high schools located on the same campus property in the heart of Dolores, with the preschool two blocks away.

Dolores High School, including the Varsity Gym, is housed in the oldest building on campus and was built in 1954. The Colorado Historical Society has determined that this building does not have significant historical value. The northwest wing of the elementary school was constructed in 1968, and the years later, the middle school and high school received additions.

In 1990 and 1995, the southeast wing of the elementary school was added, along with construction of the Band Room north of the high school. The Wood Shop and Modular Building near the elementary were constructed in 2003. Ten years later, the elementary school received another addition to the south providing more classrooms in response to the school's steady growth. The dedicated Science Building was built in 2013 just north of the Wood Shop.



The Design Advisory Group worked with an architecture firm to develop layouts that would improve campus access and safety.

## Dolores School District Campus Priorities

The District identified the following priorities as part of its Facility Master Plan and its BEST grant application to the state of Colorado:

- Constructing a new two-story high school with contemporary classrooms and flexible learning spaces.
- Renovating the current high school into a new middle school.
- Creating a secure commons space to limit access to the campus and providing covered access to the commons from the new high school and middle school.
- Providing an Agriculture Science Lab.
- Demolishing the current middle school and creating an open safe-space area.
- Replacing the existing, unsecured middle school playground in the footprint of the old middle school.
- Providing secure double-vestibule entrances at all new entrance points to reduce the number of unsecured exterior building entrances.
- Creating a dedicated bus loop and covered walkways for safe and covered entrance to the secondary school.
- Providing high school parking area to separate pedestrians and vehicles.
- Creating a covered entrance for elementary students from the bus and parent drop offs.
- Correcting Americans with Disabilities Act issues for proper accessibility in all buildings.
- Improving drainage flow from runoff to ensure that all new buildings are above the floodplain and safe from high water flows.
- Improving air quality by installing proper air-conditioning units with air-quality filtering.
- Providing sufficient office space for staff and faculty.



# Bond approval will strengthen BEST grant application

The campus and buildings being built in a disjointed progression over multiple decades results in the present layout lacking cohesion and secure corridors.

School buildings are connected by unsecured pedestrian corridors and fragmented open areas. The current layout presents health, security and safety challenges with multiple points of entry into campus. The bus drop off location requires constant outdoor travel between buildings, exposing students to weather and other safety concerns as they move about campus.

These issues are matched by several other challenges including outdated classrooms and inadequate spaces for advanced classes and career and technical education that limit the District's ability to provide classes.

Finally, the District is faced with several facility challenges, including flooding, that create unsafe learning environments and put strain on the District budget for ongoing upkeep and maintenance.

## State of Colorado BEST Grant Application

The District earlier this year applied for a BEST grant from the state; however, it did not receive the grant despite being one of the finalists.

The District is committed to reapplying for the BEST grant to ensure that we leverage state dollars to invest in our local schools. **Having bond approval from District voters as part of next year's BEST application will show that we are prepared and ready to make the improvements to the campus and schools.**

The grant provides matching funds—that do not need to be repaid by the District—for the construction and renovation of schools. School districts must provide matching funds to receive a BEST grant. The grants are awarded annually and require a detailed and well-

planned project. The grant process is competitive, and each year districts apply for a limited amount of funds.

## Bond Proposal Considered for November Ballot

The District's Board of Education is considering placing a question on the November 2023 ballot asking voters to consider the issuance of bonds for these capital improvements. The bond would be paid through an increase in property taxes.

**The bond amount is expected to be \$12 to \$14 million, depending on assessed value figures that will be available in August. This range would allow the District to apply for \$17.5 million or more through the BEST grant program.** If the bond election and BEST grant application are both successful, this would provide the District with sufficient funds to complete its campus and building plans.

## Estimated tax increase for bond:

**Residential:**  
(*\$100,000 in actual value*)

**\$5 to \$6**  
per month

**Commercial:**  
(*\$100,000 in actual value*)

**\$24 to \$25**  
per month

It is estimated the bond would cost about \$60 to \$72 per year—about \$5 to \$6 per month—for every \$100,000 of actual home value within the District. For a commercial property, the bond is estimated to be \$288 to \$300 per year for \$100,000 of actual commercial value.

The bond would be contingent on the District receiving the BEST grant. It would not be issued and the tax would not be collected until the grant was awarded.

## District Buildings Escape Major Impacts from Spring Floods

Thank you to community members, staff and students for the hard work filling sandbags during spring flooding. The preschool and middle school would have been flooded without this impressive effort. The buildings escaped major damage, and only the gym floor was ruined in the floods. The gym floor, shown to the right before the flooding, is prone to buckling and damage. The District is already installing sump-pumps to prevent future flooding of the gym floor.



# Community Opinion Survey

Please take a few minutes to read the questions below, review with other household members, and complete the survey. We will enter your response anonymously. **To take this survey, please do one of the following by June 20:**

- Take this survey online at [bit.ly/Doloressurvey](https://bit.ly/Doloressurvey)
- Drop off at the district or mail to 100 North 6th Street, Dolores 81323 ATTN: Community Survey
- Email the survey to [superintendent@dolores.k12.co.us](mailto:superintendent@dolores.k12.co.us)

**Q1.** Before receiving this informational mailer, how much would you say you have read or heard about the District's Facilities Master Plan and bond proposal? (Please check one)

- A lot                       Some  
 A little                     Nothing at all

**Q2.** Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D and F to rate the quality of their work at school. What grade would you give the Dolores School District if you were to rate the local school district in the same way?

- A    B    C    D    F    Unsure

**Q3.** The Dolores School District Board of Education is considering placing a bond proposal on the 2023 ballot. If that election were held today, would you vote "yes" in favor, or "no" to oppose, the following potential question:

*Shall Dolores School District Re-4a debt be increased by \$13 million, with a repayment cost of up to \$26 million, and shall district taxes be increased by up to \$1.2 million annually by the issuance and payment of general obligation bonds to provide local matching money required for the district to receive a Building Excellent Schools Today ("BEST") grant to finance the costs of:*

- *Building and equipping a new high school to provide state-of-the-art, safe learning environments, including an agriculture science lab, secure common area, covered access and double-vestibule entrances;*
- *Renovating existing high school into the middle school to provide modern, secure classrooms and a dedicated bus loop and covered walkways;*
- *Performing flood mitigation by improving drainage flow from runoff and removing all new buildings from the flood plain;*
- *Renovating the elementary school to provide a covered entrance for bus and parent drop off locations;*
- *Ensuring that all district buildings comply with the*

*Americans with Disabilities Act;*

- *Addressing critical school repairs including HVAC to improve indoor air quality; and*
- *Demolishing existing middle school and construct a secure playground space;*

*And for acquiring, constructing or improving any capital assets that the district is authorized by law to own; and shall the district be subject to an annual independent audit published on the district's website that reviews such expenditures of this bond?*

- Definitely Yes       Probably Yes  
 Probably No         Definitely No  
 Unsure

**Q4.** If you selected **No** or **Unsure** on the proposed question, please provide the most important reason for that decision:

- District should tighten its belt and do more with current resources.
- Concerned about potential property tax increases.
- Generally do not support tax increases and debt.
- Property taxes are already too high in the District.
- Need more information.
- Concerned with the District's priorities.
- Other more important uses of taxes such as roads and fire prevention.
- Concerned about inflation and an economic slowdown.
- Other, please explain:

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**Q5.** If the Dolores School District puts a bonding question on the ballot, please rank on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highest, which elements are most important to your support:

Making safety and security improvements  
 1  2  3  4  5  Unsure

Building a new high school to add classroom spaces including an agricultural science lab  
 1  2  3  4  5  Unsure

Renovating the high school into a new middle school  
 1  2  3  4  5  Unsure

Updating all buildings to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act  
 1  2  3  4  5  Unsure

Addressing maintenance issues including HVAC systems  
 1  2  3  4  5  Unsure

Mitigating flooding issues and repairing damage  
 1  2  3  4  5  Unsure

Renovating the elementary school  
 1  2  3  4  5  Unsure

Demolishing the existing middle school and constructing a secure playground in that location  
 1  2  3  4  5  Unsure

**Q6.** Would you be more or less likely to vote Yes on the bond proposal knowing that the District has responded to community feedback and will keep the school's buildings in town?

- Much more likely to vote yes
- Somewhat likely to vote yes
- Less likely to vote yes
- No difference
- Don't know/No opinion

**Q7.** Would you be more or less likely to vote Yes on the bond proposal if you knew that the District would be in a better position to apply for a BEST grant to leverage state dollars that would not have to be paid back?

- Much more likely to vote yes
- Somewhat likely to vote yes
- Less likely to vote yes
- No difference
- Don't know/No opinion

**Q8.** Would you be more or less likely to vote Yes on the proposal if you knew that the District would be able to improve the safety and security of its classroom environments and reduce its operational expenses by improving its facilities?

- Much more likely to vote yes
- Somewhat likely to vote yes
- Less likely to vote yes
- No difference
- Don't know/No opinion

**Q9.** Please share any other concerns regarding the bond proposal?

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*Please consider completing the following questions for demographic purposes:*

What is your age range?

- 18-34  35-44  45-54
- 55-64  65-74  75 and older

What is your gender?  Female  Male

What is your ZIP code?  81323  81328

Visit [bit.ly/Doloressurvey](https://bit.ly/Doloressurvey) to complete this Community Survey online. Please complete this survey by June 20.





100 North 6th Street  
Dolores, CO 81323



**PLEASE  
OPEN!**

## **Community survey and important information about the Dolores School District Re-4a**

### **Your input will help shape how the school district will move forward on a bond question**

The Dolores School District Re-4a Board of Education is considering placing a bond question on the November 2023 ballot. The board will use the information gathered as part of this community opinion survey – as well as other public input – to decide whether to place the question on the ballot.

### **Quick survey about the Dolores School District**

Please take a few minutes to fill out the included survey and comment on the proposal. Consider this a town hall meeting around your kitchen table. The survey should take only a few minutes to complete and can be found online at the address below.

### **Questions and Comments**

If you have questions, please contact:

**Reece Blincoe**, Superintendent  
[superintendent@dolores.k12.co.us](mailto:superintendent@dolores.k12.co.us) | 970-882-7255

### **Board of Education**

The Dolores School District Re-4a is governed by a locally elected Board of Education that oversees the budget and policy decisions for the district.

**Maegan Crowley, President**  
[mcrowley@dolores.k12.co.us](mailto:mcrowley@dolores.k12.co.us)

**Casey McClellan, Vice President**  
[cmcclellan@dolores.k12.co.us](mailto:cmcclellan@dolores.k12.co.us)

**Michael Rime, Director**  
[mrime@dolores.k12.co.us](mailto:mrime@dolores.k12.co.us)

**Lenetta Shull, Treasurer**  
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**Clay Tallmadge, Secretary**  
[ctallmadge@dolores.k12.co.us](mailto:ctallmadge@dolores.k12.co.us)

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