

8. Schools

The Brewer School Department has a unique governing structure. In addition to the elected School Committee that oversees the Superintendent of Schools and makes policy decisions, there is also an elected District Board of Trustees. The Trustees are charged with owning and maintaining the school buildings and grounds. Both boards work together closely to provide the educational programming and facilities to meet the needs of our city.

The City of Brewer has placed a high priority on the quality of its school system, both in terms of its curriculum and facilities. The City educates a combined total of about 1700 students including roughly 970 students at the new Brewer Community School (grades pre-K through 8) and 733 at Brewer High School (grades 9-12). The School Department accepts tuition students from surrounding communities. For the current school year, the student body includes tuition students from nearby communities including students from Holden, Clifton, Dedham, Aurora, Eddington, Orrington and private schools.

As shown in the following table, total enrollment has fluctuated, but has not dropped significantly as it has in other school systems.

Brewer School Department 5-Year Enrollment Overview					
Grade	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
4YO	33	60	55	58	62
K	97	92	118	87	93
1	114	87	97	105	96
2	113	115	88	96	109
3	113	112	110	83	93
4	96	110	116	106	84
5	92	95	105	120	108
6	96	95	93	100	118
7	87	90	99	98	106
8	108	87	93	94	101
Total Community School	949	943	974	947	970
9	204	228	212	181	194
10	189	192	196	187	183
11	181	159	175	186	171
12	211	180	160	166	185
Total High School	785	759	743	720	733
Total School Department	1,734	1,702	1,717	1,665	1,703

For years the Brewer School Department had five school buildings spanning Pre-K through eighth grade; one of which was closed in 2004 due to severe structural deficiencies. Hence, students in the affected school were relocated to temporary portable classrooms located on the remaining school sites. This caused an overcrowding situation in already inadequate buildings constructed between 1925 and 1957. These schools were simply unable to meet today's educational needs. In 2007 Brewer voters overwhelmingly approved construction of a new \$33m school housing all Pre-K to grade eight students under one roof. Maximizing common spaces to minimize construction costs were but one of the principal advantages of this arrangement. More importantly, there were numerous educational advantages and possibilities for educating all our elementary students at one site.

The new Brewer Community School was constructed to create five separate wings located on two stories. The first floor contains wings housing Pre-K and kindergarten, first and second grades while the second floor houses wings containing third and fourth grades, fifth and sixth grades and seventh and eighth grades. Such an arrangement facilitates developmentally appropriate cross grade groupings to maximize instructional effectiveness. The school design incorporates Brewer's economic history with wings themed to reflect; the Penobscot River, ice harvesting, forestry and papermaking, maritime industry, and brick manufacturing. The school is located in a rather densely populated residential area thus encouraging many children to become more physically active by walking or biking to their neighborhood school. Moreover, Brewer voters approved \$2.5m locally to fund a state of the art performing arts center. This addition adds a vibrant cultural dimension to the city.

In September of 2012, Brewer voters once again overwhelmingly voted to accept \$5.4m in interest free funding to begin renovations of the high school. Improvements to security, kitchen facilities, cafeteria, offices and the addition of a lecture hall, will update the building.

Both Brewer Community School and Brewer High School incorporate the latest technologies and will serve our students and community well into the future.

Currently the old buildings are in the hands of the city. Both Pendleton Street School and Washington Street School have been torn down. State Street School and Capri Street School are scheduled for demolition. At the Capri Street School site, there are recreational fields used by the City and School Department. The Brewer Housing Authority has purchased a 2-year option on the old middle school for possible use as senior housing.

Maintaining a high quality school system and managing facilities is a challenge exacerbated by uncertain state funding levels and tight municipal budgets. The city has taken on a greater portion of school funding as the state has shifted costs to the local property tax base. Balancing the financial obligations within the community to provide services will prove challenging in the future.