

[Fundraising underway to replace Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School playgrounds](#)

By Madison Schofield, Staff Writer Published: 12-26-2024 9:32 AM

SHELBURNE FALLS — Fundraising efforts are underway to replace Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School’s three playgrounds.

Principal Hayley Gilmore said the current playground structures have run the course of their lifespan.

“There’s a lot of broken equipment,” Gilmore said. “There’s rusted bolts, missing monkey bars.” Though Gilmore said she is not sure exactly how old the playground equipment is, a neighbor told her that his now 40-year-old son used to play on the exact same playgrounds when he was a student there. After at least 35 years of being played on, the swings, slides and other equipment are ready to be replaced.

Replacing the equipment is no small feat, though, Gilmore said. Estimates to replace the school’s three playgrounds — featuring equipment of varying sizes that is geared toward students in different grade levels — have come back at roughly \$300,000.

“It’s pretty outlandish,” Gilmore said.

Gilmore said the school, in collaboration with the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), is working to raise as much money as possible to put toward the equipment’s replacement. In addition to just updating the equipment, Gilmore said she would like to make at least one of the playgrounds an inclusive playground for students with disabilities that features accessible ramps and rubber surfacing. Gilmore noted Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School is the Mohawk Trail Regional School District’s main elementary school for providing special education services.

Ideally, Gilmore said, the fundraising effort would bring in enough money to replace all three playgrounds at the same time as it cheaper than having a contractor come to the school on three separate occasions. But if it’s necessary to divide up the work, the playground for preschoolers is considered the priority.

At the Winter Bazaar on Dec. 7, the PTO raised \$3,000 through a tag sale, raffles and a bake sale.

“It’s a drop in the bucket for what we need, but it’s a start,” Gilmore said.

In addition to the fundraisers, the school has applied for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding and is exploring other grant opportunities. Another fundraiser will be planned in the spring, after the school’s core group of volunteers has taken a break following a busy fall spent planning the annual Winter Bazaar and the first-ever Oktoberfest.

Gilmore noted a GoFundMe will eventually be created to allow community members to donate directly toward the playground replacement project.

The school is also seeking community feedback on what equipment should be included as designs start to be considered, Gilmore added. Parents, teachers and students are invited to submit their ideas at bit.ly/3ZNxBRN.

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Source: <https://www.recorder.com/Fundraising-underway-to-replace-Buckland-Shelburne-Elementary-School-playgrounds-58544038>