School Board Meeting:	**November 24, 2025**
Subject:	Enrollment Projection Report
Presenter:	**Ryan L. Tangen, Director Finance and Operations**

SUGGESTED SCHOOL BOARD ACTION:

For Board Review Only.

DESCRIPTION:

2024-25 Fall vs. Spring Enrollment
Historically, K-12 enrollment decreases from October 1 to June 1. Most of the enrollment drop happens in grades 9-12 and is primarily due to increased mobility and the decision to graduate early. However, during the 2024-25 school year, grades K-8 had a net decrease of 14, and grades 9-12 had a net decrease of 38, resulting in a K-12 net decrease of 52. The decrease in grades K-8 were half as much as in the prior year which will help stabilize enrollment in future years.

2025-26 K-12 Enrollment as of Oct. 1
Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose's 2025-26 school year's K-12 enrollment decreased by 65 students compared to the previous year. The five-year growth average has been declining, currently at 86 less students per year. Over this period, total enrollment has seen a net decrease of 428 students, or 8.11%.

As of October 1, 2025, enrollment was 4,899. This figure differs from the official October 1 enrollment reported by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). Internally, adjustments are made to exclude post-secondary and shared time students in our internal monthly enrollment reports. Once MDE publishes the official October 1 enrollment report, the enrollment number may increase by as much as 100-200 students primarily due to the inclusion of early childhood and voluntary pre-kindergarten enrollments.

Review of 2025-26 Enrollment Projection
The enrollment projection for 2025-26 was 4,846 students, 53 less than the October 1 count of 4,899. It is important to note that the monthly count is adjusted to exclude post-secondary and shared time students so it only includes the instructional time at the school district. By grade, kindergarten was under projections by 18, grades 1-5 exceeded by 32, grades 6-8 exceeded by 7, and grades 9-12 exceeded by 32.

2026-27 Enrollment Projection
The district uses two different enrollment projection models using three different data sets, end-of-year ADM, October 1 MARSS submission, or district data. The end-of-year ADM data includes tuition students and can inflate totals. October 1 MARSS data

includes post-secondary and shared-time students and can also inflate totals. The district data option is the third option and allows schools to enter enrollment history taken at any time and allows the data to be adjusted for post-secondary and shared time students. The projection was based on the district data option.

There are five different methods used to project kindergarten enrollment. These methods are:

- **Hold Constant** maintains the 2024-25 kindergarten level.

- **Linear Projection** is a straightforward mathematical projection based on nothing more than the past five years of data.

- **County Birth Method** uses the total number of live births in Wright County and examines what percentage of those births enroll in kindergarten. The projection is based on the average percentage of the last four years.

- **District-Determined Method** examines county birth rates in Wright County and compares that to actual student enrollment numbers in the district and projects that percentage for the next five years.

Kindergarten enrollment for this projection is based on Wright County births and the four-year average of actual enrollment of 19.7%. The October 1, 2025, kindergarten enrollment was 18.8% of Wright County births.

Projecting enrollment in the remaining grades is based on analysis of a variety of methods:

- **Cohort Survival Method** (Ratio Prior Year) uses a ratio computed for each grade from the previous year. This is accomplished by dividing the current enrollment in one grade by the previous grade in the previous year. Cohort ratios are calculated using 1-7 years of enrollment history. For example, a cohort ratio using five years of enrollment history would produce a ratio of the enrollment that occurred five years ago to the enrollment that occurred six years ago. In rapid growth, this methodology may produce projections that are too optimistic.

- **Weighted Cohort Survival Method** uses a ratio computed for each grade level from the previous year as well as by dividing the current enrollment in one grade by the previous grade in the previous year. The ratios are weighted to bias the prediction in favor of the most recent year's results. In rapid growth, this methodology may also produce overly optimistic results.

- **Numerical Survival Method** uses a simple grade-to-grade progression without calculating a ratio. A multiple year average of the enrollment change is added or subtracted to the enrollment in a grade to project future enrollment. In rapid growth, this model may produce projections that are too conservative.

- **Weighted Numerical Survival Method** uses grade-to-grade progressions like the numerical survival method, but also employs a weighted average to give greater influence to recent years' results. In rapid growth, this methodology dampens the projections slightly.

- **Merged Method** is a combination of all previous methods.

The projection model offers eighteen different variations of the described methods for comparison. For this projection, the weighted cohort survival method, specifically the five-year weighted ratio, was chosen based on historical accuracy.

The model predicts a total 2026-27 K-12 enrollment of 4,864 students, a decrease of 35 students from 2025-26. Factors such as the current housing market, economic conditions, Wright County births, and open enrollment were considered. The cities of Buffalo, Hanover, and Montrose are reporting a combined increase of 41% in single-family dwelling permits issued in 2025.

The future enrollment projections are reviewed by grade grouping to ensure school building capacities are adequate and are as follows:

BHS – 2,010   BCMS – 1,425   Elementary – 3,350

The building capacities listed are optimum and can be stretched a little bit. The enrollment projections show that we will have remaining building capacity at all levels for the duration of the five-year projection.

This projection is based on the October 1 projection and historically, enrollment has declined throughout the school year. Therefore, slightly more conservative numbers will be used in the January financial forecast.

Attachments:
- Enrollment Projection November 2025