

2025 Consolidation Process Recommendation

Prepared for Ashland School District Board

November 13, 2025 | Superintendent Joseph Hattrick



Ashland School District

inspiring learning for life

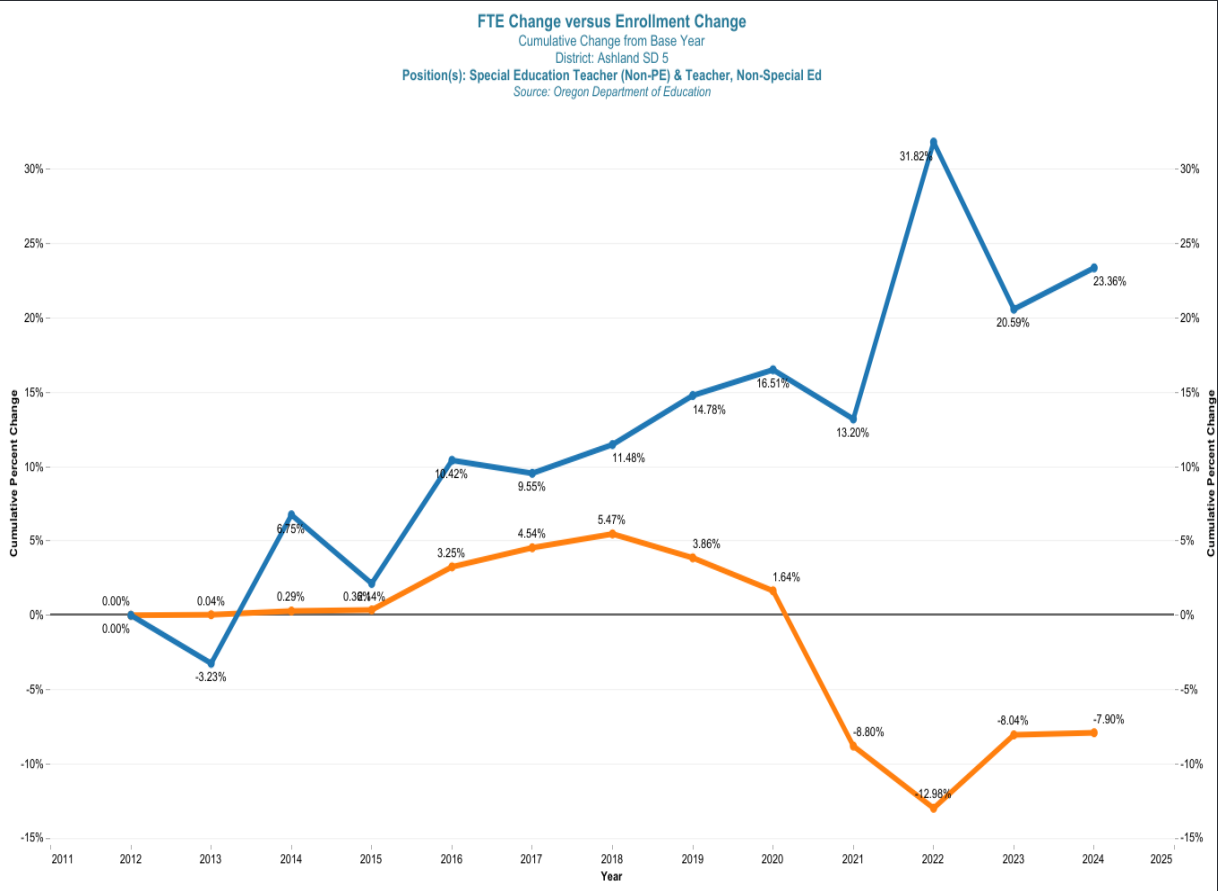
The Challenge We Face

Looking at enrollment over the past decade, Ashland School District enrollment peaked at 2,950 students in 2017-18. Since then, we've experienced steady decline—part of a longer trend forecast by demographers in 2022. Fewer students means less funding, and our resources are increasingly stretched across multiple sites.

Elementary specialists now cover multiple schools because no single site has enough classrooms for full-time placement. This includes speech-language pathologists, psychologists, music teachers, and PE instructors. Our ability to provide depth of service at each school continues to diminish.

2,950
Peak Enrollment
2017-18 school year

\$8M
Budget Deficit
Identified in 2025



Our Response: A Phased Approach

During 2025-26, we initiated a comprehensive strategy to address the severe budget deficit and align our operations with current enrollment realities.



1

Phase I: Immediate Actions

- Hiring and spending freezes
- Reduction in school days
- Staff reductions
- Class sizes increased to average of 25 students
- Some sites utilizing blended learning

2

Phase II-III: Strategic Evaluation

- Assess impact on students
- Evaluate district organization
- Analyze facility usage and capacity
- Consider educational best practices
- Plan for future development

Purpose of This Proposal

This process is not intended to be a predetermined decision to close or reconfigure any school. Rather, it is an opportunity for the district and community to evaluate multiple options together—grounded in data, transparency, and student-centered values.



Data-Driven

Examining enrollment trends, facility capacity, and financial sustainability



Transparent Process

Open dialogue with all stakeholders throughout the evaluation



Student-Centered

Every decision focused on what's best for our students' education

Following significant work to right-size the budget and align staffing with enrollment, we must now examine whether our current facility configuration represents the most effective and sustainable model for serving students.



The Central Question: Run or Walk?

We recognize that meaningful change is challenging. There are advantages and drawbacks to both an expedited process and a more extended, detailed approach. The board must decide which pathway best serves our district and community.



"Run" — Expedited

Move through analysis and decision-making within months, determining consolidation for fall 2026



"Walk" — Extended

Engage in longer, detailed process with expanded community involvement for fall 2027 implementation

"Run" — Expedited Process for Fall 2026

Pros

- **Faster financial impact** — Cost reductions begin a full year earlier, accelerating fiscal stabilization
- **Earlier relief on staffing pressures** — Reduces need for multi-grade blended classrooms sooner
- **Clearer direction for families** — Uncertainty shortened; communities can plan sooner
- **Aligns with enrollment trends** — Acts on known projections to reduce risk
- **Demonstrates decisive action** — Shows responsible leadership in addressing challenges

Cons

- **Less time for engagement** — Limits depth of dialogue with stakeholders
- **Higher emotional impact** — Process may feel rushed, creating frustration
- **Compressed transition planning** — Transportation, boundaries, staffing must be managed quickly
- **Perception concerns** — May appear predetermined despite transparency
- **Limited creative exploration** — Less time for alternative solutions like partnerships

"Walk" — Extended Process for Fall 2027

Pros

- **Comprehensive engagement** — Families, staff, and partners have meaningful participation time
- **Creative solutions** — More time to evaluate facility uses and develop multiple scenarios
- **Smoother transitions** — Transportation, staffing, programs planned with greater care
- **Long-term vision alignment** — Connects facilities plan with strategic goals beyond two years
- **Reduces community stress** — Slower pacing feels more respectful and thoughtful

Cons

- **Delays cost savings** — Postpones financial relief for one additional year
- **Prolongs uncertainty** — Extended anxiety for staff, students, and families
- **Enrollment decline risk** — Perception of instability may influence family decisions
- **Additional interim cuts** — May require continued reductions in staffing or programs
- **Increasing complexity** — Shifting conditions require repeated plan updates

Next Steps: Your Voice Matters

Beginning next week, we will launch surveys to gather input from our community about which process—expedited or extended—best serves our district's needs.

01

Staff Survey Launch

Brief survey asking staff to weigh in on whether to "run" or "walk" through the consolidation process

02

Family Survey Launch

Similar survey sent to families across the district to ensure broad input from all stakeholders

03

Feedback Compilation

District compiles and analyzes all survey responses to identify community preferences and concerns

04

Board Presentation

Results shared at December 11 board meeting with final recommendation on preferred timeline and process

Data Points for Consideration

As we engage in this process, the board, staff, and community will need to evaluate multiple factors to determine the best operational model for Ashland School District.



Current & Projected Enrollment

Analyzing trends and forecasts to understand future student population



Building Capacity & Usage

Evaluating how efficiently we're utilizing existing facility space



Facility Condition

Assessing current status and maintenance needs of each building



Educational Best Practices

Ensuring decisions align with proven approaches to student learning



Future Development

Considering opportunities for charter schools, virtual learning, and much more

Additional enrollment data, facility information, and any board-requested materials will be provided at the December 11 meeting.

Moving Forward Together

No one enters this work eagerly. These conversations are difficult, uncomfortable, and heavy—because they involve our schools, our people, and the future of our community.

Yet responsible leadership requires us to examine every possibility with clarity and courage. As the board reviews options, gathers information, and listens to staff, families, and community members, we must keep the human impact at the heart of every discussion.

The feelings, questions, and concerns that arise are real, and they matter deeply. Even in the midst of difficult decisions, our commitment remains unchanged: **to support our students, staff, and families every step of the way and to communicate openly throughout this process.**

Our Commitment

Transparency, data-driven decisions, and student-centered values guide every step of this journey

Questions?