July 2025

Potential School Closure/Consolidation Categories and Criteria

Prepared for Evanston/Skokie School District 65

Northwestern-Evanston Education Research Alliance (NEERA)

EVANSTON/SKOKIE SCHOOL DISTRICT 65

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Evanston/Skokie School District 65 School Consolidation Criteria Survey Summary

Survey administration: June 24-July 7, 2025

Purpose

D65 shared an open stakeholder survey to gather public input on the proposed categories and criteria for potential school consolidations or closures. These criteria were informed by input gathered during the district's April engagement sessions; the expertise of the stakeholder-based SDRP Facilities Subcommittee; and various data sources related to student enrollment, facilities, and finances.

Respondent Overview

Total respondents: 865

Primary role: 656 (75.8%) identified as parent/legal guardians of D65 students. Among these:

- 216 indicated their child received IEP services
- 53 indicated their child was an english language learner
- 133 indicated their child was enrolled in Two-Way Immersion

An overview of respondents by neighborhood/ward (n=771):

Neighborhood/Ward	Number of Respondents	Percentage Total
Skokie	52	6.7%
Ward 1	24	3.1%
Ward 2	59	7.7%
Ward 3	45	5.8%
Ward 4	58	7.5%
Ward 5	48	6.2%
Ward 6	141	18.3%
Ward 7	107	13.9%
Ward 8	46	6.0%
Ward 9	114	14.8%
Unsure	54	7.0%
Not a resident	23	3.0%

An overview of respondents' demographics:

	Number of Respondents	Percentage Total
Primary language other than English? (n=766)		
Yes	193	25.2%
No	502	65.5%
Prefer not to answer	71	9.3%
Gender (n=762)		
Female	471	61%
Male	172	22.6%
Nonbinary	10	1.3%
Prefer not to answer	109	14.3%
Race/Ethnicicity (n=758)		
African	10	1.3%
Black	44	5.8%
Caribbean	3	0.4%
East Asian	11	1.5%
Latinx/Hispanic	36	4.7%
Middle Eastern	5	0.7%
Multi-ethnic racial	47	6.2%
Pacific Islander	3	0.4%
South/Southeast Asian	12	1.6%
Indigenous/Native American	4	0.5%
White	440	58.0%
Prefer not to answer	143	18.9%

Respondent Satisfaction

Respondents rated their overall satisfaction with the proposed guiding criteria for school consolidation and closures, as well as their satisfaction with each specific criterion—Equity, Geography, Building Functionality, and Financial Impact. Responses were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (Very dissatisfied) to 5 (Very satisfied), with 3 representing a neutral response. Participants who indicated dissatisfaction with any criterion were invited to provide additional concerns or feedback through open-ended text responses.

The following report summarizes respondents' satisfaction ratings, along with key themes from the concerns and feedback provided by those who expressed dissatisfaction with one or more criteria.

Overall Criteria Satisfaction

Of the 845 respondents who answered this question, **59.7% (505 respondents)** reported being **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with the proposed guiding criteria overall.

	Number of Respondents	Percentage Total
Satisfied/Very Satisfied	505	59.7%
Neutral	219	25.9%
Dissatisfied/Very Dissatisfied	121	14.4%

Concerns:

- **Transparency and Trust**: Some respondents express a lack of trust in the district's decision-making process, perceiving that decisions about school closures have already been made and that the survey is merely "lip service." There's a desire for more concrete data and measurable indicators regarding the criteria.
- **Impact on Community:** Respondents are concerned about the negative impact of school closures on neighborhoods, green spaces, and community areas, and the potential for gentrification if properties are sold to developers.
- **Financial Impact**: Several responses highlight that the primary issue facing the district is financial, and that closing schools should focus on maximizing cost savings. Some question the financial logic of building a new school while closing others, and others emphasize controlling transportation costs.

Equity Criterion Satisfaction

Of the 852 respondents who answered this question, **58.2% (496 respondents)** reported being **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with the proposed equity criteria.

	Number of Respondents	Percentage Total
Satisfied/Very Satisfied	496	58.2%
Neutral	171	20.1%
Dissatisfied/Very Dissatisfied	185	21.7%

Concerns:

- **Overemphasis on Equity/Demographics:** Many respondents believe there is too much focus on equity and demographics as criteria for school closures, especially given the new Foster school built for equity. Some argue it leads to confusion, inconsistencies, or even racism.
- **Impact on Students and Communities:** Respondents highlight the importance of considering the emotional and practical impact on all students, families, and neighborhoods, including potential disruption to school culture, communities, and access to programs/services.
- **Lack of Clarity and Transparency:** Concerns were raised about the vagueness of the criteria, particularly how "demographics of impact" and "which students will be affected" would be measured or applied. Many desire more transparency and specific information before decisions are made.
- **Quality of Education and School Performance:** Several responses suggest that academic achievement, school quality, teacher and staff retention, and access to specific facilities (e.g., sensory rooms, TWI programs) should be stronger considerations.

Geography Criterion Satisfaction

Of the 850 respondents who answered this question, **79.8% (678 respondents)** reported being **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with the proposed geography criteria.

	Number of Respondents	Percentage Total
Satisfied/Very Satisfied	678	79.8%
Neutral	89	10.5%
Dissatisfied/Very Dissatisfied	83	9.7%

Concerns:

- **Walkability/Geographic Proximity**: Many respondents expressed concerns that the proposed 0.75-mile walkability criteria is too far for young children, especially in extreme weather, and that it may not be practical or safe in all areas due to busy roads or lack of crossing guards.

- **Transportation**: Many responses discuss the role of busing, with some questioning the district's ability to manage bus routes effectively or accurately measure proposed criteria related to transportation. Some believe that busing is a necessary solution and should be prioritized, especially if walkability is not feasible for all students.
- **Impact on Students and Community**: Concerns were raised about the impact of school closures on existing communities, staff, and student learning due to increased class sizes. Some respondents emphasize the importance of maintaining educational programming, student outcomes, and specialized services, not just physical access to buildings.

Building Functionality Criterion Satisfaction

Of the 848 respondents who answered this question, **68.7% (583 respondents)** reported being **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with the proposed building functionality criteria.

	Number of Respondents	**Percentage Total**
Satisfied/Very Satisfied	583	68.7%
Neutral	162	19.1%
Dissatisfied/Very Dissatisfied	103	12.2%

Concerns:

- **ADA Accessibility:** Many respondents believe ADA compliance should be addressed through improvements and renovations rather than being a primary criterion for school closure, noting that most older buildings need upgrades.
- **Facility Features:** Several responses questioned the importance of separate gyms and cafeterias as criteria for school closure, stating that these do not necessarily impact educational quality or student outcomes.
- **Building Condition & Investment:** Respondents feel that the current poor condition and deferred maintenance of many buildings are a result of district mismanagement and should not be a reason for closure. They suggest investing in existing schools, particularly those in lower-income areas.
- **Additional Criteria:** Suggestions for additional criteria included environmental impact, outdoor space, quality of receiving schools, cost of upgrades, opportunity for future expansion, and impact on student-teacher ratios.

Financial Criterion Satisfaction

Of the 850 respondents who answered this question, **57.5% (489 respondents)** reported being **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with the proposed financial criteria.

	Number of Respondents	**Percentage Total**

Satisfied/Very Satisfied	489	57.5%
Neutral	183	21.5%
Dissatisfied/Very Dissatisfied	178	20.9%

Concerns:

- **Financial Priorities:** Numerous responses express dissatisfaction with the district's financial management, arguing that revenue opportunities and capital expenses should be weighted more heavily given the structural deficit, while also questioning the decision to build a new school.
- **Selling/Leasing Buildings:** Many respondents are against selling school buildings, viewing it as short-sighted and irreversible, with some suggesting leasing for ongoing income or community use instead.
- **Building Condition/Cost:** Some responses suggest that while capital expenses are important, they should be considered in context of per-student costs or not be the primary factor for closure, especially given the age of many buildings.

Communication and Awareness

Two questions were asked of respondents to help assess the quality and effectiveness of SDRP-related communications. Of the 847 responses received, the following information was gathered:

- 95.1% of survey respondents indicated that they are ‘Very or Somewhat Familiar’ with the reasons District 65 is considering school consolidation or closure/
- 97.6% of survey respondents indicated that they are ‘Very or Somewhat Aware’ of the financial challenges (structural deficit) currently impacting the district