

Reimagine Rdale: Vision 2030 Recommendations



September 23, 2025

Tonight's Presenters



Willie Howard

Parent of graduates, Staff member, Community member (resident)



BriAnn Foss

Parent of current students, Parent of graduates, Community member (resident), Alumna



**Kyllander Nelson
Chupurdia**

Student at Cooper High School

This won't be easy.

Do you believe our recommendations will lead to a **brighter**, **more equitable** future for our students — and a **healthier financial position** for our district?

If not - **What is your plan** to
solve the challenges we are facing,
including our district's **serious**
financial crisis?

A Critical Turning Point

With **bold action**,

courageous leadership,

and **strong collaboration** between the school board and district staff,

our current reality does not need to define **our future.**

Why We're Here

01

There is so much **good** in Robbinsdale Area Schools.

02

But our district also faces **significant challenges.**

03

A **\$21 million budget deficit** has compounded these challenges.

Change was needed before.
Now, it is **essential.**



What is The Vision 2030 Team?

Our purpose:

“A community group ***reflective of the diverse makeup*** of our students and community population will engage in study, learning, and analysis to develop long-term recommendations for ***district priorities, financial stability, and considerations to reimagine the school district*** our students want, need, and deserve.”

Vision 2030 Team Meetings

Data & Topics

- Student data: Test scores, survey results, demographics
- Results from Vision 2030 community engagement efforts
- Enrollment trends & projections
- Facilities, including building condition and capacity & utilization
- Other districts' facilities
- Safety & security protocols
- Current district programming
- Educational trends



No matter the topic, we centered Equity in all conversations.

Consensus: **General agreement**
among a group of people.

What To Expect Tonight

- High-level **summary of the key insights**
- **Recommendations** (including school closures & programming changes.)

What you **won't** hear from us:

- Exactly how many schools the district should close, which ones, or when
 - These items will require additional, intensive work from district staff experienced at navigating the many interrelated variables involved in making these decisions.

This is More Than a Plan To Close Schools

It's a plan to *expand opportunities and raise academic excellence* by creating learning environments where every child is **inspired**, **supported**, and **safe**.

KEY FINDINGS & CONSIDERATIONS

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1. **Exceptional Staff & Instruction Are The District's Greatest Strengths**

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4. **Enrollment is Declining — and Will Continue To**

Enrollment is Declining — and Will Continue To

- **16% enrollment decline** (nearly 2,000 students) since 2014-2015 school year
- **Increased competition** — particularly from other public school districts & charter schools
 - Number of nonresidents open enrolling into the district nearly equal to the number of resident students leaving Robbinsdale.
 - Capture rate — the percentage of resident students who choose Robbinsdale — has fallen from 70% to 62% over the same time period.
- **Projected 2030-2031 enrollment:** Between 9,341-9,759

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4. Enrollment is Declining — and Will Continue To
5. **Robbinsdale Operates More Buildings Than Needed**

Robbinsdale Operates More Buildings Than Needed

- The district was built for thousands more students than are currently enrolled.
- Coupled with enrollment projections: the district operates too many buildings.
- Maintaining more buildings than we need strains resources across the board — from staffing to maintenance to utilities.
- **Nine of our buildings have utilization rates of less than 60%.**

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5. Robbinsdale Operates More Buildings Than Needed
- 6. Facilities Are Outdated & Expensive to Maintain**

Facilities Are Outdated & Expensive to Maintain

- **\$216.6 million** in deferred maintenance needs over the next 10 years.
- **\$76.3 million** of that in “urgent” needs in just the next two years.
- Known deferred maintenance needs over 10 years range from **\$1.2 million** (an elementary school) to **more than \$28 million** (each of our high schools).

Facilities Are Outdated & Expensive to Maintain

“I would really like to go to a school like this.”

- Student on the Vision Team during tour of other districts

Key Findings & Considerations

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6. Facilities Are Outdated & Expensive to Maintain
- 7. Safety & Security Are Priorities**

Safety & Security Are Priorities

- Fundamental safety & security protocols are in place.
- District audits identified areas that could be strengthened.
- Most students report they feel safe in their classrooms and in the hallways.
- However, the percentage of students feeling safe in bathrooms has been declining.

A portion of the Capital Projects levy as well as state funds are designated for specific safety & security improvements. But they are not sufficient to tackle the comprehensive list of currently identified needs.

Key Insights Uncovered

1. Exceptional Staff & Instruction Are The District's Greatest Strengths
2. The Arts Are Foundational to the District
3. Our District Lags Minnesota Averages on State Tests
4. Enrollment is Declining — and Will Continue To
5. Robbinsdale Operates More Buildings Than Needed
6. Facilities Are Outdated & Expensive to Maintain
7. Safety & Security Are Priorities
- 8. District's Reputation Deserves Attention**

District's Reputation Deserves Attention

The school board's reputation is difficult — but important — to address. The board has been called “embattled” and “dysfunctional” by the media.

The school board has gained and lost members since those reports. But governance was cited as a contributing factor to a recent decline in the district's bond rating, resulting in higher borrowing costs.

We're at a critical turning point for our district — and it's an opportunity to rewrite the board's story.

VISION 2030 TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Our Recommendations: A Summary

1. Implement the Vision Team's *Core Pillars for Reaching a Thriving Educational Environment*.
2. Adopt a programmatic focus & districtwide identity of *Arts & Innovation*.
3. Reduce the number of schools operated.
4. Ensure every student has access to equitable learning spaces.

Recommendation: Academic Pillars

Core Pillars for Reaching a Thriving Educational Environment



**Learning
Pathways for
Every Student**



**Safe &
Supportive
Learning
Environments**



**Exceptional &
Supported Staff**



**Impactful
Community
Engagement &
Partnerships**

Recommendation: Arts & Innovation

Programmatic Focus: Arts & Innovation

- Magnet schools are an exception to district's trend of declining enrollment.
- We recommend the district adopt a new identity as the district of Arts & Innovation — providing the educational opportunities that are so highly sought after through our School of Engineering & Arts (SEA) and FAIR to *all* students.
- This would mean incorporating the most effective initiatives from each magnet school across *all schools within the district* (instead of hosting individual magnet schools).
- While full implementation may require a phased approach, offering Arts & Innovation programming to *all* students **would be a monumental step forward for our district.**

Recommendation: Arts & Innovation

Practical Implications

- SEA & FAIR: No longer standalone magnet schools.
- Spanish Immersion: Continue as a standalone magnet school due to its unique requirement for staff proficient in Spanish.
- Children assigned to their neighborhood school using new boundaries (unless they opt into Spanish Immersion).
- Teaching staff would need to undergo professional development.
- Key partnerships would be expanded across the district.
- Arts & Innovation programming to be delivered across the district at a high standard.

If Robbinsdale is **truly committed to equity**, *all students* should have the opportunity to participate in **arts and innovation programming**.

Recommendation: Facilities

Facilities Realignment: High School

- **Create one high school:** United campus where all students would have equal access to secondary school opportunities.
 - Construct around specialized learning communities (sometimes called academies).
 - Ideally a new build in an entirely new location instead of renovating an existing campus.
 - However, additional research is necessary (e.g., finances, land availability & costs, community feedback as part of bond referendum planning process).
 - Would likely not affect current high school students; it would take several years to implement.
 - Estimated enrollment in 2030-2031 school year: 2,800-2,900 students.

Recommendation: Facilities

Facilities Realignment: Middle School

- **Operate fewer middle schools:** Fewer middle schools are needed to serve current and projected enrollment.
 - Exact number of middle schools needed would become clearer over time as additional variables play out (e.g., Spanish Immersion grade configuration). We currently estimate 2-3 middle schools would be needed.
 - Recommend retained middle schools be strategically located to balance enrollment and access.

Recommendation: Facilities

Facilities Realignment: Elementary School

- **Operate fewer elementary schools:** Fewer elementary schools are needed to serve current and projected enrollment.
 - Exact number of elementary schools needed would become clear over time as interrelated variables play out.
 - Given our work so far, the Vision Team estimates the district needs six to nine elementary school buildings to serve enrollment over the next decade. (Current: 12, including NHLC)
 - We recommend each elementary school have space for PreK, including a PreK Spanish Immersion program at Robbinsdale Spanish Immersion.

Important Facilities Notes

- It will take significant staff effort to determine the number of schools needed & implement a building configuration plan. We anticipate this would be a phased approach.
- Comprehensive transition plans for students enrolled at any closed schools would be created and managed by staff (outside the scope of this team's work).
- A bond requiring voter approval will be necessary to effectively execute on this facilities plan.
- We **do not** recommend increasing class size maximums from what exists today.
- Reducing the number of schools would reduce operating costs, eliminate unnecessary redundancies, and allow investment in modern, safe, flexible learning spaces.

Recommendation: Facilities Requirements

Physical Requirements for *Every* School Building

- Flexible learning spaces
- Special education classrooms
- Dedicated art and music spaces
- Outdoor learning opportunities
- Technology-rich classrooms
- Reliable air conditioning and heating
- Community-centered facilities for students, partnerships, family engagement, and after-school enrichment
- Comprehensive security technologies
- Private single-stall bathrooms

These are the facilities requirements we ask staff to incorporate as they determine the number of buildings the district needs.

INTENDED OUTCOMES & POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

Intended Outcomes

1. Financial Responsibility

The district has a *financial responsibility* to operate within its financial means. The school board has a *fiduciary duty* to ensure responsible use of all assets. Our financial situation requires action.

Estimated *annual* cost savings* per building:

- \$505,000 for each closed elementary school
- \$1M for each closed middle school
- \$1.5M for a closed high school

**These are general fund savings and do not include potential savings from factors like streamlined programming, staffing, food service, or transportation. Additionally, the district could invest its allocation of Long-Term Facilities Maintenance (LTFM) funds into fewer buildings, likely resulting in greater positive impact per building.*

Intended Outcomes

1. Financial Responsibility
2. **Community Support Through a Bond Referendum**

Community Support Through a Bond Referendum

Robbinsdale Area Schools has not benefited from a voter-approved building bond for ***at least 45 years.***

Recent successful bond referendums in other districts:

- Osseo Area Schools: \$223 million (2023)
- St. Louis Park Public Schools: \$135 million (2022)
- Wayzata School District: \$70 million (2017)

Coming this fall:

- Hopkins Public Schools (\$140 million)
- Minnetonka Public Schools (\$85 million)

Community Support Through a Bond Referendum

The 2024 technology levy:

- Renewed levy that extended the 2014 voter-approved technology levy *at the same tax rate*.
- Provides ~\$7 million annually, nearly $\frac{2}{3}$ dedicated to technology and $\frac{1}{3}$ to safety & security upgrades.

Simply put: It provides critical support, but it does not address the major facility needs across the district. Those needs require a higher level of investment through a building bond.

Intended Outcomes

1. Financial Responsibility
2. Community Support Through a Bond Referendum
- 3. Sharper Focus — But With Expanded Opportunities**

Intended Outcomes

1. Financial Responsibility
2. Community Support Through a Bond Referendum
3. Narrower Focus — But With Expanded Opportunities
4. **Stronger, More Unified District Community**

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- 5. Increased Equity**

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5. Increased Equity
- 6. Better Supported Staff**

Intended Outcomes

1. Financial Responsibility
2. Community Support Through a Bond Referendum
3. Narrower Focus — But With Expanded Opportunities
4. Stronger, More Unified District Community
5. Increased Equity
6. Better Supported Staff
- 7. Staff-Advised Timeline**

Timeline: What We Know

- A board-approved Statutory Operating Debt plan is due to the state by Jan 31, 2026.
- Some of the recommended cost containment measures (e.g., school closures) may need to be implemented sooner rather than later to make aggressive progress toward a healthier financial position.
- It will be important for the board and administration to communicate *transparently* and *proactively* as details become clearer.

Potential Challenges

1. Grief and loss felt from school closures.
2. Transition stress as students, staff, and families adjust to new routines and environments.
3. Property owner tax tolerance given current economic uncertainty.

Expectations for Navigating These Challenges

1. Strong alignment among the school board, district administration, staff, and parents and caregivers.
2. A clear vision of what we can all achieve together.
3. Transparency.
4. Empathy and compassion.
5. Strong transition plans for students moving to a new school.

Phased *implementation* may make sense, but phased *decision-making* **will only slow progress.**

This is our moment
to come together
to create the schools
our children deserve.

"We were vulnerable, logical, and thoughtful throughout the process, working through difficult conversations and challenging decisions with respect for one another and consideration for the Rdale community as a whole."

- **Debra Irrgang**

"I volunteered to be part of the solution to create a vision for the future. Being part of a group of equally committed individuals ready to discuss, debate, and generate ideas to make our school district better than ever was an honor."

- **Joan Evans**

"As a government representative on the V-Team, I have seen the same optimism and vision for what the district can be that originally attracted me to work in Robbinsdale."

- **Will Cardenas**

"Working on the V-Team was an absolute privilege. Having a front-row seat to Dr. Staloch's (and her team's) deep commitment to our students and enthusiasm for our district, and seeing the level of investment the team brought to the work was truly inspiring each time we met."

- **Deb Link**

"I was against a 1 high school option coming in. Now I am convinced that we have a better chance at achieving equity and excellence for all of our students with this structure, our financial reality demands it, and I just hope it happens in time for my kids to graduate from there."

- **Annie Hansen-Burke**