

A Vision for Excellence and Equity through Configuration

Mission and Guiding Principles

The Washington Central Unified Union School District (WCUUSD) exists to nurture and inspire in all students the passion, creativity, and power to contribute to their local and global communities. Our commitment is defined in our **Strategic Plan**, which focuses on building a culture of well-being, challenging and empowering students through evidence-based instruction, and ensuring responsive and transparent leadership.



See the
Strategic Plan

The core principle guiding this configuration work is that our programming must drive our structural decisions.

This commitment ensures that the resources and learning opportunities desired for all students are equitably and consistently delivered. A shift in how we are configured will allow us to address current inconsistencies in programming, staffing, and facility utilization, particularly in light of external pressures like declining enrollment and the new foundation funding model (Act 73).

The proposed vision for education in our district involves consolidating into three sustainable K-6 elementary sites in the FY27 (2026-2027 school year) and transitioning Grade 6 students to U-32 in FY28 (2027-2028 school year) to establish a 6-12 middle/high school experience. The vision for PreK is to expand the weekly hours of instruction and support PreK in locations with sufficient enrollments.

What Our Elementary Schools Will Look Like (Structure and Resources)

The new configuration will establish three elementary schools (PreK-5) defined by consistency, stability, and optimal capacity, moving away from reactive classroom configurations often necessitated by low and/or fluctuating enrollments.

- **Optimized Learning Spaces and Class Sizes:** The physical structure will consist of three K-5 elementary schools. This consolidation minimizes the need for multi-grade classes that are created reactively due to low and inconsistent enrollment, which can negatively impact our ability to deliver an articulated curriculum. We are committed to adhering to the WCUUSD Class Size D6 Policy and state minimum standards (Act 73).
 - **Class Size Commitments:** Classrooms will adhere to these standards: K-3 classes will maintain a minimum of 13 students and a maximum of 20 students; Grades 4-5 classes will maintain a minimum of 15 students and a maximum of 25 students.
 - **Grade level configurations:** Classes will be one grade level when possible and, if not, elementary classes will be configured as Grades 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6.
 - **Consistent School Location:** Students will be in one location for their elementary school instead of having low enrollment classes attend other schools.
- **Dedicated Professional Staff:** The reduction in the number of buildings allows the district to minimize shared positions and transition staff to full-time roles wherever possible, ensuring stability and consistency. This structural change creates the opportunity to deliver equitable access to specialized services.
 - **Support Staff Commitments:** We will provide full-time School Nurse services and full-time School Counselor services in every school. Library/Media will also be full-time and allow for collaboration between staff and the Librarian.
 - **Special Education Staffing:** We are committed to averaging 1 special educator for every 70 students in our elementary schools. The new configuration will mean that special educators are not spread across a wide span of grade levels, and they can also increase their effectiveness of instruction by allowing for small group instruction. The configuration will also reduce travel time for specialists (Psychs, OTs, ECSES).

What Our Elementary Schools Will Sound Like (Instruction and Equity)

The sounds of our new elementary schools will be those of robust, articulated curriculum and deeper student discussions with more diverse experiences and ideas. Our staff will be able to provide consistent student support and deep professional collaboration, guaranteeing that all students receive equitable and high-quality instruction regardless of their school site.

- **Equitable and Consistent Programming:** All students will receive an intentional and consistent baseline program across all three sites. This consistency directly addresses existing program variations and the difficulty of delivering a curriculum in reactive multi-age settings.
 - **Core Instruction (5 days/week):**
 - » Literacy (including phonics/word study, reading, writing)
 - » Math (including first instruction lesson, math menu, i-Ready MyPath)
 - » Science
 - » Global Citizenship
 - **Allied Arts Access:** Students will have Art, Music, and Library access once per week each, and PE access twice per week. These classes will be 40 minutes per day. This ensures robust enrichment opportunities are consistently delivered, addressing the current constraint where allied arts teachers are often spread across multiple small schools. Allied arts and content teachers can also collaborate and do collaborative work.
 - **Multi-Layered System of Support (MLSS):** The structure will support a vigorous MLSS, leveraging cohort sizes for more targeted interventions and specialized instruction. High-quality universal instruction (Layers 1 and 2) will be evidence-based and aligned across settings to address expectations and practices identified district-wide. MLSS Layers 3-6 will be staffed and provided to students so that they receive targeted and intensive interventions and enrichments that supplement the core classroom curriculum in order to meet specific student academic, behavioral, and social needs. Students will receive these services in appropriately sized cohorts that are as diverse as possible. The district will continue to provide guidance, training, and implementation support related to Child Find, special education referral, and evaluation processes.
 - **Professional Collaboration:** Teachers will have enhanced opportunities for collaboration and co-planning time with grade-level peers, fostering high-quality instruction and intervention delivery. The new scheduling will support joint planning time, embedded professional learning, and the development of teaching teams.
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What Our Elementary Schools Will Feel Like (Culture, Community, and Transition)

The feeling of our new schools will be characterized by a deep sense of belonging, safety, and vitality, reflecting our Core Beliefs in Well-Being, Community Engagement, and Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging. This culture will be built upon the implementation of the **Community Schools Framework**, which we have started working on in the district, and which serves as our strategy for achieving equitable outcomes.

A. Fostering Culture through the Community Schools Framework

We will implement the **Community Schools approach**—a “way of doing school” focused on improving school climate, student success, and civic engagement—by emphasizing its four pillars:

1. **Integrated Student Supports:** We will address out-of-school barriers to learning by coordinating services such as medical, dental, and mental health care. This provides a stronger safety net for students experiencing anxiety or complex needs. The community school director will coordinate support programs and foster a positive and healthy school climate.
2. **Expanded and Enriched Learning Time and Opportunities:** We will expand access to enrichment and academic support outside the traditional school day. This includes grant writing for before- and after-school programming and investing in “third space” (spaces where students can gather informally to socialize, explore interests, and develop a sense of community). The goal is to provide universal before-school and after-school programming.
3. **Active Family and Community Engagement:** We will build trust and foster relationships by actively involving families and community members as partners. This engagement is critical to preserving the “magic” and relational depth of smaller schools. We strive to offer educational opportunities for adults (such as English classes or computer skills) and structure events like two-town spaghetti dinners or community library nights to create connections between adults and families from different towns. We commit to making our schools the centers of our communities.

4. **Collaborative Leadership and Practices:** We will leverage the collective expertise of all stakeholders—including teachers, families, and partners—to develop shared goals and tailored programming. This collaborative process will be used to create new, unified school identities, ensuring that **all students belong** in the new structure and fostering a sense of ownership and pride. We will intentionally integrate the traditions of merging schools into the new culture.

B. Ensuring a Smooth Transition (Timeline and Logistics)

Elementary school configuration is recommended for FY27, the 2026-2027 school year. Grade 6 transition to U-32 is recommended for FY28, the 2027-2028 school year.

The district is committed to executing a smooth transition that aligns with our core values, keeping the process clear, predictable, inclusive, and transparent, addressing community concerns about lack of information and haste.

1. **Transition Planning and Leadership:** A comprehensive transition plan will be developed once the configuration structure is approved. This plan will include a Steering Team composed of Configuration Committee members, teachers, support staff, families, and students (Grade 5-8). We will implement a communications campaign featuring biweekly updates and infographics on the new configuration to communicate clearly and often.
2. **Staff and Facility Timeline:** We will finalize the Staff Assignment Plan by March 2026 to reduce staff anxiety and provide clarity. Building capacity and readiness assessments of Berlin, East Montpelier, and Middlesex will be conducted by February 2026. Teachers interested in teaching in the Middle School will be supported in the process to obtain middle grades licensure. Celebration and closure events for consolidating schools will be planned for May-June 2026.
3. **Middle School Transition:** The shift of Grade 6 students to U-32 allows for a developmentally appropriate 6-12 structure and greater access to co-curricular activities. We will ensure Grade 6 students feel welcome in the 2027-2028 school year. We will have specific actions to create a welcoming environment including student-led orientation programs, multiple “Step-Up Days”, community library nights at U-32, and by providing multiple exposures for families to meet teachers and understand scheduling. We acknowledge concerns about the transition and will develop a transition plan that includes identifying students with additional emotional or logistical needs and planning appropriately.
4. **Busing and Travel Commitments:** The configuration plan will also manage student travel time, a key criterion impacting student well-being.
 - We will adhere as closely as possible to maximum one-way travel times: 45 minutes for elementary students and 60 minutes for middle/high school students.
 - We will ensure the new configuration integrates a cost-benefit analysis of transportation implications.
 - We will update transportation policies based on new state guidelines under Act 73 (expected December 15, 2025). We will explicitly address the concerns about 6th-grade students riding buses with older high school students by developing a clear plan for safe and welcoming transportation routes.

Conclusion: Actualizing Our Strategic Plan

This reconfiguration proposal is a necessary and strategic action to actualize our **Strategic Plan** now (see QR code on first page). By moving to three consolidated K-5 schools and shifting Grade 6 to U-32, the district is creating a coherent, equitable, and sustainable educational environment that delivers the consistent, high-quality programming mandated by our strategic goals. The foundation of this system rests on **prioritizing our vision, which drives our programming, which ultimately drives our structure**. This commitment ensures we move from systemic inconsistencies toward sustained excellence and equity for every student.