

# Frequently Asked Questions about the WCUUSD Reconfiguration Proposal

## [Frequently Asked Questions about the WCUUSD Reconfiguration Proposal](#)

### [FAQ](#)

[If schools are closed, what will happen to the buildings in those towns?](#)

[What criteria was used by the Configuration Committee to evaluate any proposed model ?](#)

[What analysis have you done to determine the impact of closing the two elementary schools on the community, including loss of property value and loss of families with young children in Worcester and Calais? If there has been no analysis, how do you propose to address the "community well-being" criterion for evaluating configuration proposals?](#)

[How will the district transition from five \(5\) to three \(3\) elementary schools and move the 6th grade to U-32?](#)

[What changes will U-32 experience in terms of staffing and services in 2026-2027, based on current budget drafts? Will this affect U-32's ability to receive the 6th grade in 2027-2028?](#)

[Would the District fund a new position of Transition and Community Engagement Coordinator, or contract with an experienced organization, to help implement such a huge task of closing four schools and creating two new ones, while also supporting students and communities in transition?](#)

[How will school communities be combined?](#)

[Would the District support the creation of a Community Transition Stewardship Group, to ensure kids, parents and community members can work with teachers, other staff and administrators to ensure this transition happens in alignment with our District's Core Beliefs?](#)

[Would the district make a formal commitment to allowing community volunteers to be a meaningful part of the educational experience at all of the Districts' schools?](#)

[What is the current enrollment and how does the district predict future enrollment?](#)

[What resources has WCUUSD used to determine special education service delivery and staffing model?](#)

What does the current staffing look like at each school?

What does bus transportation currently look like and what are the estimated changes?

Would there be bus monitors at the elementary and middle/high school levels to ensure the safety and well-being of our students (including 6th graders riding the bus to U32 with 12th graders), many of whom may not have needed to ride the bus previously on a regular basis?

What happened to reserve funds from the elementary schools during Act 46 consolidation?

Why were Calais and Worcester chosen to close?

What has been done to consider a merger with Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools?

Could Act 73 implementation require us to reverse this plan in the coming years?

What is the expected cost in 2026 of merging the elementary schools?

What is the expected cost in 2027 of merging the 6th grade with 7th & 8th at U-32?

Why is the amount of savings projected for closing Doty and Calais in the latest estimate so much higher than the amount estimated in 2024 ( \$881,920 in 2024 has increased to \$1,088,508, a 23.4% increase.

How would the principal of a combined school be determined?

Would the District consider exploring the pros and cons of switching the timing of the upper and lower school schedules, such that elementary-aged students would arrive to school earlier and be more able to participate in Montpelier after-school offerings, while middle and high school students would arrive to school later, as has been shown to be more developmentally appropriate for that age group?

## FAQ

### If schools are closed, what will happen to the buildings in those towns?

***OTHER FRAMINGS OF THIS QUESTION WE RECEIVED: After 2026-7 when the 6th graders would move to U32 would the preK students move to East Montpelier? If so, what would the Calais building be used for? When would you expect to use Doty for other district purposes? What are possible uses? Would the District choose to retain the building for its own use, or sell it to the Town of Worcester for \$1? If the District were to sell it to the Town, what would be the cost of maintaining the building? How would the Town taking on the maintenance and upkeep of the building affect town property taxes, which would not be income-sensitive? Has the District been in communication with the Worcester Selectboard to assess whether the Town might choose to take on the building, and if so, how it might be used? Would the District consider retaining the building for an educational use, in order to not add an additional tax burden on Worcester residents? If the District were to retain it, how would it plan to use it?***

The effect of the closure of facilities to the communities of Worcester and Calais is not easy to predict. The location of these facilities suggests that the effect would be different in each town. Towns will not be responsible for maintaining the school buildings until and unless they decide to buy them. While you take away the students and those jobs, the facility remains as a community resource. Both facilities have been well maintained – specifically, the capital spending on each school in the past 6 years since our Act 46 district consolidation has exceeded \$500,000.

The district estimates the cost to maintain the Calais facility in FY2027 to be \$224,813, which is a decrease of \$85,038 or 27.44%. This assumes a .5 Lead Maintenance and 1.0 custodian. This will support the usage of the building for EMES/Calais preschool plus the potential use of two classrooms for CVCC.

The district estimates the cost to maintain the Doty facility in FY2027 to be \$150,450, which is a decrease of \$40,106 or 21.05%. This assumes a .5 Lead Maintenance (shared with Calais) and .2 custodian. This will support the usage of the building for local/community events, recreational usage or other uses as requested.

These are considered high estimates. (Because the change in electricity and maintenance is difficult to anticipate, we have budgeted for the same usage as in previous years instead of trying to cut them without a clearer understanding. If towns assumed management, their budgets would likely assume labor more in line with Doty's budget, until a specific use for the building is determined.

**What criteria was used by the Configuration Committee to evaluate any proposed model ?**

The Configuration Committee developed and presented the [Configuration Criteria on 2.6.25](#) and further refined the criteria along with administrative recommendations in the [10.13.25 Memo on a Configuration Model](#). Based on community, Board and Committee feedback we provided a [1.19.25 Configuration Presentation](#).

We organized the criteria we felt were valid yardsticks for comparing configurations based on the stated Core Beliefs of our Strategic Plan. In that way, we our linking the question of 'whether to reconfigure' not to past similar debates, but to recently developed values & priorities of our school district.

Criteria Area & Associated Core Belief	Goals	Criteria to consider	Strategies
<p><b>Impact on student's academic well-being</b></p> <p>Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction</p>	<p><b>*High academic achievement</b></p>	<p>Class size and classroom configurations</p>	<p>*Intentional design and implementation for strong programs that attend to the social, emotional and academic needs of students</p> <p>*Focus on inclusion and belonging</p>
	<p><b>*Well-rounded students</b></p>	<p>Travel time on bus (Length of bus rides for various age groups) and for families</p>	
		<p>Access to aftercare and beforecare</p>	
		<p>Maintain or expand programming such as music, art, world language, tech integration, library, etc.</p>	
<p><b>Impact on students' social and emotional development &amp; well-being</b></p>	<p><b>*Social and emotional wellness</b></p>	<p>Inclusion in a developmentally appropriate environment – what ages of kids interact in the same environment?</p>	<p>*Rename/rebuild re-configured elementary schools( New names, New mascots, Etc. )</p>
	<p><b>*Students feel they are part of a school</b></p>	<p>Access to developmentally appropriate programming (can we add a definition / explanation here? or remove it if its covered in</p>	<p>*Student-centered decisions</p>

<p>Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging</p> <p>Well-Being</p>	<p><b>community</b></p>	<p>the rest of the criteria?)</p> <p>Intentional &amp; consistent access to a variety of classes</p> <p>Access to quality health and wellness services (nursing and counseling).</p> <p>Equitable opportunities (comply with WCUUSD <a href="#">Equity Policy</a>)</p>	
<p><b>Impact on school staff</b></p> <p>Well-Being</p> <p>Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction</p> <p>Transparent and Responsible Leadership</p>	<p><b>Employ (hire and retain) quality, appropriately licensed staff</b></p>	<p>Compensation (as compared with other districts?)</p> <p>FTE allocations (how many positions are only available for less than full time?)</p> <p>Shared positions (how many positions are split between physical schools?)</p>	
<p><b>Financial Management</b></p> <p>(Transparent &amp; Responsible Leadership)</p>	<p><b>*Financial Responsibility</b></p> <p><b>*Fiscal Responsibility</b></p> <p><b>*System Resilience</b></p> <p><b>(configuration impact on ability to enter into district merger)</b></p>	<p>Change in Per pupil spending (LTWADM)</p> <p>Year over year cost savings?</p> <p>Change in tax rate across towns?</p> <p>Criteria for merger ability?</p>	

Criteria Area & Associated Core Belief	Goals	Criteria to consider	Strategies
<p><b>Community well-being (individual towns and community as a whole)</b></p> <p>Community Engagement and Relationships</p> <p>Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging</p> <p>Transparent and Responsible Leadership</p>	<p><b>*Community social / emotional well-being</b></p> <p><b>*Community economic viability</b></p>	<p>Property values</p> <hr/> <p>Community support. Closing of schools impact on towns.</p>	<p>Clear and detailed communication</p> <p>Elaborate on costs AND benefits</p> <p>Share data and proposals with credible arguments</p> <p>Provide more information on options</p> <p>Answer specific questions from the community data (FAQ)</p> <p>Acknowledge when data is inconclusive</p> <p>Publicize process, timeline, and schedule for community input</p> <p>Share the timeline, the Board's commitment to the timeline, and</p>

			any revisions to the timeline
<b>Working Definitions</b>			
<b>Financial Sustainability</b>	ability to manage finances to meet spending commitments, both now and in the future, and ensure future generations of taxpayers do not face an unmanageable bill for services provided to the current generation. (adapted from Government Finance Officers' Association)		
<b>Fiscal responsibility</b>	the practice of using taxpayer money wisely and avoiding overspending (adapted from Teachable.com blogpost)		
<b>System Resilience</b>	ability to withstand and adapt to economic shocks or demographic changes essentially maintaining its core functions even when faced with significant challenges; it signifies the ability to adapt and bounce back after experiencing a disturbance.		

**What analysis have you done to determine the impact of closing the two elementary schools on the community, including loss of property value and loss of families with young children in Worcester and Calais? If there has been no analysis, how do you propose to address the "community well-being" criterion for evaluating configuration proposals?**

**OTHER FRAMINGS OF THIS QUESTION: How might school closure affect property values in Worcester?**

What would the District do to mitigate financial and social impacts on the town of Worcester, which has the lowest median income in the District?

Has an impact study been conducted to assess how the current proposal might affect the towns of Worcester and Calais, and how the District would mitigate any negative outcomes?

**Community Well-being** came up in our committee conversations, and comes up whenever the Board considers configuration alternatives. Our community must thrive in order for our children to thrive. It's also implicit in our Articles of Agreement that we define our community as the district at large – we are obliged to measure the wellbeing of our community in terms of all the individual towns. The effect of school location on property values, the affordability of our school spending, the demographic implications on our town of

how our district is organized– all these things were important and repeatedly discussed throughout the process. It is also challenging to transfer the outcomes of case studies of other regions to our particular geography and the central Vermont economy.

We do know that property values in our communities have dramatically increased in the last 6 years. We understand that in many cases, school closures adversely affect property values in a town losing a school facility. We believe it's reasonable not to expect a dramatic change in property values, however, if driving times to schools does not significantly change. Moreover, we believe that if our district's quality of education delivered were to suffer from managing five schools with teachers and resources spread too thin, such a prospect could similarly affect property values in a negative way. This scenario is what we are trying to avoid.

### **Affordability of our communities**

Property taxes are one dimension of the affordability challenges in our region. We take seriously our responsibility to manage education spending because of its direct effect on property taxes. We also believe in finding a new school funding formula than the current one that is more progressive but does not compromise the quality of the education we know we deliver. Our school spending per weighted pupil is currently higher than the average in Vermont, but the increases in cost are not being driven by our configuration– they are being driven by decreasing enrollment and increasing health care costs. The new configuration proposed does not respond to the high spending in a direct way either – it is a response to the low enrollment, and how we can effectively use our resources and do our best work for our students. But in the long term, it's reasonable to expect savings from maintaining fewer buildings and fewer campuses.

**Effects of our district on demographics.** This reconfiguration plan is in part a response to demographic changes that have been underway for 10+ years and are expected to continue for the foreseeable future. We also understand that there's a possibility that a reconfiguration might itself affect demographic changes...We also know that we have low enrollment numbers and–small fluctuations aside–no significant residential development taking place in any town but Berlin.

### **How will the district transition from five (5) to three (3) elementary schools and move the 6th grade to U-32?**

We have developed a draft [transition timeline](#) that shows key dates and events that will occur should the Board and communities approve a reconfiguration.

Following the school closure votes in Calais and Worcester, as well as the Budget vote on Town Meeting Day, Administration will begin the hiring process for a Transition Coordinator. It will also finalize a Staff Assignment Plan and a building Disposition Plan. The merging of resources for Calais/East Montpelier and for Worcester/Middlesex will take place primarily over the summer of 2026, with the two new schools welcoming students in August.

Sixth graders will continue at our 3 elementary schools through School Year 2026-2027. Throughout next year, plans will continue to be developed for the expansion of our middle school programming at U-32. In June of 2027, the 5th and 6th grade classes at each elementary school will graduate together and move up to U-32 Middle School in August.

### **What changes will U-32 experience in terms of staffing and services in 2026-2027, based on current budget drafts? Will this affect U-32's ability to receive the 6th grade in 2027-2028?**

Both versions of the December 17 budget draft (Draft 2a and 2b) project significant cuts in staffing and expenses at U-32. A significant decline in enrollment and the Board's budget parameter of getting under the excess spending threshold require this.

In addition to the budget addressing the Board parameters and the district programmatic goals, there are still cuts to the overall U-32 budget due to declining enrollment..

- Reduction of 1.0 FTE Administrative
- Reduction of 1.0 FTE Social Worker
- Reduction of one MS core (english, math, social studies, science), Business, Art (.2), and Music (.2)
- Cuts to non-salary items in the budget of \$446,200 including supplies, athletics, late buses, summer curriculum work, and other stipends.

Beyond the classroom, the reduction in athletics, co-curriculars, and AP testing funding diminishes the wider student experience and college readiness support. Finally, the loss of summer curriculum hours undermines long-term instructional quality and impedes key summer operations, such as schedule changes and new family registration.

A significant area of staff cuts is the reduction of a teaching Core in our middle school, reducing the number of middle school cores from 3 to 2. While this would restrict our ability to receive sixth grade students in Fall of 2027, we anticipate current sixth grade teachers and/or other teachers in the district pursuing middle school licensure to accommodate adding the third grade at that time.

**Would the District fund a new position of Transition and Community Engagement Coordinator, or contract with an experienced organization, to help implement such a huge task of closing four schools and creating two new ones, while also supporting students and communities in transition?**

***OTHER FRAMING OF THIS QUESTION: Would the District commit to retaining the Community Engagement Coordinator as a permanent position to create and sustain connected relationships with communities and families?***

We recognize the importance of ensuring a smooth transition for all students impacted by the configuration. We are currently developing a job description for a transition coordinator. The position will likely be part-time (15-20 hours per week), and supported by district leadership and the Community Schools coordinator. The transition coordinator will oversee logistics, support the development of new school identities, and serve as a liaison to the community.

We see the value of the Community Engagement Coordinator and the positive impact they have had on our entire district. The work being done is important and imperative in creating a sense of community for all at WCUUSD. The Community Engagement Coordinator position is funded by a grant, so the retention of the position is determined by the funding we have available either through grants or the general fund.

**How will school communities be combined?**

***OTHER FRAMINGS OF THIS QUESTION: Many residents raised questions about what concrete steps the Board and Administration would take to ensure a smooth and welcoming transition to the combined school: How would the Worcester and Middlesex cultures be combined? How would the Calais and East Montpelier cultures be combined? What aspects of closing schools' culture/traditions would be preserved? How would the new name, colors, mascot, and traditions be determined? How would kids and families be supported in getting to know each other ahead of time?***

This work will definitely rely on community and student input. While the transition coordinator will serve in the critical role of point person for planning and coordination, we are also fortunate to have our Community Schools coordinator to help with strengthening the links between schools and communities. We will have operational staff from the WCUUSD Central Office directing the physical moves, and we will have school leaders facilitating conversations among students.

But there is a critically important role for students, families and the rest of the community to play. This is a moment for creativity and reimagining. Even for the many among us who feel the loss of some school communities, there can also be real excitement in being

part of building something new. Already this work is underway, with community members, school leaders, and PTNO groups standing up and organizing events, open houses, and community meals to bridge gaps between the current school communities as we prepare to build new ones.

**Would the District support the creation of a Community Transition Stewardship Group, to ensure kids, parents and community members can work with teachers, other staff and administrators to ensure this transition happens in alignment with our District's Core Beliefs?**

We recognize the importance of community engagement and involvement in the transition process. The goal of creating such a work group would be to ensure that all voices are heard and all perspectives are considered as we move forward with making our school multi town schools.

**Would the district make a formal commitment to allowing community volunteers to be a meaningful part of the educational experience at all of the Districts' schools?**

YES. Aside from questions of our configuration, this moment of budget crisis demands an 'all hands on deck' approach. We need to think creatively about more ways of utilizing the talent and capacity of our community members to support our students. Our Community Schools coordinator is energetically tackling this challenge already. But Identifying and recommending approaches to implementing specific strategies will be part of the work of the Transition Committee as the transition moves forward

What is the capacity of each building?

Each of the school buildings are below capacity , current numbers can be found in the [Facilities Overview Report](#).

Facility	Total Square Footage (SF)	Year Built/Last Renovation	Current FCI (Condition)
Berlin ES	36,446	1968 / 2017	0.0%
Calais ES	22,510	1970 / 1990	0.8%
Doty Memorial School	15,996	1959 / 2019	0.0%
East Montpelier ES	50,000	1965 / 2014	0.5%
Rumney Memorial School	25,000	1960 / 2015	1.50%
U32 UHS Campus	185,500 (Total)	1970 / 2000	0.0% (Main Bldg)

Facility	Total Square Footage (SF)	No. of Classrooms (Estimate)	Current Enrollment (Oct 2025, K-6 / 7-12)
Berlin ES	36,446	13	153 (K-6)
Calais ES	22,510	9	89 (K-6)
Doty Memorial School	15,996	7	57 (K-6)
East Montpelier ES	50,000	15	174 (K-6)
Rumney Memorial School	25,000	9	102 (K-6)
U32 UHS Campus	185,500 (Total)	55	671 (7-12)

What is the current enrollment and how does the district predict future enrollment?

The District uses New England School Development Council (NESDEC) reports to predict enrollment. NESDEC gives detailed projections and historical data on our enrollment. [Current Enrollment](#) & [2025-2026 NESDEC Reports](#)

OCTOBER 2024							
Grd	Ber	Cal	Doty	EMES	Rum	U-32	TOTAL
K	20	9	8	23	5		65
1	26	14	8	21	17		86
2	14	11	11	21	10		67
3	28	9	10	22	22		91
4	20	14	8	30	12		84
5	27	14	6	20	15		82
6	15	7	12	35	12		81
7						92	92
8						108	108
9						132	132
10						106	106
11						140	140
12						84	84
TOTAL	150	78	63	172	93	662	1218
CHNG	-9	4	1	-9	-8	-33	-54

OCTOBER 2025							
Grd	Ber	Cal	Doty	EMES	Rum	U-32	TOTAL
K	22	11	7	22	20		82
1	21	10	4	22	6		63
2	26	14	8	25	17		90
3	13	12	9	26	11		71
4	27	10	12	26	25		100
5	20	14	10	32	10		86
6	24	18	7	13	13		83
7						85	85
8						95	95
9						121	121
10						129	129
11						107	107
12						134	134
TOTAL	153	89	57	174	102	671	1246
CHNG	3	11	-6	2	9	9	28

PRE-K ENROLLMENTS OCTOBER 2025						
Grd	Ber	Cal	Doty	EMES	Rum	TOTAL
PK-3	19	11	2	15	9	56
PK-4	16	5	2	15	9	47
ACT 166	11	4	4	14	16	49
EEE	2			1		3

Act 166 students attend private PreK and are included in the PK3 and PK4 counts.

ATTENDING STUDENT DATA BY GRADE: HIGH SCHOOL											
Grd	Active Resident Students	Early College	HS Choice Out	Exchange Out	Other Placements	Attending Resident Students	Career Center Enrollment	HS Choice In	Tuition In	Exchange In	TOTAL
9	108			2	1	105		1	11	1	118
10	121		1		7	113	18	2	5		102
11	92				4	88	23	4	10	2	79
12	113	23	1	2	6	81	33	3	16	3	69
TOTAL	434	23	1	4	18	367	74	10	42	6	530

What resources has WCUUSD used to determine special education service delivery and staffing model?

*In addition to consultation with our staff, two major bodies of work have been used to guide our service and staffing models:  
Legislative Report: Current State of Special Education Delivery and The Ability Challenge Special Education Summary Report*

What does the current staffing look like at each school?

## CURRENT STAFFING FTE AS OF NOVEMBER 10, 2025

The below chart represents WCUUSD staffing FTE by school and by type of position. The below numbers include all WCUUSD employees that have a contract with the District, either in a bargaining or non-bargaining unit position. The data does not include subs, coaches or temporary staff.

	Berlin	Calais	Doty	EMES	Rumney	U-32	WCUUSD	TOTAL
ADMIN	1	0.9	0.9	1	0.9	5	6	15.7
ADMIN OTHER						1	4	5
NON-BARGAINING ESP	1	1	1	1	1	3	4	12
NON-BARGAINING ESP SALARY						2	7	9
NON-BARGAINING PROF						0.7	2.6	3.3
TEACHERS (Spec. Ed, classroom, intervention)	20.44	9.52	8.1	20.44	11.3	75.8	1.8	147.4
BEHAVIOR	1			1	1	2	1	6
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST							2	2
SPEECH/LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST	1			1	0.8	1	2	5.8
SCHOOL COUNSELORS	1	1	1	1	0.8	4		8.8
NURSING	1	0.5	0.5	1	0.6	1.4		5
ESP	15.5	7.37	2	10.71	2.5	15.39		53.47
FOOD SERVICE	2	1	1	2	1	5		12
CUSTODIAL/B&G	3	2.3	1.5	2.5	2.5	13.5		25.3
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS	3.66	0.6		2.58	1.29			8.13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50.6</b>	<b>24.19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>44.23</b>	<b>23.69</b>	<b>129.79</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>318.9</b>

### What does bus transportation currently look like and what are the estimated changes?

**OTHER FRAMINGS OF THIS QUESTION:** *What would transportation look like at a combined school? If schools were combined at the Middlesex campus, would there be a group stop at Doty (or other central location in Worcester village), which would then provide an express route straight to a combined school (picking up students along Route 12S along the way) in the morning and an express route*

***back to Worcester in the afternoon? Would there be a bus to Montpelier after school from a combined school in Middlesex, so that students from a combined school could spend time at the library and/or attend Montpelier after-school offerings?***

We will be looking at all our transportation to maximize service without increasing costs. We are committed to keeping travel times manageable and aiming for a maximum of 45 minutes per ride for elementary students. The transportation committee of the Board and administration can work with the community once results on the votes for closure and the budget are known. This will give us the information we need to make decisions about our transportation and what we are able to offer.

**Would there be bus monitors at the elementary and middle/high school levels to ensure the safety and well-being of our students (including 6th graders riding the bus to U32 with 12th graders), many of whom may not have needed to ride the bus previously on a regular basis?**

The decision to assign bus monitors to a bus is based on the needs of the students on the bus. As with many of our programmatic decisions, if a need is identified, the principal and leadership team will determine the best way to meet those needs (including but not limited to assigning a bus monitor to the bus).

**What happened to reserve funds from the elementary schools during Act 46 consolidation?**

Each of the elementary boards voted to retain fund balance funds to be designated for capital expenses when the district consolidated. Those funds have been used for capital projects at each elementary school. The U-32 Board voted to give the U-32 fund balance to the new district since U-32 received funding from all towns. Capital improvements at the Calais & Doty schools since Act 46 consolidation significantly exceed the balance of those reserve funds.

**Why were Calais and Worcester chosen to close?**

Given that our high school is south of most of the area comprising Calais, Worcester, East Montpelier & Middlesex, and given that our regional population centers are also south of most of the area of these towns, choosing the school facilities on the southern end makes more sense from the perspective of the daily flow of traffic and road usage. These are intuitively the easier facilities from/to which we can manage busing.

East Montpelier also is a larger facility than Calais, and the Middlesex facility is larger than Worcester. The lot sizes of East Montpelier and Middlesex facilities are also larger.

### What has been done to consider a merger with Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools?

The school boards of Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools and Washington Central UUSD [commissioned a report](#) that was completed earlier this year and the results were presented to both boards for their consideration. While this remains a promising potential future for our district, the timeline for merging with MRPS is very different from our own Reconfiguration process and the Reconfiguration process would help to align our district configuration and services with those of MRPS anyway.

It's possible that in the future we are faced with the prospect/opportunity of merging with other districts, not just MRPS. Other adjacent districts include Paine Mountain (Northfield & Williamstown), Barre Unified Union School District, Twinfield School District, Cabot School District, Hazen Union School District, and Harwood School District.

We are seriously exploring merging with other districts OR receiving more students at U-32. To be clear, our expectation is that our high school would remain open and would receive (another school would cease high school operations).

One challenge of merging districts with anyone is that every district has different configurations. Looking at MRPS in particular, that district has the following configuration:

- Union Elementary School, PreKindergarten to 4th Grade, currently with 380 students
- Main Street Middle School, 5th Grade to 8th Grade, currently with 343 students
- Montpelier High School, 9th Grade to 12th Grade, currently with 393 students.

In Washington Central 5th and 6th grades attend our elementary schools. Additionally, the grade sizes in the Union Elementary school are significantly larger than our elementary schools. These differences make a district merger a more challenging conversation because of the value we place on consistent and equitable instruction. Our internal plan to reconfigure will better align our elementary schools with MRPS, both in terms of elementary school size and in terms of grade configuration.

## Could Act 73 implementation require us to reverse this plan in the coming years?

No. While it is not clear how and when Act 73 will be fully implemented, the law is clearly intended to reduce the spending on education state-wide. While first-year savings are not significant for a three-school configuration, managing fewer schools positions our district to more economically deliver a high-quality education as we continue to face restrictive budgets. Maintaining five elementary schools in the face of declining enrollment and increased state pressure to reduce spending will result in more and more reactive policies and management practices to meet our students' needs—this isn't speculation, it has been happening already and will accelerate next year if we do not re-configure. The ambiguity around details and timeline for Act 73 doesn't detract from the clear message that high-spending districts like our own will have more pressure and less flexibility in future years' budgets. This plan positions WCUUSD to better handle those trends.

Because the intent of Act 73 is clear, it is possible that down the road small schools will be forced to consolidate into larger schools. By doing this now, Washington Central has the opportunity to do so on our own terms, in a way that supports students and improves opportunity.

To read more about Act 73, how it might change education funding and to find other resources about education funding reform, check out this [January 12, 2026 Article from VT Digger](#).

## What is the expected cost in 2026 of merging the elementary schools?

## What is the expected cost in 2027 of merging the 6th grade with 7th & 8th at U-32?

Administration has shared the following potential areas of expense in transitioning to a 3 elementary school configuration in FY27 and a 6-12 U-32 in FY28. Specific cost estimates will not be made until after the vote on February 10.

- Moving supplies/books/teacher items from Doty to Middlesex and Calais to East Montpelier.
  - Could be done with existing B&G/Custodial staff
  - May need to rent a moving van
- Teachers who are moving can be granted from 3-10 days by the Superintendent paid at a per diem rate.
  - Estimate a max of about 10 teachers
- Technology infrastructure and equipment considerations
- Moving of Food service supplies and equipment
- Office files, equipment

- Rebranding the elementary schools
  - New signage, Website redesign, New stationery, New mascots
  - Swag - t-shirts, sweatshirts, mugs, etc.
- Transition Coordinator position
  - Salary and Benefits
  - Budget for events like meals, open houses, opening ceremonies, other transition activities.
- U-32 Evaluation of Space
  - Separation of MS from HS considerations

**Why is the amount of savings projected for closing Doty and Calais in the latest estimate so much higher than the amount estimated in 2024 ( \$881,920 in 2024 has increased to \$1,088,508, a 23.4% increase.**

Neither of these estimates of projected savings is accurate data as of our current budget scenario.

**How would the principal of a combined school be determined?**

***RELATED QUESTION: How would staffing be integrated so that trusted adults from Doty would be present at a new school?***

The Board recognizes the value of there being familiar adults present in the combined schools to increase student comfort and stability. Staff will be transitioned according to our Collective Bargaining Agreements and contracts. Administration has stated that continuity for staff and students will be a high priority for them as well. Administration is currently working with the Association (the union) on the process that will be followed.

**Would the District consider exploring the pros and cons of switching the timing of the upper and lower school schedules, such that elementary-aged students would arrive to school earlier and be more able to participate in Montpelier after-school offerings, while middle and high school students would arrive to school later, as has been shown to be more developmentally appropriate for that age group?**

The district has explored this option in the past and can do so again in the future. When asked, Steven said he would recommend a workgroup tasked with reviewing the request, developing a proposal, speaking with our community about pros and cons, and making a recommendation to the board.

***Members of the Configuration Committee***

Board Members: Daniel Keeney, Mckalyn Leclerc, Chris McVeigh, Kealy Sloan, Flor Diaz Smith,

Administrators: Rebecca Tatistcheff, Superintendent Steven Dellinger-Pate, Gillian Fuqua

Community Members: Anna Matheson ( Calais ) Daisy Scarzello ( Middlesex ) , Deborah Bloom ( Worcester), Andy Shapiro ( East Montpelier), Shannon Miller ( Berlin)