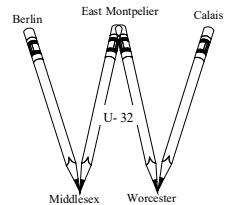


# Washington Central Unified Union School District

**WCUUSD exists to nurture and inspire in all students the passion, creativity and power to contribute to their local and global communities.**

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Steven Dellinger-Pate  
Superintendent



To the Washington Central Community,

As we approach our upcoming configuration and budget votes, I want to share important context about our current financial landscape. There has been some understandable confusion in the community about whether maintaining all five elementary schools could be achieved by redistributing existing funds without impacting student services. It's important to clarify that, given our current budget constraints, this is not the case. Keeping all five schools open would require tradeoffs that would affect programs and services that directly support students.

Our budget for the 2026-2027 school year has been developed based on a three-elementary school configuration. While it is true that a budget is an estimate, the total amount authorized by voters is a fixed limit. We will not be creating a new budget after the votes. If the district continues to operate five elementary schools instead of three, the **same approved funds will be reallocated across five elementary sites**, which means spreading our limited resources significantly thinner.

Some have suggested that our "Districtwide Services" (which represent roughly 49% of our spending) act as a flexible "pot" of money that can be used to keep all schools open without affecting staff or programs. This is a misunderstanding of our financial obligations. These funds are almost entirely dedicated to mandated and essential services that cannot be cut to fund the redundancies of operating extra buildings. For example, Special Education alone accounts for nearly 24% of our entire budget. We cannot simply cut the heat, the buses, or state-mandated special education supports to fund underutilized facilities.

We are able in this reconfiguration to also assess how we are allocating our current resources. While we can reduce the total number of principals in the district from six to four, we did see the opportunity to convert two behavior positions at Berlin and East Montpelier into assistant principal positions. For a small increase in salary, our schools can have personnel that can supervise employees and have a higher level of responsibility for behavior and school issues.

This is not a matter of "moving numbers on a spreadsheet"; it is a matter of mandatory reallocation. As the breakdown below demonstrates, over 66% of our budget is dedicated to direct student services—including Instruction, Special Education, Guidance, Library, Health, and co-curricular activities. Another 14% is strictly allocated for Operations, Transportation, and Food Service. When those same dollars are spread across five elementary buildings instead of three, the level of support at every school in the district will diminish.

On FPF, it was noted that there is more spending on instructional services in the three elementary school model, and this is possible because of the reduction of two principals and a custodian from the five school model. It was also noted that the district will provide identical funding in both models in food service and transportation, and this is true because we will still be feeding and transporting the same number of students.

**Impact of Reallocation (The "Contingency" Scenario)** We have already shared the data on what a five elementary school model looks like under our current financial constraints, labeled previously as Budget 2a. Should we be required to reallocate funds to five elementary schools, the impacts would include:

- **Reduction to Shared Professional Staff:** The three-school model is designed to provide a full-time dedicated nurse, counselor, and librarian in every building to ensure student well-being. In the contingency model, these specialists must be shared across multiple buildings, limiting their daily availability. For example, under this scenario, nursing services at schools like Doty or Calais would drop to one day per week (0.2 FTE), forcing principals and administrative assistants to manage medical needs and taking them away from their primary role of instructional leadership and support.
- **A Diluted Intervention System (MLSS):** Spreading our interventionists across five sites causes our Multi-Layered System of Supports (MLSS) to be limited.
- **Inconsistent Class Sizes and Configurations:** We would no longer be able to guarantee the stable classroom sizes or configurations our students deserve. Under the contingency scenario, classrooms will exceed district standards.
- **Erosion of Student Supports:** We would be unable to provide the full-time nurses, counselors, librarians, and administration planned for the three-school model. Instead, these positions would be shared across multiple buildings, limiting their availability.

My responsibility is to every student in this district. Choosing a three elementary school model is not about "punishing" any town; it is a strategic decision to move away from reactive, fluctuating configurations and toward a structure that guarantees a baseline of excellence for every child.

I must also remind our communities that the budget authorized by the board serves all students, including over 650 middle and high schoolers at U-32. In the final FY27 budget—regardless of whether we operate three or five elementary schools—U-32 is already absorbing \$1.4 million in reductions to meet state and Board financial parameters. These cuts include the elimination of a Middle School core team (English, Math, Social Studies, and Science) and \$446,000 in non-salary items like supplies, athletics, theater, and late buses.

While declining enrollment is a primary driver of these secondary-level cuts, we must view our elementary configuration as the foundation for the entire district's future. By consolidating into three multi-town elementary schools, we can afford to provide the robust intervention programs (MLSS) and full-time support staff that our students need now. Addressing academic and social-emotional needs early is not just an educational priority; it is a long-term sustainability strategy. Stronger support in the early grades reduces the need for intensive, high-cost services in middle and high school, helping us maintain a more stable and resilient system for all students from Pre-K through graduation. The ability to have an additional school counselor at each of the three elementary schools means we have trained professionals to support the increased social and emotional needs of our students.

By consolidating, we use the money saved from administrative and facility redundancies to invest directly in instruction. If we remain in a five-school model, those same dollars must instead be spent on maintaining underutilized buildings and redundant staffing, leaving less for the direct services our students need to thrive.

I urge you to consider these facts as you cast your vote. Our goal is a future defined by educational excellence and equity, and our budget must reflect that vision.

Sincerely,

Steven Dellinger-Pate Superintendent, WCUUSD

**Where the Money Goes:** To understand why funds cannot simply be "moved around" without consequence, it is helpful to see how our current budget is distributed. These categories represent the foundational costs of educating our students across the entire district:

This final budget total is \$43,271,845, and it represents the expenditures authorized for a three-elementary school configuration. If the community votes to maintain five elementary schools, this exact same budget will be reallocated, spreading these resources across more sites.

| Budget Category                                   | Final Budget 2027 Amount | Percent of Total Budget |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Instructional Services (K-12)</b>              | \$13,901,019             | <b>32.12%</b>           |
| <b>Special Education (Programs &amp; Admin)</b>   | \$10,374,976             | <b>23.98%</b>           |
| <b>Operations and Maintenance</b>                 | \$4,290,293              | <b>9.91%</b>            |
| <b>Office of the Principal</b>                    | \$2,345,466              | <b>5.42%</b>            |
| <b>Student Transportation (Incl. Field Trips)</b> | \$1,753,208              | <b>4.05%</b>            |
| <b>Guidance Services</b>                          | \$1,666,616              | <b>3.85%</b>            |
| <b>Instructional Technology Services</b>          | \$1,625,404              | <b>3.76%</b>            |
| <b>Transfer to Other Funds</b>                    | \$976,939                | <b>2.26%</b>            |
| <b>Debt Service</b>                               | \$955,585                | <b>2.21%</b>            |
| <b>Cocurricular Activities</b>                    | \$912,846                | <b>2.11%</b>            |
| <b>Fiscal Services</b>                            | \$871,520                | <b>2.01%</b>            |
| <b>Superintendent Services</b>                    | \$813,398                | <b>1.88%</b>            |
| <b>Preschool Program</b>                          | \$643,221                | <b>1.49%</b>            |
| <b>Library Services</b>                           | \$575,866                | <b>1.33%</b>            |
| <b>Health Services</b>                            | \$572,117                | <b>1.32%</b>            |

|                                     |                     |                |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| <b>Board of Education Services</b>  | \$314,820           | <b>0.73%</b>   |
| <b>Curriculum Services</b>          | \$264,560           | <b>0.61%</b>   |
| <b>Instructional Staff Training</b> | \$154,485           | <b>0.36%</b>   |
| <b>Food Service</b>                 | \$143,669           | <b>0.33%</b>   |
| <b>English Language Learner</b>     | \$105,360           | <b>0.24%</b>   |
| <b>Other Support Services</b>       | \$10,477            | <b>0.02%</b>   |
| <b>TOTAL AUTHORIZED EXPENSES</b>    | <b>\$43,271,845</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |