Shorewood School District

February 23, 2026

Task Force

Long-Term Financial Sustainability











Welcome!

SCAN ME

Access tonight’s slides

Our Promise & Strategic Plan





OUR PROMISE

The Shorewood School District is an inclusive community that values, supports, and challenges every student so they thrive now and in the future they choose.





Our Promise & Strategic Plan



1 CHALLENGING & ENGAGING LEARNING

A strong academic foundation equips students with the knowledge, collaboration, and critical thinking skills needed to succeed in college, careers, and lifelong learning while empowering them to contribute meaningfully to their communities.



2 A CULTURE OF BELONGING & GROWTH

Students thrive when they are supported as whole individuals and engaged as active contributors in a community in which belonging, growth, and continuous learning are modeled by staff and shaped by student voice.



3 STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Strong partnerships with staff, families, community members, and organizations are essential. When schools and communities work together, students benefit from a wider network of support, resources, and opportunities that enrich learning and development.



4 OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Safe and well-maintained school and community facilities create environments where students and staff can focus fully on learning and growth. At the same time, we recognize the importance of fiscal responsibility in supporting our Promise and sustaining conditions necessary for every student to thrive.

Shorewood School District

Task Force Charge

Evaluate and recommend school and program configuration scenarios that align with financial parameters and balance financial responsibility, educational excellence, and community needs/impact.



Shorewood School District

Today's Agenda

1. Information from Board Workshop & Student Focus Groups
2. Scenarios
3. Task Force Dialogue
4. Next Steps & Feedback Form

You told us...

- **The process is good – and we are in the midst of potential challenging change!**
- **You wanted to continue to explore configuration options**
- **You wanted more financial information**
- **You want:**
  - *More student voice*
  - *A comparison to Scenario Zero (what are things like now)*
  - *More time for open dialogue and discussion whole group*

Board Workshop & Student Focus Groups

February 10 Board Workshop

- Board Expectations
- Fiscal Responsibility & Community Trust
- Budget Realities/Cost Reduction Goals
- Educational Quality & Students at the Center
- Decision-Making Lens

Student Focus Groups

Questions:

- Grounding & context
- What do you like about school now?
- Reactions to scenarios
- What helps you work through transitions?
- What matters most regardless of school configuration?
- What do you want adults on the committee to know and think about?

6 groups
83 students:
Atwater - 20
Lake Bluff - 24
SIS - 20
SHS - 19

★ The following slides present a summary of the themes from all six focus groups.

Student Feedback

Importance of Well-Supported Transitions

Across all schools, students emphasized that supporting transitions matters as much, if not more, than the school configurations.



Students value:

- Orientation days;
- Practice schedules;
- Tours and student-led walkthroughs;
- Opportunities to meet teachers and peers ahead of time;
- Gradual increases in responsibility (multiple teachers, lockers, moving between classes).

Students expressed concern that poorly supported transitions could create anxiety, overwhelm, and a sense of disconnection.

Students also feel we should allow them to become more independent in 6th grade.

Student Feedback

Strong Preference for a Distinct Middle School Experience

Students articulated that middle school serves several unique and important purposes:

- A bridge between elementary and high school;
- A space to practice independence, responsibility, and social growth;
- A setting that feels developmentally appropriate in size, expectations, and peer group.



Many students expressed concern about combining middle school students with high school students due to maturity gaps, social dynamics, and emotional readiness. Several described 7-12 scenarios as seemingly “overwhelming,” “intimidating,” or developmentally mismatched.

Students, overall, did not like the idea of 7th grade being a part of elementary school. By the end of 6th grade, they feel “ready to go.”

Student Feedback

Age, Size, and Belonging

Students expressed concerns about:

- Large age gaps (e.g., 11-year-olds with 18-year-olds) in some of the configurations;
- Very large campuses feeling impersonal or intimidating;
- The importance of seeing familiar faces and being known by adults;
- Improving practices to strengthen sense of belonging for students who are new to SSD.



Students described belonging as closely tied to feeling safe, known, and appropriately challenged.

Students at all schools recognized the size of Shorewood and value the idea of having students who live outside of Shorewood be a part of the community (Open Enrollment).

Student Feedback

Protect What Makes School Feel “Worth Coming To”

Regardless of configuration, students were clear about what they want protected:

- Recess and outdoor time (longer, not shorter);
- Lunch that allows time to eat and socialize;
- Clubs, music, arts, and extracurricular activities;
- Pep rallies, spirit days, and community-building events;



Students linked these elements to motivation, mental health, and daily engagement; not “extras,” but essential parts of learning.

Access to strong academic programming is an expectation.

Student Feedback

Logistics and Family Impact

Students of all ages demonstrated awareness of:

- Transportation challenges;
- Walking distance and weather;
- Sibling logistics and family schedules;
- The strain of navigating multiple buildings.



Students recognized that changes affect families differently and expressed concern for peers who may lack transportation or rely on siblings for support.

Older students talked about housing availability and affordability; they recognize the importance of the District remaining attractive to families.

School Configuration Scenarios

Scenario Zero: Status Quo

Total Enrollment: 1,906





Schools

Lake Bluff
Grades K4-6
Enrollment: 546

Atwater
Grades K4-6
Enrollment: 469

SIS
Grades 7-8
Enrollment: 291

SHS
Grades 9-12
Enrollment: 600

Considerations

- All buildings underutilized;
- Awkward elementary class size split across campuses;
- Two-grade middle school presents challenges (scheduling, staffing, and every student is in transition)
- Status quo operations will require a larger operating referendum in the future (>$5.5M/year).

Potential Impacts

Open Enrollment
Seats/% Total Enrollment

220/12%

Student-to-Staff Ratio

8.7

Financial

N/A

Scenario A: Stairsteps

4K-2/3-7/8-12

Total Enrollment: 1,636



Schools

Lake Bluff
Grades K4-2
Enrollment: 411

Atwater
Grades 3-7
Enrollment: 596

SHS
Grades 8-12
Enrollment: 629

Considerations

- Most of LB second floor is not used;
- Grades 3-7 is a bottleneck, which prevents expansion at younger grade levels; minimal OE capacity ends at 9th grade;
- Requires review of elective offerings and sequence;
- Grades 8-12 are in some of the same classes, share hallways, etc. but could have a separate cafeteria;
- Fitness Center and Rec. Dept. move to first floor of SIS.

Potential Impacts

Open Enrollment
Seats/% Total Enrollment

39/2%

Student-to-Staff Ratio

9.0

Financial

Medium
($1.75M-$2.5M Per Year)

Scenario B: Two Feed Into One

Total Enrollment: 1,636





Schools

Lake Bluff
Grades K4-6
3 sections per grade
Enrollment: 524

Atwater
Grades K4-6
2 sections per grade
Enrollment: 359

SHS
Grades 7-12
Enrollment: 753

Considerations

- Attendance boundaries no longer define school assignment;
- Excess physical capacity at Atwater; minimal OE capacity ends at 9th grade
- Possible use of second floor classrooms at SIS;
- Grades 7-12 are in some of the same classes; share hallways, etc., but could have separate cafeteria;
- Fitness Center and Rec. Dept. move to first floor of SIS.

Potential Impacts

Open Enrollment
Seats/% Total Enrollment

39/2%

Student-to-Staff Ratio

9.3

Financial

Medium
($1.75M-$2.5M Per Year)

Scenario C: Two Feed Into One + Add'l Open Enrollment

Total Enrollment: 1,897



Schools

Lake Bluff
Grades K4-7
Enrollment: 585

Atwater
Grades K4-7
Enrollment: 585

SHS
Grades 8-12
Enrollment: 727

Considerations

- Requires review of elective offerings and sequence;
- May need to increase class sizes to meet minimum OE goal;
- OE grows through 8th grade, then drops in 9th (re-application required);
- Possible use of second floor classrooms at SIS;
- Grades 8-12 are in some of the same classes; share hallways, etc., but could have separate cafeteria;
- Fitness Center and Rec. Dept. move to 1st floor of SIS.

Potential Impacts

Open Enrollment
Seats/% Total Enrollment

299/16%

Student-to-Staff Ratio

9.2

Financial

Low
($1M-$1.5M Per Year)

Scenario D: Four Schools + Add'l Open Enrollment

Total Enrollment: 1,993



Schools

Lake Bluff
Grades K4-5
Enrollment: 443

Atwater
Grades K4-5
Enrollment: 443

SIS
Grades 6-8
Enrollment: 434

SHS
Grades 9-12
Enrollment: 673

Considerations

- May need to increase class sizes to meet minimum OE goal;
- New OE students added at all grade levels;
- Total SHS OE is 41 students/grade level;
- SIS at maximum capacity.

Potential Impacts

Open Enrollment
Seats/% Total Enrollment

395/20%

Student-to-Staff Ratio

8.7

Financial

Neutral ($0-$500K)

Scenario E: Big Middle/Small High

Total Enrollment: 1,636





Schools

Lake Bluff
Grades K4-4
Enrollment: 643

Atwater
Grades 5-8
Enrollment: 484

SHS
Grades 9-12
Enrollment: 509

Considerations

- Atwater not fully occupied;
- Requires review of elective offerings and sequence;
- Reduction in available courses and/or limits on student scheduling at SHS;
- No change to Fitness Center or Rec. Dept.

Potential Impacts

Open Enrollment
Seats/% Total Enrollment

39/2%

Student-to-Staff Ratio

8.9

Financial

Medium (Low End)
($1.5M-$2M Per Year)

Scenario F: Big Middle/Big High

Total Enrollment: 1,904



Schools

Lake Bluff
Grades K4-4
Enrollment: 643

Atwater
Grades 5-8
Enrollment: 588

SHS
Grades 9-12
Enrollment: 673

Considerations

- All three buildings fully utilized;
- OE starts at grade 5;
- Requires review of elective offerings and sequence;
- Fitness Center and Rec. Dept. move to first floor of SIS.

Potential Impacts

Open Enrollment
Seats/% Total Enrollment

306/16%

Student-to-Staff Ratio

9.3

Financial

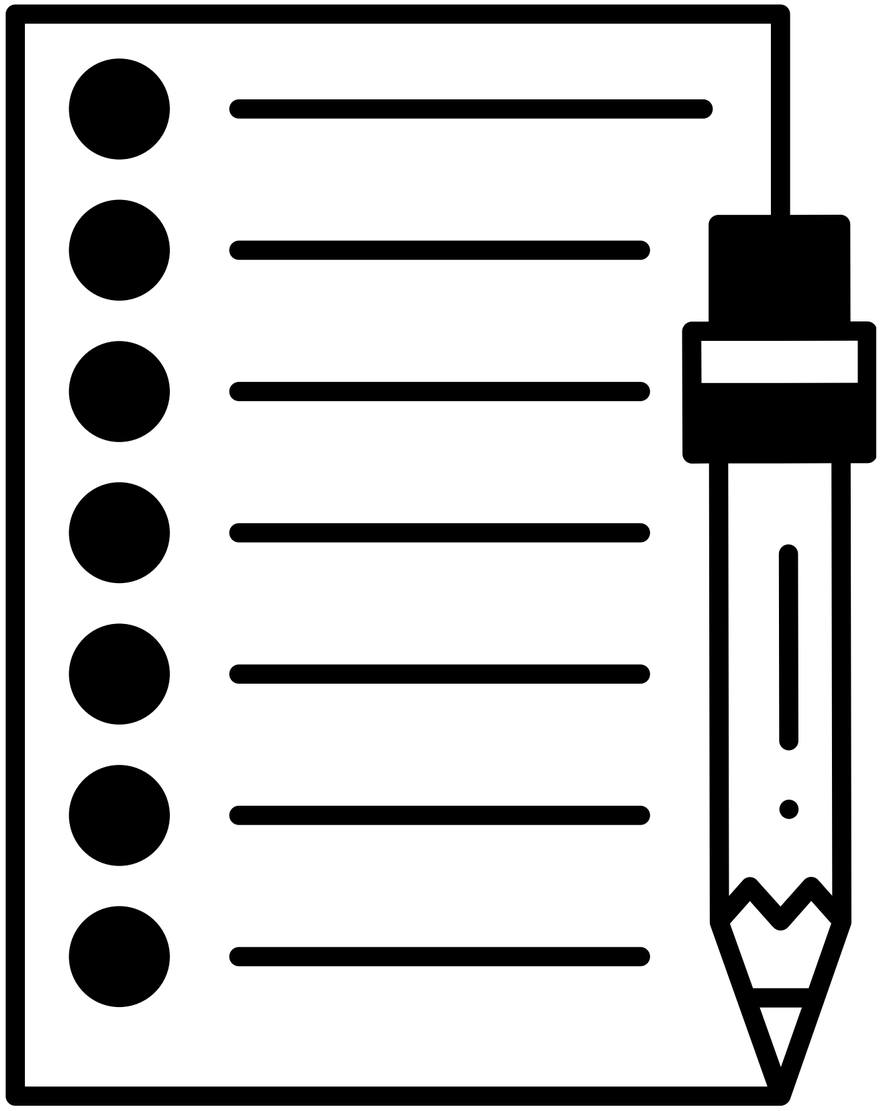
Medium (Low End)
($1.5M-$2M Per Year)

Task Force Dialogue

Shorewood School District

Working Agreements

- Trust and Live into the Democratic Process
- Be Clear and Uphold Transparency & Confidentiality
- Share Your Truth
- Civil & Honest Dialogue
- Keep True to Strategic Plan Values
- Keep Students at Heart & in the Room
- Represent, Represent - the community & your own perspective



Task Force Dialogue

Three 15-Minute Rounds

1 - Questions About the Finances/Models/Assumptions

2 - The Student Experience and Educational Programming

3 - Process – What would happen if we went with Scenario X?

Each Round:

- 3 min - Table talk - What questions do you have about this category?
- 10 min - Whole group discussion
- 3 min - Discuss at table…

Shared Agreements:

- 5 others before circling back to anyone person
- Prioritize shared questions from your group
- Avoid Queggestions.



Needs & Next Steps

What do you need?

Share what more info you would like in the **exit ticket, parking lot, talk with us**...

In upcoming sessions:

March 2, 2026
Community Update
& Input Session

March 14, 2026
Task Force Summit
10:00am to 2:30pm

Exit Ticket

Shorewood School District Task Force: Post-Meeting Exit Ticket - Feb 23rd, 2026

Please provide your confidential feedback on today's Task Force meeting regarding school configuration and financial sustainability.

Sign in to Google to save your progress. Learn more

After tonight's initial review... what configuration potentials did you find compelling?
(Non-binding: You might change your mind tomorrow...)

- [ ] Configuration A
- [ ] Configuration B
- [ ] Configuration C
- [ ] Configuration D
- [ ] Configuration E
- [ ] Configuration F

What did you find compelling about those configurations you checked above?

Your answer

bit.ly/SSDTaskForceFeb23



Thank You

Next Meeting:
March 14 at 10:00 am in SHS LMC South