

West Bend School District

High School Configuration Study

Frequently Asked Questions

This document summarizes the questions raised by community members, parents, students, and staff regarding the configuration and potential consolidation of East and West High Schools into a single school. Questions have been organized by topic to make it easier to find answers relevant to your interests. Many answers reflect what is currently known or under consideration—final decisions regarding the configuration have not yet been made. Topics include:

- Academics & Programs
- Athletics & Conference Alignment
- Decision-Making Process & Timeline
- Enrollment, School Choice, & Demographics
- Finances & Costs
- Scholarships & Financial Aid
- School Identity & Branding
- Staffing & Administration
- Student Experience & Social Traditions

If you have additional questions or feedback, please send via email to wbsd@wbsd-schools.org.

Academics & Programs

All students have access to the same academic courses and programs, regardless of whether they attend East or West. Class sections, teachers, departments, counselors, and administrators are shared across both schools.

Clubs and other co-curriculars such as forensics, theater, Skills USA, etc. are shared between East and West. Students can participate in any offering, regardless of school assignment. Each high school maintains separate National Honor Societies, this could be combined without limiting participation.

Q: Are honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered at both schools currently, and would that continue?

A: Both schools currently offer honors and AP courses. A combined school would maintain these offerings as students are already enrolled together in their academic classes.

Q: What would happen to debate and other non-athletic programs?

A: Non-athletic programs like debate, fine arts, and student organizations are already consolidated. The intent is to preserve and strengthen these programs, not eliminate them.

Q: Would athletic feeder programs (grades 5–8) remain split East/West?

A: The status of middle and elementary feeder or youth programs has not been decided. We would work with those organizations as part of the planning process should a change occur.

Athletics & Conference Alignment

Currently, East and West High Schools offer a wide range of athletic opportunities through:

- WIAA-sanctioned sports, which follow statewide eligibility and safety rules
- Club sports, which are student-initiated and locally or regionally governed
- Intramural sports, which are school-sponsored and focused on inclusive participation

Many athletic teams already operate as combined East/West programs or regional partnerships, especially in sports where participation numbers are too low to support separate teams. Examples of current co-op/combined teams include: golf (girls), mountain biking, swim and dive (boys and girls), gymnastics, hockey (boys and girls), skiing, snowboarding, wrestling, lacrosse (boys and girls), soccer (girls), and trapshooting. A common perception is that maintaining two high schools automatically provides more athletic opportunities. However, in practice, many sports would not be viable without combining teams across schools. In several cases, if teams were not a co-op, they could not compete due to insufficient roster size.

Overall athletic participation remains strong, with about 15-25% of students involved in sports depending on the season. However, enrollment at the high schools will continue to decline. Most WIAA sports do not limit regular-season roster sizes, and when needed, the district has responded by utilizing co-op models or adding additional levels of play—such as JV2, JV3, varsity reserve, or intramurals—to ensure students continue to have access at different skill and developmental levels.

If configuration changes, athletics could be affected in areas like team structures, division placement, travel, and facility use, though all changes would be carefully planned.

Q: Would all sports belong to one conference if we reconfigure?

A: West Bend currently competes across five different conferences. It is uncertain if or when West Bend would be moved to a new conference; that decision ultimately rests with the WIAA, which reviews conference alignment every few years based on enrollment figures, competitive balance, and geographic region.

Q: Would there be enough competition at every level, including JV2 and JV3?

A: Yes. Many schools in our area field varsity, reserve, and additional JV teams, so there is not an anticipated shortage of competition at any level. If a JV3 team were added in a sport, the district would work to schedule games against schools with similar additional teams, as well as JV and reserve teams from larger area schools.

Q: How many of our sports currently sustain three levels of competition at both schools?

A: Only three out of 33 sports offerings regularly sustain three levels at both East and West: girls volleyball, boys basketball, and baseball. For those three sports, a reconfigured school might need to add a JV3 team or a second JV2 team in addition to varsity and reserve. For all other sports, the current number of levels is unlikely to require significant changes. An intramural program with no travel required could also be explored to expand participation opportunities further.

Q: What happens to existing co-op arrangements?

A: Co-ops require participation data spanning three to five years, and approval must come from school administration, the conference commissioner, conference athletic directors, the superintendent, the school board, and the WIAA, nearly a year in advance. It is worth noting that forming a new co-op often faces resistance from other conference schools, who have the opportunity to vote on approval and may oppose co-ops out of concern about competitive imbalance. Some co-ops require annual renewal; others renew biannually with the WIAA.

Q: How would coaching positions and contracts be handled?

A: If the schools were reconfigured, selecting head coaches would follow the same hiring procedures already in place in the West Bend School District. All current head coaches would be encouraged to apply for open positions, and candidates would be evaluated on experience, qualifications, and ability to build a successful program. The goal is to find the best fit for student-athletes while keeping the process fair and transparent. Coaching contracts are issued on a seasonal basis each year. Staffing levels are based on student enrollments, not configuration scenarios, so the full picture will become clearer if and when a decision is made. We anticipate needing to expand assistant coaching or head coaches for additional teams (added JV2, etc.).

Q: Would student-athletes be guaranteed playing time?

A: At the JV3, JV2, and JV1 levels, the goal is to ensure all students have meaningful opportunities to play and compete. At the varsity level, playing time is more competitive and may vary based on performance. Transparent communication with student athletes, so they clearly understand what is needed to earn additional playing time, is important for any team.

Q: What would happen to feeder sports programs at Badger and Silverbrook?

A: If the high schools were reconfigured into one school, the district would work to ensure all sports offerings at Badger remain intact as West Bend programs. Silverbrook will become a K-5 elementary school beginning in the 2027-2028 school year. All students would play for

the same program and would no longer be divided by East and West. The focus would be on teaching fundamentals and developing players for a single unified high school program.

Q: Would there be an intramural program?

A: Yes, an intramural program could be explored as part of any reconfiguration. Intramurals would involve no travel and would provide participation opportunities for students regardless of whether they make a varsity or JV roster.

Q: What would happen to the Athletic Directors and structure?

A: The structure of the athletic department in the event of a reconfiguration has not yet been determined. However, if West Bend were to move to a single high school, it would be served by one Athletic Director.

Decision-Making Process & Timeline

Q: Who makes the final decision?

A: The West Bend School Board has the authority to make this decision and is committed to hearing from students, staff, families, and the communities it serves to determine the path forward.

Q: How soon could this be implemented if the board takes action?

A: The Board can make a decision as early as March 2026 to direct the administration to begin planning for a new configuration. Should that occur, planning would occur over the next year with implementation in the 2027-2028 school year. It is important that a thoughtful engagement and design process is used to ensure students, staff, families, and the community are involved and have adequate time to prepare for change should it occur.

Q: How is this time different from previous times this topic has come up?

A: This discussion was reinitiated in the context of facilities planning and declining enrollment projections. The combination of demographic trends and fiscal pressures makes the question more urgent now than in previous cycles. The process is different as it prioritized engagement efforts prior to taking action or designing a plan.

Q: Should there be a 'trigger point' for revisiting this in the future?

A: Establishing a formal review trigger—such as enrollment falling below a certain threshold—is being discussed as part of any decision framework, ensuring the district can reassess proactively rather than reactively.

Q: How will the community be kept informed and engaged?

A: The district is committed to broad communication, including local newspapers, direct family outreach, and digital channels. Community members without students in the district are also part of this conversation and will be reached through multiple channels.

Q: How much weight does each group's survey input carry (parents, students, community)?

A: The feedback was not weighted by category. The initial review of survey data commingled all respondents. The data will be further separated to understand if there are differences in feedback by categories such as students, families, community members, etc.

Enrollment, School Choice & Demographics

The West Bend School District has operated two high schools on one shared campus since 1970. Students are currently assigned to either East High School or West High School based on the birthdate of the oldest sibling, with some choice available in 8th grade, space permitting.

The high schools have a combined enrollment of 1,818 students. Projections show that enrollment could drop to 1,500 by 2029–2030, and possibly 1,200 by 2037–2038, due to declining birth rates (unless offset by local housing growth, etc.)

Q: How does declining enrollment affect this decision?

A: Declining enrollment is one data point in this discussion. Projections show 60–100 fewer students per graduating class in coming years. Fewer students makes it harder to sustain two full athletic and academic programs, and the trend is expected to continue.

Q: How many students are currently choosing to attend schools outside the district?

A: Approximately 620 students are currently open enrolled out of the West Bend School District. Understanding the reasons behind these choices—including the role athletics may play—is part of the broader enrollment analysis.

Q: Could enrollment caps be placed on East and West to balance numbers?

A: Inter district schools choice (selecting a different district) was introduced by the State of Wisconsin in the late 1990's, making it easier to select a different district than go across the hall for an intra (within) district choice. Therefore it is difficult to place restrictions in a manner that would pass an appeal process (since space is clearly available).

Q: With district map realignment, could we eliminate school choice and return to neighborhood-based attendance?

A: Returning to neighborhood-based attendance boundaries could be considered.

Q: What if the population significantly increases in 10–20 years?

A: Any plan must account for future growth scenarios. If enrollment rebounds significantly, the district would need a mechanism to reassess the configuration. Building in review triggers is part of the planning conversation.

Finances & Costs

The district conducted a financial analysis as part of this exploration.

- School funding is tied to enrollment, with a projected 30% drop in students by 2038, revenue will also decline significantly.
 - Most administrative, academic, co-curricular, and operational systems are already combined.
 - Athletics is the primary area with duplicative costs, including coaches, staff, transportation, and equipment. Combining athletics could save more than \$600,000 annually.
 - Startup costs for rebranding, uniforms, and expanded teams are estimated at \$359,000 in Year 1, and \$95,000 annually to support expanded participation.
 - A net savings of \$1.3 million is projected over three years. Additional savings would be garnered each subsequent year as opposed to continuing to operate two separate athletic programs.
-

Q: Would combining schools save money?

A: Yes, consolidation is expected to generate savings primarily through reduced redundancy in athletic programs. However, one-time transition costs (rebranding, signage, facility updates, etc.) must also be factored in for the short-term.

Q: Would taxes increase?

A: The goal of consolidation is cost savings, not increased spending. Any financial projections, including the impact on the tax levy, will be shared with the community before a decision is made. At this time, there is not an anticipated tax impact.

Q: How is state aid currently allocated between two schools, and what changes with consolidation?

A: State aid formulas and funding are tied to enrollment. The district is analyzing how aid would be affected by consolidation to ensure there are no unexpected funding losses.

Q: Would there be any cost savings on the educational side beyond administration?

A: Potentially yes, however they will be achieved as overall enrollment decreases, not related to configuration.

Scholarships & Financial Aid

Each school names separate valedictorians, salutatorians, and some school-specific scholarships for graduates are available from organizations outside of the district.

Q: Would scholarship opportunities change under a combined school?

A: Currently each school (East and West) may offer separate scholarships. Whether a combined school would maintain the same total number or value of scholarships is under review and is largely dependent on independent organization decisions such as Columns. They have been made aware of the conversation.

Q: Has Columns made any commitment about scholarships in a consolidation scenario?

A: The district has reached out to Columns leadership and they participated in the community conversation. We will reach out again should a direction/decision be made.

School Identity & Branding

Q: What would the new school be called, and what would the mascot and colors be?

A: No decisions have been made. Staff, students, and community members would have opportunities to provide feedback regarding a new name, mascot, and color scheme. Should change occur, it is important to make whatever is chosen feel exciting and unifying for the entire community.

Q: Who decides on the school colors and mascot?

A: The process for making these decisions has not yet been determined, but community engagement will be a priority. There will be a formal process for gathering input from students, staff, and the broader community.

Q: Could this be an opportunity to rebrand the entire district K–12 under one identity?

A: This is one of the ideas being explored. A full district rebrand—aligning all schools under a single mascot and identity—to strengthen community support and foster a unified school culture is a possibility.

Staffing and Administration

Q: Would there be one Athletic Director or two?

A: The structure of the athletic department in the event of a reconfiguration has not yet been determined. However, if West Bend were to move to a single high school, it would likely be served by one Athletic Director.

Q: What would the overall administrative structure look like?

A: Reducing administrative redundancy is one of the potential cost savings (reducing an Athletic Director). Other decisions to reduce administrators such as Assistant Principals will occur as enrollment declines, regardless of configuration. There is one Executive Principal, five supporting Assistant Principals, and two Athletic Directors.

There are eight total administrators on campus, which was consistent with staffing from 1990. However, roles were assigned differently (i.e. there was one Athletic Director, an executive principal, and two separate high school principals in addition to assistant principals).

Overall district administration has been reduced along with enrollment.

Q: Would there be job losses?

A: There may be some reduction in administrative positions due to consolidation and declining enrollment. As enrollment continues to decline, there may be reductions in other staff; however, they are related to enrollment, not configuration.

Q: What would happen to NHS advisors and other program coordinators?

A: There is one primary advisor for each group, some may split the role and co-advise and additional advisors or supervisors by the enrollment in the program.

Q: Is it difficult to find qualified coaches?

A: Yes, finding qualified coaches for two schools is increasingly challenging. Consolidating into one school may make it easier to attract and retain strong coaching staff.

Student Experience and Social Traditions

Social traditions like prom court are separate. However, most large events, such as homecoming events, spirit week, dances, etc. are held jointly.

Q: What happens to homecoming and other school traditions?

A: Homecoming and its associated events would continue. The district's goal is always to improve school spirit and carry on meaningful traditions. Any reconfiguration needs to plan for honoring former and building new unified traditions while preserving what makes these events special.

Q: Where would graduation be held?

A: This is an open question. The fieldhouse is not anticipated to have capacity. Finding a comfortable, appropriately sized venue for a larger combined graduating class will be part of any planning process. At this time, High School administration works with graduates as part of the Graduation Committee which plans this celebration.

Q: What would happen to seniors during the transition year (2027–2028)?

A: Protecting the senior experience is a key concern. Students who began high school under the current two-school model should not lose leadership roles, or milestone experiences due to a mid-career consolidation. There also may be options to honor their status as East and West graduates. This will be addressed directly in any transition plan.

Q: Would students switching schools mid-career lose eligibility for WIAA or other activities?

A: WIAA has rules about transfers and eligibility. If the schools consolidate, they remain eligible with the WIAA.

Q: Would students be able to request teachers?

A: Students select courses, not specific teachers.

Q: How do we ensure students feel connected and not lost in a larger school?

A: The students are already consolidated on campus and in classes. Strategies like smaller advisory groups, robust extracurriculars, and intramurals are all being considered to ensure students feel they are part of something.