

Considering a Tuition Model

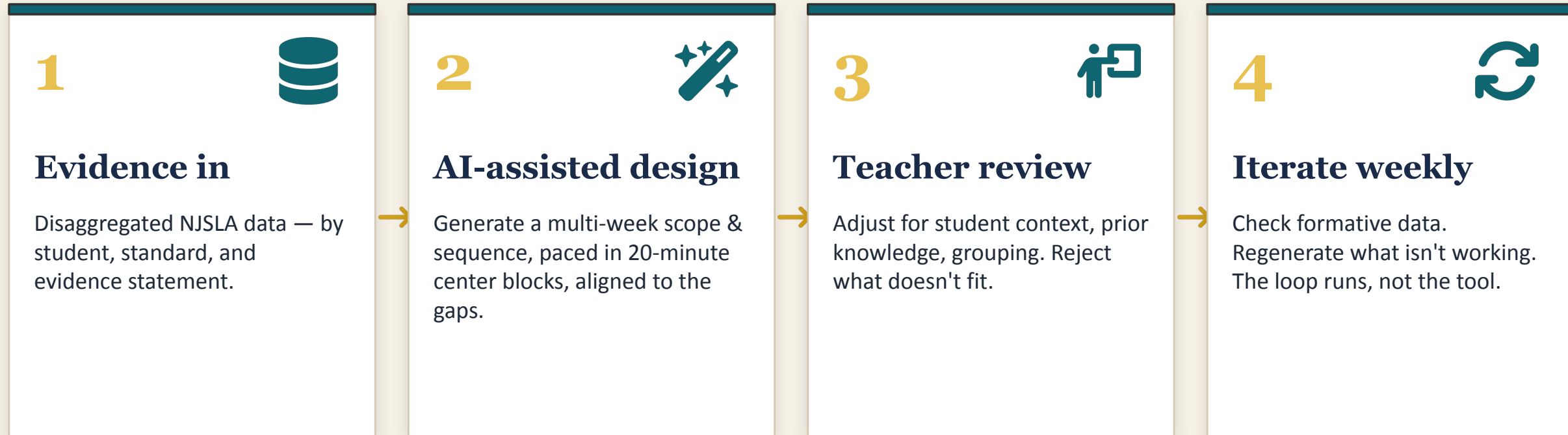
Four Reasons CMS Is Pursuing This Transition

A plan to protect educational richness, restore financial stability, and answer real demand from families

NJSLA Remediation Scope & Sequence

The problem:

Spring NJSLA data revealed specific skill gaps. Remediation couldn't be generic — it had to map to evidence statements, fit center-time blocks, and still feel coherent.



The strategic move:

data → AI-assisted plan → teacher judgment → instruction — weekly, not yearly.

What the impact looks like...

Student Achievement Impact

Grade 3 ELA

2024 36.4%

2025 53%

↑ +16.6 percentage points

Grade 3 Math

2024 68.2%

2025 79%

↑ +10.8 percentage points

Grade 4 ELA

2024 40%

2025 74%

↑ +34 percentage points

Grade 4 Math

2024 50%

2025 68%

↑ +18 percentage points

Grade 5 ELA

2024 40%

2025 39%

→ -1 percentage point

Grade 5 Math

2024 40%

2025 73%

↑ +33 percentage points

BANS & AI-Enhanced Mentoring

Framework developed through AI-enhanced mentoring

B

Belonging

Connection to the school community drives engagement and resilience.

A

Agency

Perceived ability to influence ability to influence outcomes.

N

Narrative

A learner's story impacts motivation and confidence. Often it is inaccurate and undermines the ability to succeed.

S

Strengths

Recognizing what a kid does well and how they can use those assets to succeed.



How AI shaped the framework

- Synthesized patterns across staff mentor sessions that no single mentor could see alone.
- Drafted mentoring protocols grounded in the data — then revised them in teacher review.
- Translated the BANS constructs into observable mentor prompts, not just ideas.
- Surfaced which students were moving on which construct — before a grade card said so.

AI didn't replace mentor judgment. It gave mentors a wider view of their own work.

What the impact looks like...

The Social Emotional Impact

- We reduced discipline referrals by 35 percent
- Developed a mentor framework called BANS
- Recognized peer conflict is the #1 issue across every grade level.
- Recognized many students are carrying heavy loads from home that show up as behavior in the classroom.
- Students open up when they feel safe and that looks different for every kid.

OVERVIEW

The Four Reasons We Are Considering a Tuition Model

CMS administration is considering the transition from a choice model to a tuition-based model for four reasons.

1

Class Size

Our class sizes are becoming so small they limit the richness of the educational experience for every current CMS student.

2

Programing Cliff

If the declining enrollment trend continues, severe staffing and program cuts become unavoidable, just like many surrounding districts.

3

Real Demand

There is tremendous demand from out-of-district families who were forced off the island because of limited housing but want a CMS education for their children.

4

Financial Sense

A \$3,000 tuition is competitive with neighboring districts and builds independence from a state that has long underfunded our region.

Each reason is developed on the following slides.

First and Foremost: Our Class Sizes Are Hurting Today's Students

“

Class sizes are becoming so small that they are limiting the richness of the educational experience for every current CMS student.

This is not a future concern. It is happening now.

Collaboration suffers

Fewer peers means fewer partners, fewer perspectives, fewer chances to learn through each other.

Programs shrink

G&T, R.O.A.R., and specialized instruction become difficult to run at current class sizes.

Identity development narrows

Smaller cohorts give students fewer social options and fewer ways to find their people.

Activities thin out

Teams, casts, and clubs lose the depth needed to be genuinely competitive and fun.

The impact of small class size is already limiting program depth at CMS today.

THE TREND

Enrollment Is Already Declining — and the Trajectory Is Steep

Without intervention, K–8 enrollment falls 32% in five years.

Metric	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	Change
K-8 Enrollment	161	153	135	126	117	110	-51 (-32%)
PK-8 Enrollment	188	179	160	150	140	132	-56 (-30%)
K Entry Class	14	14	13	12	11	11	-3 (-21%)

7.0

Births per 1,000 — lowest in NJ

61

Median age in Wildwood Crest vs. 40 NJ avg.

-32%

K-8 enrollment decline projected by 2030-31

Source: CMS Enrollment Projections, Feb 2026. Cohort Survival Method.

THE IMPACT

What Small Classes Mean in the Classroom and on the Field

Academic Reporting

Two struggling students in a grade can swing proficiency rates by 17%.

12 students / grade

2 below proficient

16.7% swing

30 students / grade

2 below proficient

6.7% swing

Same instruction quality — dramatically different reported outcomes. Scores should reflect teaching, not statistical noise.

Sports & Activities

At 11 students per grade, CMS cannot field competitive teams.

Sport	Min. Roster	Without Tuition	With Tuition
Soccer	11	Cannot field	Competitive
Basketball	10	Cannot field	Competitive
Baseball/Softball	9	Barely viable	Strong
Annual Play	—	Casting gaps	Full cast & crew

*Projected for 2029-30 assuming ~50% participation.
Source: CMS enrollment model.*

Same students. Same instruction. The difference is whether there are enough peers in the room.

If Enrollment Keeps Declining, Financial Cuts Become Unavoidable

If the declining enrollment trend continues, there will be severe financial implications — staff cuts, academic program cuts, and extracurricular cuts.

Staff Cuts

Fewer students means state aid decreases. Districts are forced to reduce teachers, specialists, and support staff.

Academic Cuts

Specialized programs — electives, enrichment, interventions — are first on the chopping block when budgets contract.

Extracurricular Cuts

Sports teams, clubs, the annual play, and after-school offerings disappear or are consolidated out of existence.

The next slide shows this playing out in districts just miles from Wildwood Crest.

THE MATH OF INACTION

Fewer Students, Same Fixed Costs — Per-Pupil Spending Explodes

Fixed costs don't shrink with enrollment. As students leave, local taxpayers pay more per child for less programming.

WITHOUT TUITION (110 K-8 by 2030-31)

Year	K-8	Budget	Cost / Pupil
2025-26	161	\$6.1M	\$37,888
2027-28	135	\$6.3M	\$46,667
2029-30	117	\$6.5M	\$55,556
2030-31	110	\$6.6M	\$60,000

~58% per-pupil cost increase over 5 years with the same budget.

\$60,000 per pupil is nearly 3× the NJ state average of \$21,199.

WITH \$3,000 TUITION (171-180 K-8)

Year	K-8	Budget	Cost / Pupil
2025-26	161	\$6.1M	\$37,888
2027-28	168-175	\$6.3M	\$36,000
2029-30	171-179	\$6.5M	\$36,300
2030-31	171-180	\$6.6M	\$36,667

Per-pupil cost stable as tuition students share fixed costs.

\$22,000+ per-pupil savings compared to the do-nothing scenario.

Out-of-District Families Already Want a CMS Education

Demand is real and already here.

- Many out-of-district families were forced off the island by limited housing opportunities.
- They have a real history with CMS. They attended here, or their siblings did, or their families still do.
- They want their children to have the same experience they remember.
- This isn't abstract demand. It walks through the door every year.

EVERY YEAR

25+

choice-student applications to CMS

Applications have consistently exceeded available seats under the choice model.

Tuition gives CMS a way to meet demand already present in the community.

REASON 4 · FINANCIAL SENSE

A \$3,000 Tuition Is Nearly Double What Local Taxpayers Contribute

Currently, for a home assessed at \$400,000, only \$1,504 of the tax levy goes to CMS. A \$3,000 tuition is competitive in the regional market — and strengthens our financial independence.

2025 TAX BREAKDOWN · \$400K HOME IN WILDWOOD CREST

Taxing Entity	Rate	Tax on \$400K	Share
Local School (Crest Memorial)	0.376	\$1,504	~26.0%
Municipal (Local Purpose)	0.7246	\$2,898	~50.2%
County General	0.287	\$1,148	~19.9%
County Library	0.042	\$168	~2.9%
County Open Space	0.015	\$60	~1.0%
Total	1.444	~\$5,778	100%

Source: Borough of Wildwood Crest Summary of Tax Rates, 2025.

PROPOSED CMS TUITION

\$3,000

Nearly 2x the \$1,504 local tax contribution

COMPETITIVE WITH THE REGIONAL MARKET

Stone Harbor/ Stone Harbor **\$3,250**

WCA **\$6,500**

North Wildwood **\$2,500**

CMS (proposed) \$3,000

THE REVENUE STORY

Choice Revenue Bridges the Gap While Tuition Revenue Grows

For 2026-27, CMS continues to receive state funding for all existing choice students. As they graduate, tuition revenue is projected to outpace what choice once provided.

\$326K

Projected 2026-27 choice revenue still flowing to CMS

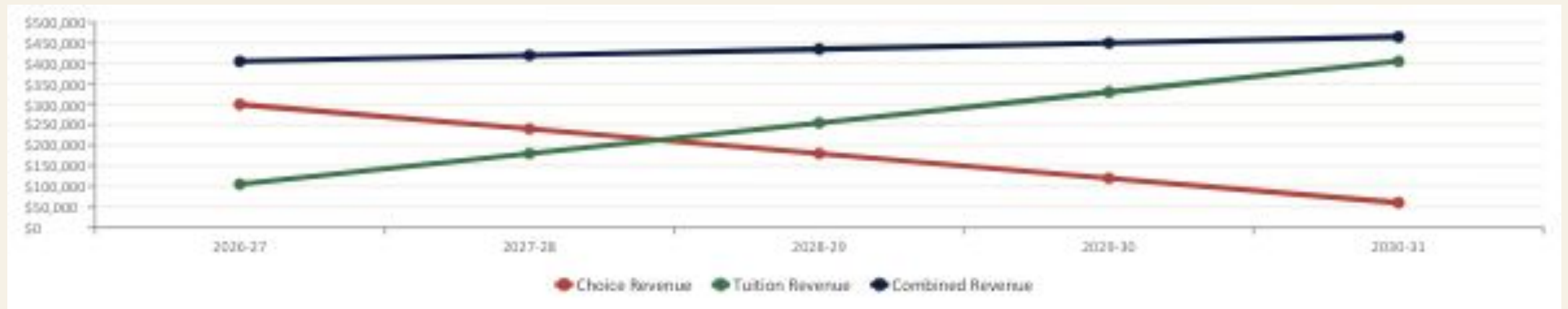
Decreasing

Choice revenue as current students graduate

Growing

Tuition revenue each year until it outpaces choice

REVENUE TRAJECTORY — ILLUSTRATIVE



Illustrative projection based on assumed tuition ramp and choice-student graduation schedule. Actual figures will be refined as enrollment is confirmed.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

Current Registration and Our Commitment If Numbers Fall Short

AS OF APRIL 24, 2026

34

students registered for 2026-27 tuition enrollment

We expect this number to grow as outreach continues through the spring.

OUR COMMITMENT

If it doesn't work, we rescind.

If tuition enrollment falls short of students needed

We will not move forward with the tuition model.

If new information suggests this won't benefit the district

Financially, academically, or socially-emotionally — we will rescind.

We are genuinely moving in this direction — but only if the numbers and the evidence support it.

A DECISION GROUNDED IN FOUR REASONS

The Path Forward

1

Class size

The richness of education for today's students requires a critical mass of peers.

2

Financial cliff

Avoiding the cuts crippling surrounding districts starts with acting before we're forced to.

3

Real demand

50+ families want CMS every year. Tuition gives us a way to say yes.

4

Financial sense

\$3,000 is nearly double the local contribution and competitive with neighbors — and it builds independence.