Cedar Rapids Community School District

BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL WORK SESSION

January 26, 2026

Cedar Rapids Community School District

CALL TO ORDER

President Neumann

Cedar Rapids Community School District

ADDRESSING THE BOARD

Communications, Delegations, Petitions

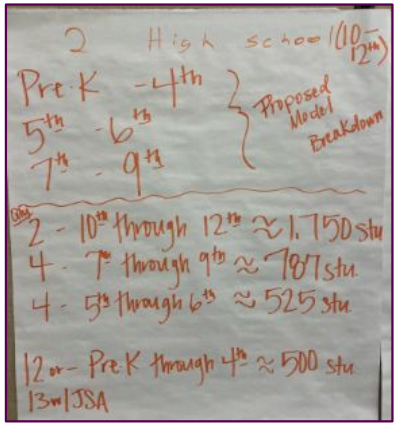
Cedar Rapids Community School District

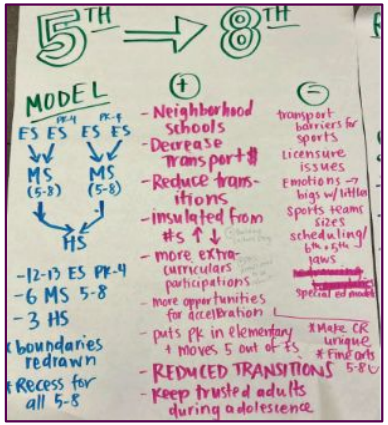
COMMUNITY COALITION UPDATE

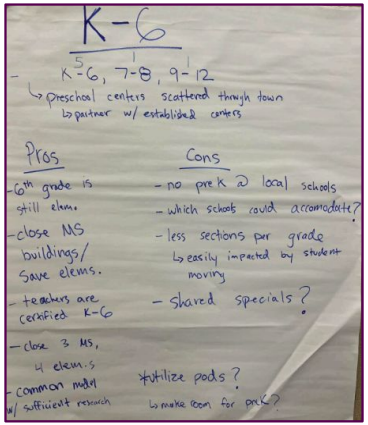
Jillian Schulte & Chad Schumacher

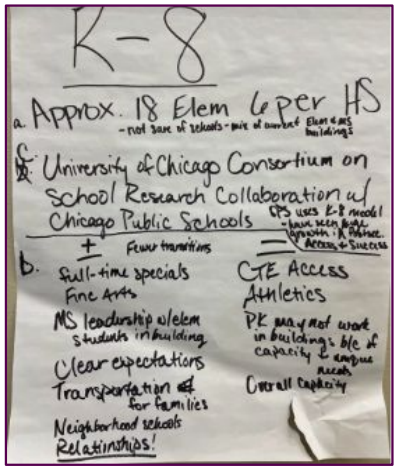
SCHOOL MODELS EXPLORED

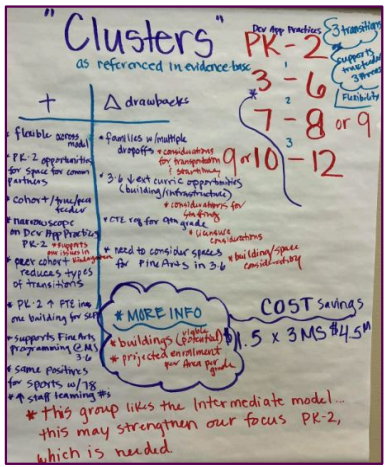
1. 2 High School Model
   (PreK-4, 5-6, 7-9, 10-12)
2. 5-8 Model
   (PreK-4, 5-8, 9-12)
3. K-6 Model
   (PreK-6, 7-8, 9-12)
4. K-8 Model
   (PreK-8, 9-12)
5. 5-1-1 Model
   (PreK-5, 6-8, 9-12)
6. “Cluster” Model
   (PreK-2, 3-6, 7-8 or 7-9, 10-12 or 9-12)

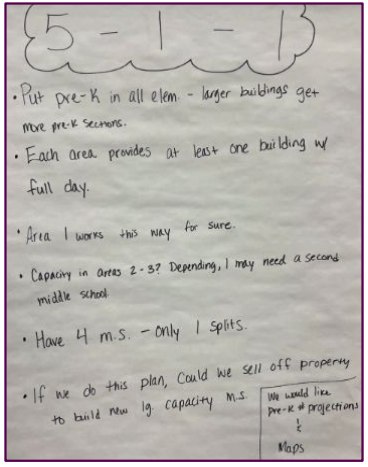












MODEL VETTING

Cedar Rapids Community School District

What Must Be True (Non-Negotiables):

1. **True feeder patterns** (clear ES → MS → HS)
2. **Existing building inventory only** (no new builds- “move in ready”)
3. **Meaningful cost savings** (achieve $6 million in savings)
4. **Improved building utilization**
5. **Responsiveness to family priorities**

NORMS

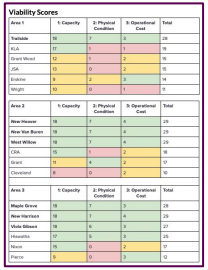
1. **Be criteria-based**
2. **Assume positive intent**
3. **It's okay to let go of ideas**

"Not advancing a model is not a failure, it's evidence of criteria-based decision making."

RESOURCES

Cedar Rapids Community School District

1. Viability Scores



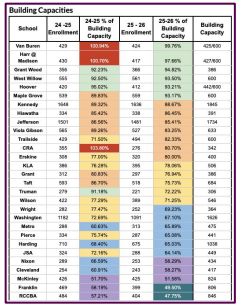
Viability Scores

Area 1	1: Capacity	2: Physical Condition	3: Operational Cost	Total
Taliaide	10	7	3	20
KLA	17	1	1	19
Grant Wood	12	1	2	15
JSA	11	0	2	13
Erskine	9	2	3	14
Wright	10	0	1	11

Area 2	1: Capacity	2: Physical Condition	3: Operational Cost	Total
Hoover	10	7	4	20
Van Buren	10	7	4	20
West Willow	10	7	4	20
CRA	10	1	2	13
Grant	11	4	2	17
Cleveland	8	0	2	10

Area 3	1: Capacity	2: Physical Condition	3: Operational Cost	Total
Maple Grove	10	7	3	20
Herr Harrison	10	7	4	20
Viola Gibson	10	6	3	19
Hiawatha	17	6	3	26
Nixon	15	0	2	17
Pierce	9	0	3	12

2. Building Capacity Data



Building Capacities

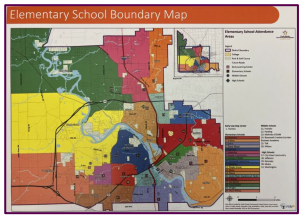
School	24 -25 Enrollment	24-25 % of Building Capacity	25 - 26 Enrollment	25-26 % of Building Capacity	Building Capacity
Van Buren	429	103.14%	424	98.76%	429/430
Herr @ Harrison	430	100.70%	417	97.66%	427/430
Grant Wood	366	92.23%	366	94.82%	386
West Willow	555	92.50%	561	93.50%	600
Hoover	420	95.02%	412	93.21%	442/630
Maple Grove	539	89.83%	559	93.17%	600
Kennedy	1648	89.32%	1638	88.67%	1845
Hiawatha	334	86.42%	338	86.45%	391
Jefferson	1501	86.58%	1481	85.41%	1734
Viola Gibson	565	89.26%	527	83.25%	633
Taliaide	429	71.50%	494	82.33%	600
CRA	355	103.80%	276	80.70%	342
Erskine	308	77.00%	320	80.00%	400
KLA	386	79.29%	386	79.06%	506
Grant	312	82.83%	297	78.94%	386
Taft	583	66.70%	518	75.73%	684
Truman	279	91.18%	221	72.22%	306
Wilson	422	77.29%	389	71.25%	546
Wright	282	77.47%	252	69.23%	364
Washington	1182	72.69%	1091	67.10%	1626
Metro	288	60.63%	313	65.89%	475
Pierce	334	75.74%	287	65.08%	441
Harding	710	68.40%	675	65.03%	1038
JSA	324	72.16%	288	64.14%	449
Nixon	289	66.59%	253	58.29%	434
Cleveland	254	60.91%	243	58.27%	417
McKinley	426	51.70%	425	51.58%	824
Franklin	669	58.19%	399	43.90%	909
RCCBA	484	57.21%	404	47.75%	846

3. District Enrollment by Grade

CRCSD Enrollment by Grade Level

Grade	Enrollment
PK 3	117
PK 4	735
AK	55
K	1048
1	1049
2	1101
3	1041
4	1096
5	1032
6	939
7	947
8	968
9	1162
10	1195
11	1177
12	1134
Total	14,796

4. District Maps & Current Boundaries



MODEL VETTING

Cedar Rapids Community School District

4 Phases:

1. Feeder Pattern Check
2. Capacity & Utilization Check
3. Cost Savings Check
4. Family Priorities Alignment Check

FEEDER PATTERN CHECK

Task

- Select:
  - Which buildings remain open
  - Which buildings close



*In order to right size our district, we need to close enough buildings to achieve $6M in savings. Closing an Elementary saves approx. 1M; a middle school approx. $1.5M

- Draw the **full feeder pattern** on the map

Guiding Questions

- Is the feeder pattern simple and logical?
- At each transition, does each previous school feed into a single next school?
- Are students split across multiple feeders unnecessarily?

DECISION POINT: If the feeder pattern is unclear or fractured, the model is not viable.

Cedar Rapids Community School District

FEEDER PATTERN CHECK

Task

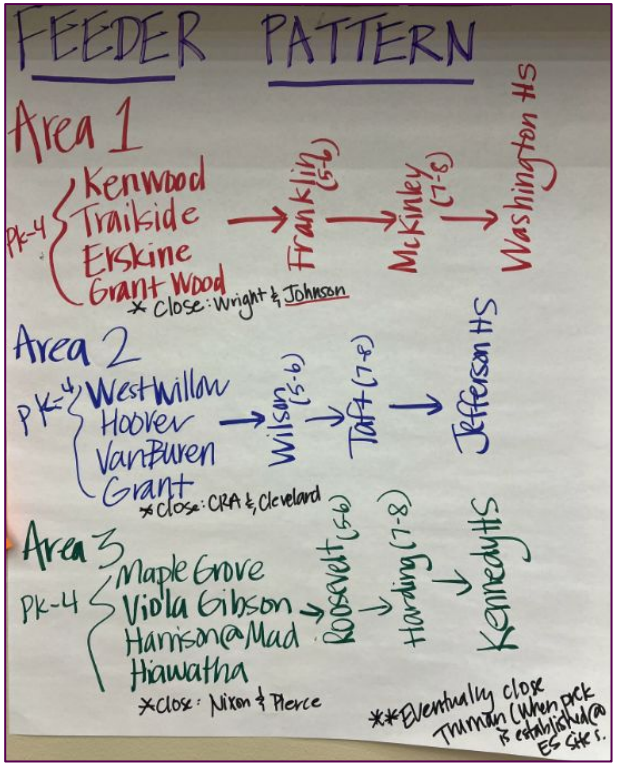
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CAPACITY & UTILIZATION

Task

- Using enrollment by grade level:
  - Calculate students per building
  - Compare to building capacity



Guiding Questions

- Are any buildings:
  - Over capacity?
  - Still significantly underutilized?
- Does the model actually improve utilization district-wide?

DECISION POINT: If capacity does not work, the model is not viable.

Cedar Rapids Community School District

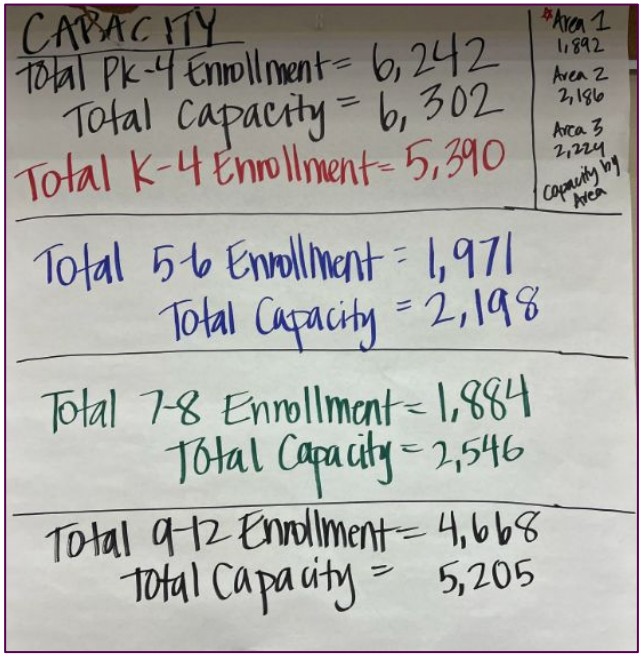
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COST SAVINGS CHECK

Task

- Identify:
  - of elementary closures × approx. $1M
  - of middle school closures × approx. $1.5M

- Calculate estimated annual savings



Guiding Questions

- Does this result in meaningful savings?
- Does the savings justify the disruption?

DECISION POINT: If savings are marginal, label it as low-return.

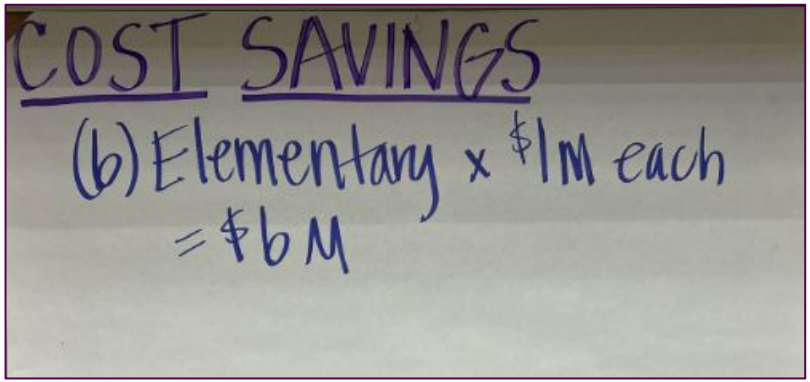
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COST SAVINGS CHECK

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Cedar Rapids Community School District

FAMILY PRIORITIES



Task

- Consider Family Priorities:
  - Preschool access in all elementary schools
  - Fine arts opportunities
  - Competitive athletics

Guiding Questions

- Does this model *expand* or *limit* these priorities?
- Where are the “trade ups”?

DECISION POINT: If the family priority “trade ups” are marginal, label it as low-return.

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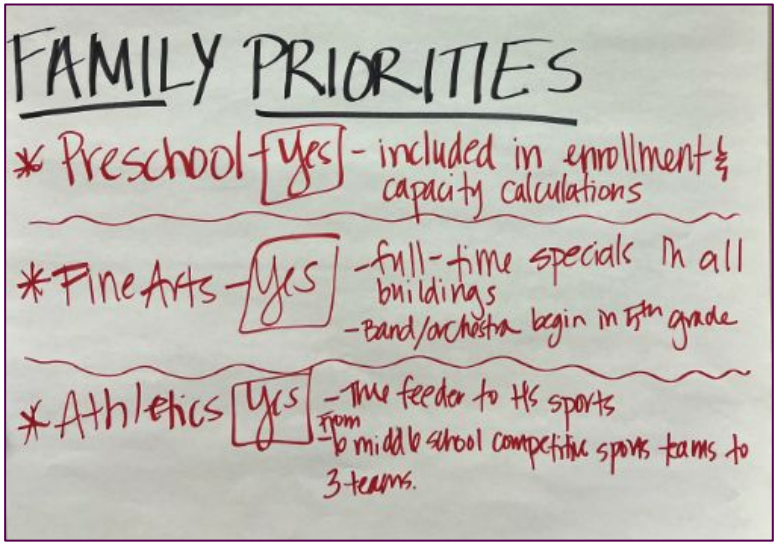
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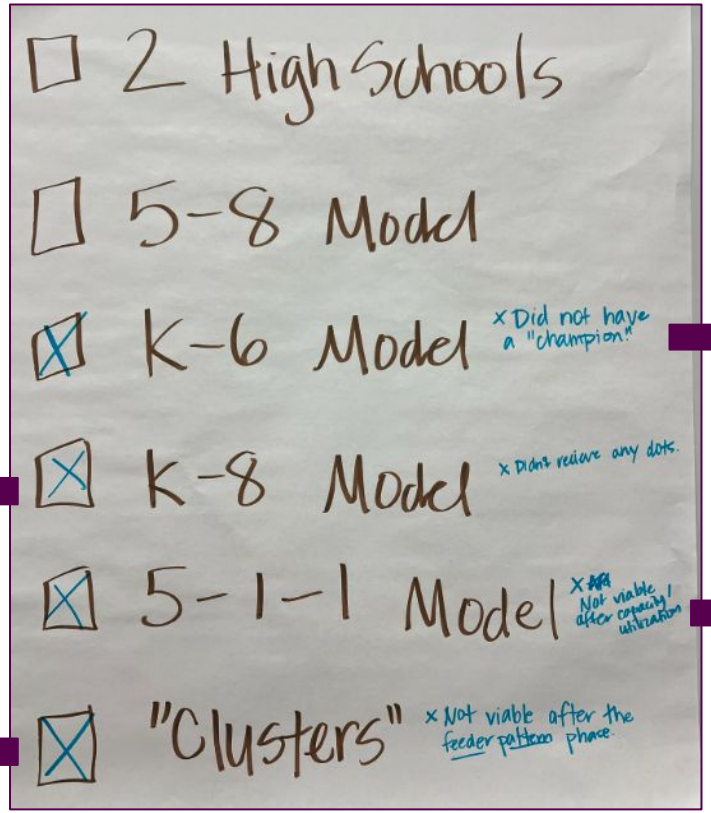
- Does this model *expand* or *limit* these priorities?
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DECISION POINT: If the family priority “trade ups” are marginal, label it as low-return.

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VETTING RESULTS



Didn't have a "Champion"

Didn't receive any dots

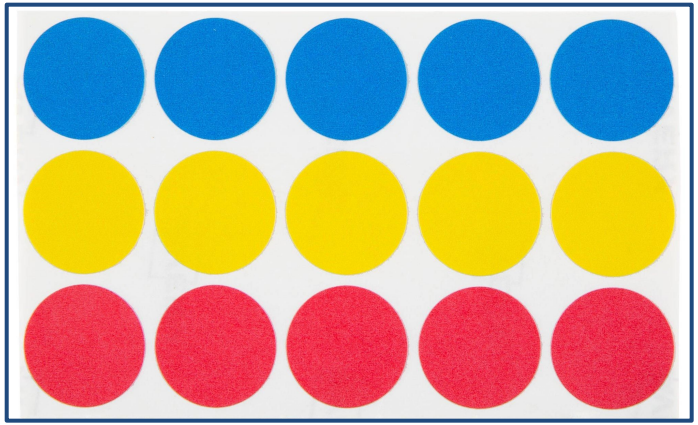
Not viable after Capacity & Utilization Check

Not viable after Feeder Pattern Check

Cedar Rapids Community School District

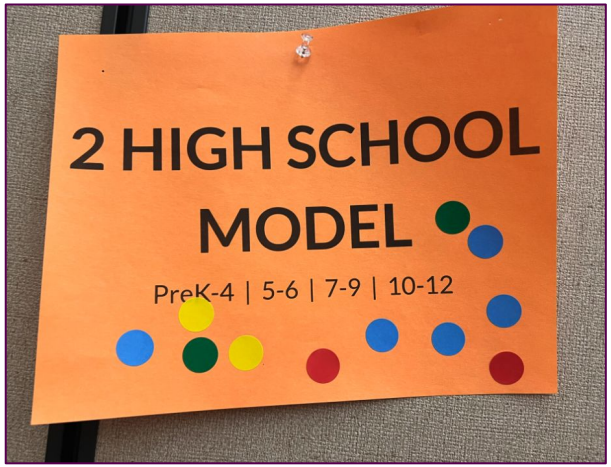
SHARE YOUR VOICE

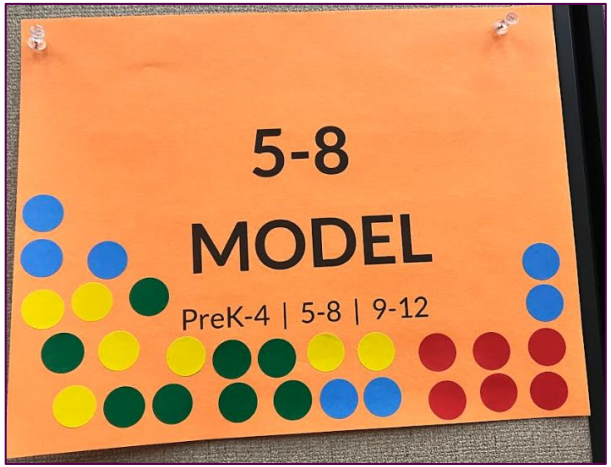
- **Each participant gets two dots to spend on the consolidation model(s) that they believe is/are the strongest.**
- **You can put two dots on one consolidation model if you choose.**

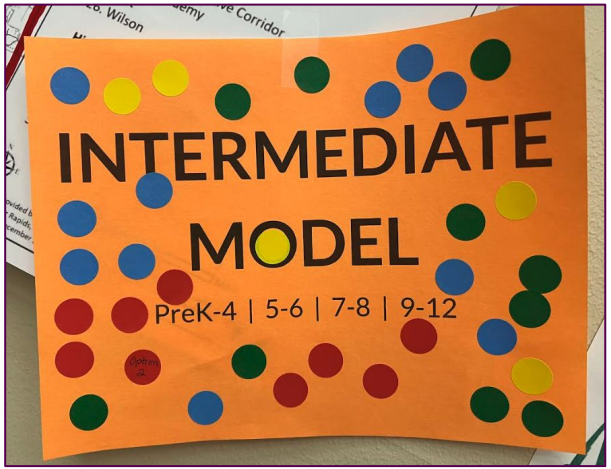


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RESULTS







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INTERMEDIATE MODEL

Jason Kline, Condra Allred, Joslin Hanna, Dr. Carl Rowles

FEEDER PATTERN CHECK

FEEDER PATTERN:

Option 1

AREA	ELEMENTARY (PK-4)	INTERMEDIATE (5-6)	MIDDLE SCHOOL (7-8)	HIGH SCHOOL (9-12)
1	Erskine, Grant Wood Trailside, Kenwood, *Johnson	Franklin	McKinley	Washington
2	West Willow, Hoover, Van Buren, Grant	Wilson	Taft	Jefferson
3	Maple Grove, Hiawatha Harrison, Viola Gibson	Roosevelt	Harding	Kennedy

**Schools Closed: Wright, CRA, Cleveland, Nixon, Pierce, Truman (after preschool is set in each elementary)

Option 2

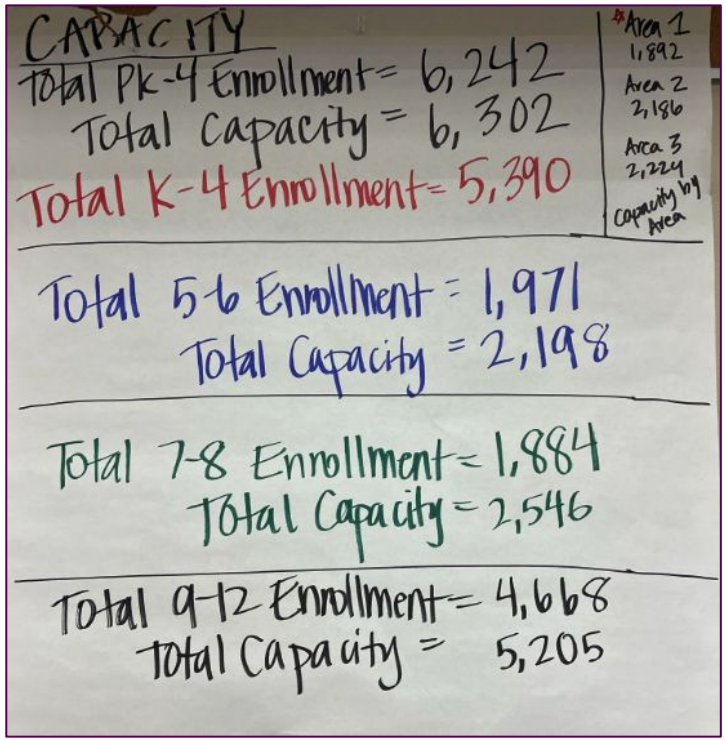
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1	Erskine, Grant Wood Trailside, Kenwood, *Johnson	Franklin	McKinley	Washington
2	West Willow, Hoover Van Buren, Wilson (ES)	Roosevelt	Taft	Jefferson
3	Hiawatha, Harrison, Maple Grove, Pierce	Viola Gibson	Harding	Kennedy

**Schools Closed: Wright, CRA, Cleveland, Grant, Nixon, Truman (after preschool is set in each elementary)

Option 1: Utilizes existing middle schools for 5-6 and 7-8 buildings; requires less reconfiguration of existing buildings.

Option 2: Preserves more geographic unity for Areas 3 and 2, reduces (does not eliminate) boundary disruptions.

CAPACITY & UTILIZATION



Cedar Rapids Community School District

CAPACITY & UTILIZATION

Area #1 - WHS Feeder *at capacity			
	Current Reality PK-4	**Option 1**	**Option 2**
Erskine	275	375 + 1 PK Section*	315 + 2 PK
GW	264 + PK (57)	365 + 2 PK	301 + 2 PK
Trailside	390 * (+AK 19)	490+ 2 PK & 1AK	427 + PK + AK
KLA	288 + PK (46)	388 + 2 PK	325 + PK
Johnson	215 + PK (34)		250 + PK
Wright	186 + PK (32)		
TOTAL:	1,618 + 188 (PK/AK) = 1806		
⅝ Buildig Franklin		534	534
⅞ Building McKinley		543	543

Cedar Rapids Community School District

CAPACITY & UTILIZATION

Area #2 - JHS Feeder *No current AK in buildings in Area 2			
	Current Reality PK-4	**Option 1**	**Option 2**
West Willow	428 + PK (66)	528+ 2 PK	500+ 2 PK
Hoover	337	437+ 2 PK	409+ 2 PK
Van Buren	372	472+ 2 PK	445+ 2 PK
Grant	247	347+ 1 PK	
CRA	177 + PK (62)		
Cleveland	215		
Total	1776 + 128 (PK) = 1904		
Wilson ES			425+ 2 PK
⅝ Building		**Wilson:** 621	**Roosevelt:** 621
⅜ Building		**Taft:** 631	**Taft:** 631

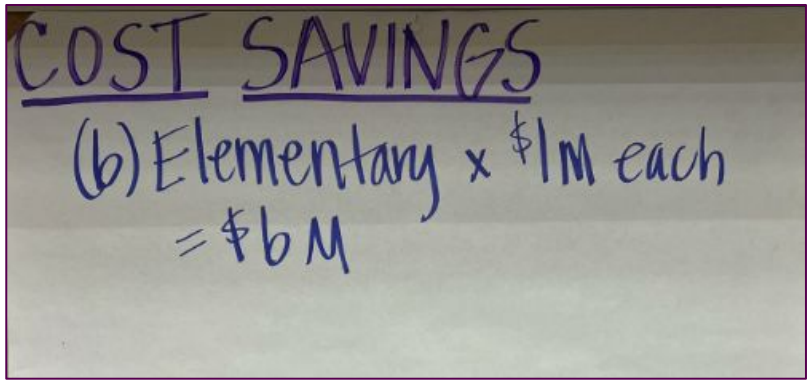
Cedar Rapids Community School District

CAPACITY & UTILIZATION

Area #3 - KHS Feeder			
	Current Reality PK-4	**Option 1**	**Option 2**
Maple Grove	425 + PK (30) + (AK 17)	540+ 2 PK	580 + 1 PK
Hiawatha	258 + PK (33)	373+ 2 PK	450 + 2 PK
Harrison	343	458+ 2 PK	525 + 2PK + 1 AK
Viola Gibson	404 + PK (34) + (AK 20)	519 + 2 PK	
Pierce	246		350 + 1PK
Nixon	213		
Total	1889 + 101 (PK/AK)		
⅝ Building		**Roosevelt:** 736	**Viola Gibson:** 736
⅞ Building		**Harding:** 726	**Harding:** 726

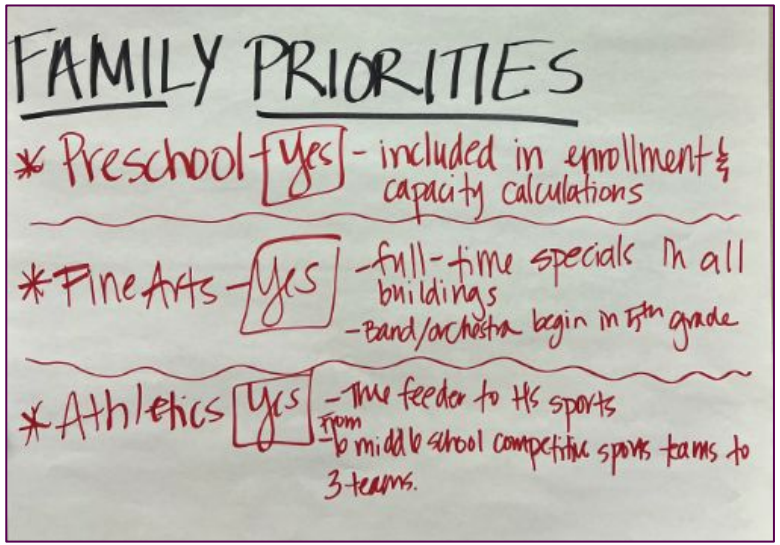
Cedar Rapids Community School District

COST SAVINGS CHECK



Cedar Rapids Community School District

FAMILY PRIORITIES



FAMILY PRIORITIES:

- Preschool:
  - Make preschool available in all elementary schools
  - Retain students in elementary schools
- Fine Arts:
  - Creates equity across the district
  - Enrollment stabilizes viability of offerings
  - Start band/orchestra in 5th grade to build more success in later grades.
- Athletics:
  - Allow for students to engage in sports earlier
  - Intramurals for 5th and 6th or competition between in district buildings

Cedar Rapids Community School District

RESEARCH

Fine Arts Enrollment as Driver of Efficiency (Earnhart, 2025):

- FTE Efficiency (staffing): can serve more students without adding staffing at same rate
- Credit Efficiency (master schedule): Reduces pressure to create additional low-enrollment elective sections
- True feeders allow for more vertical collaboration within Fine Arts Programs
- Strong vertical teacher relationships increase retention and performance

Sixth Graders Fare Worse in Middle School than Elementary School (2007)

- Fewer discipline issues
- Increased test scores
- Possible reasons: Less exposure to “older” behavior that they are not mature enough to process

Six Graders Suffer More than Other Groups When They Are the “Bottom Dog.” (2016)

- When six graders are ‘top dog’ they perform better on tests
- Experience less bullying when not with 7th and 8th graders

BENEFITS & CONSIDERATIONS

Benefits

- Developmental Appropriateness for 5th Grade(Cook et al, 2008)
- More Targeted Instructional Focus (CALDER Center, 2025; Alspaugh, 1998)
- Teaming Opportunities for 5th Grade
- Peer Group Stability from 5th - 12th Grade
- Fine Arts and Athletics in 5th and 6th Grade
- Behavior Expectations
- Identity and Pride
- Efficient Use of Resources
- Eliminates building transition between PK and Kindergarten

Considerations

- Transition Dip
- Teacher Licensure
- Disruption to Families

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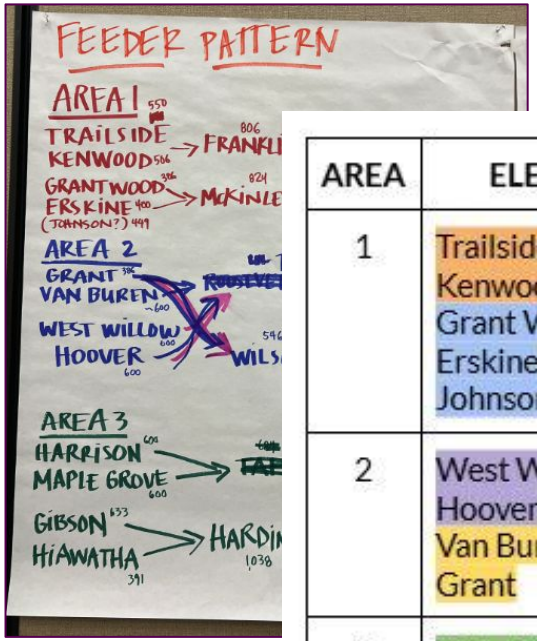
BOARD QUESTIONS

Cedar Rapids Community School District

5-8 MODEL

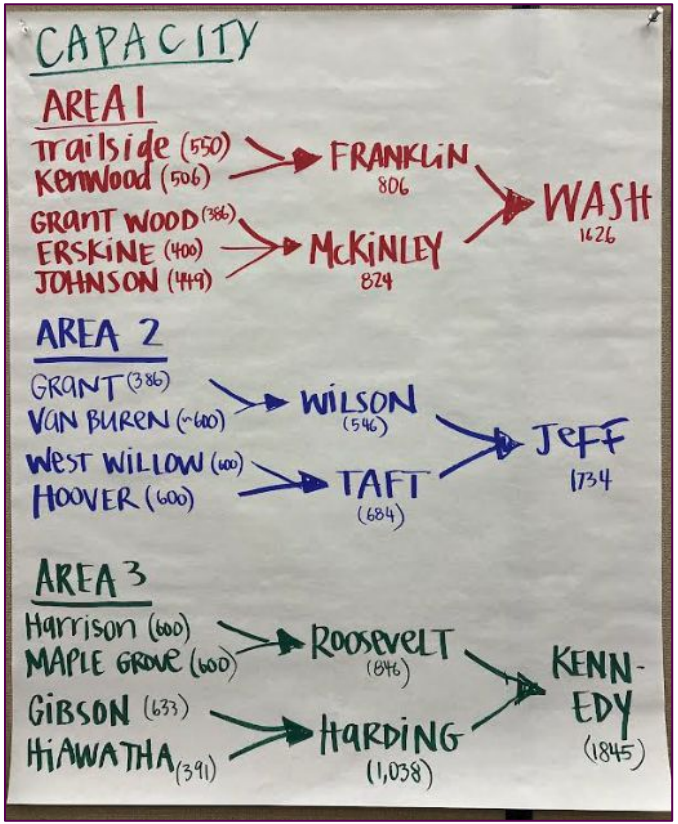
Eric Butikofer
Sarah Hale Keuseman
Arianna Neveu
Tyler Turner

FEEDER PATTERN CHECK



AREA	ELEMENTARY (PK-4)	MIDDLE SCHOOL (5-8)	HIGH SCHOOL (9-12)
1	Trailside Kenwood Grant Wood Erskine Johnson (optional)	Franklin McKinley	Washington
2	West Willow Hoover Van Buren Grant	Taft Wilson	Jefferson
3	Viola Gibson Hiawatha Maple Grove Harrison	Harding Roosevelt	Kennedy

CAPACITY & UTILIZATION



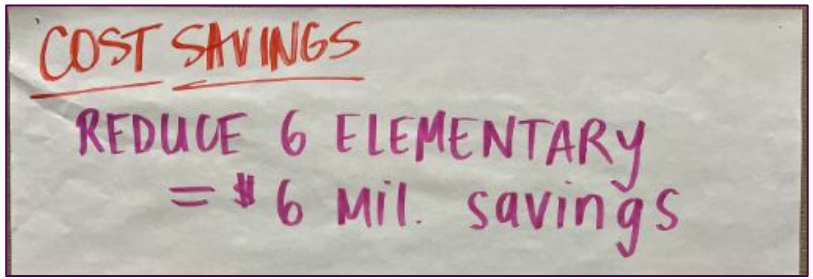
Total PK-4 Enrollment = 6242
Total PK-4 Capacity = 6302

Total 5-8 Enrollment = 3855
Total 5-8 Capacity = 4744

Total 9-12 Enrollment = 4668
Total 9-12 Enrollment = 5205

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COST SAVINGS CHECK



- Closings same as the intermediate plan
- Wright, CRA, Cleveland, Nixon, Pierce, and Truman would close
  - $6 million savings
- Johnson option
  - saves an additional $1 million
- Decreases transportation costs and the average travel time for students

Cedar Rapids Community School District

FAMILY PRIORITIES



- Preschool:
  - Preschool in each Pk-4 building
- Fine Arts:
  - Start in the 5th grade at the middle school level
- Athletics:
  - Feeder systems establish a pipeline for the athletics program
  - Junior Warriors, J-Hawks, and Cougars
  - Opens the door to greater participation; if numbers were high, each middle school could field its own team

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RESEARCH

- Multiple school transitions during early adolescence are associated with **decreases in self-esteem, grades, test scores, engagement, and attendance**, alongside **increases in disciplinary infractions and suspensions** (Aikins, Bierman, & Parker, 2005).
- Schwartz et al. (2011) noted s**trong positive effects for students who transitioned from a K-4 to a 5-8 model,** finding that moving in 5th grade was less disruptive than moving in 6th grade.
- School transitions have been shown to **lower academic achievement for minority groups**, and for low-income students, and these same students have more difficulty making up for these losses in subsequent years (Stillwater Public Schools, 2011).
- Student achievement in middle grades is **higher when they attend schools with a wide grade span configuration** (Dove, Pearson, & Hooper, 2010).
- After reviewing multiple studies, Hanover Research (2021) declared that **"intermediate schools are not beneficial for Grade 5 and 6 students"** (p. 40).

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PROS & CONSIDERATIONS

Pros

- Full-day preschool programming in elementary schools
- Reduces the number of building transitions for a student
- Continued trusted adult relationships during times of physical and emotional changes
- Music ensembles start in 5th grade
- Opportunity for accelerated courses
- Decreased transportation costs and travel time
- Flexibility to combine or separate athletics
- Differentiates us from neighboring districts that will ultimately meet the diverse population of CRCSD
- Improves continuity for parent organizations
- Continued opportunity for recess
- Mentoring and role model opportunities for students

Considerations

- Structure to help keep grade levels separate
- Bussing for athletics
- Smaller middle school sizes mean that music specialists might have to teach broader areas
- Focused special education programs (level 2-3) are a viable option with one building in each area that encompasses 5-8
- PLCs might need to meet across buildings
- Teacher licensure: K-6, 5-8

Cedar Rapids Community School District

BOARD QUESTIONS

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2 HIGH SCHOOL MODEL

Caleb Claus & Staci Jackson

FEEDER PATTERN CHECK

AREA	ELEMENTARY (PK-4)	INTERMEDIATE (5-6)	MIDDLE SCHOOL (7-9)	HIGH SCHOOL (10-12)
East Side Area 1	Viola [27] Grant Wood [15] Erskine [14] Trailside [28] Kenwood [19] Hiawatha [25] JSA [15]	Harding	Kennedy	Washington
West Side Area 2	West Willow [29] Hoover [29] Van Buren [29] —---------- CRA [18] Grant [17] Harrison [29]	Maple Grove Wilson	Taft Roosevelt	Jefferson

Viability Scores:
Capacity + Physical Condition + Operational Costs

29 Highest possible score

CAPACITY & UTILIZATION

	ELEMENTARY (PK-4)	INTERMEDIATE (5-6)	MIDDLE SCHOOL (7-9)	HIGH SCHOOL (10-12)
Student Enrollment	**6,242 = 3,121 target each area (95% Capacity)**	**1,971 = 986 target each area (90% capacity)**	**3,077 =1,539 Target each area (91% Capacity)**	**3,506 - 313 (Metro) = 3193 ~1597 target each area (95% Capacity)**
East Side **Area 1**	Viola **(633)** Grant Wood **(386)** Erskine **(400)** Trailside **(600)** Kenwood **(506)** Hiawatha **(391)** JSA **(449)** **Total Capacity: (3,365)**	Harding **(1038)** **Total Capacity: (1,038)**	Kennedy **(1,845)**	Washington **(1626 + new Construction)**
West Side **Area 2**	West Willow **(600)** Hoover **(600)** Van Buren **(600)** —---------- CRA **(342)** Grant **(386)** Harrison **(600)** **Total Capacity: (3,128)**	Maple Grove **(600)** Wilson **(546)** **Total Capacity: (1,146)**	Taft **(684)** Roosevelt **(846)** **Total Capacity: (1,530)**	Jefferson **(1,734 + new construction)**

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FAMILY PRIORITIES

- Fine Arts
- Athletics & Extracurriculars
- Mental Health and Wellness Supports
- Early Childhood Education
- Advanced placement, Honors, and Dual Credit opportunities



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COST SAVINGS CHECK

Closed Buildings + Cost Savings	Wright (1 M) Nixon (1 M) Truman (1 M) Cleveland (1 M) Pierce (1 M) **Cost Savings: 5 Million**	Franklin (1.5 M) McKinley (1.5 M) **Cost Savings: 3 Million +**	Additional Savings: • Reduced staffing/cut positions contingent on 2 Areas • Kennedy converted to a 7-9 building

Cedar Rapids Community School District

RESEARCH

Taking 9th grade out of the high school.	https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/should-9th-grade-be-separate-from-high-school
Rethinking grade spans to better align with developmental and executive functioning reality.	https://diversifiededucationservices.com/rethinking-grade-spans-an-executive-func on-coachs-perspective-on-why-the-6-8-9-12-model-fails-kids/

That means 6th graders are developmentally closer to 4th- or 5th-graders than to teenagers. And many 9th graders (particularly boys) are still operating on **emotional reflex, not regulation**.

In practical terms? These students struggle to:

- **Prioritize tasks** across multiple teachers.
- Manage a locker, digital calendar, and s**ocial pressures** all at once.
- **Tolerate frustration** or bounce back from setbacks without spiraling.

But our systems expect them to perform like adults in training. (Boxer, 2025)

Cedar Rapids Community School District

PROS & CONSIDERATIONS

PLUSES:	CONSIDERATIONS:
• Buildings at Capacity (90% or higher) ○ Current HSs are operating at 81% capacity • Cost Savings - (8 M +) • Special Programs (AP, Honors, dual enrollment) will have more than 5-10 students in a class. This allows the ability to offer more choices. It also takes the strain off other class enrollments. • Special Education won't be spread so thin and services could be provided at all schools. • Competitive Districts with 10-12 as HS (green below)	• Could also do Washington as 7-9 building and Kennedy as the 10-12 building • We would keep all 3 conventional high school buildings. • Distributes the communities diversity and SES more equally between 2 feeder patterns. • If enrollment continues to decline, would this be something to consider in future years? • PK or K-6→7-9 Junior High→10-12 High School

District Name	School Name	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	10-12 Total
West Des Moines Comm School District	Valley High School	0	687	711	662	2,060
Southeast Polk Comm School District	Southeast Polk High School	0	611	539	614	1,764
Johnston Comm School District	Johnston Senior High School	0	581	608	573	1,762
Des Moines Independent Comm School District	Lincoln High School	559	521	516	622	1,659
Linn-Mar Comm School District	Linn-Mar High School	578	575	535	546	1,656
Waukee Comm School District	Northwest High School	0	557	542	529	1,628
Ankeny Comm School District	Ankeny Centennial High School	0	495	517	518	1,530
Des Moines Independent Comm School District	Roosevelt High School	438	506	484	525	1,515
Des Moines Independent Comm School District	East High School	430	476	427	560	1,463
Waukee Comm School District	Waukee High School	0	509	471	471	1,451
Ankeny Comm School District	Ankeny High School	0	468	444	489	1,401
College Comm School District	Prairie High School	442	442	457	436	1,335
Cedar Falls Comm School District	Cedar Falls High School	0	436	427	430	1,293

Current Jeff/Wash Projections

Dept of Ed Website

Cedar Rapids Community School District

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BOARD QUESTIONS