

April 26, 2026

Dr. Tawana Lannin, Superintendent
Cedar Rapids Community School District
2400 Edgewood Rd NW
Cedar Rapids, IA 52405

RE: Formal Recommendation of the Strategic Plan Executive Committee (SPEC)

Dear Superintendent Lannin,

On behalf of the Strategic Plan Executive Committee (SPEC), after careful consideration, we formally submit our recommendation for the district's strategic redesign ahead of our April 27 presentation to the Board of Education. This recommendation is the result of months of rigorous analysis, extensive deliberation, and meaningful community engagement, carried out within the framework established by the Board's resolution. What we can offer is our full confidence that the path we are recommending is grounded in evidence, shaped by community insight, and designed with every student in mind to move us forward as a whole district together.

Guiding Framework

From the outset, SPEC used the Board's resolution as our compass. Every option we evaluated was weighed against its criteria: feeder pattern coherence, geographic and enrollment balance, fiscal stewardship, evidence-based design, programmatic access, class size expectations, long-term facilities planning, and meaningful community engagement. We did not arrive at our recommendation quickly or easily. We examined multiple scenarios, considered partial and phased approaches, and stress-tested our thinking against the data. What follows reflects our honest assessment of the path that best serves the whole district.

District-Wide Adoption of the Intermediate School Model (2027–2028)

SPEC recommends a full district-wide rollout of the intermediate school model, to take effect in the 2027–2028 school year.

This recommendation is rooted in the Board's call for evidence-based design tailored to CRCSD's unique context. We reviewed independent research on grade configurations, and considered many different models. Separating 5th and 6th graders into dedicated intermediate schools allows us to build environments specifically suited to that pivotal stage of development and the intermediate model ultimately serves the needs of our district best.

We carefully considered a partial or staggered rollout. Ultimately, we concluded that anything short of a full district-wide implementation would create an inequitable two-tiered system - where some students benefit from a richer model while others remain in the status quo. The Board's resolution called for "one district" moving forward together, and we believe a unified rollout is the only way to honor that standard. A full rollout also unlocks meaningful programmatic gains: dedicated program teachers like music, orchestra, band, art, and PE in every building rather than spread thin across multiple schools; richer collaboration among teachers; and the ability to grow competitive athletics and robust extracurricular offerings at the middle school level. All things we think will enhance our students' experiences.

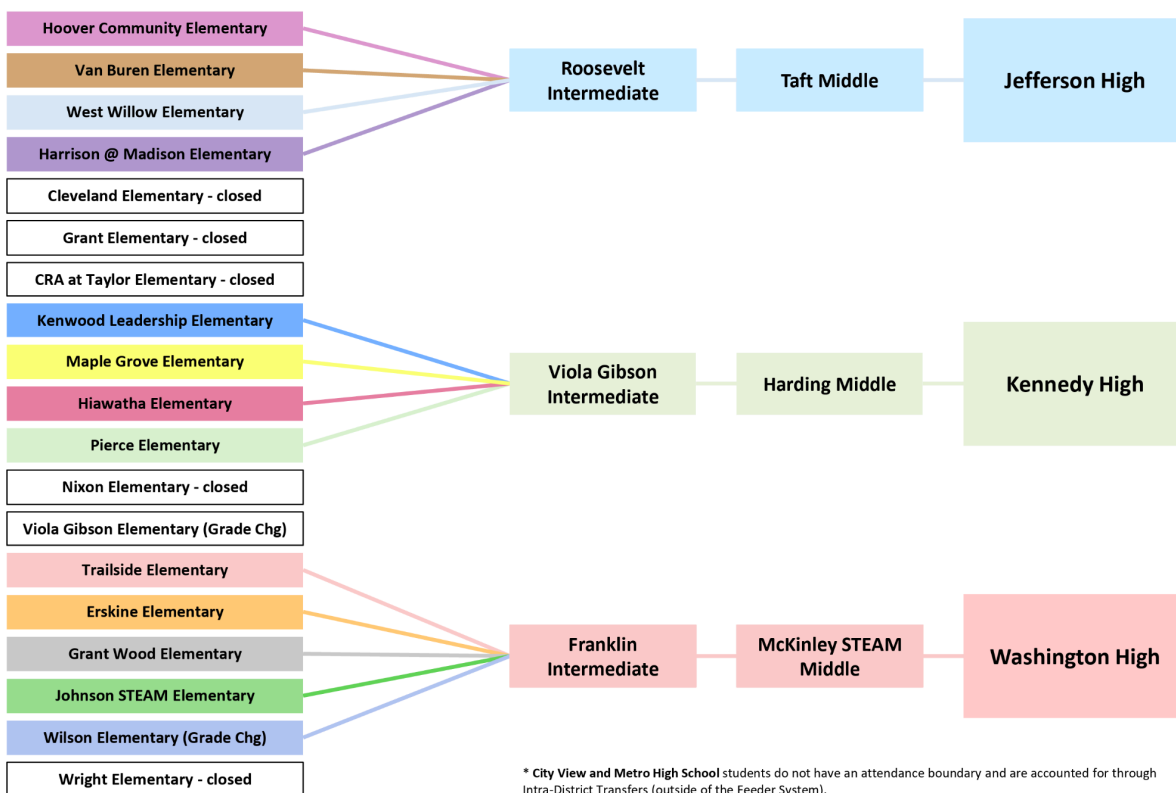
True Feeder Patterns

SPEC recommends the adoption of true feeder patterns, creating consistent and coherent pathways for students from kindergarten through graduation.

The Board's resolution specifically called for feeder pattern coherence with clear, predictable progressions that foster community and belonging. We believe this approach will also help address some of the behavioral challenges the district experiences at key transition points when students from multiple elementary buildings come together for the first time at the middle or high school level.

We did consider options that would split elementary attendance zones to more evenly distribute enrollment across high schools. After careful analysis, we concluded that the benefits of a true feeder system outweigh the benefits of mathematically balanced enrollment. We remain committed to exploring in-district permits, strategic enrollment marketing, and other solutions to enhance programming as tools to support a better enrollment balance across areas.

Feeder Pattern Recommendation



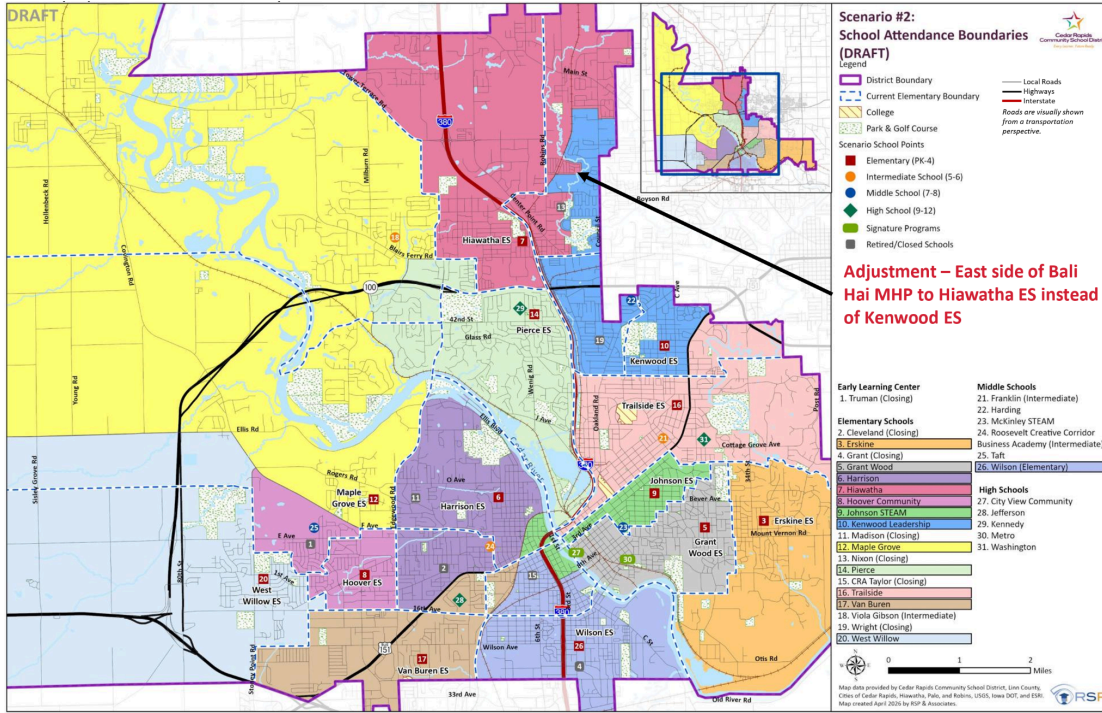
School Boundaries — Scenario #2

SPEC recommends Boundary Scenario #2, which involves a modest clockwise rotation of high school attendance boundaries to better balance enrollment across the district's three high schools.

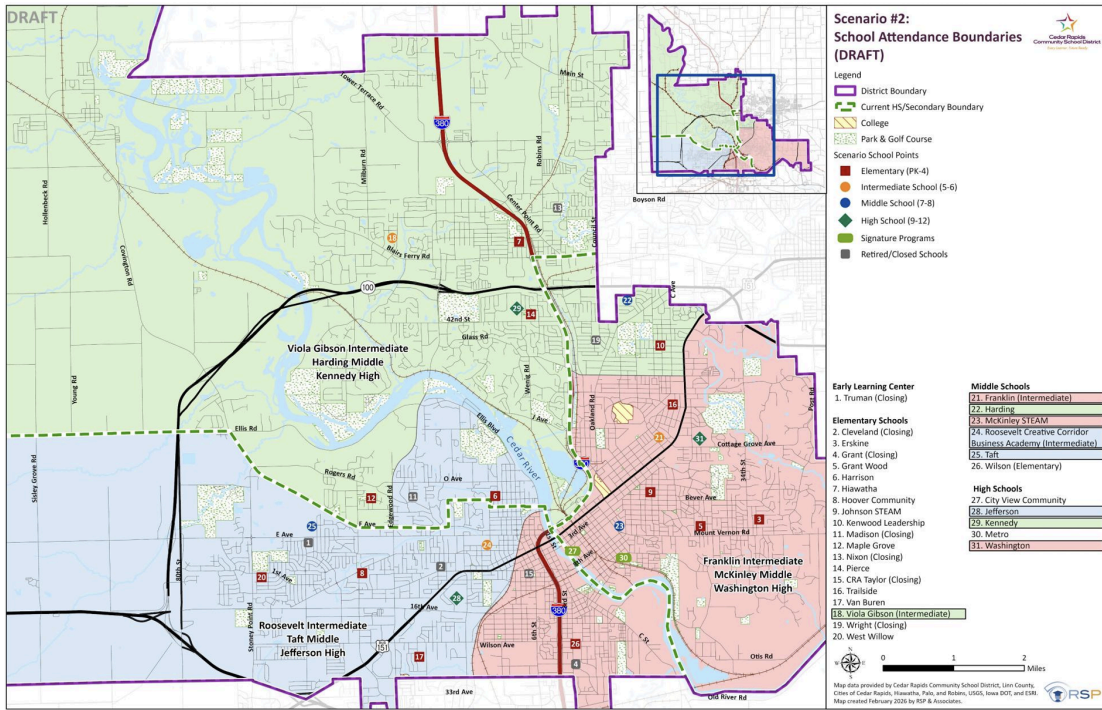
This recommendation directly addresses the Board's criteria regarding geographic location and enrollment sustainability. The boundary analysis, conducted in partnership with RSP, tested a wide range of community-suggested adjustments. Time and again, the data showed that even modest deviations from Scenario #2 produced dramatic instability: some buildings pushed to 100% capacity while others fell to 50%. Scenario #2 represents the most balanced and sustainable configuration the data supports.

We also encourage the Board to consider a regular review cycle for school boundaries, so the district can adapt proactively to demographic shifts rather than reactively to crisis. This directly supports the Board's criterion for long-term facilities planning.

Elementary Boundary Map:



Intermediate, Middle, and High School Boundary Map:



Addressing Operational Efficiency and Fiscal Stewardship

We recognize that one of the most difficult aspects of this recommendation involves the consolidation of school buildings. We do not take this lightly, and we understand the deep community ties that exist with every school in this district. These are not decisions anyone on SPEC made with ease.

At the same time, the Board's resolution required SPEC to evaluate the fiscal stewardship of District funds. The reality of CRCSD's enrollment trends and state funding landscape makes clear that we cannot sustainably maintain all of our current facilities. To be responsible for the long-term use of taxpayer resources, establish true feeder patterns, and achieve better enrollment balance, we recommend closing the following elementary buildings: Wright, Cedar River Academy, Cleveland, Grant, and Nixon. Consolidation is not about closing doors; it is about concentrating our resources where they can have the greatest impact on students. The savings realized through consolidation can be reinvested into high-quality programming, competitive teacher salaries, and robust student support that every CRCSD student deserves.

As part of this work, SPEC also recommends the conversion of Viola Gibson Elementary into an Intermediate School. This decision was also weighed heavily with extensive options considered. With Viola Gibson being centrally located within the Area 3 attendance zone, its sufficient building capacity, and its relatively modest renovation requirements (\$250,000–\$400,000) make it the strongest available option for a 5th and 6th grade hub in that area. While it will not stay an elementary school, the students will still get to experience this great school in 5th and 6th grade. The school's configuration will change, but the heart and legacy that Viola Gibson brings to the community will remain.

Our Commitment Going Forward

SPEC was formed to do hard work responsibly, putting our individual benefits aside and focusing on what is best for the district as a whole, and we believe we have done that. This recommendation reflects the full weight of months of research, data analysis, scenario modeling, community listening, and honest deliberation guided at every step by the Board's resolution.

We are presenting this to the Board not as a conclusion, but as the beginning of the next chapter for CRCSD. We remain committed to supporting the ongoing work, including the continued development of a long-term Facilities Plan, to ensure this district provides safe, modern, and inspiring learning environments to continue to create Every Learner Future Ready.

We look forward to presenting our recommendation to the Board of Education on Monday, April 27.

Sincerely,

Kate Weber and Jaymie McGrath

Strategic Plan Executive Committee Co-Chairs

SPEC Committee Members:

Jason Kline (Co-Chair)

Joslin Hanna (Co-Chair)

Marty Hoeger

Danielle Monthei

Dave Markward

Tyler Turner

Barb Solberg

Kris Gulick

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Mike Moran

Sarah Hale Keusman

Andy Seyfer

Scott Drzycimski

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Stephen Probert

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Charlie Goetz

