Shorewood School District

September 24, 2026

Community Conversation

Open Enrollment









Welcome

Abby Fowler
President, Board of Education

Tonight's Agenda

- Purpose & Background on Long-Term Financial Sustainability

- Open enrollment (OE)
  - A legal perspective - Attorney Tess O'Brien-Heinzen
  - SSD data & research
  - District OE strategy & considerations

- Community questions & input

- Exit ticket

Access the slideshow

Purpose

- Build a shared understanding of Wisconsin's Open Enrollment (OE) program and its implications for Shorewood;
- Explore how OE intersects with the District’s long-term financial sustainability work;
- Hear community perspectives to inform the Board's ongoing deliberations.





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.





Tax burden

Rising costs

Enrollment changes

State funding & School choice



Accountability & Compliance

Community expectations

Student needs

Long-term sustainability

2025-2030 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.



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.

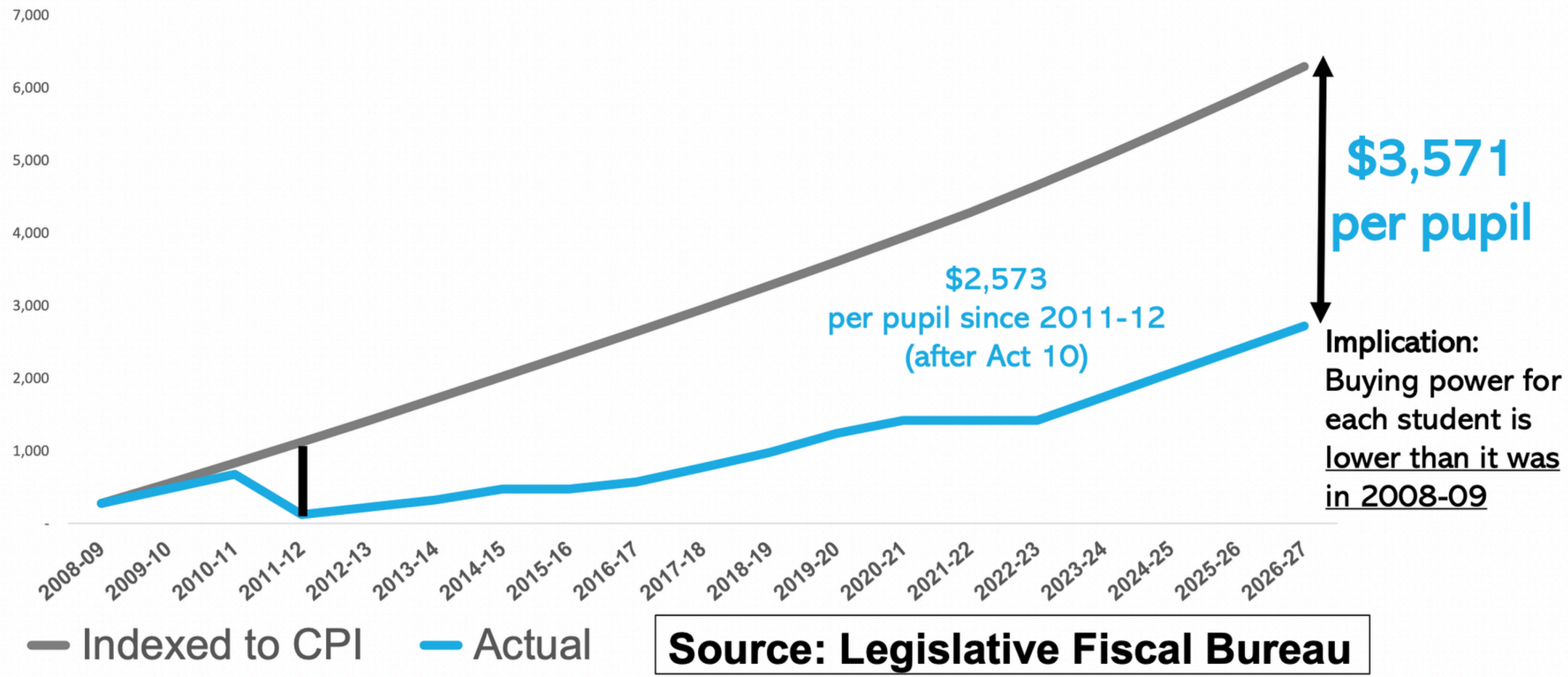


4 OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

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.

Wisconsin Per Pupil Funding

Cumulative annual adjustments in **general school district revenues per pupil** lag **inflation** by nearly $3,600 since 2009



Operating Referendum Impact

Even with an ongoing $5.5M/year operating referendum, deficits are projected to grow.

Current amount = **$5.5M/year**

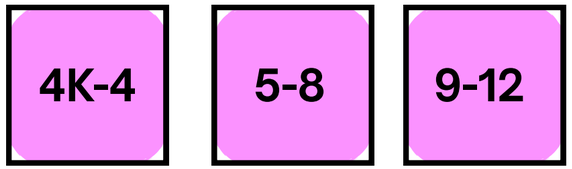
Projected need 2028-2032 = **Up to $7M+/year**

Our long-term financial sustainability work will help determine the magnitude of a future operating referendum in 2028.

Task Force: School Configuration Models

~40-member Task Force convened from January to May 2026 to review different school configuration scenarios and evaluate them against a set of criteria:

Three-School Model



Enrollment: 1,904

OE: 306/16%
OE starts at grade 5; Possible reduction in current OE seats

Reduction in operating costs: $1.5M-$2M/year

Three-School Model

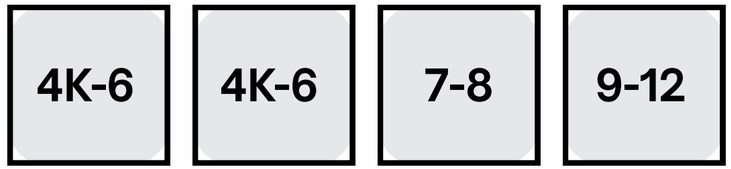


Enrollment: 1,636

OE: 39/2%
No new seats; Possible reduction in current OE seats

Reduction in operating costs: $1.75M-$2.5M/year

Four-School Model



Enrollment: 1,906

OE: 220/12%

Reduction in operating costs: N/A

Task Force materials from spring 2026 are available on the District website under the Community tab.

Long-Term Financial Sustainability Work

Ongoing conversations in 2026-27:

Remaining Questions:

- Open enrollment
- Walkability
- Middle school experience
- High school size
- Reliance on future referenda

Considerations for the School Board:

- Third Friday count
- Open Enrollment Presentation - September 24
- Original Budget approval - October 27
- Gubernatorial election implications
- 2027-29 State Biennium Budget

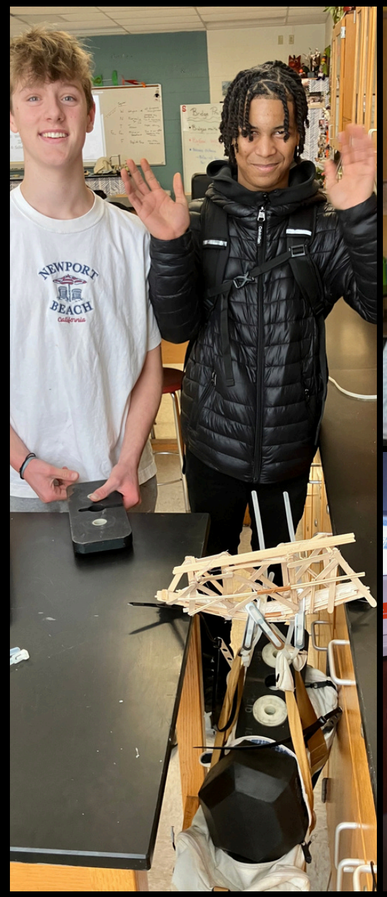






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About Enrollment...







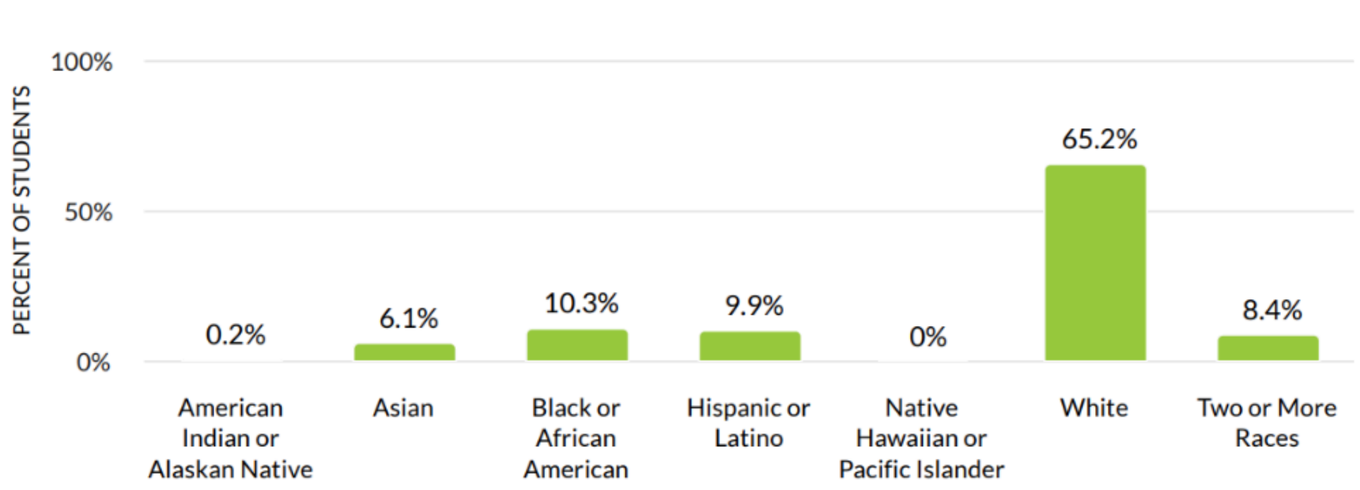
- Enrollment changes throughout the year (almost every day);
- Students’ residency status may change within a year and/or throughout their educational journey;
- Student needs guide educational supports.

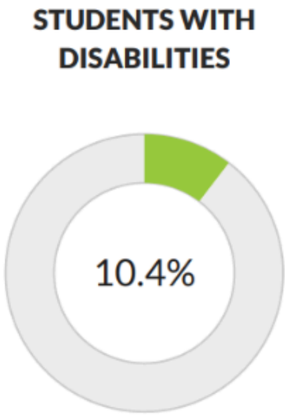
Who We Serve

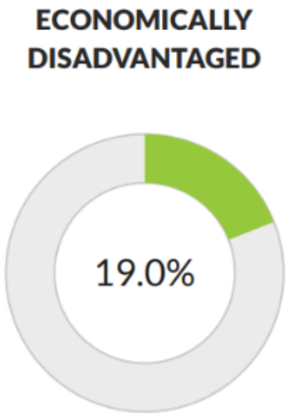
~1,900
Students

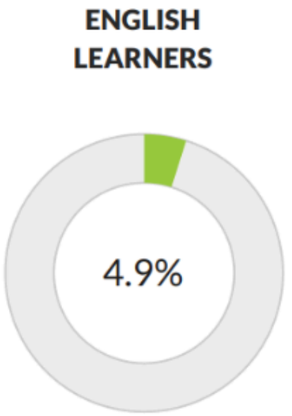
99%
Graduation Rate

35+
Languages spoken









Open Enrollment Total: 2026-27*

SSD total enrollment: ~1,900

194 Open enrolled students
10.4% of total enrollment

- Average of **16.2** open enrolled students per grade level;
- Almost **25%** of current OE students previously attended as residents.

*Preliminary figures prior to Third Friday Count

Open Enrollment: A Legal Perspective

Attorney Tess O’Brien-Heinzen
Renning, Lewis & Lacy

Open Enrollment

- Two Forms of Open Enrollment:
  - Regular Open Enrollment – Students apply in the Spring for the following school year.
  - Alternative Open Enrollment – Students may apply any time but only available for circumstances listed by statute.
  - Open Enrollment is open to Any Wisconsin Resident
  - **A student attending a public school in a nonresident school district has all of the rights and privileges of pupils residing in the district and is subject to the same rules and regulations as pupils residing in the district.**

January Board Meeting

- School boards must adopt space limitations for general and special education during their January board meeting.
  - Based on projected enrollment, caseloads, and student/staff ratios.
- Special education space limits are set by service or program.
  - Based on the manner in which the district provides the program or service.
    - All services/programs the nonresident district contracts with a third-party are considered unavailable. If the District wants to accept applications for students needing these services, the Board needs to identify space.
    - Any service/program in which the nonresident district would need to hire staff to provide is unavailable.
- The Board's January determinations are applicable to new applications.

Permissive Decision Criteria

- Established by Board Policy.
  - Availability of space in the schools, programs, classes, or grades within the nonresident school district (by grade).
  - Whether the pupil has been expelled from school by any school district during the current or 2 preceding school years or whether a disciplinary proceeding involving the pupil is pending for any of the following reasons:
    - Conveying a bomb threat;
    - Engaging in contact at school that endangers the health safety, or property of other;
    - Engaging in conduct while not at school that endangers the health, safety, or property of others at school; or
    - Possessing a dangerous weapon at school.

Permissive Decision Criteria

- Whether the nonresident school board determined that the pupil was habitually truant from the nonresident school district during any semester of attendance at the nonresident school district in the current or previous school year.
- Whether the special education or related services described in the child's IEP are available in the nonresident school district or whether there is space available to provide the special education or related services established by the nonresident school board.
- Whether the child has been referred or identified as potentially eligible for special education but not yet evaluated by an IEP team appointed by the resident school district.

Random Lottery

- If applications exceed the number of available seats the District must conduct a random lottery.
- The lottery must be conducted by grade level.
- Preferences in the lottery must be given to:
  - Currently attending students
  - Siblings of currently attending students
- The Board may grant guarantees to currently attending students and siblings at the January Board meeting.
- **There are no other preferences or guarantees allowed under the law.**

Regular Application Approval/Denial

- The school district's decision cannot be arbitrary or capricious.
- The school district must follow its space limitations consistently.
- The school district's denial letter must specify which criteria the school district relied upon to deny the application.
- Parent may appeal district's denial.
- The school district is limited to the reasons stated in the denial letter if the student or parent appeals to DPI.

Open Enrollment – School Assignment

- Open enrollment applicants apply to the school district not specific schools within a school district.
  - A nonresident school district is not required to honor a request for a specific school.
  - School assignment is not appealable to DPI.

Open Enrollment – Post Decision

- A nonresident district may reverse a prior acceptance before the student begins attending if the Board determines the student is under an order of expulsion or was previously in the last two years.
- A nonresident district may create a waiting list for student whose applications were rejected. Students may be accepted from the waiting list up to the 3rd Thursday in September, but only if the student will be in attendance on the 3rd Friday count.

Alternative Open Enrollment: Basis for Application

- The student has been the victim of a violent criminal offense.
- The student has been a homeless pupil in the current or immediately proceeding school year.
- The student was the victim of repeated bullying or harassment and the bullying or harassment continues despite the student reporting it to the resident school district.
- The student's residency has changed due to military orders.
- The student recently moved into Wisconsin.

Alternative Open Enrollment: Basis for Application

- The student's residency changed due to a court order, custody agreement, or placement in foster care.
- The parent and the nonresident school district agree that attending the nonresident school district is in the student's best interests.

Alternative Application Approval/Denial

- Generally, the nonresident school district may apply the same decisional criteria to alternative applications as it applies to regular applications.
- The nonresident school district's application of space limitations depends on when it receives the alternative application.
- Decisions on alternative applications are not appealable.

Automatic Termination

- Open enrollment automatically terminates when:
  - The student withdraws.
  - The student moves into the nonresident school district.
  - The student enrolls in and attends any other public, private, or home-based school.
  - The student is no longer a resident of Wisconsin.
  - The student does not attend by the 3rd Friday count or within 15 days.

Permissive Termination

- Habitual Truancy – Nonresident district may terminate open enrollment for the succeeding semester or school year when a student is determined to be habitually truant.
- Expulsion - The nonresident district may terminate open enrollment if the student is expelled from the District.

Termination - Special Education

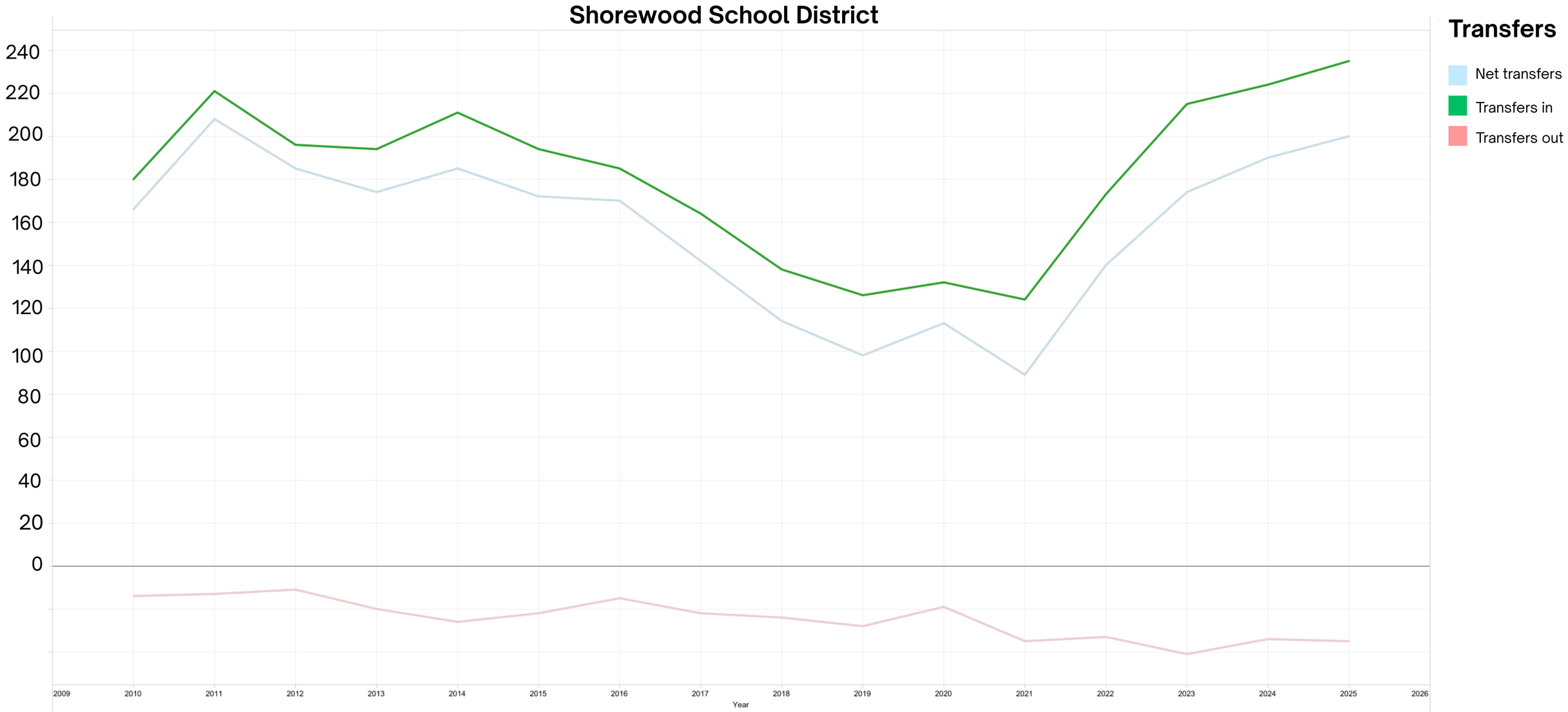
- Open enrollment may be terminated by the nonresident school district if an IEP for the student is developed or revised after the student begins attending the school district and the special education or related services are unavailable or lack space.
  - Developed means written and parent consents to the initial provision of services.
  - Revision must include the service or program that is unavailable or lacks space.

Chapter 220 & Open Enrollment Comparison

	Chapter 220	Open Enrollment
Established	1974; No new students admitted after 2015-16	1998 to present
Primary Purpose	Voluntary racial/cultural integration	Allow families to apply to a non-resident school district
Geographic Scope	Greater Milwaukee Area	Statewide
Enrollment Considerations	Integration goals & program-specific requirements	Statewide-eligibility, application & admissions requirements; local approval of seats
Transportation	Provided through inter-district agreements	Families generally responsible with some exceptions
Funding Structure	Integration aid formula for participating districts	Set per-pupil transfer amount

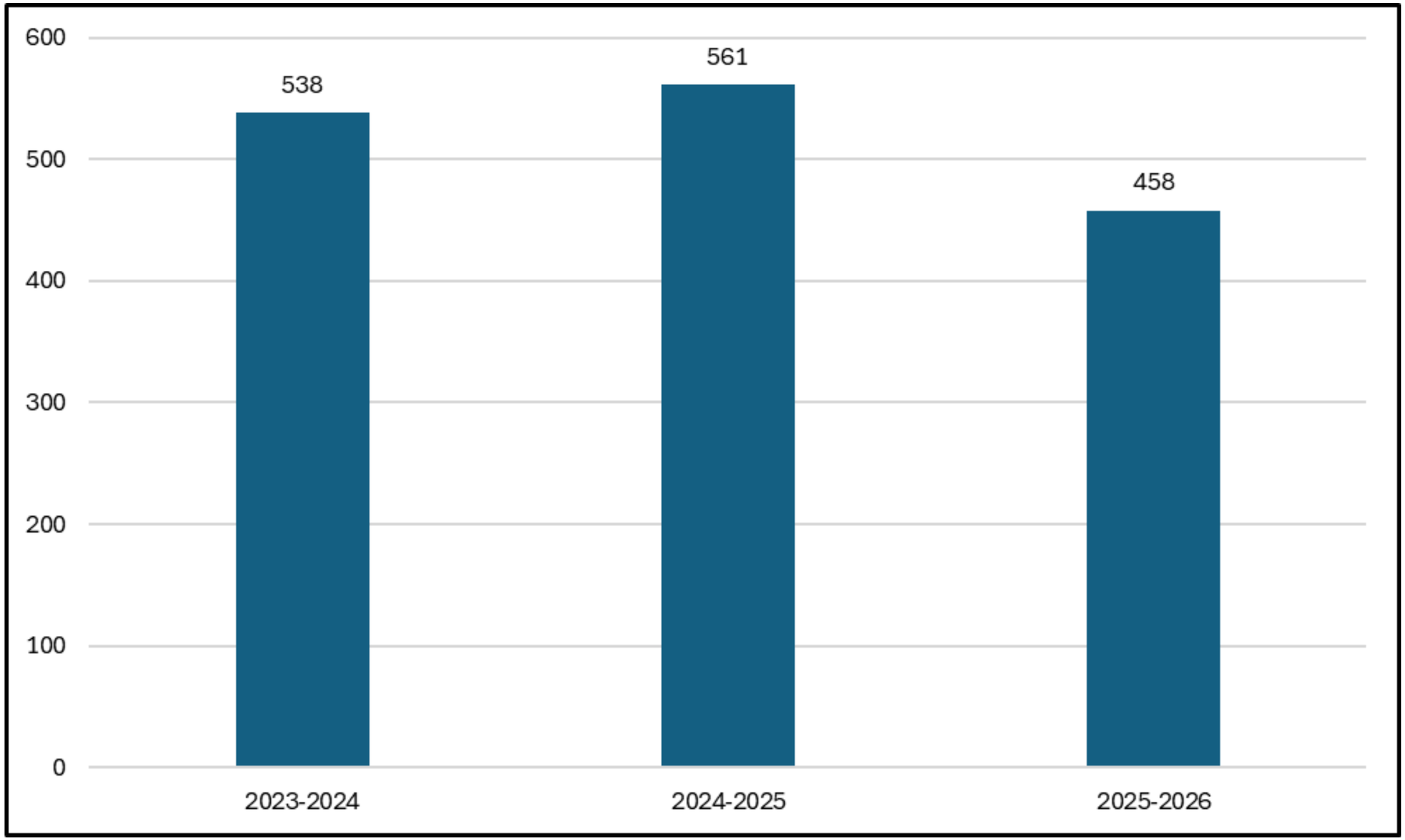
Open Enrollment: SSD Data

Open Enrollment Trends: 2010-2025*



*Source: WI DPI

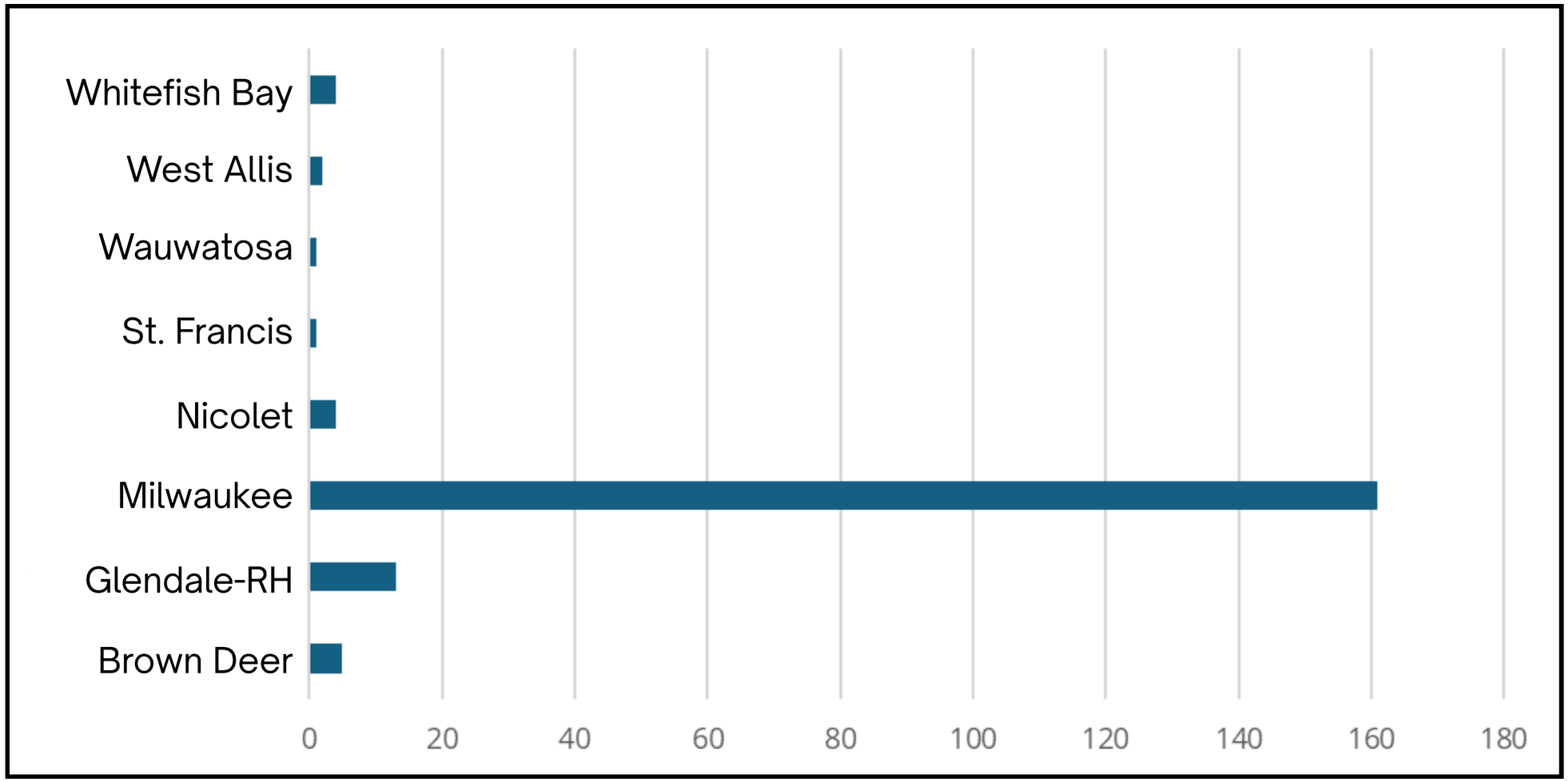
Total OE Applications by Year



The School Board approved 3 new OE seats in January 2026

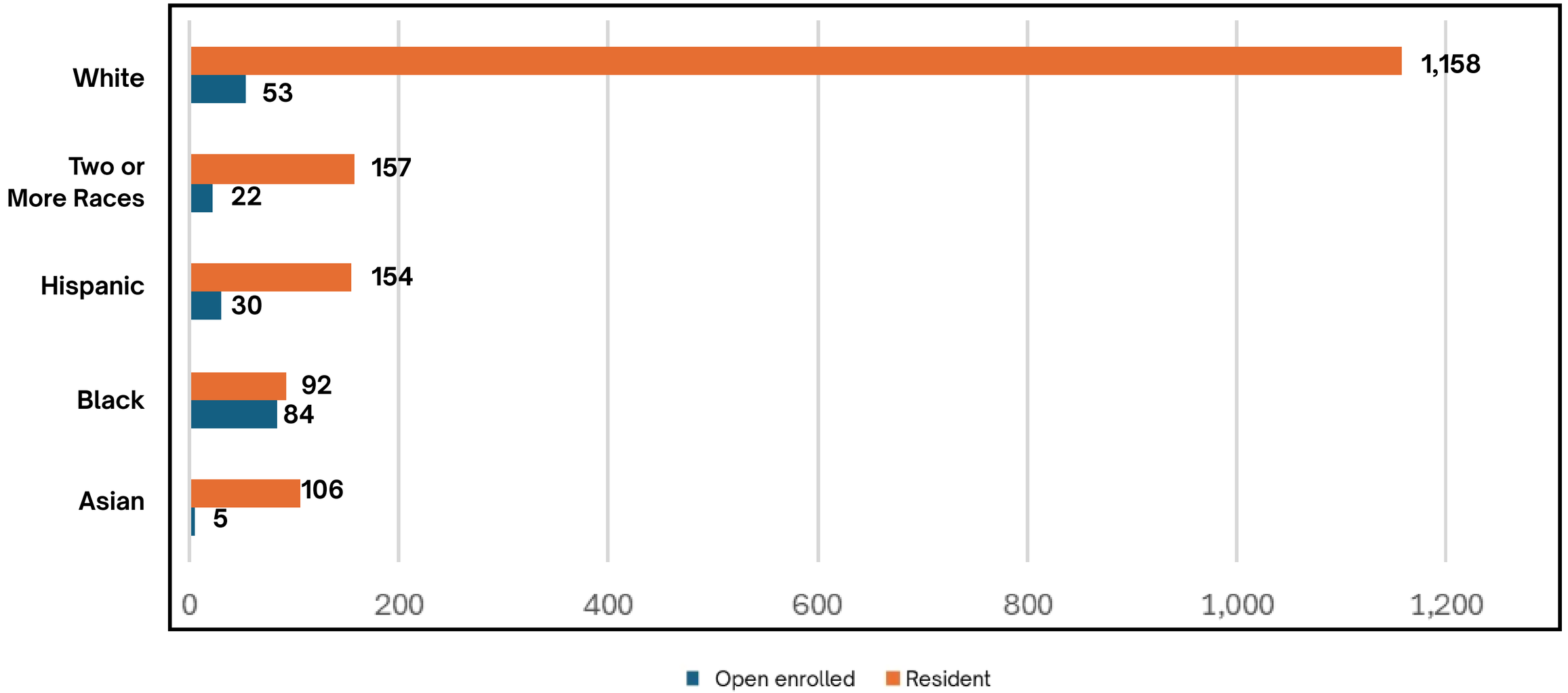
We tend to receive the highest numbers of OE applications for seats in 5K, 6th grade, and 9th grade

Where OE Students Come From*



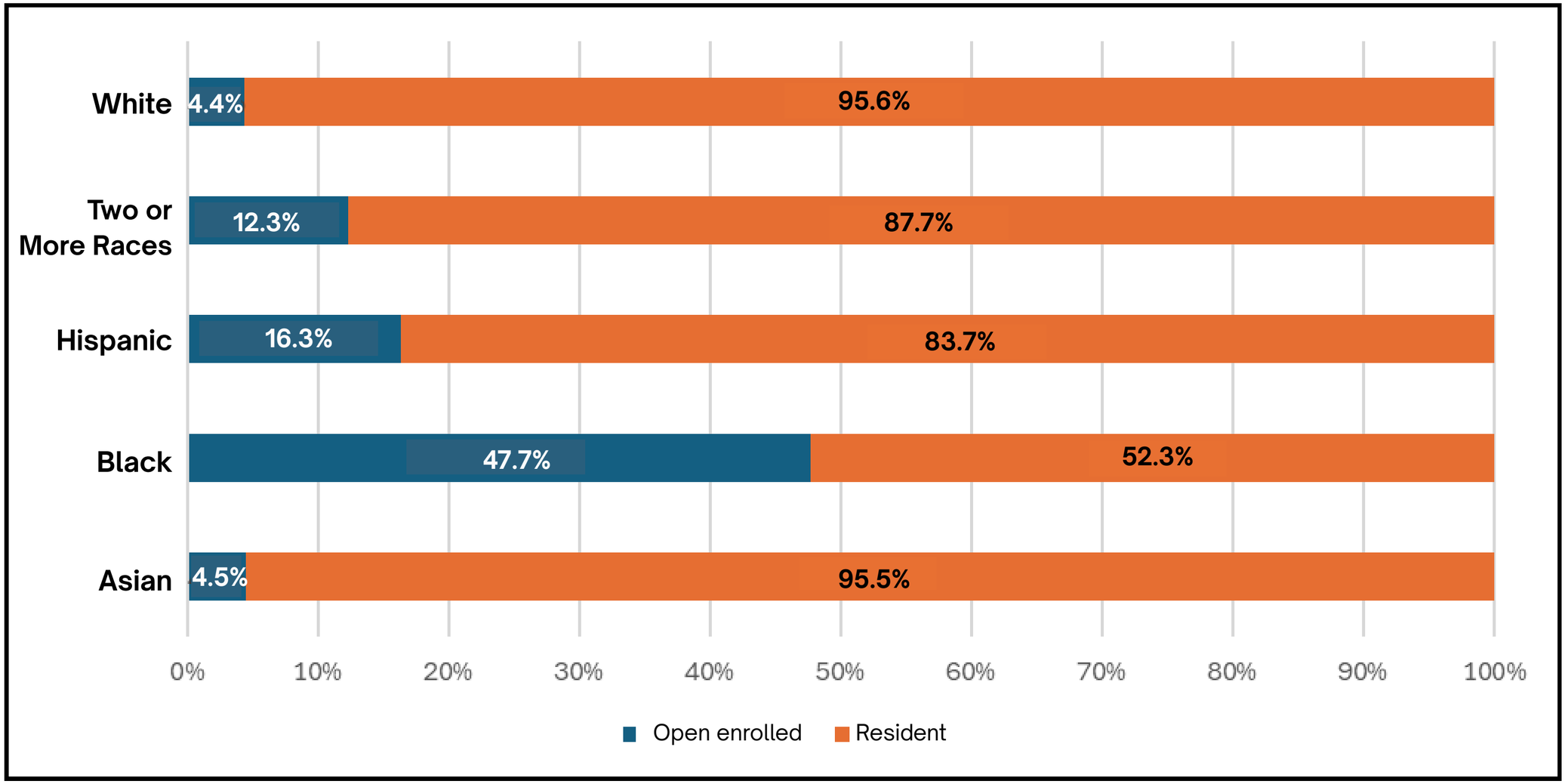
*Preliminary figures prior to Third Friday Count

Race/Ethnicity: OE Student Count*



*Preliminary figures prior to Third Friday Count

Race/Ethnicity: OE v. Resident (% Group)*



*Preliminary figures prior to 3rd Friday Count

Open Enrollment Demographics

Metric	Open Enrolled	Resident
% Special Education	8.8%	9.3%
% Multilingual Learner	2.1%	3.8%
% Students of Color	72.7%	30.7%
% Female	49.0%	50.4%
Avg. Years in District	4.8	5.3

*Preliminary figures prior to Third Friday Count

Open Enrollment: Research Findings (2025)

District Academic Performance & Enrollment

- Districts with higher accountability scores generally experienced more favorable OE patterns.
- The study does not establish why individual families choose particular districts.

OE & Academic Outcomes

- No statistically significant relationship was found between net OE transfers and subsequent district accountability scores.
- Gaining students through OE was not associated with measurable improvements in district academic performance.
- The study did not establish that incoming OE students lowered district academic performance.

District Characteristics & Enrollment

- Districts with higher percentages of Black and Hispanic students tended to experience less favorable net OE patterns.
- Districts with higher per-pupil revenue limits tended to experience more favorable enrollment patterns.
- Urban districts generally experienced less favorable net transfers than districts in other geographic classifications.

Ford, M. R. (2025). Wisconsin's open enrollment program: Student transfers and district academic performance. *Journal of School Choice*, 19(3), 471–490. https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2024.2429187

Open Enrollment & Academic Performance

- DPI does not track student outcomes to enrollment status;
- OE v. Resident status does not factor into the annual DPI Report Card;
- SSD also does not track this data point;
- Enrollment is fluid:
  - At different points in their education, the same student could be a resident or open enrolled;
  - We monitor student learning and provide academic and social emotional supports based on individual student needs, not where a student resides.

Open Enrollment: District Strategy & Considerations

Open Enrollment - Financial Impact

OE Per Pupil Reimbursement Rates for 2026-27:

$11,030
Per pupil

$14,882
Students with IEPs

7%
of SSD's projected general fund revenue

Can provide a net benefit
when additional students can be served with no or minimal additional staffing.

Can be net negative or neutral
when additional students trigger significant staffing needs or impact required physical space and number of schools.

Cohort Size & Staffing

Impact of Different Cohort Sizes

Example: 125 Students in Grade 5

Average target class size in grades 1-12*: 25

Scenario 1

5 sections of 25

Teacher cost per student =

$4,200

Scenario 2

6 sections of 21

Teacher cost per student =

$5,000

+$106,000 per section

*Smaller in lower grades; Does not include PE or Performing Arts classes

Class Sizes & Staffing

Case Study: Lake Bluff Grade 2

Goal: “Goldilocks” class sizes
Target Class Size: 22 students

Scenario 1

- 51 Resident Students
- 3 Sections = 17/section
- 2 Sections = 26/section

Scenario 2

- 51 Resident + 11 OE Students
- 3 Sections = 21/section

+$121,300 in open enrollment revenue

The additional revenue from open enrollment covers the cost of the third section teacher and allows for lower class sizes than would otherwise be affordable.

Limitation: Revenue covers the cost of the third classroom teacher, but not other services.

*Sections may be stand alone single age classes or the number of grade-level students within a multi-age classroom

Future Considerations

As the Board continues its work, several questions remain:

- How should Open Enrollment factor into long-term financial sustainability?
- How might different enrollment strategies affect staffing, class sizes, and educational programs?
- **What matters most to our community as the Board weighs these considerations?**

Community Input

We need to hear from you.



Community Agreements

We hold these agreements to make this a productive and respectful space for everyone.
Please state your name.

Share the Air

Wait for at least five others to speak before returning to the mic. Many perspectives deserve to be heard tonight.

Speak from Your Own Experience

Use "I" statements. Share your own perspective, not what "everyone" thinks or what you've heard others say.

Assume Positive Intent

Everyone in this room cares about Shorewood's students and community. Extend good faith to those whose views differ from yours.

Be Concise & Make Space

Keep comments focused so more voices can be heard. Tonight is not a debate, but rather a contribution to a broader process.

Civil & Honest Dialogue

You can disagree and you should share your truth. Do so with respect for the people in the room and for the difficulty of this work.

Focus on Helping the Board

The goal tonight is to give the Board a clear, honest picture of community priorities and values, not to convince your neighbors.

Questions/Comments are limited to one minute per person.

Community Input - Three Parts

Part One: 5 minutes

Turn & Talk

Use this time to:

- Name what stood out to you from the information presented;
- Identify clarifying questions or talking points.

Part Two: 10 minutes

Clarifying Questions

- This is a time for information, not persuasion.
- Ask brief clarifying questions to ensure everyone shares a common understanding of the facts;
- Questions should seek clarification - not make arguments or advocate for a position.

Part Three: 25 minutes

Community Input

Share your perspective and what matters to you. Help your elected officials understand where you stand:

- Thoughts on open enrollment;
- What you believe is most important for students, families, and the long-term health of the District.

Thank you!

- Watch for more opportunities to engage with us!
- Please scan the QR code to provide us with additional input.

Exit Ticket







Resources

- DPI Open Enrollment Report 2024-25
- OE/Chapter 220 Research articles & information





