TULSA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Staff Report

Update on Upcoming Board Resolution Recommendations

September 8, 2026

ABOUT
OUR DISTRICT

TULSA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MISSION

Our students lead through literacy, are empowered through experience, and contribute to their community.

VISION

We honor the diversity, creativity, and passion of our students, elevating every student to be designers of their destiny.

The July 27 Board Resolution requires that we bring forward recommendations by October 19 for financial savings of at least $12M while prioritizing access to opportunities for students across the district.

OUR COMMITMENTS

We are focused on what students need and deserve in every school, consistently across the district, to continue to accelerate student outcomes and opportunities.

Our vision prioritizes access to programs, stable staffing, enrichment, supports, and student readiness for academic success.

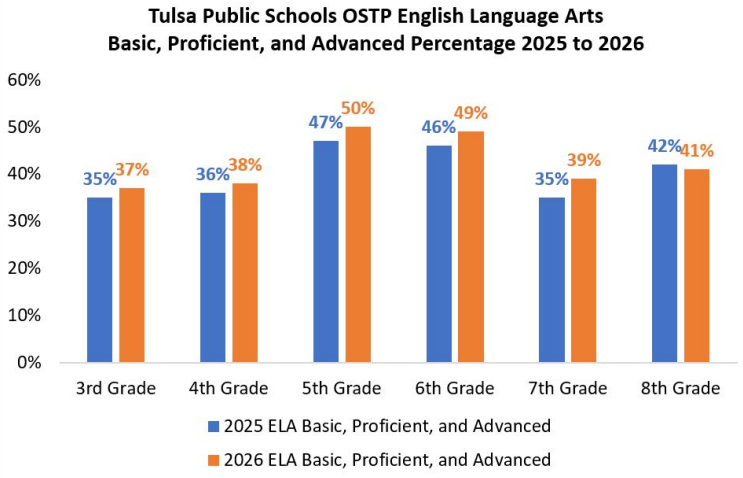
We must make thoughtful, long-term decisions that protect what students need most to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

TPS is improving, but our current model is not delivering the experience every student deserves.

Opportunity to accelerate improvement

- We have made progress - literacy and math results have risen across grades over the last three years, even as statewide scores slipped.
- Our current financial model prevents us from making the investments additional improvements require.

The actions we take will provide an opportunity to build a stronger, more sustainable future for Tulsa Public Schools students.



We have spent the past 12+ months engaging with students, staff, and community to clarify our aspirations for TPS.

What should be true across TPS

Every student:

- Belongs and feels supported
- Builds strong foundational skills
- Sees a meaningful future and pathway
- Has access to high-quality experiences and opportunities

Every teacher:

- Belongs to a strong community of peers
- Feels valued, respected, and proud of their contributions
- Has the tools/support to succeed
- Can build a sustainable career

Over 50 community engagement sessions

1,000+ survey responses

5 cross-functional summer working groups

We know where additional investments can make a pronounced difference.

Re-investing in key opportunities

Reaching our aspirations for students and teachers requires investments beyond what our current resources can sustain/support

- Elementary students with guaranteed music, art, and PE teachers
- 3rd grade reading bill student supports like teacher assistants, reading specialists and additional classroom resources
- Teacher compensation reform
- Opportunities for out of school time learning
- Additional teacher supports for novice teachers

Reductions for 27-28 are an important step to bring our expenses into alignment with our revenue. This will require ongoing attention over the coming years.

A challenge and an opportunity

Our district will approach this challenge as an opportunity to think differently about our portfolio of schools:

- How can we continue to improve offerings for our current students and families?
- Where can we expand seats for in-demand programs?
- Where can we be strategic in seeking out additional sources of revenue?
- How else can we better deploy our staff and resources to serve young people?

We have already taken significant steps to reduce costs.

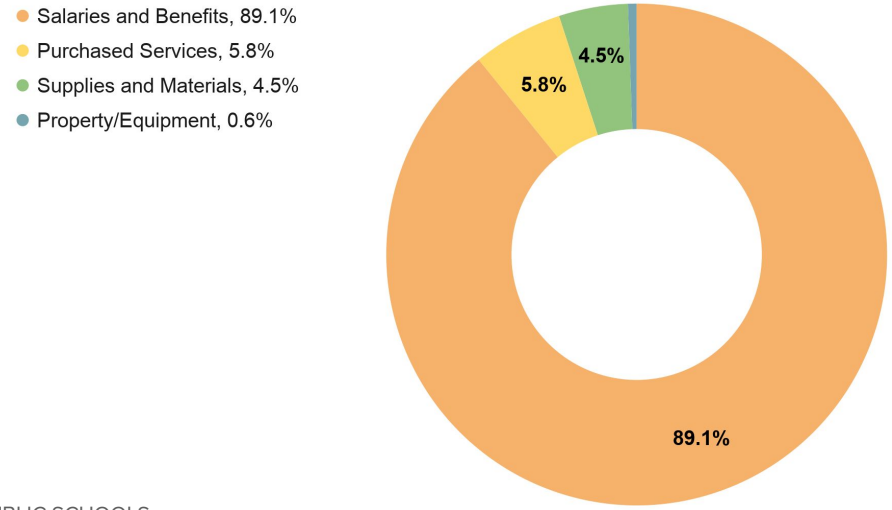
Ongoing cost reduction efforts

- Eliminating or significantly reducing contracts
  - From FY24 to FY26, we've reduced spending by $5.4 million
- Realizing $1.7M in department budget savings
- Eliminated district office positions (both filled and unfilled)
- Continuing to ensure consistent implementation of school site staffing plan
  - Our school staffing plan ensures that the number of positions at school sites scales with the number of students enrolled, special caseloads, and the number of buildings.
- Ongoing intentional use of various funding sources
  - Shifting all child nutrition program costs to child nutrition fund
  - Shifting applicable insurance coverages to building fund
  - Utilizing applicable bond funds for appropriate software and curriculum purchases
  - Sunsetting certain services to outside entities to reduce internal infrastructure spend

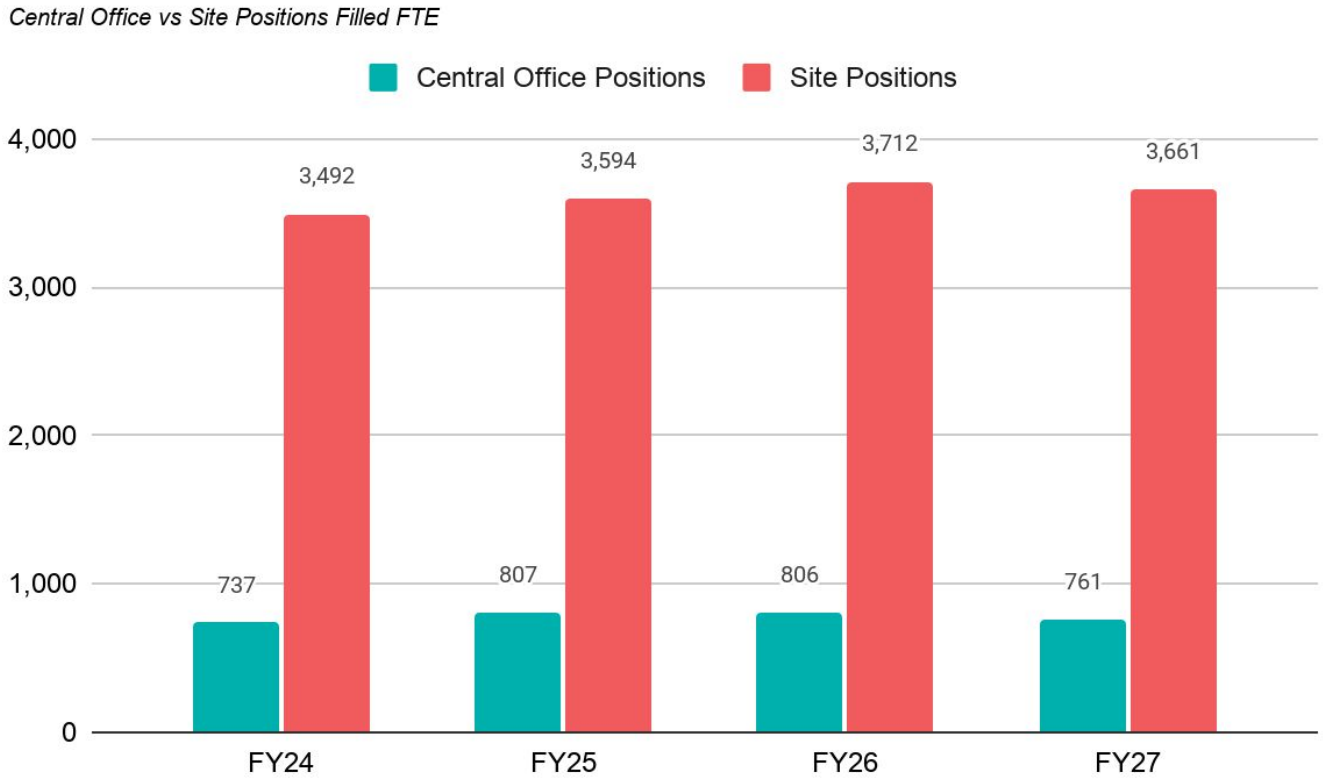
These budget reduction efforts have protected the general fund and enabled us to devote a greater portion of our dollars toward staff salaries/benefits.

Nearly 90% of our general fund goes toward people.

2025-2026 General Fund Expenditures



Our budget reduction efforts have made a difference in our ability to invest in staff. We have increased the portion of our general fund going toward salaries and benefits from 80% in 2021 to 89% today.



Most of our staffing costs are at schools, so meaningful structural savings ultimately require decisions about how we organize schools. We also will need to continually assess all staffing levels.

The size of our workforce remains out of alignment with our student enrollment, relative to comparison districts.

Size of workforce relative to student count

Peer FTE per 1,000 Students

District	School Year				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Broken Arrow	119.0	113.9	114.8	121.1	126.4
Moore	122.8	116.1	115.9	117.0	123.8
Oklahoma City	127.7	150.9	146.1	145.8	135.8
Owasso	117.8	110.2	114.9	117.7	123.4
Putnam City	130.6	129.5	119.5	123.6	125.6
Tulsa	**139.4**	**137.4**	**132.6**	**137.6**	**146.9**
Union	126.6	125.7	128.1	131.9	129.8

Even with a net reduction in district office roles earlier this spring, TPS remains overstaffed compared to other Oklahoma districts.

Our current school structure creates large gaps and differences in students' experience.

Site experiences vary by size

Compared to larger elementary schools, on average small schools have:

- Lower student attendance
- Lower academic growth
- Less access to both art and music
- Suspension rates 2.25x higher
- 49% of students experience a teacher in their first 2 years of teaching (vs. 42% at larger sites)
- Fewer teachers with 5+ years of experience

Small schools have dedicated staff who work intentionally to boost student outcomes. Still, small school structures make it harder to provide an ideal experience for all students while creating conditions to support all teachers.

	Average of smallest elem. schools	Average of largest elem. schools
Student Enrollment	~370	~670
Core Teacher Allocations	18	29
Specials Teachers	2.5	4
Additional Staff		+1 counselor, asst. principal, clerk
Title $ Investments	$240K	$475K
Cost per pupil*	$11,695	$9,594

Site experiences vary by size

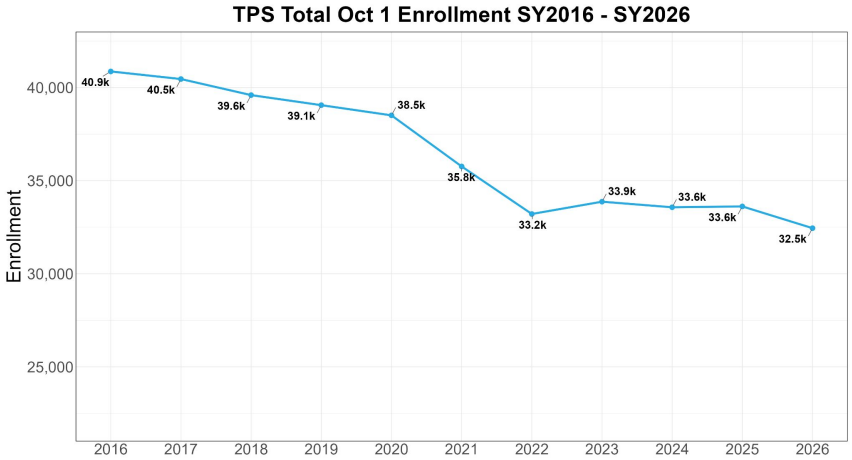
Small enrollment coupled with class size requirements result in different staffing situations. It is also less resource efficient, resulting in a gap of over $2,000/pupil between our smallest and largest elementary schools.

Planning for the future, we are operating at far more capacity than our enrollment projections can sustainably support.

Even our most optimistic projections suggest sustaining - not increasing - enrollment over the coming 5-10 years.

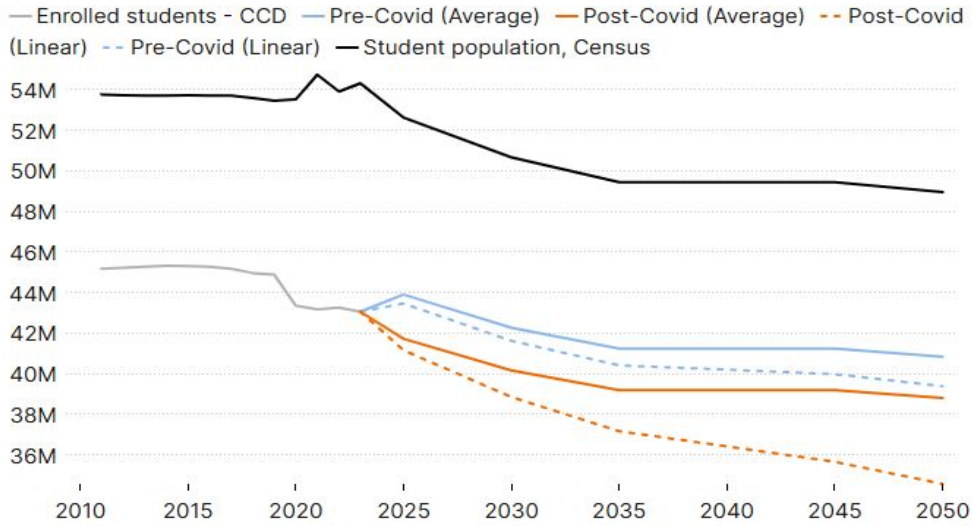
Enrollment versus capacity

Traditional Site Enrollment and Building Capacity	
Elementary 17,426 students (25-26) 28,936 available seats **60% building usage** 34 of 45 sites are under 80% usage (25 at or below 60%)	**Secondary** 13,388 students (25-26) 17,324 available seats **77% building usage** 9 of 16 sites are under 80% usage (3 at or below 60%)



These regional trends are mirrored at the national level, with national declines in school age children predicted through 2050.

Projected national public school enrollment, in millions



Long-term enrollment trends

In Tulsa Public Schools, the average annual rate of decline is 1.6%.

"In practical terms, our estimates suggest that districts could potentially face declines of roughly 2.91 to 6.59 million fewer students over the next quarter century."

Brookings Institute (Council et al., 2025)

We are using consistent criteria to manage our budget and inform recommendations to the Board.

Budget criteria

District-wide investments:

- Ongoing review of contracts and vendor services
- Cabinet-level approval of all new positions and filling of vacancies
- Utilization of appropriate funding sources
  - Maximizing bond investments
  - Stronger use of building fund
  - Prioritization of Title funds for personnel not travel

School site investments:

- School enrollment and neighborhood population trends
- Facility capacity and future feasibility
- Resources and opportunities available for students
- Geographic location and proximity to students and/or other school sites

We must make choices that accelerate student outcomes.

Yet, every option we explored impacts school sites and many significantly impact student learning.

Budget options

Considered options include:

- **Closing and consolidating small schools**
- **Increasing class sizes**
  - Elementary (currently 24:1 and 28:1)
  - Middle (currently 29:1)
  - High (currently 33:1)
- **Freezing salaries for all employees**
- **Reducing access to services and programs:**
  - counseling / tutoring / wrap-around
  - field trips
  - athletic and fine arts
- **Reducing transportation availability**
  - Discontinue transportation for magnet programs
  - Increase student walking radius (currently 1.5 miles for elementary and 2.0 miles for secondary)

Looking ahead, we will work to inform our stakeholders and hear about their questions and desired supports for any 27-28 school year transitions.

Next steps

- This staff report presented at September 8 Board meeting
- Planning Information Sessions:
  - 9/9 and 9/18
- Recommendations presented at September 21 Board meeting
- Community Information Sessions:
  - 9/29, 10/6, 10/8, 10/12, 10/14
- October 19 anticipated Board vote on recommendations

PLANNING INFORMATION SESSIONS

Tulsa Public Schools is planning responsibly for the future so every student, in every neighborhood, has access to a well-resourced school experience. With an unwavering focus on student success, TPS must make thoughtful, long-term decisions that protect what students need most to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. We invite community members to join us to learn more about the many factors that go into planning and preparing for the future.

SESSION 1:
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 - 5:30-6:30 PM
Wilson Teaching and Learning
(2710 E. 11th St.)

SESSION 2:
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 - 5:30-6:30 PM
Education Service Center - Selman Room
(3027 S. New Haven Ave.)

COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS

As you look ahead to navigating changes for the 2027-28 school year, join district team members to share your questions and needs for the upcoming school year. Participants will be invited to itemize their priorities for district resources, including the services and opportunities they want and need for success in the coming years.

SESSION 1:
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29 - 5:30-6:30 PM
Martin Regional Library
(2601 S. Garnett Rd.)

SESSION 2:
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6 - 5:30-6:30 PM
Bronson Brookside Library
(4607 S. Madison Pl.)

SESSION 3:
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8 - 5:30-6:30 PM
Parent Resource Center
(525 E. 46th St. N.)

SESSION 4:
MONDAY, OCTOBER 12 - 5:30-6:30 PM
Central Library - Downtown
(400 Civic Center)

SESSION 5:
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14 - 5:30-6:30 PM
Zarrow Regional Library
(2224 W. 51st St.)

These events are not affiliated in any way with the Tulsa City-County Library. The Library neither sponsors nor endorses this event, the speaker(s) or the organization.

Asks for board members

Thank you for your support

- What other factors should we consider as we review site and district investments?
- What additional information would you expect us to bring as part of the recommendations we will share on September 21?