

Northshore School District

Enrollment and Demographics Community Input Survey September 21, 2026

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Executive Summary

School districts regularly review enrollment patterns, demographic shifts, school building conditions, boundaries, and the impact of new residential development to ensure they are making thoughtful, long-term decisions in support of our students and families. Northshore School District (NSD) distributed the *Enrollment and Demographics Input Survey* as part of a comprehensive review of these factors in the spring of 2026.

The survey was completed by 2,144 individuals. Respondents were students (405 responses), family members (1,385 responses), staff members (344 responses), and community members (10 responses). Respondents had multiple places where they could provide written feedback.

Supporting student access to the programs they need at their schools was identified as one of the most important themes. Another important theme was keeping travel time to schools reasonable. The size of the school was generally viewed as less important. To the degree that school size did matter, students tended to see developing larger schools as more important whereas staff members tended to see maintaining smaller schools as more important.

About half of the respondents across all groups feel relatively uninformed about NSD's projected student enrollment and demographics. The most prominent theme regarding an effective process is to explain clearly and transparently why enrollment-related changes might be necessary. Some respondents asked for this type of explanation explicitly, but the expressed disappointment or anger shared in the comments underscores the deeper need for explanation.

Some respondents want an iterative process, so they can weigh in at different points if necessary. Many individuals expressed a desire to keep current student groupings together (e.g., all Grade 5 students at an existing school) and to minimize the impact on students and families. Some respondents asked for a grandfathering policy to avoid specific kinds of disruption like moving students in their final year at a particular school.

This report summarizes the comments by theme and provides comments as examples. Readers should know that Northshore has considered, and will continue to consider, every comment provided in response to the *Enrollment and Demographics Input Survey*. Community feedback is essential to guiding the process of identifying possible solutions to address the district's enrollment challenges.

1. Background and Survey Methodology

Northshore School District might need to adjust neighborhood schools to respond to demographic changes in our community. The district distributed a survey to gather community feedback about these potential changes. This report summarizes the feedback received.

Survey

The *Enrollment and Demographics Input Survey* was distributed and available to Northshore families, secondary students, and staff from June 4 through June 10, 2026. The survey was distributed via ParentSquare – the district's multilingual communication tool (i.e., email and text) and the ParentSquare mobile application. The Northshore *Connections* newsletter, distributed on June 16, included a reminder about the opportunity to complete the survey.

Demographics. The first item of the survey asked respondents to describe their connection to NSD. Potential responses were *Student*, *Family*, *Staff member* and *Community member/partner*. Subsequent survey items were adapted based on the indicated role.

Students were asked to share what school they attend, their race/ethnicity, their home language, current grade level, enrollment in services or programs, and home zip codes. Family members were asked to share what schools their child or children currently attend, their race/ethnicity, home language, in what grades their child or children were enrolled, the services or programs their child or children receive, and their home zip codes. Staff members were asked to share their more specific role (e.g., teacher, librarian, transportation), at which locations they work, and their race/ethnicity. Community members were asked to share the schools or district sites to which they are connected and their race/ethnicity.

Items soliciting information about race/ethnicity used the federal government's seven categories as well as a prefer not to respond option and a self-description option. The survey solicited information about respondents to help Northshore understand whether the people responding to the survey reflected our community more broadly and if there are any differences in responses across specific groups that need to be considered. The survey was anonymous.

Survey Items. The demographic items were followed by survey items that focused on the importance of different outcomes associated with potential changes to address the district's enrollment challenges.

The first item asked respondents to rate the importance of seven dimensions related to schools: (1) *Walking distance or a short travel time to school*; (2) *Building condition and facilities*; (3) *Specific program offerings (e.g., Dual Language, Special Education, Highly Capable services, Music, Visual and Performing Arts, Athletics, Clubs, Advanced Placement/IB, CTE)*; (4) *Keeping students from the same neighborhood together from elementary to high school*; (5) *Diversity of the student body*; (6) *Smaller school community feel*; (7) *Larger school which enables more programs to be offered at the school*. Potential responses to each of these dimensions and their designated numerical equivalents were: *Not at all important* (1); *Slightly important* (2); *Moderately important* (3); *Important* (4); and *Extremely important* (5). This item also offered an "Other" response which allowed respondents to provide written responses.

The second item asked: *If the district determines neighborhood school changes are necessary to respond to demographic shifts, which factors should be prioritized? (Please identify your top four)*. The 11 responses that could be selected were: *Walkability*; *Reasonable travel time to school*; *Building condition*; *Smaller school community feel*; *Larger school which enables more programs to be offered at the school*; *Minimizing the number of students who would change schools*; *Keeping specific neighborhoods together*; *Stable boundaries that won't change again in the near future*; *Cost and operational efficiency for the district and schools*; *Students have access to most of their educational programs and services close to home*; *Minimize use of portable classrooms*. This item also included an "Other" response that allowed a written response.

The third item asked: *"How informed do you feel about NSD's projected student enrollment and demographics?"* Potential responses and their designated numerical equivalents were: *Not at all informed* (1); *Slightly informed* (2); *Moderately informed* (3); *Informed* (4); *Very informed* (5).

The fourth item asked: *"What would help you feel confident that potential recommendations about school boundaries, facilities, or programs are made transparently and fairly?"* This item was followed by an open-ended response.

The fifth item asked respondents to describe what a supportive experience would look like. This item was adapted by role to refer to (1) *students and their friends*, (2) *family members*, (3) *staff members and colleagues*, or (4) *community members*. This item was followed by an open-ended response.

The sixth and final item asked: *Is there anything else you want the district staff or the School Board to know related to enrollment and demographic shifts?* This item was followed by an open-ended response.

Participation

The survey generated 2,144 responses (Responses by role: *Student* = 405; *Family* = 1,385; *Staff member* = 344; *Community member/partner* = 10). Results involving community members are limited due to the small sample size.

Students. Student responses were primarily associated with middle and high schools: *Bothell High School* = 13.8%; *Canyon Park Middle School* = 3.5%; *Inglemoor High School* = 7.7%;

Innovation Lab High School = 1.2%; Kenmore Middle School = 4.7%; Leota Middle School = 6.9%; North Creek High School = 12.1%; Northshore Middle School = 5.2%; Skyview Middle School = 9.9%; Timbercrest Middle School = 4.2%; Woodinville High School = 5.2%). The remaining responses were spread across elementary schools, Adults Transitioning to Independence, Northshore Learning Options, and Secondary Academy for Success. Student responses were distributed across race/ethnicity categories (*American Indian or Alaska Native = 1.7%; Asian 33.3%; Black or African American = 1.5%; Hispanic or Latino = 5.9%; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander = 1.0%; White = 39.3%; Two or More = 12.8%; Prefer not to respond = 3.7%).* The majority of reported home languages were *English (60.5%), Chinese-Simplified (4.7%), Spanish (4.7%), Telugu (4.4%), and Hindi (4.2%).* Student responses about grade levels were mostly spread across secondary levels ($N = 306$; 80.1% of those providing responses). Students reported receiving many services and programs with *Highly Capable* services being the most common. Reported zip codes were consistent with expectations, and reflected a representative sampling of students from across the district

Family members. Family respondents reported having a child or children across all of Northshore's schools; there were too many combinations of school affiliations to report them here. Family responses were distributed across race/ethnicity categories (*American Indian or Alaska Native = 0.2%; Asian = 23.2%; Black or African American = 1.2%; Hispanic or Latino = 3.6%; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander = 0.4%; White = 58.3%; Two or More = 7.1%; Prefer not to respond = 5.4%).* Family respondents reported the most common home language as *English (78.3%)* followed by *Telugu (2.3%), Chinese-Simplified (2.2%) Spanish (2.2%), Tamil (2.1%), and Hindi (2.0%).* Family respondents indicated having students ranging from pre-kindergarten to Grade 12. Family respondents also reported that their students were associated with a wide variety of programs and services.

Staff members. Staff members reported having a wide variety of specific roles in Northshore (e.g., bus driver, paraeducator, teacher, assistant principal, principal, counselor, etc.). Staff members reported connections across all Northshore schools. Staff member responses were distributed across race/ethnicity categories (*American Indian or Alaska Native = 0.3%; Asian = 6.1%; Black or African American = 0.3%; Hispanic or Latino = 3.8%; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander = 0.3%; White = 73.8%; Two or More = 3.5%; Prefer not to respond = 11.0%).*

Community members. The small number of community members identified connections with 12 different Northshore schools ranging from elementary to high school. Community members reported their race/ethnicity as *Asian (40.0%), Hispanic or Latino (10.0%), White (40.0%),* or they indicated that they *Prefer not to respond (10.0%).*

2. Survey Results

Importance of Outcomes Related to Potential School Changes

Table 1 shows the average response for the importance of items related to neighborhood school changes disaggregated by the role of the respondent. Recall that respondents rated these items on a scale ranging from *Not at all important (1)* to *Extremely*

important (5). Respondents rated each of these items independently meaning that they could rate all of them as not at all important or as extremely important. For each group, the highest-rated item has been shaded in green, and the lowest-rated item has been shaded in gray.

Table 1: Importance Ratings by Respondent Role Disaggregated by Community Role				
Item	Students <i>M</i>	Families <i>M</i>	Staff <i>M</i>	Community <i>M</i>
Walking distance or short travel time	3.18	3.45	3.40	3.00
Building condition and facilities	3.88	4.04	4.25	3.90
Specific program offerings	4.33	4.36	4.13	4.00
Keeping neighborhoods together	3.39	3.62	3.56	3.40
Diversity of student body	3.54	3.46	3.75	3.30
Smaller school and community	2.74	3.28	3.45	3.20
Larger school and programs	3.46	3.21	2.96	3.30

Table 1 shows that most items were rated on average as being between *moderately important* and *important*. Schools providing specific program offerings was easily the most important outcome. Students clearly preferred larger schools that offer more programs and provided the lowest ratings for smaller schools. Staff provided opposing results by preferring smaller schools to larger ones. Additional written feedback suggests that staff might have less enthusiasm for larger schools because they associate larger schools with overcrowded schools.

One drawback to the items presented in Table 1 is that respondents can circumvent the difficult choices a school district must make by indicating that everything is important. Indeed, respondents who rated one item as more important tended to rate the other items as more important. Using all participants, 20 of the 21 correlations between the items were positive, meaning that participants tended to rate everything higher or lower; the only exception was that rating the smaller school option as more important weakly predicted reporting the larger school option as less important ($r = -0.079$).

The following survey item required respondents to make choices about the relative importance of 11 items. Table 2 shows the percentage of times that each of the 11 items was selected by respondents as one of the top four priorities related to potential school boundary changes. The most frequently included item is highlighted in green.

Table 2: Percentage of Top Four Inclusion for Each Item Disaggregated by Community Role				
Item	Students %	Families %	Staff %	Community %
Walkability	20.7%	14.3%	12.8%	20.0%
Travel time to school	59.0%	63.8%	57.8%	60.0%
Building condition	38.8%	33.3%	39.8%	10.0%
Smaller school community feel	11.4%	17.6%	19.2%	10.0%
Larger school and programs	34.8%	23.2%	13.1%	30.0%
Minimizing students changing schools	38.0%	44.3%	32.0%	30.0%
Keeping neighborhoods together	24.4%	31.6%	27.9%	10.0%
Stable boundaries	34.3%	41.3%	42.7%	30.0%
Cost and operational efficiency	23.0%	20.4%	38.1%	20.0%
Student access to programs and services	37.3%	49.5%	48.3%	70.0%
Minimizing use of portables	18.0%	20.1%	28.8%	10.0%

The results provided in Table 2 show that travel time to school was easily the most included item among top four preferences. Reasonable travel time appears more important in Table 2 than it does in Table 1. This change is likely due to the separation of walkability and short travel time into separate items, which suggests that walking distance is not terribly important to our community, but reasonable travel time is. Table 2 also reiterates community members' desire to have the programs that students need at their local schools. An obvious challenge for Northshore is a polarization between the desire for reasonable travel time which suggests more smaller schools closer to home and the desire for increasing the programs and services available at each school which suggests a smaller number of larger schools.

Table 2 also shows that respondents prioritized minimizing the ongoing disruption associated with school boundary changes. Stable boundaries and minimizing the number of students changing schools were strongly endorsed items. Northshore students, families, and staff also endorsed the importance of nice building conditions.

Additional feedback about the importance of factors related to potential neighborhood school changes (the items in Table 1) can be found in open-ended responses associated with the "Other" option:

- **Specific programs and services.** Much of the written feedback reinforced the importance of access to specific programs and services. This feedback spanned a wide variety of programs. Highly capable service was frequently mentioned with some comments expressing concern about integration and some comments expressing support for integration. Respondents occasionally questioned whether having larger schools was necessary to provide more programs and services at each school. Respondents occasionally expressed that they thought small schools were important at the elementary level, but large schools were more appropriate for the secondary level.
- **Medium-sized schools.** Commentors occasionally expressed support for medium-sized schools probably in part because only large and small schools were provided as options in the survey.

- **Broader political beliefs.** Some comments stated or implied that Northshore was too politically liberal or not sufficiently politically liberal.
- **Tier 1 education.** Many of the comments reiterated themes about the importance of offering excellent education. This sentiment sometimes referred to a desire for smaller class sizes and safe environments.
- **Diversity.** The value of diversity and equity was a frequent theme.
- **Keeping kids together.** Respondents sometimes expressed their desire that student cohorts could stay together as they transitioned through different school levels.

Respondents could also provide written comments about issues that were important to them using the “*Other*” response to the item about top four priorities (the items in Table 2). These responses were informative but generally paralleled the aforementioned themes.

The Process of Potential Neighborhood School Changes

The final portion of the survey focused on how informed Northshore members felt about potential changes to neighborhood schools.

Table 3 shows the percentage of responses to the scaled item about feeling informed disaggregated by role. Table 3 shows that over half of the respondents reported being *Not at all informed* or only *Slightly informed*.

Role	Number of Responses	Not at all informed %	Slightly informed %	Moderately informed %	Informed %	Very informed %
Student	392	37.5%	25.0%	21.2%	11.7%	4.6%
Family	1,377	30.3%	32.4%	24.0%	10.2%	3.1%
Staff member	340	20.6%	31.2%	29.7%	14.1%	4.4%
Community Member	10	30.0%	10.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%

Community feedback about how to support them through changes to neighborhood schools can be found in the open-ended responses about (1) factors that make the decision-making process appear fairer and more transparent and (2) the best way to support the community through enrollment changes. The responses to these items were thematically similar:

- **The problem to be solved.** Several respondents wrote explicitly that Northshore should explain why changes to school boundaries are necessary. Negative sentiment about this potential process also indicates a need to explain why changes are necessary.
- **Iterative process.** Several comments supported making the process iterative. One community member wrote “*Surprise changes are bad.*” The suggested iterative process often involved sharing with the community potential steps along the way and providing new opportunities for community feedback.

- **Lead time.** Several people asked for as much lead time as possible. One respondent suggested three years of lead time before changes would occur. Others provided shorter expectations.
- **Evidence-based.** Many comments referred to the need for a clear, evidence-based process. Coincidentally, the first response to this survey was a family member who asked for “*Clear communication of survey results.*” This report is part of that communication.
- **Grandfathering.** Many comments referred to grandfathering exemptions to enrollment changes. The proposed form of grandfathering took different forms.
 - One form involved allowing students to keep their original feeder pattern for a period of time. A narrow form of this proposal limited grandfathering to students who were in the last year of their current school (e.g., seniors). A slightly broader version extended grandfathering to students who were already attending certain schools. A particularly strong version of this proposal was that Kindergartners should be allowed to keep their original feeder pattern until they graduated, meaning that enrollment changes would take course over 13 years.
 - Another proposed form of grandfathering involved property ownership. These comments occasionally expressed concern about the sacrifices families make to purchase property zoned to particular schools.
 - Another form of grandfathering involved allowing siblings to continue at the same schools.
- **Budget-driven.** Comments occasionally lamented Northshore considering these issues for budgetary reasons.
- **District and school alignment.** Several comments referred to the importance of school communication in addition to district communication. This train of thought included not letting district communication get ahead of school communication and potentially leaving some of the more sensitive communication to school communities.
- **Maps.** Several comments emphasized the need for maps to help understand existing boundaries and potential changes. Many comments provided a way to anticipate concerns that would be elicited by maps: Some examples: (1) Why are some commutes longer than others? (2) Was traffic congestion considered? (3) How does Northshore balance street travel versus “as the crow flies” proximity?
- **Amount of communication.** There were mixed feelings about the amount of communication. Most responses wanted frequent, multi-channeled communication to ensure nothing important was missed. A staff member wrote “*Excessive communication.*” A much smaller number of responses wanted less communication and referred to the existing volume of Northshore communication.
- **Dedicated place for information.** Comments occasionally referred to the benefits of having a dedicated place for information, like a dedicated presence on the Northshore School District webpage.
- **Email subject line.** An infrequent but potentially actionable theme involved concerns that big Northshore decisions were unintentionally or intentionally hidden in emails with misaligned subject lines.

- **Pre-existing levels of trust.** Comments sometimes expressed skepticism about district leadership managing the process in a fair and transparent manner. When these comments occurred, they sometimes referred to a previous process that they found disappointing. In contrast, comments were occasionally supportive about how the district manages this type of work. A few comments referred to decisions at other school districts that were perceived negatively.
- **School Resource Officer (SRO) Decision-Making Process.** The SRO program was mentioned at least once in 49 different open-ended responses. At times, these responses only expressed support for the program. At other times, respondents indicated that the decision to suspend the SRO program undermined their belief that Northshore genuinely cares about community voice.
- **School or program quality.** Comments infrequently expressed that community members should not have to move students to schools that were lower in quality. These comments generally did not offer a method for determining which Northshore schools were better than others. One comment referred to some schools being ranked lower than others without clarification of the ranking system. Comments sometimes expressed a similar concern about moving to a school where a specific program or service was lower in quality or non-existent.
- **Transportation.** Many comments referred to concerns about the length of travel and the importance of school day bussing and activity bussing.
- **Demographics.** A small number of respondents expressed some concern about the focus on demographics. I think the main concern was using demographics like race/ethnicity as part of the decision making rather than the whole student (e.g., *Why are we talking about demographics? You should be demographic blind*). In contrast, some respondents stated explicitly that Northshore should use demographics in their decision making.
- **Don't do it.** Comments infrequently suggested that changes were unacceptable under any circumstances. One comment indicated that closing a school will never be an acceptable option.

One major theme was noticeably more evident in responses to the supportive experience open-ended item specifically:

- **Becoming acquainted with the new school.** Many respondents described actions that would help them become acquainted with a new school if changes were necessary. These actions often mirror the procedures Northshore uses to help students navigate transitions across school levels. These comments sometimes mentioned getting to know the grounds and teachers before beginning school officially. These concerns were sometimes connected to students with special needs.

Differences Between Groups

I also examined differences between students, family members, and staff members. I excluded community members because the sample size was too small. I conducted a series of

statistical analyses that simultaneously compared how greatly these groups differed in responding to the seven options about the importance of factors related to potential changes. To be statistically transparent, I conducted seven one-way analysis of variance tests using role (student, family, and staff member) as the predictor variable and these seven items as individual outcome variables. The F values associated with the tests are provided below for those who are familiar with the statistical test.

The groups differed the most when responding about the importance of having a smaller school with a community feel ($F = 45.80$). This effect was driven primarily by students perceiving this issue as much less important than staff members did (Student average = 2.74; Staff member average = 3.45). Similarly, the groups differed considerably when responding about the importance of having larger schools ($F = 21.64$); students rated larger schools as more important (Average = 3.46) than did staff members (Average = 2.96). The groups also showed substantial differences when responding to the importance of school building conditions ($F = 18.96$), which staff members rated more important (Average = 4.25) than did family members (Average = 4.04) and students (Average = 3.88).

As always, it is important to remember that these results reflect average differences between groups and that these groups also overlapped in their responding.

3. Recommendations

The survey results provide actionable feedback. I organized recommendations into three categories: (1) General; (2) The Communication Process; and (3) The Decision-Making Process.

General

1. **Community voice.** Clarify for the community how their voice will be used in any school enrollment decision-making process.

The Communication Process

2. **Consistent location for information.** Maintain a single location that provides updates about the process and provides the history of communication.
3. **District and school communication.** The administrative center and schools must work together as part of a cohesive communication plan.
4. **Email subject lines.** Send important information with a subject line that identifies the information.

The Decision-Making Process

5. **Explain why.** It is essential that Northshore explain why any neighborhood school changes are necessary. Ideally, this communication would clarify how Northshore works to anticipate changes in our community to adapt more effectively. Explaining why is a major issue.
6. **Link changes to tangible benefits.** Some respondents reiterated broader themes about what they want to see in Northshore. This feedback, combined with other forms of community feedback, indicates that community members must understand how

changes are necessary to make Northshore stronger (e.g., increased student supports, excellent instruction, counselor availability, local program availability, nice facilities, etc.).

7. **Evidence-based.** Northshore communications should emphasize how decisions were based on evidence.
8. **Iterative process.** Give community members multiple opportunities to provide feedback – and potential influence – on the process. A community fear is a big band aid rip where they learn what the district has decided.
9. **Communicate polarities.** Northshore should communicate the diversity of opinion within our Northshore community. The feedback highlighted multiple areas where community members desire opposing outcomes:
 - a. Support for large schools versus small schools
 - b. Support for considering student demographics versus being demographic blind
 - c. The value of shorter travel times versus the costs associated with more schools
 - d. Support for specific programs or services at the expense of others
10. **Grandfathering polarity.** Describe how grandfathering was considered.
11. **Lead-time polarity.** Northshore should provide as much lead time for potential changes as possible while recognizing that lead time can conflict with the necessity to adapt more quickly.
12. **Share bad news.** Some community members express an unease that Northshore communication is distorted to serve Northshore’s purposes. This type of anxiety is challenging to dispel because it is difficult to demonstrate that genuine information is truly genuine when people distrust the process. Direct, authentic communication about Northshore successes *and* failures might increase confidence among some community members about the reliability of Northshore communications.
13. **School and program quality.** Improve communication about how Northshore considers school and program quality. It is entirely understandable that community members do not want to be forced to leave one school for a school that they perceive as lower in quality. That said, the notion of identifying one Northshore school as “better than” another is exceptionally difficult and likely to be counterproductive. School reputations are presumably built on building conditions and information provided by the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI; <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/>) like end-of-year standardized test scores, student demographics, attendance statistics, and so forth. This type of information is essential, but a school’s responsibility is to maximize student growth across each academic year. Furthermore, student growth takes different forms to include personal well-being, literacy, math, science, critical thinking, specific subject mastery, interpersonal skills, and so forth. That type of growth is not measured directly by building appearance or the information provided by OSPI. Every Northshore school creates this type of growth in different ways that are not necessarily easy to compare.