Board of Director Questions Related to School Closures as of 10/28/2026

Contents

Closure Site Selection Criteria, Process, and Rationale 1
Budget, Funding & Savings 5
Facilities & Future of Closed Sites 7
Boundaries & Transportation 8
Receiving Schools: Capacity and Class Size 10
Student Impact: Programs, Services & Outcomes 13
Staffing & Labor Relations 18
Transition Planning and Community Engagement 19
Board Process & Monitoring 23
Miscellaneous/Other 23

Closure Site Selection Criteria, Process, and Rationale

1. Why six closures? What objective analysis establishes that number?

The process began by establishing a baseline utilization rate across all 42 elementary schools, which was slightly above 60% based on 2025–2026 data. From that baseline, the district set a target of approximately 80% utilization for this round of closures.

To reach 80% would have required closing approximately 8-9 schools. This led to the public announcement of "up to 8" schools. The initial list identified 12 potential schools for closure consideration: Brush College, Candalaria, Cummings, Englewood, Liberty and Richmond, Grant, Highland, McKinley, Myers, Salem Heights and Washington.

Analysis of boundaries and neighboring schools then narrowed the recommendation to the current six, achieving slightly more than 71% district-wide utilization. Other elementary closures will need to be considered in the future, supported by capital investment to maintain equitable proximity.

2. Using the same selection criteria for 42 elementary schools, why these six schools?

Facility condition was a significant factor in narrowing the analysis to 12 schools and then to six. Candalaria, Englewood, Liberty, and Richmond are considered beyond economical repair and are beyond their useful life as school buildings. Highland and McKinley have similar facility

conditions but are not recommended for closure at this time due to equitable proximity concerns.

Enrollment decline by feeder pattern was also considered. The analysis identified a need to reduce capacity in the West Salem and McNary feeder areas. Within those feeders, Brush College and Cummings had less favorable educational qualities and conditions when compared with other schools in their respective feeder areas, leading to their inclusion among the six recommended closures.

3. For each closure, what is the strongest alternative and why was it rejected?

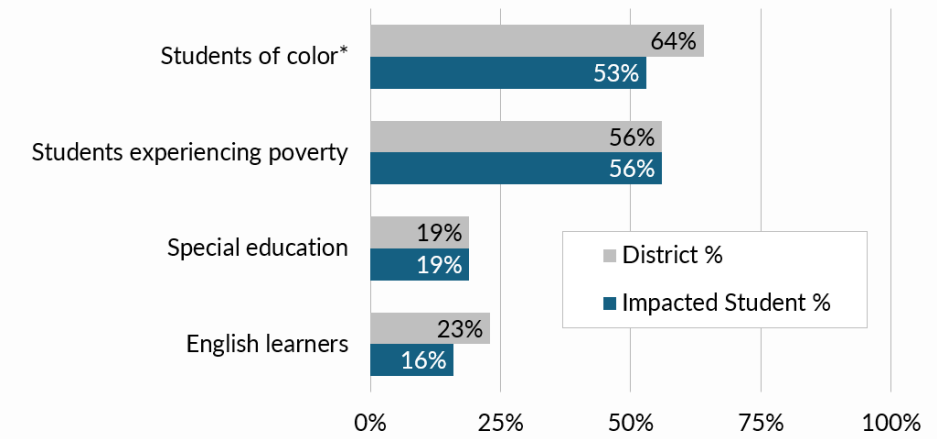
Each of the 12 schools that advanced beyond the initial site viability analysis was considered a potential closure site, including as an alternative to the six recommended. The analysis did not pair each recommended school with a single alternative; schools were evaluated within their feeder areas based on facility condition, enrollment, neighboring school capacity, and geographic proximity.

Enrollment declines and excess capacity affect the feeder areas to varying degrees, with the need to be less pronounced in the McKay feeder. As the analysis progressed, schools were removed from consideration when their facility condition, location, or role in maintaining reasonable proximity made them better candidates to remain open. For example, Highland and McKinley were excluded due to proximity considerations despite significant facility concerns.

The six recommended schools emerged from this comparative analysis, not from a predetermined list of one-for-one alternatives.

4. Who bears the burden? Would another closure combination reduce disproportionate impact?

In accordance with board policy, the current closure proposal does not “fail to consider disproportionate adverse impacts on any student population, especially the impact on historically marginalized and underserved student populations and neighborhoods.”



Impacts on key student groups were considered throughout the selection process to avoid disproportionate impacts on students at both closing and receiving schools. The recommended closures result in an equivalent or lower representation of these student groups than the districtwide average.

Equity will continue to be considered during the boundary process. If the Boundary Review Task Force considers different receiving schools or boundary configurations, the impact on these student groups will be evaluated.

5. Liberty and Cummings reportedly met only three viability indicators. How were they identified, and what led to their inclusion over other schools in their area?

Schools that met two or more site viability indicators advanced for further consideration. Thirty-four elementary schools met that initial threshold; additional review of the full site viability information, enrollment, and conditions within each feeder area narrowed the group to 12 sites for further consideration. The indicators were used as an initial screen, not as a scoring or ranking system. Once a school advanced, the full range of site viability information was considered, along with enrollment and conditions within its feeder area.

In the McNary feeder, Cummings was selected based on its facility condition relative to other schools in the feeder, including the building's age and the investment required to modernize it.

Similarly, Liberty compared less favorably with other schools in the Sprague feeder. Although Liberty scored well in educational adequacy, it still ranked lowest in that feeder. It also has significant accessibility issues, particularly in the cafeteria and library, which would require reconstruction (or possibly demolition) of that section of the building to fully address.

6. Is there an established process for considering other schools or alternative approaches before a final decision?

Adding a different or additional school to the recommendation would require further analysis and delay consideration beyond this year. Proposed boundaries or receiving schools can still be

evaluated through the boundary process without changing the schools recommended for closure.

7. Why did the utilization data change between the LRFP and the data the district posted related to closures?

The change from the April 2026 LRFP capacity numbers to the current capacity numbers is the result of a review during the summer of 2026 for greater precision in counting instructional spaces. Some rooms that were not included in the LRFP capacity numbers are now being counted. This reevaluation was completed to ensure precision in our methodology for establishing planning capacity for all schools.

The review also identified spaces that had been counted inconsistently or were previously reserved for specific purposes but are now available for instruction. The revised methodology applies the same approach across all elementary schools, with across-the-board adjustments for pre-K and special education classes.

8. What alternatives, including boundary adjustments, program consolidation, shared services, operational efficiencies, and targeted facility investments—were evaluated, and how do their financial and educational consequences compare with closure?

Boundary adjustments, grade span adjustments, and program consolidations

The core problem driving this school closure recommendation is systemwide declining enrollment. Alternatives that simply redistribute students across existing schools do not address excess infrastructure or unsustainable staffing. For example, converting a small elementary school into a K-8 may make the elementary school sustainable, but moving 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students would cause an equivalent enrollment crisis at the affected middle school.

Operational efficiencies and shared services

We know of no operational efficiencies that address declining enrollment.

Co-locating another organization or service in a school building can make use of underutilized space. However, it does not address our core problem: unsustainable school staffing. Empty classrooms might be put to better use, but Salem-Keizer still could not effectively staff the school.

Volunteer staffing

It is neither legal nor practical to rely on volunteers to serve as full-time teachers, counselors, instructional assistants, or behavior and reading specialists. While we appreciate every volunteer in our schools, they cannot substitute for full-time trained and licensed staff.

Targeted facilities improvements

Targeted facilities improvements may address some building deficiencies at the six recommended sites, but they do not change the core problem of declining enrollment and unsustainably small elementary schools.

Closing the six recommended schools can be achieved without major capital investment. Future closures and consolidation are still necessary but will need bond support to create replacement space, such as a new elementary school that consolidates two schools in subpar buildings.

Budget, Funding & Savings

9. What are the true net savings after transportation, transition, receiving-school costs, and other related expenses?

Salem-Keizer Public Schools estimates net savings of less than $1M per site, based on nominal staffing efficiencies and facility savings. Savings will be offset by additional transportation routes, one-time transition costs, and temporary supplemental staffing at some welcoming sites. Final estimates for net financial savings will not be possible until spring, when the district has a fuller picture of school-by-school 2027-2028 enrollment.

The financial rationale for school closures (as a response to declining enrollment) is not immediate savings, which are incidental compared to three more consequential goals: (1) mid-term and long-term staffing sustainability, (2) reducing the number of elementary schools with enrollment under 300, and (3) avoiding future facility maintenance and capital expenses.

Staffing Sustainability

Elementary schools with enrollment below 300 create a significant resource challenge. Each year, districts with small elementary schools face a stark choice:

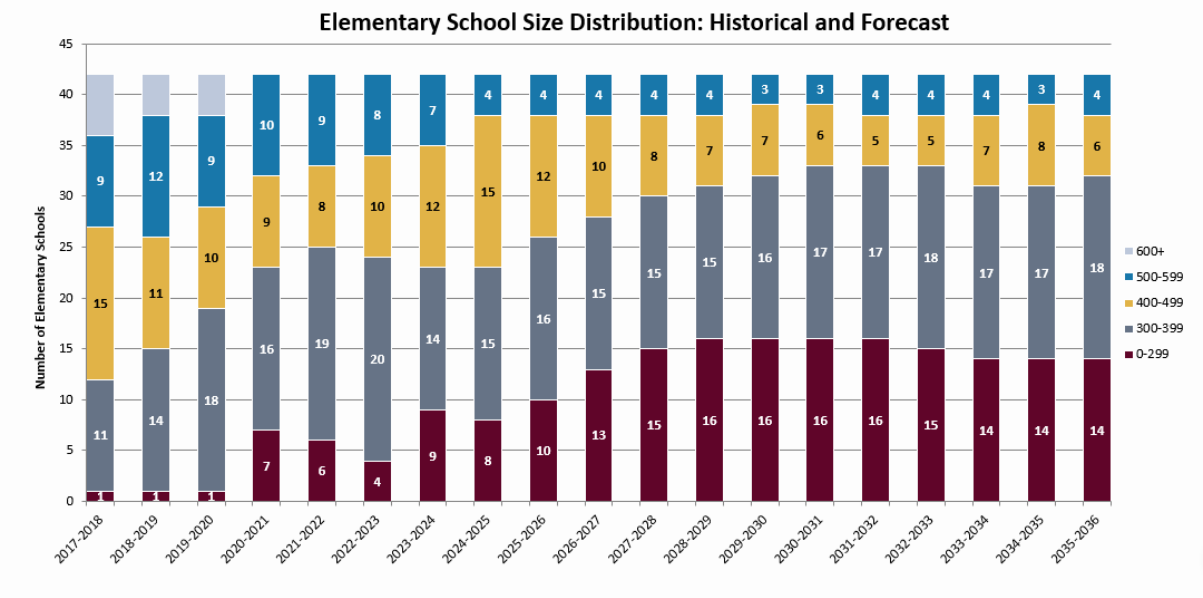
(1) Staff the school based on enrollment, leaving it with only partial allocations of the base staff assigned to all elementary schools (counselors, reading and behavior supports, office staff, and licensed teachers)
(2) Supplement the small school to provide the same base staffing as larger elementary schools.

For years, Salem-Keizer has chosen option 2. This is no longer possible. The image below illustrates the current and future staffing dilemma created by small elementary schools.

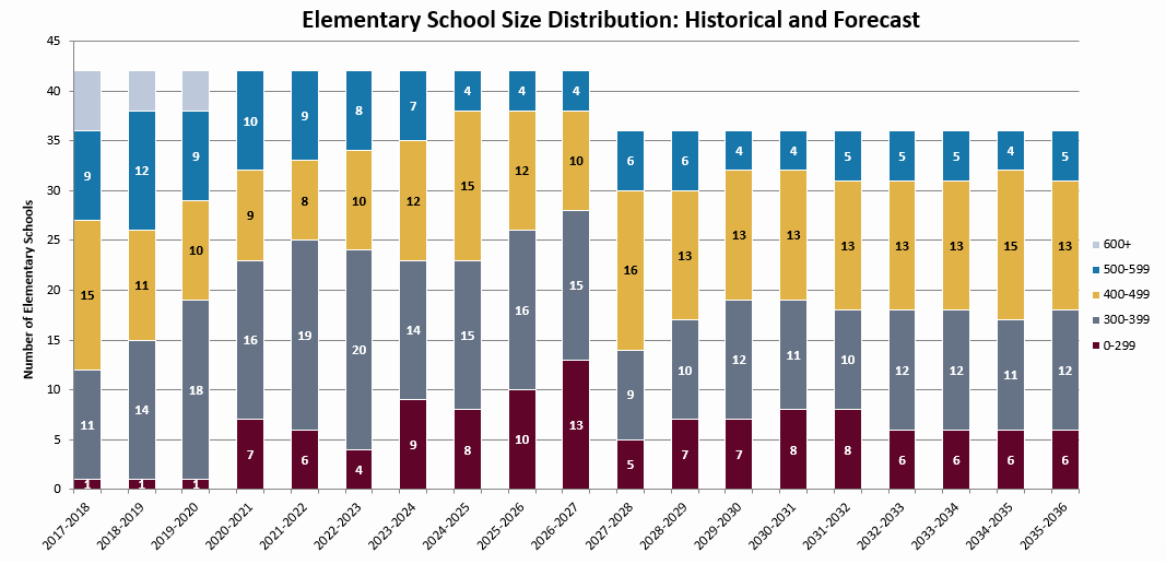
Current elementary school enrollment of 300 or below, sample staffing		Elementary school enrollment of 300 or below, potential future staffing
2 classroom teachers per grade with a district subsidy	→	Reduction of 1-2 teachers, reinstate blends
2.5 Instructional Assistants	→	Reduction
1.65 Specials (PE/Music)	→	Further split of staff across sites
1.0 Counselor	→	Further split of staff across sites
2.5 School office staff	→	Reduction
1.0 Reading support	→	Reduction

Reducing the number of elementary buildings with enrollment under 300

Elementary schools with enrollment under 300 present the starkest staffing sustainability challenges. Their number has grown over time. Based on current forecasts, they will peak at 16 in the 2028-2029 school year. At that point, almost 40% of Salem-Keizer elementary schools would be unsustainably small and either (a) stripped of base staffing or (b) requiring supplemental staffing that comes at the direct cost of the students served in the other 49 schools in our district.



Closing six elementary schools dramatically reduces the number of elementary schools under 300 students. Based on current forecasts, unsustainably small elementary schools drop from 15 to 5. This, in turn, improves staffing and financial sustainability districtwide.



Capital expense avoidance.
Salem-Keizer has more elementary school buildings than our enrollment requires. We need to stop spending taxpayer funding on buildings we no longer need.

Every school building has short- and long-term maintenance costs. The six proposed closures allow the district to avoid approximately $15M in near-term capital investments. This is not the same as a "savings" because the district has neither adequate funding nor a board-approved budget to cover these expenses.

Facilities & Future of Closed Sites

10. Why hasn't the district shared its intentions for the six sites along with the proposal?

Salem-Keizer is focused on the most important elements of the closure recommendation: student, family, and staff impact and planning. Long-term plans for the buildings are not motivating factors. If the board approves the closure recommendation, then the district will begin planning for individual sites. Options include (a) retaining and maintaining the property for future district use, (b) selling the property, and/or (c) partnering with local government and organizations to consider new forms of public use.

Planning for future site use requires consultation with other government entities and real estate professionals, as well as site assessment and valuation. This work is extensive, and other entities will be reluctant to begin before a closure decision. The district cannot dispose of any property without board approval.

11. Would the district consider letting go of the Wells Fargo building?

In 2025, Salem-Keizer purchased a former Wells Fargo call center building centrally located on almost 16 acres. The site is unusual in its size, location, flexibility, and multi-purpose utility. The district has already rezoned the property for educational use, and the building (which had pre-existing sophisticated IT infrastructure) now houses the district's off-site server and data storage room.

The property is rare: few centrally located sites in Salem offer 10+ acres with parking, a large, high-quality building appropriate for education, and sufficient land for additional school or satellite buildings. We hope to convert it into a new alternative learning school that replaces numerous rented and/or lower-quality alternative education buildings spread throughout Salem).

Selling the building would not address declining enrollment. Sale revenue would provide short-term capital funding for building projects but would not improve our underlying sustainability issues related to enrollment and staffing.

12. Has the district estimated how many families may leave Salem-Keizer following the closures for charter or private schools, homeschooling, or neighboring districts? Have these potential enrollment and revenue losses been incorporated into the financial projections?

There are few credible studies or research-based methods to estimate how many families may leave Salem-Keizer Public Schools due to closures or boundary changes. The risk of accelerated enrollment loss varies by community, depending on the availability and affordability of other educational options. Current enrollment forecasts include typical in-and-out student migration based on historical data.

Brick-and-mortar private and charter school capacity in Salem-Keizer is limited when compared to other districts and regions. In the most recent year with available public data, there were fewer than 20 accredited private or public charter elementary school options in the greater Salem area.

Boundaries & Transportation

13. Once the boundary task force finishes, roughly how many more students might be affected: 25, 50, 100?

On October 9, Salem-Keizer Public Schools released an initial boundary recommendation alongside the closure recommendation. This due diligence step confirmed that multiple boundary options could support the closure recommendation. The initial boundary recommendation was limited to closure-related changes, with few additional changes to support long-term sustainability and enrollment balance across feeder patterns. The boundary committee will review options for broader changes.

The boundary review task force began its work on October 26 and will conclude in early January. It is too early to predict its recommendations, but the district will provide updates during its deliberations.

14. If a family thinks it's unaffected by the boundary concept but later is affected, what communication and support can it expect?

As the boundary review task force begins its work, Salem-Keizer will continue communicating directly with families through Parent Square/email and public announcements. Any newly affected family will need direct notice of the proposed change, an explanation of the current decision stage, and a way to ask questions and provide feedback before final boundary action. Families will also receive information about applicable programs, transportation, and continuity options.

15. How will the number of bus riders, travel time, and walking routes, and transportation cost change?

Our transportation team has been involved in every step of site selection and planning, including an initial review of walk and ride zones, traffic flow assessments, walking routes, and early route modeling.

Transportation routes/run and cost estimates.

It is important to distinguish between a bus "run" and a bus "route." A run is one trip serving one school, while a route is a bus and driver's full day of work and typically includes multiple runs. Most regular routes include six runs: three in the morning and three in the afternoon. Therefore, more runs do not necessarily mean the district will need more buses.

Based on the current potential boundary scenario, preliminary modeling indicates seven additional large bus runs may be needed for elementary schools. No net increase in large bus runs is anticipated for middle and high schools, although the number of runs serving individual schools may change. These seven additional runs are a relatively small change within the district's overall transportation system. Once integrated into existing routes, they could require one to a maximum of four routes, at an estimated general fund cost after state reimbursements of $45,000 to $150,000 annually.

The preliminary transportation analysis uses the current potential boundaries and the locations of currently enrolled students. This identifies students whose transportation eligibility would change, including current bus riders who would be within the walk zone of their new school and students who would become eligible for transportation. Early analysis cannot yet include the

locations of next year's incoming kindergarten students. Detailed route development cannot occur until boundaries are finalized and 2026-2027 enrollment information is more complete.

Safe walking routes and safety planning

The proposed closures and boundary changes will turn some current bus riders into walkers and make some current walkers eligible for bus transportation. A slight increase in overall ridership is anticipated.

The preliminary boundary analysis identifies how the proposed changes affect school walk zones and which currently enrolled students would move into or out of them. Once boundaries are finalized, the district will complete the required supplemental plan evaluating safe walking routes in non-transportation zones. Where no safe walking route is available, the district will seek approval from the SKPS Board and the State Board of Education to transport those students, even within the statutory transportation limits.

The district has begun coordinating with the Cities of Salem and Keizer and the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments Safe Routes to School program on signage and other traffic-related changes for the proposed boundaries. The appropriate road authority will determine whether additional traffic analysis or traffic-control changes are needed.

16. Can closure impacts be evaluated before boundaries are finalized? Why aren't boundary decisions made first or concurrently with closure decisions?

Closure and welcoming sites have already been evaluated. Final boundary decisions may affect welcoming sites, but changes are likely to be modest, as the boundary task force will face numerous practical and external limits, including available classroom space, proximity, and transportation time.

Boundary decisions cannot precede or coincide with closure decisions because boundary changes *depend* on closure decisions. The Boundary Task Force is beginning its work based on the closure proposal. If the board delays or rejects school closures, the Boundary Task Force would suspend or delay its work.

Receiving Schools: Capacity and Class Size

17. Where will students go, and can each receiving school fully accommodate them?

The closure proposal includes numerous welcoming schools. All welcoming school spaces have been reviewed in blueprints and in person by district staff, architects, and building principals to review space, layout, and potential changes.

Recommended closure	*Proposed welcoming school*
Brush College	Kalapuya
Candalaria	Salem Heights
Cummings	Keizer and Kennedy
Englewood	Hoover
Liberty	Sumpter, Schirle, and Wright
Richmond	Four Corners and Bush

The closure proposal alone does not push any welcoming school above 90% utilization. However, if more than 75% of students eligible for a continuity exemption request it, Hoover could exceed 90% utilization in 2027-2028.

18. Smaller schools mean more blended classrooms and split staff. How does that affect young students and families, especially students with IEPs, students facing houselessness, or students with major challenges at home?

Small elementary schools without current supplemental staffing will likely return to blended classes.[1] Blended elementary classrooms are not ideal teaching or learning environments. Foundational reading is best taught in a straight grade structure where students can learn, practice, and master core early literacy skills. Students with disabilities, facing houselessness or food insecurity, or other challenges are more deeply impacted by split staff in small schools. Students and families with complex lives need access to full-time counselors and reading and behavior supports. If Salem-Keizer is forced to blend grades and split staff into small schools, our most vulnerable students will be negatively impacted.

19. Who sets the 25–27 ratio target? Will closures and consolidations drive class size above 30?

It is important to clarify terms. “Staffing ratio” is different than and not interchangeable with “class size.” The ratio determines the number of licensed classroom educators allocated to the school each year. Ratio is calculated based on multiple classrooms in aggregate (i.e. all classrooms in a grade span, building, etc.) “Class size” refers to individual classroom data.

The district established the school staffing. See the figure below.

[1] Blended classes are necessary when there are too few students to create multiple classes of a single grade. Instead, a school will create one or two classrooms of a single grade and combine the remaining students in that grade level up/down into the grade above/below them.

Projected Educator (FTE) to Student Ratios			
Level		**Title Schools**	**Non-Title Schools**
Elementary	Grades K-2	1.00 FTE: 25 students	1.00 FTE: 27 students
	Grades 3-5	1.00 FTE: 27 students	1.00 FTE: 29 students
Middle		1.00 FTE: 26.50 students	1.00 FTE: 27.25 students
High		1.00 FTE: 26.75 students	1.00 FTE: 27.25 students

Each year, Salem-Keizer staffs to the ratio above. Inevitably, this results in classrooms being below and above ratio. As of October 1, 2026, across over 600 classrooms, 23 (or 3%) of Salem-Keizer elementary classes exceeded 30 students. In those instances, additional staffing support is typically provided.

At this early point in the 2026-2027 year, we cannot accurately predict whether closures will reduce or increase the number of elementary classes over 30. We ***can predict*** that the number of classrooms significantly below ratio will decrease and the variability in class sizes will decrease.

Existing system safeguards that monitor and manage class size will remain in place and unchanged: (1) the district staffing ratio, and (2) a joint labor-management committee that monitors class. Appropriate class sizes are evaluated by grade, current staffing ratios, actual enrollment, and program needs. The proposed safeguards are school-by-grade section planning, checking classroom and support-space availability, reviewing continuity participation, and adjusting allocations when enrollment differs from assumptions.

20. How will the district ensure receiving schools can accommodate reassigned students without compromising educational conditions? Please provide school-specific information on classroom capacity, staffing, specialized instructional spaces, student services, transportation, maintenance, and necessary facility upgrades.

School capacity

Classroom capacity. The receiving schools have been evaluated to ensure they can accommodate the relocated students, including floor plan review and building walks with facilities, level directors, and principals. Building utilization will be further reviewed and refined in the boundary process.

Grade Group	School	Planning Capacity	Current Attendance Areas 2026–27			Future Capacity	Scenario Attendance Areas 2027–28			2030–31			2035–36		
			Enrollment	+/–	Utilization		Enrollment	+/–	Utilization	Enrollment	+/–	Utilization	Enrollment	+/–	Utilization
K–5	Bush ES	353	227	-126	64%	353	263	-90	75%	279	-74	79%	292	-61	83%
K–5	Chapman Hill ES	541	277	-264	51%	541	353	-188	65%	338	-203	62%	350	-191	65%
K–5	Four Corners ES	587	309	-278	53%	587	417	-170	71%	397	-190	68%	415	-172	71%
K–5	Gubser ES	646	346	-300	54%	646	451	-195	70%	419	-227	65%	416	-230	64%
K–5	Hoover ES	576	354	-222	61%	587	508	-79	87%	490	-97	83%	478	-109	81%
K–5	Kalapuya ES	689	413	-276	60%	689	418	-271	61%	380	-309	55%	397	-292	58%
K–5	Keizer ES	795	513	-282	65%	795	636	-159	80%	597	-198	75%	604	-191	76%
K–5	Kennedy ES	616	344	-272	56%	616	483	-133	78%	472	-144	77%	465	-151	76%
K–5	Morningside ES	475	286	-189	60%	475	302	-173	64%	290	-185	61%	308	-167	65%
K–5	Myers ES	564	360	-204	64%	564	482	-82	85%	464	-100	82%	481	-83	85%
K–5	Salem Heights ES	501	229	-272	46%	501	395	-106	79%	379	-122	76%	400	-101	80%
K–5	Schirle ES	590	294	-296	50%	590	437	-153	74%	430	-160	73%	438	-152	74%
K–5	Sumpter ES	676	409	-267	61%	676	560	-116	83%	525	-151	78%	556	-120	82%
K–5	Swegle ES	674	428	-246	64%	674	497	-177	74%	485	-189	72%	487	-187	72%
K–5	Wright ES	559	306	-253	55%	559	485	-74	87%	474	-85	85%	481	-78	86%
6–8	Judson MS	1,164	844	-320	73%	1,164	892	-272	77%	923	-241	79%	885	-279	76%
6–8	Waldo MS	1,318	1,008	-310	76%	1,318	1,026	-292	78%	853	-465	65%	796	-522	60%
9–12	McKay HS	2,271	2,171	-100	96%	2,271	2,200	-71	97%	2,108	-163	93%	1,809	-462	80%
K–5	Grade Group Totals for Attendance Area Schools	8,842	5,095	-3,747	58%	8,853	6,687	-2,166	76%	6,419	-2,434	73%	6,568	-2,285	74%
6–8		2,482	1,852	-630	75%	2,482	1,918	-564	77%	1,776	-706	72%	1,681	-801	68%
9–12		2,271	2,171	-100	96%	2,271	2,200	-71	97%	2,108	-163	93%	1,809	-462	80%
K–12		13,595	9,118	-4,477	67%	13,606	10,805	-2,801	79%	10,303	-3,303	76%	10,059	-3,547	74%

0% *1.0% to 60.0%* *60.1% to 70.0%* *> 70.0%*

Staffing

Staffing ratios are unchanged. Please see questions 18 and 19 for more information about staffing.

Specialized instructional spaces

All self-contained special education programs proposed for relocation are moving to spaces in better condition than their current location. In most cases, the changes are improving program continuity across K-5 by eliminating a shift of buildings between K-2 and 3-5.

Transportation

See question 15.

Maintenance

Maintenance standards will not change.

Necessary facility upgrades.

The relocation of students from the six proposed sites can be accomplished without major capital investment, and students would move to schools in better condition. Minor modifications will be needed to prepare self-contained special education classrooms.

Student Impact: Programs, Services & Outcomes

21. What causes the peaks and valleys in sense-of-belonging data, and what might we see if schools close?

Across many years of use in thousands of districts, the national Panorama survey has a well-established trend of seasonality: fall sense-of-belonging results are higher than spring results. It is too early to predict the impact of closures on districtwide sense of belonging, but students changing schools can reasonably be expected to have a lower sense of belonging and social confidence during the transition. District and school teams will prepare supports to keep student experience at the center of transition planning.

22. Will closures have short-term effects on proficiency scores, positive or negative?

It is difficult to predict whether closures will have a short-term impact on proficiency scores. Negative impact is most likely for students who change schools due to closure. Approximately 11% of elementary test takers attended the six closure sites. Quality peer-reviewed research on closures due to declining enrollment is thin and findings are mixed. Some research indicates that changing schools has a temporary negative effect, with results rebounding within one to two years. One study found the largest impact in the year the closure is announced, followed by a rebound; another found negative results persisting across multiple years.

Other factors that are more likely to impact district-wide proficiency in the short term. This year, all elementary schools are implementing a new, high-quality reading curriculum. Using the same core curriculum and instructional routines districtwide will help smooth the transition. However, the first year of a new curriculum often brings a temporary plateau or drop in proficiency, known as the "implementation dip," as teachers and students adjust to new materials, pacing, units, and assessments.

Conversely, a decision to not close schools will have a predictable negative impact on student proficiency in the mid and long-term due to the loss of staffing supports and the need to continue shifting resources from all other schools to support our smallest elementary schools.

23. Is it guaranteed in all cases that students' IEP paperwork and teachers go with them?

All student IEPs are tracked electronically and available to staff in real time, ensuring continuity of records for students who transfer schools or programs during the year or over summer.

We can't guarantee that all special education teachers and staff will follow their students. To the extent possible, self-contained special education programs like EGCs, Life Skills, and Developmental classes will move as a whole team to protect critical relationships among staff, students, and families.

24. What programs, services, or opportunities will students gain, lose, or experience differently?

Continuing services and programs

With the introduction of high-quality curriculum, elementary students affected by closures and boundary changes will have uninterrupted access to common core content reading instruction. All students affected by closures or boundary changes will retain access to dual language and special education programming. Free breakfast and lunch are available at all elementary schools. Before and after-care programming currently at closure sites is already available or can be added at welcoming sites.

Differences across sites

Different schools have different programs, cultures, activities, clubs, and traditions. This variability is part of what makes each school unique. If schools close, we plan to work collaboratively between school staff, parents, and students to identify activities that could strengthen a newly combined school community.

In some cases, new activities will require additional resources. For example, a newly combined elementary school may choose to participate in Oregon Battle of the Books. The district will work with schools to identify reasonable supplemental resources to support program expansion.

25. Beyond enrollment and utilization, what student-opportunity problem would closing six schools solve? What evidence shows that this number of closures would improve access to instruction, enrichment, services, and supportive relationships compared with fewer closures or no closures?

This question is best answered by considering the educational implications that could occur across nearly all elementary schools if Salem-Keizer does not close schools. We would be left with two choices:

(1) Maintain smaller, most costly per student elementary schools. This would continue to draw resources from larger elementary schools as well as middle and high schools to maintain current levels of staffing.

or

(2) Introduce staffing reductions like those modeled in the image below which could have significant and lasting negative impacts on academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral supports. If these reductions happened, it would impact all 15 elementary schools under 300 students, not just the small schools we didn't close. This would impact approximately 3,500 students, which is nearly a quarter of all elementary school students.

Current elementary school enrollment of 300 or below, sample staffing		Elementary school enrollment of 300 or below, potential future staffing
2 classroom teachers per grade with a district subsidy	→	Reduction of 1-2 teachers, reinstate blends
2.5 Instructional Assistants	→	Reduction
1.65 Specials (PE/Music)	→	Further split of staff across sites
1.0 Counselor	→	Further split of staff across sites
2.5 School office staff	→	Reduction
1.0 Reading support	→	Reduction

26. For each receiving school, what evidence shows that it can absorb affected students while providing meaningful access to trusted adults, counseling, specialized services, and enrichment—not merely enough seats? Describe how each school will maintain important peer connections and establish new adult relationships before and after the move.

All of our schools are resourced according to the same staffing plan. Many services and supports, including general education staff, counseling services, and instructional assistants, scale with school size.

As part of the transition, we are planning to welcome new students and families to each school. Our data show no statistically significant relationship between school size and sense of belonging, suggesting that elementary schools of any size can and do create strong relationships.

Individualized transition planning for each school will begin in earnest after the board vote. Engaging welcoming schools in detailed planning now would presuppose the outcome of the board deliberation.

27. If the board votes to approve the amended version of the EL3, can it reassure the community that the Board will provide an oversight in allowing family engagement and volunteer participation in the receiving schools and help retain some of the activities that has helped in some of the closing sites? I bring this up as there is concern and wide variation in various schools allowing family participation and opportunities to volunteer in various schools. Some schools have active PTA and volunteer activities compared to other schools.

District staff will work closely with schools to ensure families are welcomed and can engage in volunteer opportunities, Parent Teacher Clubs, and other parent-led/parent-supported programs. To the extent possible, welcoming schools will try to add or expand programming important to the culture and history of the closing site.

28. Is it cost effective to merge Candalaria and Englewood elementary schools and create a Magnet school with a special focus and have an open enrollment from across the district? The Englewood site can have K-3 grades and the top floors used as administrative office spaces?

Neither Candalaria nor Englewood has sufficient capacity to accommodate this proposal. In addition, both buildings also have significant facility and accessibility deficiencies that make them poor candidates for reuse or capital investment. This would also not address the underlying issue of small schools and excess districtwide building capacity.

Open enrollment would also raise transportation and equitable access concerns. Overall, the proposal would require additional investment, retain excess facility capacity, and not address the conditions driving the closure recommendations.

29. Will the district publish a school-by-school, three-year comparison of third grade reading proficiency and student belonging for every proposed closing school and its designated receiving school? Please include actual results, survey response rates, percentage-point differences, and data limitations.

Third grade reading proficiency data for every school is available on ODE's online report card. The district will compile and publish third grade reading and sense of belonging data for all schools, including the number of students represented. We will also include year-over-year growth to show a more complete picture of academic performance.

The most significant context for all these data is that many academic outcomes are strongly correlated with demographic factors like poverty.

30. What objective evidence supports the expectation that consolidation will preserve or improve academic achievement and student belonging?

If we do not close schools, we will likely have to reduce staffing and resources at *all* small schools. We cannot provide local historical evidence of the impact because we have heavily subsidized small schools' staffing. However, the research is clear: reduced staffing, grade-level blends, and reductions in social, emotional, and behavioral support negatively impact student outcomes.

31. Will boundaries drawn around closure and receiving schools unintentionally exacerbate the problem of 'Double Segregation'- Racial and Economic Segregation. I ask this question as Double Segregation is especially harmful for Children from Black and Latino families if they also face economic segregation, have less opportunity exposure for social economic mobility and future outcomes?

The chart below shows the impact of the proposed closure and boundary change package by race, economic status, English learner status, and students with disabilities. Most schools change by 3 to 5 percentage points, often reflecting natural geographic boundaries in particular

neighborhoods; the proposed scenario attempts to minimize discontinuous boundaries and prioritize walk zones where possible.

Grade Group	School	Students of Color		Students with Disabilities		English Learner		Experiencing Poverty	
		Existing	Scenario	Existing	Scenario	Existing	Scenario	Existing	Scenario
K–5	Bush ES	71%	70%	26%	23%	37%	32%	75%	75%
K–5	Chapman Hill ES	45%	42%	22%	20%	8%	6%	38%	33%
K–5	Four Corners ES	82%	75%	17%	20%	46%	40%	73%	74%
K–5	Gubser ES	51%	55%	18%	18%	7%	12%	37%	43%
K–5	Hoover ES	86%	68%	17%	20%	51%	31%	80%	68%
K–5	Kalapuya ES	41%	40%	19%	19%	4%	5%	39%	34%
K–5	Keizer ES	65%	62%	14%	15%	31%	27%	62%	59%
K–5	Kennedy ES	76%	67%	20%	20%	36%	26%	68%	65%
K–5	Morningside ES	45%	47%	16%	18%	8%	11%	50%	52%
K–5	Myers ES	48%	48%	18%	21%	13%	10%	43%	48%
K–5	Salem Heights ES	45%	37%	30%	23%	5%	4%	56%	45%
K–5	Schirle ES	36%	36%	26%	23%	7%	6%	36%	37%
K–5	Sumpter ES	43%	44%	18%	19%	8%	8%	32%	32%
K–5	Swegle ES	84%	86%	15%	14%	46%	50%	72%	75%
K–5	Wright ES	41%	47%	20%	20%	6%	6%	54%	57%
6–8	Judson MS	46%	47%	23%	22%	11%	11%	49%	51%
6–8	Waldo MS	87%	87%	20%	20%	38%	39%	74%	74%
9–12	McKay HS	86%	86%	15%	15%	32%	33%	65%	65%

K–5 District Average	**65%**	**20%**	**28%**	**60%**
6–8 District Average	**63%**	**20%**	**20%**	**57%**
9–12 District Average	**62%**	**17%**	**17%**	**50%**
K–12 District Average	**64%**	**19%**	**23%**	**56%**

Staffing & Labor Relations

32. What union protections will displaced teachers get, is the district doing more, and how will they be reassigned?

We have MOUs with SKEA and ASKESP that allow licensed and classified staff to submit placement preferences. Staff from a closing school who indicate a preference to follow their students to a welcoming school will receive priority under those agreements, but placement is not guaranteed. Practically speaking, there will be fewer new vacancies in welcoming schools than there are staff in closing schools.

Salem-Keizer is preparing for a significant budget and workforce reductions for the 2027-2028 year. In reduction scenarios, staffing assignments are based on a combination of licensure, experience, and seniority. Final staffing assignments will not and cannot be known until the spring, when all school districts have more reliable information about anticipated revenue and expenses.

33. How does this affect educators, and what do we know about how they think and feel about the proposal?

Salem-Keizer is a tight-knit community, and educators throughout the district are impacted by this closure proposal, with a wide range of sentiment and emotion. The most common concern among staff at closure sites is anxiety and frustration that they will not know their job or employment status until Spring 2027. This wait is unavoidable given staffing complexity and the lengthy process of accurately staffing schools during budget uncertainty.

We stay connected to educator perspectives through regular check-ins with building principals and visits to the sites most impacted by the closure and boundary proposals. We have also convened a staff advisory committee that provides insight and recommendations on staff impact and transition planning.

Transition Planning and Community Engagement

34. Can we delay this process for a few months to provide more time for engagement, advocacy, and planning?

The board can delay the process by a full year, but not by a few months. A two-month delay would likely have the following negative effects:

(1) Some staff may not receive their teaching assignments before the end of the school year.
(2) Delays in crafting, announcing, and managing and finalizing district-wide workforce reductions.
(3) Errors in school enrollment forecasting due to delayed closure and boundary decisions.
(4) Budget forecasting and production delays because of delayed clarity about school and staffing expenses.

Even in routine years, there are critical milestones that must be met to staff schools, assign staff, and pass a budget. Salem-Keizer is not in a routine year: we are facing significant budget reductions and proposed school closures and boundary changes. These three issues compound to make budget and staffing complex and dynamic. The table below summarizes a few of the key external milestones for staffing plans and budget creation.

Date	*Milestone*	*Function*	*Delay Implication*
December	Budget priorities & staffing plan adjustments	Our budget forecast informs school staffing adjustments.	We cannot build staffing plans without certainty about core data elements (like the number of schools).
January	School staffing model testing	During this time, we test our new staffing scenarios with schools to ensure feasibility and assess impact.	Skipping the testing step would cause errors in staffing plans and staff assignments.

February	Enrollment projection adjustments based on boundary changes	Boundary adjustments and continuity exemptions allow us to calculate more accurate school enrollment projections.	We could not plan how many students will attend each school in time to build staffing plans and make staff assignments.
March	Allocations are released to schools.	Allocations tell schools how many staff they will have next year, allowing principals to adjust grade level assignments and hire for vacancies. Allocations also allow staff to know their likely assignments.	Staffing allocations would be late, interfering with master scheduling.
April	Staff are informed of their placements or possible layoffs for the following year.	Based on staffing work by schools and the HR team, staff are notified in April of their placements for the following year.	Staff will not know their placement or employment status for the following year.
Throughout Spring and Summer	Principals and school staff planning for welcoming students	Once closure and boundary decisions are made, teams can actively plan for the specific students, staff, and families they will welcome.	A delay would directly limit our ability to reach out to specific families, examine student data, IEPs, and interventions, and create the right schedules and course sections to support students.

35. If students who formerly walked to school have to take a bus because of a closure or boundary change, will that impact their instructional time?

No. Instructional time is the time between the bell times for the start and end of the school day. Bus routes are built around those bell times.

36. What specific transition plan, timeline, and accountability measures will ensure receiving schools have adequate staffing, space, programs, transportation, and family support before any closure occurs?

Transition Plan:

Our teams are already discussing transition plan components to ensure sufficient runway for the recommended closures and boundary changes, including modeling potential staffing shifts,

facility changes, transportation routes, and welcoming practices. While final plans for specific school and community transitions depend on the board's decision, we can begin planning general supports and scenarios immediately.

Timeline:

See question 34 for timeline details and implications. The current timeline provides adequate runway to staff schools.

Accountability:

We will closely monitor outcomes for students experiencing transition. Because we can identify every student impacted by a closure or boundary change, we can monitor for impact on outcomes such as attendance, sense of belonging, and academic achievement. We commit to transparently reporting these impacts to the board and our community during the 2027-2028 year.

37. We've heard mostly from [the same school communities.] Is the district reaching out to sites we haven't heard from?

In the past month, we've heard a great deal from a few communities, but not equally from all. To address this, we are adding engagement sessions focused on individual schools and communities whose voices are currently underrepresented. These smaller meetings focus on each school's parents, students, and staff.

38. Community members say the data is too broad. How can we make the rationale, criteria, and decisions more specific?

The district used a variety of data sets to reach a recommendation of six building closures. The data are specific and published on the district website. Utilization rates, transportation zones, enrollment trends, deferred capital investment, code compliance, and facilities condition index scores are examples of defined and replicable criteria. Other data sets (such as educational adequacy scores) combine subjective and objective data.

The decision-making process (including rationale and criteria) is not and cannot be formulaic; factors like enrollment patterns, utilization rates, building stock, residential density, and geographic features vary throughout the city. Schools can be compared using common indicators, but recommendations also depend on feeder-area needs, forecasting, and feasible consolidation options.

39. What is the process and timeline for involving community partners (churches, CBEL, SKCE, MPELH) in transition planning?

We have begun meeting with community partners to share information about the proposal and begin early transition planning. Deeper collaboration and planning will begin in early winter (after the board vote) and continue through next school year.

40. How will families, staff, students, and partners get meaningful input into transition plans?

If the board approves school closures, the district will begin detailed transition planning directly with impacted school communities. We've already started early planning, including meeting with a staff advisory group. Engagement will include meetings, surveys, and other tools to understand the needs, expectations, and priorities of those impacted.

41. What are the legal, contractual, and personnel barriers the district must navigate related to planning?

Law, regulation, and collective bargaining agreements prevent numerous actions. We cannot:

- Guarantee that staff from closure sites will continue working together at a welcoming school. Enrollment, space, and staffing plan limits prevent full staff teams from moving together, and state law and collective bargaining agreements prioritize seniority in several important staffing decisions.
- Place staff in positions for which they are not licensed or otherwise qualified.
- Guarantee that small program teams will move together and remain 100% intact.

There are also several budgetary and procedural barriers. We cannot:

- Tell staff or administrators of closure sites exactly where they will work next year. Because Salem-Keizer faces a sizeable budget reduction for 2027-2028, we must complete a series of negotiated and legally required steps before making final staffing placements, which cannot begin until we have a more complete view of the SY2027-2028 state budget. Job placement notifications will come in the spring.
- Accurately predict the scope of Salem-Keizer's workforce reductions this early in the budget process. Our early forecast shows an estimated $46M budget reduction target, which we anticipate will change as the state passes key budget milestones. We anticipate releasing 2027-2028 budget reduction proposals this winter.

42. What additional interventions, staffing, professional development, transition supports, and follow-up assessments will protect academic achievement, student belonging, and relationships with teachers, classmates, and school communities?

All of our schools are resourced according to the same staffing plan. Many of these services and supports scale with the size of school. This includes general education staff, counseling services, and instructional assistants.

As part of school transition, we are planning for the welcoming of new students and families to each school. We acknowledge that affected students will be building new relationships with their peers and receiving school staff. But we have incredible, caring staff and educators in every one of our schools. Building relationships and a strong sense of community is a key component of school site plans. Every school implements a plan for culture, counseling, and social emotional learning to support sense of belonging and relationship-building.

As we have worked in standardizing grade level instruction, high-quality curriculum, pacing guides, social emotional learning tools, assessments, and professional learning practices based on the science of reading across all of our school, students across every school experience the same level of rigorous teaching and learning. Our assessment and data systems allow us to monitor students who need additional support or intervention, and our department teams push into schools when needed to provide additional services.

Board Process & Monitoring

43. Will the board vote on the proposal as a whole or school by school? What does that mean for deliberation and community input?

The district brought the closure recommendation forward at first reading as a single package to address district-wide enrollment decline, building utilization, and school size. The Board will determine the structure of the vote using existing processes and Robert's Rules. Regardless of the motion's language and structure, both the board and district staff are considering community feedback school by school.

44. How will the impact of school closures be monitored and reported publicly and to the Board?

Because we know each student affected by a closure or boundary change, we can track and report measurable outcomes (e.g., proficiency, attendance, and sense of belonging, etc.) for all students and subpopulations over the short and longer term. The district will also publicly report staffing and operational impacts.

Miscellaneous/Other

45. Why did the superintendent join Chiefs of Change, and what does it bring you as a superintendent in Salem?

Chiefs for Change is one of the nation's leading networks of state and district superintendents. Our connection allows Salem-Keizer to learn from best practices in other states, participate in

national advocacy, and join working groups exploring pressing or emerging issues in public education.

46. Enrollment has been falling for years. What have you done or considered to address it?

Enrollment loss in Salem-Keizer is driven by two key factors: a declining birthrate and the percentage of students we capture in kindergarten enrollment. Over the past three years, we've taken several steps to explore and address these issues.

A focus on academic quality and safety

From the board to the classroom, Salem-Keizer has prioritized academic quality and school safety. Over the past two years, our schools have posted steady academic gains, and school safety systems and data have improved. These improvements benefit every student and will help us attract and retain students who might otherwise consider leaving our district.

Attempts to improve conditions for teaching and learning

In 2024, we fully explored a local option levy, which brings additional local revenue for things like class size reduction, expanded career and technical education, and tutoring programs. Our exploration included dozens of community interviews, real estate valuation and tax compression analysis, voter polling, and board member engagement. After many months of work, Salem-Keizer reluctantly declined to pursue a ballot initiative for additional school funding.

Legislative advocacy

Salem-Keizer is one of Oregon's leading advocates for funding formula reform. We've conducted widely published independent research into Oregon's funding formula, used years of successive budget cuts as an advocacy platform for a fair funding model, and are a leader in a statewide coalition advocating for funding reform in the 2027 legislative session.

Expanded Pre-K Programming

Capturing a larger share of area kindergarten students is both an academic and an enrollment priority. Over 95% of students who attend Salem-Keizer Pre-K programs enroll in a Salem-Keizer kindergarten. In the 2025-2026 year, we set up a working group to explore the logistical and financial elements of expanding pre-kindergarten access, including early legislative advocacy and cost modeling for expansion without additional state funding. We've launched a pilot fee-for-service model to explore the viability of tuition-based programs with a sliding scale.

47. What has led you to believe the legislature won't change the funding formula during the upcoming long session? If state help seemed more likely, would you still recommend closures?

Salem-Keizer Public Schools is one of the leading advocates for funding formula modernization. However, all funding formulas, including a modernized and more adequately funded one, are based on student enrollment.

Salem-Keizer is unlikely to recover the 6,500 students we've lost since our peak or to stop future enrollment losses.

Grade	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29	2029–30	2030–31	2031–32	2032–33	2033–34	2034–35	2035–36
K	2,313	2,259	2,333	2,312	2,323	2,325	2,352	2,362	2,358	2,353	2,348
1	2,434	2,432	2,363	2,441	2,419	2,430	2,432	2,461	2,471	2,467	2,462
2	2,658	2,455	2,453	2,384	2,462	2,440	2,451	2,453	2,483	2,493	2,489
3	2,830	2,688	2,472	2,470	2,400	2,479	2,456	2,468	2,470	2,500	2,510
4	2,861	2,849	2,706	2,488	2,486	2,416	2,495	2,472	2,484	2,486	2,517
5	2,840	2,876	2,864	2,721	2,502	2,500	2,429	2,509	2,486	2,498	2,500
6	2,951	2,816	2,854	2,842	2,699	2,481	2,479	2,409	2,488	2,465	2,477
7	2,926	2,942	2,807	2,845	2,833	2,691	2,474	2,472	2,402	2,481	2,458
8	2,903	2,919	2,935	2,800	2,838	2,826	2,685	2,468	2,466	2,396	2,475
9	3,046	2,958	2,973	2,987	2,851	2,889	2,877	2,734	2,513	2,511	2,440
10	3,114	2,997	2,913	2,928	2,939	2,807	2,844	2,832	2,693	2,475	2,473
11	2,994	3,007	2,896	2,815	2,830	2,839	2,713	2,748	2,737	2,603	2,392
12	3,338	3,028	3,042	2,930	2,849	2,865	2,871	2,746	2,781	2,769	2,635
K–5	15,936	15,559	15,191	14,816	14,592	14,590	14,615	14,725	14,752	14,797	14,826
6–8	8,780	8,677	8,596	8,487	8,370	7,998	7,638	7,349	7,356	7,342	7,410
9–12	12,492	11,990	11,824	11,660	11,469	11,400	11,305	11,060	10,724	10,358	9,940
Total	37,208	36,226	35,611	34,963	34,431	33,988	33,558	33,134	32,832	32,497	32,176
Incoming K / Outgoing 12th		*-1,079*	*-695*	*-730*	*-607*	*-524*	*-513*	*-509*	*-388*	*-428*	*-421*

Salem-Keizer's advocacy for funding formula modernization focuses on adequately funding the students we currently serve and will serve in the future by addressing the flawed poverty measure, inadequate special education funding, and other core flaws in an obsolete 30-year-old formula. But modernization alone will not help us recover student enrollment or fund us for students we no longer serve.

School closures are a deeply undesirable but unavoidable local responsibility. Though we all wish the State of Oregon would increase K-12 funding enough to compensate for declining enrollment, this is highly unlikely. The largest K-12 funding increase under serious pre-session discussion would add a little over a billion dollars statewide over the biennium. Even with this increase, Salem-Keizer will still have to *reduce our budget by tens of millions* for 2027-2028. This is why Salem-Keizer, Portland, Beaverton, Corvallis, West Linn-Wilsonville, Tigard-Tualatin, and others have implemented or announced plans for school closures.

48. What is the anticipated impact on future levy or bond ballot initiatives?

Salem-Keizer has not conducted polling on a future bond or levy, so the impact of school closures on voter support cannot be reliably predicted. Voter approval will depend largely on the

quality of the proposal, including whether the need is clear; the investments are well justified, and the cost is reasonable. Reducing excess capacity and avoiding investment in unneeded buildings can help demonstrate that future capital requests focus on facilities the district expects to need long term.