Pennridge School District
Middle School Consolidation Planning
Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 2026

The Pennridge School District is examining the potential consolidation of its three middle schools into two, with the earliest possible implementation during the 2028–2029 school year.

Background and Enrollment

1. ***Why is the District considering consolidating from three middle schools to two?***

   The District is considering consolidation in response to declining student enrollment and significant unused capacity in its middle school buildings.

   In May 2025, Breslin Architects completed an updated building utilization study using enrollment projections prepared by the Pennsylvania Economy League. Based on enrollment trends and existing building capacity, the study recommended consolidating from three middle schools to two.

   The District is examining whether consolidation could provide long-term operational and financial efficiencies while maintaining high-quality educational programs and appropriate learning environments for students.

2. ***How much has middle school enrollment declined?***

   Middle school enrollment declined from 1,838 students in 2016–2017 to 1,390 students in 2024–2025, a reduction of approximately 24%.

   The Pennsylvania Economy League's school-level projections anticipate approximately 1,326 middle school students in 2029–2030 and 1,381 students in 2034–2035.

   These enrollment trends were presented during the District's May and June 2026 Student Services Committee meetings.

3. ***Why is enrollment declining when new homes continue to be built in the District?***

   Although the Pennridge community has experienced population and residential growth, that growth has not resulted in corresponding increases in public school enrollment.

   According to the Pennsylvania Economy League's demographic analysis, the District's total population increased from approximately 42,800 in 2000 to 52,000 in 2022. During that same period, the population under age 18 declined by approximately 1,500 residents.

The number of housing units increased, while the number of public school students per household declined. The District recognizes the importance of considering future residential development and changing demographics when evaluating long-term enrollment and facility needs.

4. How reliable are the enrollment projections?

The Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL) develops enrollment projections using historical enrollment patterns, demographic information, birth trends, housing information, and other factors.

The District's June 2026 presentation included a comparison of previous projections with actual enrollment. That analysis demonstrated that earlier projections generally tracked closely with actual enrollment, particularly during their initial five years.

Recognizing that enrollment projections are estimates and that demographic conditions can change, the District has engaged PEL to prepare updated enrollment projections using additional information and the most current data available.

The updated projections will be shared with the committee and made available to the public to inform the planning process and the Board's consideration of potential consolidation.

5. What happens if student enrollment increases in the future?

The District recognizes that future enrollment may differ from current projections.

The Facilities, Operations, and Logistics working group will examine long-term building capacity and the ability of the remaining middle schools to accommodate projected enrollment. The committee will consider these findings when developing its recommendations.

Building Capacity and Facilities

6. ***Do Central and North Middle Schools have enough space to accommodate additional students?***

   The May 2025 building utilization study identified significant unused capacity across all three middle schools.

   The study reported the following enrollment and functional capacity figures for the 2024–2025 school year:

Middle School	Enrollment	Functional Capacity
Central	475	771
North	529	773
South	386	776

   The May 2025 building utilization study concluded that projected middle school enrollment could be accommodated within two buildings.

   However, building capacity involves more than the total number of students a building can accommodate. The Facilities, Operations, and Logistics working group has begun evaluating Central and North Middle Schools to determine how the buildings would function with additional students.

   This work includes examining classrooms, specialized instructional spaces, cafeterias, hallways, common areas, and other operational considerations.

   The group is also working with the District's engineering consultant, ICS, to identify potential facility needs and improvements. These findings, together with the work of the Academic Programs and Scheduling group, will help inform the committee's recommendations.

7. ***How was building capacity determined?***

   Breslin Architects evaluated classroom sizes, instructional spaces, room usage, and building floor plans using Pennsylvania Department of Education guidelines.

   The study applied a 75% utilization factor to middle school capacity calculations to account for scheduling and instructional needs. This provides an estimate of functional building capacity rather than simply counting available seats.

The District recognizes that actual building utilization also depends on instructional schedules, classroom assignments, specialized programs, and the needs of students and teachers.

The committee is examining these considerations to determine how classrooms and other spaces would function throughout the instructional day. The capacity figures from the study provide a starting point for this analysis rather than a final determination of how the buildings would operate.

8. ***Would renovations or modifications be needed at Central and North Middle Schools?***

   The Facilities, Operations, and Logistics working group has begun evaluating the physical and operational needs of Central and North Middle Schools, including building tours and an initial review of instructional and common spaces.

   The group is working with the District's engineering consultant, ICS, to identify potential facility improvements, technology and safety needs, logistical considerations, and associated costs.The committee will review these findings and develop recommendations regarding any improvements that may be necessary if consolidation is approved.

9. ***Why has South Middle School been identified for potential closure rather than Central or North?***

   The May 2025 building utilization study recommended consolidating to two middle schools but did not identify a specific building for closure. The District's May 2026 presentation subsequently recommended repurposing South Middle School based on several factors, including building age, facility condition, building and site size, available amenities, and enrollment.

   South Middle School was originally constructed in 1931, last renovated in 1992, and has the smallest building and site of the three middle schools.The Board has not made a final decision regarding the proposed consolidation.

10. ***What would happen to South Middle School if it were no longer used as a middle school?***

    The District has identified potential opportunities to repurpose South Middle School for other educational uses.

    The committee will examine relevant facilities and operational considerations. Any future decision regarding the building's use would require further evaluation and Board consideration.

Academic Programs and Student Opportunities

11. How would consolidation affect class sizes?

Maintaining appropriate class sizes is an important consideration in evaluating potential consolidation and was among the highest priorities identified through the community survey.

The Academic Programs and Scheduling working group is examining instructional schedules, curricular needs, course offerings, and the number of instructional sections that would be needed at Central and North Middle Schools.

Projected class sizes will depend on how academic programs are organized, the number of instructional sections offered, and staffing allocations. Those details have not yet been finalized.The committee will examine this information and develop recommendations regarding appropriate class sizes, staffing needs, and effective learning environments.

12. How would consolidation affect academic programs, electives, and exploratory courses?

The Academic Programs and Scheduling working group will examine how academic programs, electives, exploratory courses, and instructional schedules could be organized within two middle schools.

The committee will consider opportunities to maintain or improve program consistency and equitable access to educational opportunities across both schools.

13. How would consolidation affect special education programs, IEPs, 504 plans, and other student supports?

The District remains responsible for providing the services and accommodations required by students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Section 504 plans.

The committee will examine how special education programs, specialized instructional spaces, related services, and other student supports could be accommodated within a two-middle-school configuration and develop recommendations accordingly.

14. How would consolidation affect athletics, clubs, musicals, and other extracurricular activities?

The committee will examine how potential consolidation could affect student participation in athletics, performing arts, clubs, and other extracurricular activities.

Maintaining meaningful opportunities for student participation will be an important consideration as the committee develops its recommendations.

Student Transitions and School Culture

15. ***How would students be supported in transitioning to a different middle school?***

    The Student Transition and School Culture working group will examine orientation activities, transition supports, student relationships, and strategies for establishing a positive school culture.

    The committee will consider the needs of students and families, including those who have recently experienced changes in school assignments.

16. ***Would students currently attending South Middle School be required to transfer, or could a phased transition be considered?***

    The specific approach to student transitions has not been determined.

    The committee will examine transition considerations, including questions raised by community members regarding phased implementation and students remaining at their current schools, and develop recommendations for Board consideration.

17. ***How would consolidation affect school culture, school identity, and students' sense of belonging?***

    The Student Transition and School Culture working group will examine ways to support positive school environments, student relationships, school traditions, and a sense of belonging. The committee recognizes that school culture and students' social-emotional experiences are important considerations in any potential transition.

Staffing, Transportation, and Attendance Boundaries

18. ***How would consolidation affect teachers, administrators, counselors, and support staff?***

    The Staffing and Human Resources working group will examine projected staffing needs, staff assignments, certification requirements, reassignment procedures, and other personnel considerations.

    The committee will develop findings and recommendations regarding potential staffing changes. No final staffing plan has been established.

19. ***How would middle school attendance boundaries be determined?***

    The Transportation and Boundary Planning working group will examine potential attendance boundary configurations, elementary-to-middle-school feeder patterns, student enrollment, and transportation considerations. The committee

will develop recommendations for Board consideration. No final attendance boundary plan has been adopted.

20. How would consolidation affect bus transportation, walking routes, and travel times?

The Transportation and Boundary Planning working group will examine transportation routes, travel times, walking considerations, operational logistics, and associated costs.

The committee will consider the impact on students and families when developing its recommendations.

Financial Considerations and Alternatives

21. What financial savings could result from consolidation?

The May 2025 Breslin utilization study estimated approximately $3.34 million in annual savings associated with consolidating from three middle schools to two.

The estimate included potential staffing and operating efficiencies, offset by additional transportation expenses. The study also identified approximately $320,000 in initial transportation-related costs.

These are preliminary estimates from the original study, not final budget projections. Additional analysis will be necessary to determine the potential costs and savings associated with a possible 2028–2029 implementation.

22. Would consolidation result in lower school property taxes?

Potential savings from consolidation would be considered as part of the District's overall budget and long-term financial planning. While consolidation could reduce certain operating expenses, savings would not automatically result in a corresponding reduction in property taxes.

Future tax decisions would depend on the District's overall financial needs and the annual budget process.

23. Have alternatives to consolidation been considered?

The May 2025 utilization study examined enrollment trends and building capacity and recommended consolidating from three middle schools to two. Community members have raised questions about maintaining three schools, changing attendance boundaries, delaying consolidation, and considering alternative transition approaches.

The committee is charged with identifying potential challenges, evaluating solutions, and considering community questions and concerns as it develops findings and recommendations for the Board.

Committee Process and Community Engagement

24. Who serves on the Middle School Consolidation Planning Committee?

The Middle School Consolidation Planning Committee includes approximately 50 members representing a cross-section of the Pennridge School District community, including parents, students, teachers, support staff, building and District administrators, and members of the Board of School Directors.

Committee members were selected by District leadership and middle school administrators based on their experience with middle school education and their connections to middle school students, families, and programs. The goal was to bring together individuals with a variety of perspectives and experiences to examine the educational and operational considerations associated with potential consolidation.

Members were also asked to identify the working groups in which they were most interested in participating. A complete list of committee members, their roles, and their working group assignments is available on the District's Middle School Consolidation webpage.

The committee is organized into six working groups:

- Academic Programs and Scheduling
- Communication and Community Engagement
- Student Transition and School Culture
- Staffing and Human Resources
- Transportation and Boundary Planning
- Facilities, Operations, and Logistics

25. What is the committee's role, and who makes the final decision?

The committee is charged with examining the feasibility and implications of a potential transition from three middle schools to two.

Its work includes identifying challenges, examining academic and operational considerations, evaluating potential solutions, and developing findings and recommendations.

The committee will make recommendations, but the final decision regarding consolidation rests with the Board of School Directors.

26. How is the community being involved in the planning process?

The District distributed a community survey on October 6, 2026, to gather feedback regarding important considerations, concerns, potential opportunities, and questions related to consolidation.

The survey received more than 300 responses. The District has reviewed the numerical ratings and written feedback and prepared a summary of the findings to share with the Middle School Consolidation Planning Committee and its working groups.

Committee members have also been encouraged to communicate with colleagues, neighbors, families, and other community members to bring additional perspectives and questions into the committee's work.

The District will continue to provide opportunities for community engagement as the planning process progresses, including an additional online form through which community members will be able to submit questions, suggestions, and information for the committee's consideration.

27. How can community members follow the committee's work?

The District has established a Middle School Consolidation section of its website that includes previous presentations, supporting studies, committee membership and working group assignments, meeting information, and frequently asked questions.

Additional information will be shared through District communications and public Student Services Committee meetings. The Frequently Asked Questions will be updated as the committee completes its work and additional information becomes available. The District is also developing an online form to provide a convenient way for community members to submit questions and information for the committee's consideration.

28. What is the timeline for the planning process and a potential decision?

The Middle School Consolidation Planning Committee held its organizational meeting on September 30, 2026. Working groups are meeting throughout the fall and winter to examine their assigned areas and develop findings and recommendations. The full committee is scheduled to meet on November 16, 2026, and January 7, 2027, to review the progress of the working groups and consider their findings.

The current planning timeline anticipates presenting findings and recommendations to the Board in early 2027, followed by the required public process and potential Board consideration of a decision in spring 2027.

The Board of School Directors will make the final decision regarding consolidation. If approved, the earliest proposed implementation would be the 2028–2029 school year.

Additional Community Questions – November 2026

29. How will new housing developments and changing demographic trends be considered in the updated enrollment projections?

The District recognizes the importance of considering residential development, birth trends, migration patterns, and changing demographics when planning for future enrollment and facility needs.

The Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL) previously developed enrollment projections using historical enrollment, demographic trends, and available housing information. The District has engaged PEL to update these projections using additional information and the most current data available.

Community members have raised specific questions about proposed residential developments, neighborhood turnover, student-generation rates, full-day kindergarten, and enrollment in nonpublic and charter schools. We have shared these questions with PEL for consideration as part of its updated review.

The updated projections will be shared publicly and with the committee to inform its work and the Board's consideration of potential consolidation.

30. How would consolidation affect Title I services, school counseling, and other student support programs?

The District recognizes the importance of maintaining appropriate educational and student support services, including Title I programs, school counseling, academic interventions, and other building-based supports.

The Academic Programs and Scheduling working group will examine how academic interventions, specialized programs, and student support services could be organized and delivered within a two-middle-school configuration.

The District will also review the potential implications for federal programs, including Title I eligibility and funding, as well as the continuity of existing student services.

No final decisions regarding the organization of these programs have been made.

31. How will the District consider students who have already experienced elementary school redistricting?

The District recognizes that some students and families have recently experienced changes in school assignments as a result of elementary school redistricting.

The Student Transition and School Culture working group will consider the potential impact of additional school changes, including effects on student relationships, school belonging, and continuity of educational experiences.

The Transportation and Boundary Planning working group will also examine elementary-to-middle-school feeder patterns and how potential attendance boundary changes might affect students who have already experienced school reassignments.

These considerations will be included in the committee's findings and recommendations.

32. What would it cost to continue operating three middle schools, and how will that be compared with consolidation?

The District recognizes the importance of understanding both the potential financial benefits of consolidation and the costs associated with continuing to operate three middle schools.

The May 2025 building utilization study provides preliminary estimates of the operating efficiencies that could result from consolidation. Additional analysis will be necessary to evaluate facility improvements, staffing, transportation, and other costs associated with a potential two-middle-school configuration.

The District will also consider the operational and financial implications of maintaining three middle schools, including ongoing staffing, building maintenance, and future facility needs.

This information will help inform the committee's findings and the Board's consideration of the proposal.

33. Are committee meetings open to the public, and how can community members share questions or information with the committee?

The Middle School Consolidation Planning Committee and its working groups have been established as collaborative working sessions for appointed members to review information, examine potential challenges, and develop findings and recommendations.

These working sessions are not open to the public and will not be livestreamed. However, the District is committed to sharing information about the committee's work through its Middle School Consolidation webpage, District communications, and public Student Services Committee meetings.

Community members may continue to submit questions, suggestions, and information to District administration for the committee's consideration. The District is also developing an additional online form to provide a convenient way for community members to share information and questions with the committee.

The District will continue updating its Frequently Asked Questions as additional information becomes available. The committee's findings and recommendations will be shared as the planning process progresses, and the required public process will occur before any final Board decision.

Additional Information and Resources

The following materials provide additional background regarding the District's consideration of middle school consolidation:

- Pennridge School District Enrollment Projections - Pennsylvania Economy League, February 2025
- Pennridge School District Utilization Study Update - Breslin Architects, May 27, 2025
- Middle School Consolidation Proposal - Student Services Committee, May 4, 2026
- Middle School Consolidation Recommendation Update - Student Services Committee, June 2, 2026
- Middle School Consolidation Planning Committee Presentation - September 30, 2026
- Middle School Consolidation Committee Update - October 5, 2026 Student Services Committee

These materials and additional updates are available through the District's Middle School Consolidation webpage.

This FAQ is intended to provide information regarding the District's ongoing planning process. It will be updated as the Middle School Consolidation Planning Committee develops its findings and recommendations and as additional information becomes available.