Enrollment Demographics Task Force
December 11, 2025 | 5:00 - 7:00pm | Virtual
Meeting 2 Minutes

There were 22 members in attendance.

Agenda

- Welcome & Housekeeping
- Timeline Review
- Demographer's Report
- Guiding Principles
- Working Group
- Next Steps & Exit Ticket

Welcome & Housekeeping

Welcome

Ashley Davies, facilitator from Better Education Partners, opened the meeting with a welcome and an overview of the evening's agenda and goals. She reviewed the parking lot protocol and let the group know that questions from the last meeting have been updated in the parking lot. She also reviewed the norms and the addition of two norms that were added based on feedback from the kickoff meeting.

Timeline Review

Ashley walked the group through the draft boundary change timeline, emphasizing that it is confidential at this stage and has only been shared with the task force and district Cabinet. She clarified that boundary changes under discussion would be for implementation in Fall 2028 (2028–29 school year) and that the work intentionally includes multiple checkpoints for internal review, board awareness, and community engagement before any final decisions are made. Boundary changes are approved at least one year prior to implementation. If the target implementation year changes, the timeline would adjust accordingly.

Ashley also explained the role of Cabinet and why preliminary boundary work is reviewed there. Cabinet is the district's executive leadership team that supports the Superintendent. It includes executive directors representing major departments (e.g., schools, support services, academics). Cabinet provides a space to review work through a district-wide lens, identify interdependencies, and offer early feedback before proposals move forward. A full overview of the confidential timeline is included in the PowerPoint Presentation.

Demographer's Report

Ashley walked the task force through the annual Demographer's Report provided by Les Kendrick, a comprehensive, 50+ page analysis used by the district to understand current enrollment, historical trends, and projected future enrollment. The report examines multiple data sources including births, housing, migration, and enrollment patterns. An updated version of the report will be reviewed later this year to compare trends over time.

The report is a foundational planning tool that informs decisions related to school capacity, boundaries, capital planning, and resource allocation, providing data to complement lived experience and community insight.

Regional Enrollment Trends (Puget Sound)

Key regional trends highlighted from the report included:

- Public school enrollment remains below pre-COVID levels, though there was modest growth in 2024
- Kindergarten enrollment remains lower than expected, particularly in King County
- Birth rates have declined for seven consecutive years, signaling fewer future kindergarten students
- Population growth has slowed, affecting future enrollment growth
- Private school and homeschool enrollment increased during COVID but have largely returned to pre-pandemic levels

Ashley emphasized the importance of understanding the relationship between births and kindergarten enrollment, as these trends strongly influence long-term enrollment forecasts.

Northshore-Specific Enrollment Trends

- District enrollment declined by 327 students in the most recent year
- Kindergarten enrollment remains below pre-pandemic levels
- Home-based learning has largely returned to pre-pandemic levels
- Private school enrollment remains slightly elevated compared to pre-pandemic levels
- Both in-migration and out-migration have declined in recent years, meaning fewer students are both entering and leaving the district
- Housing trends show fewer home sales and more apartments and townhomes, which generate fewer students than single-family homes

The report also notes that while some future enrollment growth is projected beginning around 2027, new housing developments, especially early-stage projects, are unlikely to generate students until 2029 or later.

Grade-Level Enrollment Patterns

- Enrollment growth previously seen in elementary grades is now moving through middle and high school
- Elementary enrollment has begun to decline while secondary enrollment remains elevated due to earlier birth-rate peaks
- District-wide enrollment growth can mask important grade-level differences, particularly when increases are concentrated in high school
- The full report includes grade-by-grade detail for deeper analysis beyond high-level trend charts

This context helps explain why overall enrollment may appear stable or growing even as elementary enrollment declines.

Headcount vs. FTE (Capacity Context)

Ashley explained the difference between:

- Headcount: Total number of enrolled students
- FTE (Full-Time Equivalent): Reflects how much time students are physically using district seats (e.g., Running Start, partial enrollment)

Understanding both measures is important when evaluating school utilization and physical capacity, though building capacity itself is based on the physical structure (brick-and-mortar plus portables), not enrollment calculations.

In- and Out-Migration

The demographer's report includes analysis of student migration (grades 1–11), excluding kindergarten entry and graduating seniors:

- Migration data tracks students entering or leaving the district after kindergarten
- Recent years show lower overall mobility, with fewer students moving both in and out
- While individual student pathways are not tracked, trend-level data provides reliable forecasting signals based on historical patterns

Questions were raised on the following topics:

- **Births vs. Kindergarten Enrollment:** Task Force members asked about the gap between birth data and kindergarten enrollment. It was clarified that while individual students are not tracked, historical correlations between these data sets provide reliable trend-level forecasting.
- **Migration Data Limitations:** Questions were raised about whether the district asks why families move in and out of the district. While reasons for relocation are not systematically captured, migration trends are still valuable for planning.
- **Headcount vs. FTE and Capacity:** Task Force members discussed how FTE fluctuations (e.g., Running Start, partial schedules) affect planning. Ashley

emphasized that both historical and forecast data are used to determine whether additional physical capacity is warranted.
- **Housing Types and Student Yield:** Clarification was provided that townhomes, even large ones, generate fewer students than single-family homes, and yield rates can vary from year to year.

Additional detail including grade-level data, housing yield rates, and projections can be found in both the meeting PowerPoint and the full Demographer's Report.

Guiding Principles

The group reviewed guiding principles from the last boundary changes in 2020 and spent time in small groups talking about potential edits to the principles for this group's work. Ashley clarified that the guiding principles are intended to define how boundary decisions are made, not to prescribe a single outcome. The problem the task force is solving is the imbalance between enrollment and capacity across the district, with some schools overcrowded and others underutilized.

Several members raised the importance of eventually agreeing on a shared measure of goodness to evaluate boundary scenarios, recognizing that no single option will optimize all principles equally. This led to discussion about whether principles should eventually be ranked or weighted to support decision-making.

Small Group Share-Outs

Group 1

- Instructional considerations: Suggested updating language to explicitly reflect changes in special education programming and placement
- Operational considerations: Emphasized the importance of fiscal responsibility and transportation efficiency
- Geographic considerations: Strong support for keeping neighborhood students together, particularly for students returning to their homeschool after participating in specialized programs

Group 2

- Questions about whether the guiding principles differ meaningfully from prior versions and what prompted recent revisions
- Significant concern that instructional considerations feel vague and difficult to measure
- Interest in revisiting instructional principles to reflect how much has changed since 2020, particularly around equity, program placement, and systemwide instructional shifts

Group 3

- Focus on the demographic considerations, particularly the principle related to minimizing disparate impact on schools' current ethnic, linguistic, or socioeconomic composition
- Concern that maintaining current demographic patterns could unintentionally limit opportunities to improve equity or rebalance socioeconomic distribution across the district
- Interest in clarifying whether demographic stability or intentional rebalancing should be prioritized

Group 4

- Recommendation to make capacity balance more explicit, including strain on overcrowded schools
- Desire to more clearly address distance and travel burden for families, beyond general references to neighborhoods
- Discussion of tension between operational efficiency and family experience/access
- Agreement that language about maintaining existing demographic composition may need reconsideration to allow for greater equity and exposure
- Open questions about what constitutes academic needs and whether those should directly influence boundary decisions

Next Steps & Exit Ticket

The group reviewed the agenda items for the next meeting:

- Selection of Guiding Principles
- Program Deep Dive
- Development Overview

Exit Ticket

Members completed an exit ticket which asked to share feedback on the meeting. A summary of the feedback received is below.

- Members valued the small group discussions, noting that small groups created space to hear diverse perspectives and engage more deeply than with the full group.
- The conversation on guiding principles was seen as a strong start, with clear interest in spending more time.
- Several members suggested adding more structure to full-group discussion (e.g., managing airtime, organizing questions) to support focus and balanced participation.
- A concern was raised that the task force's scope may feel constrained, with key issues perceived as predetermined or out of scope.