Enrollment Demographics Advisory Committee
September 10, 2026 | 5:00 - 7:00pm | In-person
Meeting 1 Minutes

There were 30 members and 2 guests in attendance.

Agenda

- Welcome & Housekeeping
- Introductions
- EDAC Overview + Timeline
- Guiding Principles Review
- District Background + Enrollment Review
- Survey Review + Community Engagement
- Scenario Planning Buckets
- Next Steps & Exit Ticket

Welcome & Housekeeping

Ashley Davies, committee facilitator, welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda and goals for the meeting. The group has a new name this year, the Enrollment Demographics Advisory Committee (EDAC), formerly the Enrollment Demographics Task Force. The name changed, but the group's purpose and charge did not. Office hours will be offered throughout September so new members can get oriented before the committee begins reviewing scenarios later this month.

The group reviewed the norms developed last year, which are in the presentation. Ashley highlighted three: do what's best for kids; no one person has all the answers; and not all ideas will be adopted.

Members were asked to raise questions in the room when they fit the discussion, and to put other questions in the parking lot.

Introductions

Ashley described who is on the committee: returning members from capital bond planning or last year's enrollment work, new community members chosen for their analytical background, where they live in the district, and range of experience, and district staff and partners.

Members then shared their name, their connection to Northshore School District, and one thing they hope the committee will prioritize. Ashley noted that everyone shares the goal of doing what is best for students, but each member might see the work differently.

EDAC Overview + Timeline

EDAC is charged this year with reviewing and recommending possible school boundary changes for the 2028–29 school year. The goal is to use school buildings well and plan

for future capacity, while keeping access to programs fair, enrollment balanced, and district spending responsible.

Ashley explained that EDAC reviews current and future enrollment and demographic information and suggests scenarios. The district's technical team then maps boundaries, builds enrollment tables and visuals, and models the impact and trade-offs of each idea. After Board approval, workable scenarios go to the community for feedback. These steps are repeated as needed to narrow the options. The School Board makes the final decision, with a vote expected in March 2027.

Ashley also reviewed how the district got here. A separate task force worked on capital bond planning two years ago, leading to the bond that passed in February 2026. Some approved projects require moving students during construction, so the district must decide where those students will go. Last year's task force started in November 2025 with enrollment data and the demographers report, finalized the guiding principles in January and February 2026, received an updated demographers report and began scenario development in March and April, and ended the year in May with a discussion of community engagement. This year's timeline ends with a Board vote on a recommendation on March 3, followed by one or two more meetings. The full timeline is in the presentation.

Guiding Principles Review

Ashley introduced the guiding principles, which last year's committee spent several weeks developing. They fall into four categories: instructional, demographic, operational, and geographic considerations. The wording was adjusted slightly so families and community members can understand what each priority means.

Members discussed one operational principle at length: “Ensure all school populations are appropriate for their building.” The question was whether it refers to the number of students in a building or to student needs. Staff will bring a suggested revision to the next meeting.

District Background + Enrollment Review

The work is often described simply as declining and unbalanced enrollment, but several different factors shape it. Staff from across the district spoke to each.

Declining Enrollment: Dri Ralph, Executive Director of Support Services, shared that 2019 was a turning point, when nearly every district in the country saw a significant drop. Northshore declined too, though less than some. Before 2019, enrollment grew steadily with new housing and higher birth rates. Since then, a falling birth rate, a shift from single-family to multi-family housing, aging neighborhoods in the east and south, and fewer homes changing hands have added up.

Enrollment has declined by about 1,600 students since 2019, almost all in elementary schools. That is roughly two schools' worth, against an ideal size of 400 to 700 students. Secondary enrollment has stayed steadier. At the same time, Snohomish County's

Commented [SC1]: @Ashley Davies should this be 1,000?

Commented [AD2R1]: Should be 1600 based on what was shared. I had an extra 0!

urban growth expansion is expected to add about 300 students over ten years, adding pressure in the north while the south and east continue to decline.

Capital Projects: William Tribble, Director of Capital Projects, reviewed the 2026 bond, which passed in February 2026 and funds a wide range of projects. The project that matters most to this committee is Shelton View Elementary, which the bond planning task force found to be in the worst condition of any district elementary school. Demolition and construction begin in summer 2028. The school's 477 students will need another home for two years. They return to a new building in fall 2030. Deciding where those students go is a central question for this committee.

Staff asked members to look past this bond as well. The condition review identified other elementary schools likely to need replacement in the next two or three bond cycles: Arrowhead, Westhill, Wellington, Canyon Creek, and Moorlands. Any replacement would need board and voter approval. Because these sites are small, most would also require moving students during construction.

Program Placement: Amity Butler, Executive Director of Teaching & Learning, and Shannon Phanhthavilay, Director of Special Education described work to integrate Highly Capable and Special Education services and build more inclusive schools. Highly Capable students used to be served at a few schools and bused there, with some rides up to an hour each way. Those services are now offered at about 20 elementary schools. Access has improved, but changes are still needed to increase access further.

Staff noted that enrollment has been a constraint: keeping enrollment up at certain schools has sometimes kept students from being served at their home school. Ashley emphasized that these program plans are already underway. EDAC is not making these decisions but is responding to how the decisions affect enrollment.

Class Size, Staffing, and Operating Budget: JoLynn Berge, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Financial Officer, explained that districts assign staff based on projected enrollment and set ratios, so smaller schools have less flexibility in how they use the staff they get. Every school also needs a minimum level of staffing no matter its size. That raises the cost per student in under-enrolled buildings and pulls money away from classrooms across the district. At the secondary level, school size also affects how many courses a school can offer. She also explained that empty classrooms do not mean smaller class sizes since the staffing ratios remain the same.

Other factors discussed included different zoning and building rules across the district, people moving out of state, the link between technology jobs and housing costs, and birth rates that were already falling before COVID and continue to fall nationally and statewide. Staff noted that families are not leaving for private schools.

Community Input: Jennifer Piplic, Assistant Director of Communications, shared how community input will shape the committee's work and reviewed results from the June survey. Key findings were:

- Reasonable travel time was a top priority for every group that responded.
- Moving as few students as possible, and keeping boundaries stable afterward.
- More than half of students, families, and staff said they were not at all or only slightly informed about the district's enrollment situation.
- The strongest theme was wanting a clear, evidence-based reason for change.
- Respondents repeatedly asked for several chances to give feedback, and for years of notice rather than months.

Community Engagement Review

Ashley shared the themes from the committee's May engagement planning discussion, which will shape how community engagement is designed this year. A list of all the themes is included in the PowerPoint presentation.

Scenario Planning Buckets

Ashley closed by reviewing the three buckets of options developed so far. The committee will begin working with scenarios at the next meeting.

- *Temporary home for Shelton View* — students are housed somewhere else during construction and everything returns to normal afterward. Nothing else in the district changes. This is the minimum the district must do.
- *Permanent home for rebuilds* — one building becomes a permanent swing site, used for rebuilds, instead of repeating the same planning process each time.
- Permanent home plus rebalancing — the swing site, plus changes on the east side of the district where buildings are most under-enrolled, to balance enrollment and resources.

Next Steps & Exit Ticket

Ashley reviewed upcoming dates and opportunities to engage:

- Office hours — Sept 11 (12-1p), Sept 17 (4–5p), and Sept 28 (12–1p)
- Board study session — Sept 14 at 6p
- Next EDAC meeting — Sept 24, 5–7p

Exit Ticket

The following feedback was provided on the meeting:

- Members found the meeting clear, well organized, and efficiently paced.
- The recap of last year's work helped ground both returning and new members.
- First-time members appreciated the high-level overview, and several said they were glad to be on the committee.
- A member asked for shorter recaps and more working time in future meetings, along with pre-reading ahead of each meeting.
- New members requested a single resource with the committee's prior work, including enrollment data and full survey results.
- Members asked for more detail on scenarios, particularly cost savings and impacts on class offerings.