



School Consolidations Virtual Info Sessions Feedback Summary

Number of Meetings: 3

Total Participants: 430+

Key Themes: Concerns

- **Equity and impact on communities**
 - Concerns about how consolidations will disproportionately affect East Austin, low-income neighborhoods, students of color and special populations (special education, English language learners).
 - Concern about deepening historical and systemic inequities in the district.
- **Loss of student support and program quality**
 - Concern over losing bilingual education, Dual Language programs, Special Education services and access to magnet schools.
 - Concerns about class size increases, teacher retention and disruption to trusted school environments.
- **Transportation**
 - Concerns about transportation if attendance zones shift or schools are consolidated farther from students' homes.
 - Uncertainty around transfer policy changes and whether current transfers will be honored.
- **Lack of state funding**
 - Emphasis that the district is in this position due to stagnant state funding.



- Concern that recent funding legislation from HB2 does little to address district budget shortfalls.
- Concern that recent SB2 voucher legislation could further contribute to enrollment challenges.
- **Financial accountability and data**
 - Clarity on whether past closures saved money and what alternatives (selling properties/cutting central office expenses) have been considered.
 - Concerns about flawed demographic data, outdated assumptions and lack of cost-benefit transparency.
- **Lack of trust and transparency**
 - Skepticism about whether survey input will influence decisions.
 - Concerns about vague, jargon-heavy language in the survey and lack of clarity on timelines and decision-making criteria.

Key Themes: Ideas

- **Improve and expand communication**
 - Use plain language in all communications, including clearly defined terms and provide open forums for continued dialogue.
 - Share full data sets (demographics, enrollment trends, costs) publicly before making decisions.
- **Equity-focused planning**
 - Factor in historical inequities (east/west divide) and prioritize minimizing harm to marginalized student populations.
 - Consider different approaches that support, rather than penalize, small or under-enrolled schools serving historically underserved students.
- **Optimize existing resources**
 - Reevaluate transfer and attendance zone policies to better balance enrollment across the district.
 - Use existing under-enrolled schools more efficiently, possibly by shifting programs rather than closing campuses.



- **Reassess property and facility use**
 - Consider leasing or repurposing unused school properties rather than selling.
 - Reexamine the role and cost of the Austin ISD Central office and administrative buildings in budget planning.
- **Protect program continuity**
 - Ensure students in Dual Language, Special Education or magnet programs can continue programming without disruption.
 - Maintain stable teacher placements and cohort continuity for middle and high school students when possible.

FAQs

General Process

- **How many schools will be consolidated?**
 - At this time we don't have a number or goal of consolidated schools. All schools will be evaluated to identify areas of opportunity to consolidate and achieve more balanced enrollment. Rather than create a target number of schools or savings, we will be working to develop a goal tied to reducing the number of empty seats and increasing the efficiency of our schools with the aim of operating fewer more well-resourced schools.
- **Will consolidations only impact elementary schools?**
 - No. The majority of schools that exist within the district are elementary schools, however, the consolidation process will evaluate all schools within the district, including middle and high schools.
- **What does the consolidation tool look like?**
 - The tool will be broken in two parts: A data driven rubric tool and a contextual analysis tool. Each school within Austin ISD will be run through these tools to determine such things as overcrowding, enrollment and capacity of the school building, facility conditions and



suitability and cost per student metric. Community and board feedback will help inform how these factors are weighed in our analysis.

- One big milestone will be in August when the results of the consolidation tool analysis will be shared as a list of all schools sorted by ranking according to the rubric. At that point we will begin the contextual analysis which considers additional questions we need to ask beyond the initial data. This will include things like programming, history, campus experience, transportation, staffing etc.
- That work will result in a recommended consolidation package, which we will share in October, leading up to a board vote in November. These changes are expected to occur in the 2026-27 school year.

Student Impact

- **How will transportation work for students once their home school has been consolidated?**
 - Transportation will still be available to any student who lives more than two miles away from their zoned school. If your neighborhood school is consolidated, transportation will be provided to the new zoned school.
- **How will transfers be impacted?**
 - Since the school consolidation process will include reviews and possible changes to boundaries and transfer policies, we don't have enough information yet to know exactly how transfers will be impacted.
- **Why doesn't the district split into two? Wouldn't this be more cost effective?**
 - No. Splitting the district would cause us to lose economies of scale and lead to duplication of costly services like transportation and administration, without escaping state funding rules like recapture. While the amount of recapture that two separate districts would pay could differ from our current recapture payment, it wouldn't



necessarily result in either districts receiving more per-student funding. This is because districts are funded on a per-student basis with additional weights for specific student groups, any additional funds raised are sent to the state through recapture. Additionally, dividing the district would require complex legal processes, major disruptions, and years of planning—time and energy that could be better spent improving our schools now. Instead of dividing our community, we are focused on equitable solutions that benefit all students: advocating for fair state funding, boosting enrollment and investing in programs that serve every campus.

- In 2017 the district commissioned a study that showed that splitting the district would result in very little if any new funding based on current law at the time, and would most likely result in less funding per pupil. The review also determined that both districts would still be subject to paying recapture. While there have been some changes to school finance law since 2017, the changes would not result in a more positive financial benefit to splitting the district.
- **Will there be more opportunities for feedback?**
 - Yes! There will be three open houses on June 24 and June 25 and more in-depth workshops in mid-July. These events will be posted to the district website and will include additional details as we move through the consolidation process.

Outcomes of 2019 School Closures

- **What do we know about how the 2019 school closures affected student academic performance?**
 - We have not been able to properly explore student success outcomes in relation to the 2019 school closures. The pandemic hit Spring 2019, just as students were being reassigned to their receiving schools the following fall. During the pandemic, data paused, changed, or can't be accurately compared. For example, we would typically compare students using academic measures, but STAAR paused during COVID,



and our national-normed benchmarks changed because we switched vendors and changed implementation.

- To better understand the experiences of those affected by the 2019 closures, we asked all survey participants whether they were directly impacted by the 2019-20 closure of Sims, Metz, Pease, and/or Brooke elementary schools (i.e., your student's school was closed or your position was displaced). A portion of survey participants answered yes, 2.61% (n=367). These individuals were given a follow-up question asking perception of the impact school consolidation had on student academic success during the 2020-21 school year. 68% of the group responded either somewhat or extremely negative (n=366).
- **Did the 2019 school closures save money?**
 - We're currently working on this analysis, but several factors make it difficult to pinpoint any savings. When the pandemic hit, enrollment dropped and didn't rebound for several years. With fewer students, the cost per student increased. Additionally, the pandemic led to unexpected costs, which also increased per student spending. To support students and families during the transition, we made significant one-time investments in receiving schools—adding counselors, parent support specialists, instructional coaches, front office staff, and after-school programs. These added expenses meant that any potential savings wouldn't be realized until those investments tapered off. We'll share a full analysis with the supporting data later this summer.

Long-term Planning

- **How will consolidations now, limit or possibly eliminate the need to do more consolidations in the future.**
 - We understand consolidations, boundary changes and transfer policy review can be disruptive, regardless of when it happens. It is our goal to thoughtfully go through this process with the future in mind to



ensure we get it right and don't have to consider consolidations again in the near future.