



Facts About Hudson School District's Budget Challenges and Elementary School Closures

In recent conversations, some community members have expressed concern that the decision-making process surrounding school closures is moving too quickly and without adequate public input. In reality, the Hudson School District and Board of Education have been transparently discussing declining student enrollment, projected budget shortfalls, and the potential need to close schools for more than three years. Throughout this period, the Board has engaged the community through multiple meetings, presentations, referendums, newsletters, and public reports. These conversations began well before any final decisions were made and were focused on sustaining high-quality educational programs, responsible fiscal stewardship, and prioritizing student experiences over maintaining buildings.

Misleading statement: This decision is moving too fast, and there has been limited dialogue with the community.

Fact: The Board of Education has been discussing projected budget shortfalls and the possible need to close schools for the past three years.

The Board of Education has been discussing declining student enrollment and projected budget shortfalls for the past three years. In the spring of 2023, the Board asked the community to support an \$8 million operational referendum that would help the District maintain all of its programs and schools. The community said no. The Board adjusted its request down to \$5 million in the fall of 2024. Again, the community said no. This past spring (2025), the Board adjusted its request to \$5 million, with a six-year limit. They also stated that this \$5 million would not meet the projected long-term budget shortfall. Additional cuts would be needed. The community said yes by a very slim margin of six (6) votes.

Following the narrow passage of the spring operational referendum, the Board began discussions on the next steps for the School District. The Board reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining high-quality academics, adhering to class-size guidelines, continuing class and course experiences such as art, music, and other specials, retaining high-quality staff, ensuring our schools are safe, clean, and well-maintained, and continuing extracurricular activities. These commitments to the educational experience of all children outweighed a commitment to maintaining bricks-and-mortar schools. The Board of Education is charged with balancing decisions in the best interest of the greatest number of students while being responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars.

The following provides a brief overview of the community engagement opportunities and stories over the past three years ([link to the full list of Long-term Facility and Budget Planning Communications 2020-2025](#)):

Community Engagement

- September 28, 2022, Hudson School District Facilities Planning parent meetings at Willow River and EP Rock Elementary Schools

- October 3, 2022, Hudson School District Facilities Planning parent meetings at North Hudson and Houlton Elementary Schools
- November 1, 2022, Community Meeting Presentation. [Link to presentation slides.](#)
- February 22, 2023, Community Meeting regarding April 2023 referendum at Hudson Middle School
- February 23, 2023, Referendum presentations to Hudson Chamber of Commerce and EP Rock Parent Group.
- March 2, 2023, Referendum presentation to Hudson Prairie Parent Group
- March 7, 2023, Referendum presentation to North Hudson Parent Group
- March 9, 2023, Referendum presentation to Willow River Parent Group
- March 21, 2023, Referendum virtual presentation open to community
- March 23, 2023, Referendum presentation to Noon Rotary and the community at North Hudson Elementary
- March 30, 2023, Referendum presentation to Houlton Parent Group
- April 4-6, 2024, Creating our future strategic planning
- January 7, 2025, Community Conversation to gather input on potential budget cuts and potential school closures ([link to feedback responses](#))

News Articles and Community Newsletters/Mailers

- Hudson School District Annual Meeting, September 12, 2022: Budget challenges included reduced state funding, maintaining class size guidelines, sustainable funding of long-term maintenance and capital improvement plans for all facilities, and a projected decline in student enrollment. [Link to HSD Annual Report 2022](#)
- The Star Observer, October 24, 2022: Big decision - Hudson faces school closure choices https://www.hudsonstarobserver.com/news/big-decision-hudson-faces-school-closure-choices/article_aacf1600-53cd-11ed-bc2d-db141e09bf99.html
- The Star Observer, November 3, 2022: Hudson - District takes questions about Houlton, Willow River schools https://www.hudsonstarobserver.com/news/hudson-district-takes-questions-about-houlton-willow-river-schools/article_0e485102-5ba7-11ed-bc70-9becedc9731b.html
- The Star Observer, November 15, 2022: Hudson - People pleas for Houlton, Willow https://www.hudsonstarobserver.com/news/hudson-people-plea-for-houlton-willow/article_048e00a2-6512-11ed-bf37-0bc29282d631.html
- Hudson School District Annual Meeting, September 11, 2023: Budget challenges included addressing state funding levels, addressing instructional needs for all learners, maintaining class size guidelines, sustainable funding of long-term maintenance and capital improvement plans for all facilities, projected decline in student enrollment. [Link to HSD Annual Report 2023](#)
- HSD Community Newsletter, December 2023: Creating Our Future Together - A community conversation for educational excellence. [Link to newsletter](#)
- HSD Community Newsletter, March 2024: Creating our Future Together - A community conversation for educational excellence. [Link to newsletter](#)
- The Star Observer, January 8, 2025: Hudson School District hosts community conversation, where residents discuss budget cuts, referendum https://www.hudsonstarobserver.com/news/hudson-school-district-hosts-community-conversation-where-residents-discuss-budget-cuts-referendum/article_156d907c-cdde-11ef-8839-17318988d7c2.html

- The Star Observer, January 14, 2025: Hudson School Board agrees to place referendum on ballot this April
https://www.hudsonstarobserver.com/news/hudson-school-board-agrees-to-place-referendum-on-ballot-this-april/article_70ea03c2-d2a2-11ef-888e-e3b063ebd65c.html
- The Star Observer, February 14, 2025: Hudson Superintendent - We're working to address budget challenges
https://www.hudsonstarobserver.com/opinion/hudson-superintendent-were-working-to-address-budget-challenges/article_11e01b46-eb11-11ef-91df-675b7b492ab9.html
- The Star Observer, March 17, 2025: Why the operational referendum matters for our schools and community
- The Star Observer, March 15, 2025: Hudson School Board Candidate Forum features discussion on referendum, student mental health
https://www.hudsonstarobserver.com/news/hudson-school-board-candidate-forum-features-discussion-on-referendum-mental-health/article_f44a2594-006f-11f0-b009-535b60b81189.html
- Operational Referendum website information, April 1, 2025
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bJxZWXhgmlpDN_WzIAEMZiU312zNHBNY9uYpJO10jGE/edit?usp=sharing

Misleading statement: The Board of Education has withheld information. How is it possible to make a decision when there are so many unknowns, such as new attendance boundaries, bus routes, staffing, and more?

Fact: The School District has used data to make this decision.

Based on current enrollment data, the School District is able to make accurate assumptions about staffing, available classroom and common spaces, special education, and other programming needs. Bussing costs may remain the same or increase slightly.

[Use this link to review all of the documents used by the Board of Education to make their decisions.](#)

Misleading statement: The District states student enrollment is declining, yet new housing is being built.

Fact: The last demographic study, which was shared with the community, was done in May of 2022 by Applied Population Laboratory - UW Madison. The projected data from this study extended to 2031-2032.

Over the past ten (10) years, the School District has turned to professional demographers to help answer this question regarding future student enrollments. The most recent demographic study, conducted by the Applied Population Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, was completed in 2022. The data from that study indicate the following points:

- Continued long-term downward trend in elementary projected enrollments through 2031-2032.
- Recent and long-term municipal birthrates are on a downward trend through 2027.
- The District's attendance area has seen the most growth in individuals aged 55 or older.

Additionally, the School District has retained the services of another demographic consulting group, MGT, to update student enrollment projections and assist with setting new elementary attendance boundaries. Preliminary conversations with MGT suggest that the School District's student enrollment will continue to decline over the next ten years.

Based on data from the Applied Population study, despite an increase in housing units, both single-family and multi-family, the estimated number of students from each new unit is only 0.47 (meaning that for every two new residences, the School District would gain one student).

Misleading Statement: Class sizes will go up, and neighborhoods/families divided.

Fact: The Board of Education is committed to maintaining existing class-size guidelines, and individual families will not be divided in resetting elementary attendance boundaries.

The current class-size guidelines have been in place for the Hudson School District since the 1990s. A thirty-year history of adhering to the same class size guidelines is a strong indicator of the School District's commitment to these guidelines.

Our elementary schools currently have enough capacity to accommodate the closure of up to two schools, including space for 4K programs. Options for 4K wrap care may be more limited. Class sizes would remain within our Board-approved guidelines:

- Kindergarten–2nd Grade: 18–22 students
- Grades 3–5: 22–27 students

Currently, there is only one 2nd-grade classroom at Willow River with 23 students, and two 5th-grade classrooms at River Crest with 28 students each. Alternatively, nine grade levels across the School District are below classroom guidelines.

While some classes that are currently at sixteen students will see an increase, there are other classes at the high end of the guidelines that will actually see a decrease.

Part of the community engagement feedback will help the School District understand neighborhood boundaries. Considerations for keeping neighborhoods together will include roadways and other physical barriers to bus routes, and enrollment numbers for each attendance area. Individual families will not be split.

False: The School District asked for money to build a new school three (3) years ago.

Fact: The School District asked the community to support the maintenance and improvements to EP Rock and North Hudson Elementary Schools, and Hudson Middle School in 2023.

The last new school to be built in the School District was River Crest Elementary, which opened in 2008. Referendum-approved additions, improvements, and maintenance projects have been completed at Hudson High School, Hudson Middle School, EP Rock Elementary, and North Hudson Elementary Schools.

False: The School District is holding on to a portion of the UU property for a future school site.

Fact: The School Board is committed to selling the approximate 16 acres on UU once the larger portion of the UU property is sold.

Questions have been raised and speculation expressed regarding the approximate 16 acres of UU property that is being retained by the School District. The Board of Education chose to hold onto this small parcel of land in order to sell it once the larger UU sale is completed and developed. It is believed that the property will have greater value and provide the School District with additional revenue.

The zoning classification for this parcel is AG/residential within the Town of Hudson. However, because the School District owns the property as a governmental entity, there are no taxes collected on the property. This has created some confusion when people have stated it is zoned public.

[Link to additional questions and answers following the September 22, 2025 community meeting.](#)