

## **McMillan Elementary Second Community Meeting Summary**

September 22, 2026

The second community meeting reinforced the themes heard during the September 16 meeting. Participants expressed strong support for keeping McMillan Elementary open and described the school as a safe, high-performing and deeply connected part of the neighborhood.

Community members continued to question the speed of the process, the financial and enrollment data supporting the recommendation, and whether alternatives to decommissioning have been fully evaluated. Participants asked the district and Board to slow the process, respond directly to outstanding questions and develop a more complete plan before making a decision.

### **Major Themes**

#### **1. McMillan's small-school environment is viewed as a strength.**

Families repeatedly said McMillan's size allows students to be known personally by teachers, administrators and support staff. Participants associated the smaller environment with strong relationships, safety, individualized attention and academic progress.

Families particularly valued:

- Small class sizes and student-to-teacher ratios
- Staff members who know students and families personally
- A safe, welcoming environment with little reported bullying
- Strong academic performance and student growth
- Individualized intervention and enrichment
- A principal and staff who create a positive school culture
- Stability for students who have struggled in larger settings

Several families said their children transferred to McMillan after being unsuccessful elsewhere and began making significant academic or social progress.

#### **2. The effect on students with special needs remains a primary concern.**

Participants emphasized McMillan's special education services, experienced staff and ability to provide students with individual attention. Families worried that moving students

to larger schools or requiring a transition could cause anxiety, dysregulation or academic regression.

Questions focused on:

- How IEP and 504 services would transition
- Whether students would retain comparable services and staffing
- Whether receiving schools have appropriate classrooms and facilities
- How fourth-grade students would manage changing schools for fifth grade and again for middle school
- Whether special education students could remain with familiar staff or peers
- How the district would address students' emotional and mental-health needs

Participants asked the district to consider the needs of students with disabilities when calculating building capacity, noting that specialized programs require space that cannot necessarily be counted as general classrooms.

### **3. Participants want alternatives to decommissioning fully evaluated.**

The most frequently raised question was why decommissioning is being considered before other options.

Suggestions included:

- Adjusting attendance boundaries to increase McMillan's enrollment
- Moving students from schools using portable classrooms to McMillan
- Limiting enrollment at schools of choice
- Converting McMillan into a school of choice, bilingual school or specialized program
- Expanding preschool or early-childhood programming
- Using one portion of the building as an elementary school and another as a districtwide early-learning or special education hub
- Leasing unused space to childcare providers, community organizations or other partners
- Closing or consolidating only one wing of the building
- Phasing any change over several years

- Allowing current students to complete elementary school at McMillan
- Increasing outreach and marketing to attract additional families
- Pursuing grants, fundraising or other funding sources for repairs

Participants asked the district to frame the discussion around what would make McMillan sustainable for the next 10 to 20 years, rather than focusing only on the cost of current operations.

#### **4. Enrollment trends and neighborhood growth require further study.**

Community members questioned whether declining enrollment is permanent. They described younger families moving into the neighborhood and anticipated additional regional growth connected to employment and economic development.

Participants requested:

- Updated neighborhood demographic information
- Data on recent home sales and neighborhood turnover
- Enrollment projections that account for future growth
- An analysis of the effect of COVID-era birth rates
- Historical enrollment before, during and after when McMillan was Gateway School
- Information about students living in the attendance area who attend choice, charter, private or home schools
- Enrollment trends at comparable nearby schools
- An explanation of what the district has done to increase enrollment at McMillan

Several participants said they purchased homes specifically so their children could attend McMillan and expressed concern that removing the school could affect the neighborhood's identity and property values.

#### **5. Participants want greater facility and financial transparency.**

Community members continued to question the approximately \$5.4 million in projected repairs. Some described the amount as manageable when compared with the cost of constructing or renovating other schools.

Requested information included:

- A detailed breakdown and photographs of the identified facility needs

- The name and methodology of the independent facility assessor
- Whether more than one assessment or estimate was obtained
- Which repairs are essential and which could be completed over time
- Maintenance spending at McMillan during the past five and 10 years
- Comparable repair estimates and investments at nearby schools
- How the district prioritizes funding between new and older schools
- The cost of decommissioning, student redistribution and transportation
- Ongoing costs associated with maintaining a vacant building
- The projected net savings from decommissioning

Some participants expressed concern that deferred maintenance contributed to the current situation and asked why McMillan has not received investments comparable to other schools.

#### **6. McMillan is considered essential neighborhood infrastructure.**

Participants described McMillan as more than a school. The building and grounds serve as a gathering place, polling location, recreation area and home for after-school programs, childcare, sports and community events.

Community members highlighted:

- Walking and biking access
- Playgrounds and athletic fields
- Free after-school programming
- Community School resources
- Partnerships with churches, nonprofits and volunteers
- Enrichment programs and clubs
- A strong culture of family and community involvement

Participants worried that decommissioning the school would remove another resource from an area serving many families with financial, transportation and support needs.

#### **7. Transportation and walkability remain significant concerns.**

Families said many students currently walk or bike to McMillan and that some households

do not have reliable transportation. Participants requested a full analysis of safe routes, busing costs, driver availability, travel times and the effect on families with children at multiple schools or shared parenting arrangements.

Some participants said they may choose charter schools, homeschooling or schools outside the district if McMillan closes.

#### **8. Participants want a detailed transition plan before any decision.**

Community members said they need to understand not only whether McMillan might be decommissioned, but exactly how students, families and staff would be supported.

Requested transition supports included:

- Counseling and social-emotional assistance
- Visits to potential receiving schools
- Opportunities to meet new teachers and staff
- Clear plans for IEPs, 504 plans and specialized services
- Continuation of free meals, Title I, multilingual learner and Community School supports
- Preservation of after-school and childcare programs
- Efforts to keep students, peer groups and staff teams together
- Advance notice and a longer implementation period
- Clear information about class sizes at receiving schools

Participants also requested information about staff placement, seniority, job classifications and whether teachers or teams could transition with students.

#### **9. The school's academic success should be part of the evaluation.**

Participants repeatedly asked the district and Board to consider McMillan's test scores, student growth, attendance and success as a Title I school. They expressed concern that the presentation focused on enrollment and finances without giving equal attention to educational outcomes.

Several participants asked trustees to visit McMillan during the school day to observe its programs, culture and student support firsthand.

#### **10. Trust and communication remain major concerns.**

Participants described the process as rushed and said the meeting time and short notice

created barriers for working families. Some believed questions had not been answered and worried that public engagement was being treated as a procedural requirement rather than an opportunity to influence the outcome.

Participants requested:

- A large-group question-and-answer meeting
- Additional meetings at more accessible times
- A virtual participation option
- Direct communication from McMillan
- Greater use of TalkingPoints, flyers, the reader board and mailed notices
- Publication of the data and sources used in the recommendation
- Clear information about how community feedback will be presented to trustees
- Direct responses to questions raised at both meetings

Several participants also asked for broader outreach to neighbors, taxpayers and community members who do not currently have children enrolled at McMillan.

### **Overall Sentiment**

The dominant message remained: Keep McMillan open, slow down the process and evaluate alternatives first.

Participants believe McMillan's small size, strong staff, academic performance and specialized supports make it particularly effective for its students. They expressed deep concern that decommissioning could disproportionately affect students with disabilities, low-income families and families with limited transportation.

The second meeting also produced more specific alternatives, particularly shared-use models that would continue operating McMillan as an elementary school while using available space for early-childhood services, special education programs, childcare or community partners.