Special Board Presentation:

WSD Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee Presentation

March 3, 2026
6:00 - 8:30 pm

Introduction: The Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee

Elementary Parent Reps
Eisenhower: Vivian Dondlinger
Jefferson: Seth Flanders
Lincoln: Katie Triska Wiemer
McKinley: Abby Kortes
Roosevelt: Andrea Hoffman
Underwood: Patrick Zarling
Washington: Katharine Hudson**
Wilson: Jonathan Ference-Burke
Wauwatosa Montessori: Lindsay Schiller

Secondary Parent Reps
Longfellow: Will Gilbert
Longfellow: Tyler Malzahn
Whitman: Pablo Bras
Whitman: Maura Riordan
East: Melissa Smothers
East: Martha Handrich
West: Charmina McGill
West: Sarah Noerenberg

Tosa Resident Reps
Liz Shickles
Martin McLemore
Edward Brennan
Sharon Muehlfeld

Secondary Staff Reps
Longfellow: Dana Federmeyer
Whitman: Matt Troilo
East: Michael Hayden

**Note: There was an attempt to solicit participation from a parent at Madison Elementary, staff at West High School, and students*

***Note: The selection committee recommended Katharine Hudson after the representative who was initially identified indicated that they do not intend to be a Washington parent/guardian for the 2025-26 school year.*

Introduction: External Facilitator



Paige Richards

Agenda

I. Call to Order

II. Introduction of the Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee Facilitator, Ms. Paige Richards

III. Presentation of the Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee Final Report Findings

A. Why Doing Nothing is Not an Option
B. Why Deferred Maintenance is Not Sufficient
C. Recommendations and Rationale
D. Considerations
E. Dissenting Opinion(s)

IV. Questions from the School Board

V. Public Comment

VI. Adjournment

Structure of the Committee and Its Work

Forward-Thinking by Design

- Empowered a diverse, representative group of community members
- Built individuals into a cohesive, collaborative, well-informed, and highly effective Committee
- Developed shared understanding of the complex, "wicked" policy challenges surrounding school facilities
- Because "wicked" problems resist simple solutions, the Committee's exploration extended beyond physical infrastructure to enrollment trends, social-emotional learning, school finance, and academic programming

Structure of the Committee and Its Work

Professionally Facilitated Process

- The District's commitment to an independent process was essential
- Autonomy ensured the committee could examine all dimensions of the work comprehensively and candidly — free to surface trade-offs, test assumptions, dissent, and engage in rigorous analysis
- Grounded by a framing essential question that provided boundaries and direction



Pausing



Paraphrasing



Posing questions

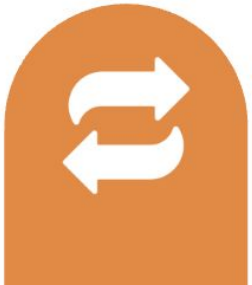
Norms of Collaboration

Source: Thinking Collaborative

Putting ideas on the table



Providing data



Paying attention to self and others



Presuming positive intentions



Committee Purpose

The charge of the Committee is to answer the following essential question:

Which secondary school facility model best equips WSD to implement and sustain an efficient and impactful instructional program?

Efficient is defined as:

- maximize space utilization
- staffing allocation
- student experience

Impactful is defined as:

- improved student achievement within the learning spaces
- further prepares students to thrive in post-secondary pathways

Committee Purpose continued

The Committee was asked to base their decisions on the following decision-making criteria:

1. maximize students' academic growth and achievement;
2. maximize students' social-emotional development;
3. maximize the District's investment in allocating funds responsibly;
4. maximize modern learning environments for all students; and
5. maximize efficient facility usage.

Background

24 committee members collectively invested hundreds of hours in meetings, school tours, expert consultations, and community engagement to identify the best secondary school model for WSD students.

After thorough analysis, the Committee narrowed its focus from **10 models to 5** — going deeper on the options best suited to WSD's current and future needs.

Decision Making: 10 to 5

BUILD CAPACITY CONSULTING

Models Voted to Be Studied	
Model	Committee Vote
I	**258.72**
F	253.54
A1	222.8
D	189.89
H	**181.38**

Models Voted to be Set Aside	
Model	Committee Vote
A2	170.96
G	**169.98**
C	144.45
E	137.04
B	134.79

Models brought forward by Committee members are in purple

Decision Making: Do Nothing = Not an Option

The committee toured all four secondary schools, secondary schools in other districts, and reviewed the administrative analysis of learning spaces.

This information unanimously convinced members of the ad hoc committee that significant secondary school infrastructure improvements are required.

Decades of a ‘just in time’ approach to financing maintenance needs have led to significant deficiencies in Wauwatosa’s secondary school buildings.

The opportunity lies before us to invest in our secondary schools.

Elimination of the Maintenance Only Option

A deferred maintenance only approach is insufficient.

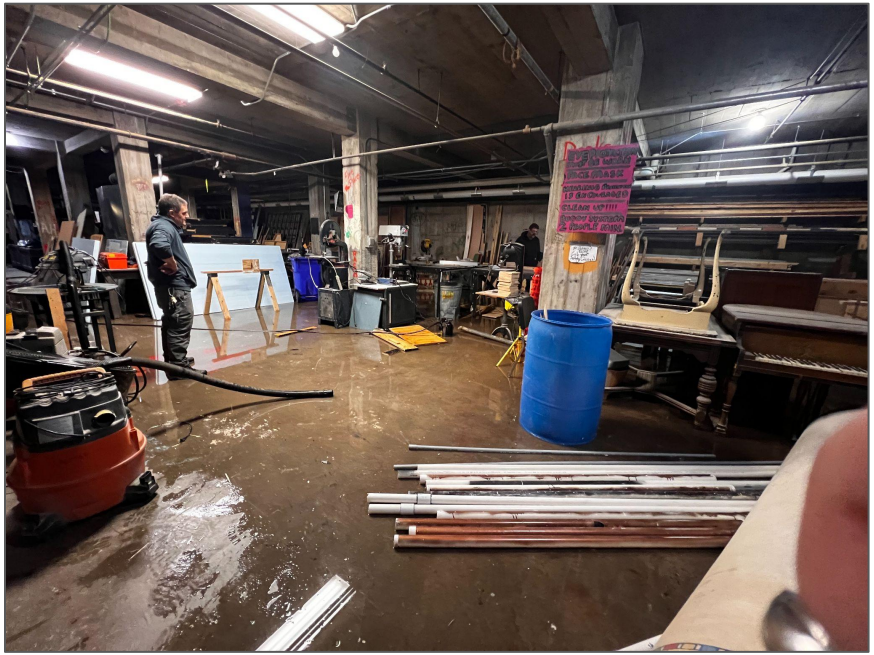
Major systems in each of the four secondary schools are already past their useful life.

Bringing the secondary school buildings up to code is required but will not address items such as modernization of learning environments, or providing safe and accessible educational spaces.

Wisconsin's property tax funding structure leaves the District unable to fund these necessary capital improvements.

Elimination of the Maintenance Only Option





Flooding damage pictures from Wauwatosa West Theatre stage (left, 2025) and Wauwatosa East Theatre basement (right, 2024)

Elimination of the Maintenance Only Option

The maintenance-only approach would require substantial additional investment within a relatively short time frame to adequately adapt these aging buildings to educate many future generations of WSD students.

The Committee believes that if the district is prepared to invest at this scale, that investment should position our secondary schools for the future, not merely preserve them in their current inadequate state.

Committee Recommendation: Model F

After 10 months of study, deliberation, community engagement, and careful application of the Committee's decision-making criteria, the Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee recommends **Model F** as the facility model best equipped to help the Wauwatosa School District *implement* and *sustain* an efficient and impactful instructional program.

Model F preserves all four secondary school campuses — configuring **East and West as 9–12 high schools** and **Longfellow and Whitman as 7–8 middle schools**.

- **$349M** estimated total project cost, covering light and heavy renovations across all four buildings
- **$165M** in deferred maintenance and capital needs addressed
- **~$140,000** projected annual reduction in staffing and utility costs
- All four pools retained or restored

Rationale: Social-Emotional Development

Model F preserves school environments where students are more likely to feel known, supported, and connected.

Moderate-size schools (600-1200) report higher levels of student belonging, engagement, and extracurricular participation.

Lower rates of bullying, higher attendance, closer student-teacher relationships.

Larger schools can potentially offer more programs but can also increase anonymity, isolation, and risk behaviors.

Rationale: Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

Participation contributes to healthy social-emotional development and has been shown to have long term benefits to students.

Develops sense of purpose & belonging, connection to school community.

By preserving all four secondary buildings, **Model F** provides the greatest access to these programs.

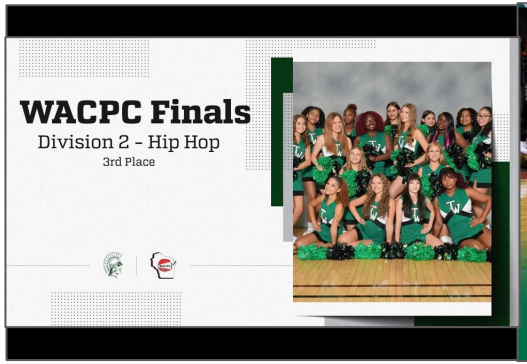




Rationale: Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

Programs (music, theater, athletics, etc) are seeing great participation from students, great community support, and are receiving state and national recognition, but the quality of our facilities does not match the enthusiasm the community has for these programs.









Rationale: Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

Recent program success and recognition:



Rationale: Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

Recent program success and recognition:



WAUWATOSA SCHOOL DISTRICT RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR MUSIC EDUCATION SUPPORT FOR SEVENTH YEAR IN A ROW

WE THE PEOPLE THE CITIZEN & THE CONSTITUTION

TOSA WEST TROJANS

Rationale: Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

Space for activities is already at a premium, any loss of activity space affects not just school programs, but a wide range of programming for all ages.







































Rationale: Academic Growth

- Modern learning environments foster stronger educational outcomes.
- **Model F** maintains access to high-demand classes and specialized programming at both high schools.
- Moderate school sizes allow for more personalized instruction.
- Maintains flexibility for future changes in needs.
- Good facilities allow good teachers to be effective.





Rationale: Allocating Funds Responsibly

Any path forward represents a significant investment — **but $165M in deferred maintenance must be addressed regardless** of which model is selected.

Renovating and modernizing now is the fiscally responsible choice. Deferring further will only cost more.

Retaining all district-owned property positions WSD for long-term success. Land in Wauwatosa is at a premium — what is sold can never be recovered.

By avoiding additions and major reconfigurations, **Model F offers the greatest flexibility** to manage and reduce final renovation costs.

Rationale: Benefit to Broader Community

Our schools anchor neighborhoods, host community events, provide space for athletics, arts, and serve as gathering space for residents of all ages.

By preserving the four building footprint, **Model F** ensures that all corners of Wauwatosa are in close proximity to their neighborhood secondary building.

Provides updated learning spaces, meeting spaces, and restores needed school/community resources.

> *Example: Model F would invest funds to restore the Longfellow pool. This impact extends far beyond middle school students. Wauwatosa Recreation Department uses all district (and beyond) to offer swim lessons for people 8 months to adults. Water safety is a critical, life long skill for all.*

This is a long-term investment in not just our schools, but in our community at large.

Rationale: Modern Learning Spaces

Many of our classrooms / program spaces are simply inadequate for today and will continue to be so in the future.

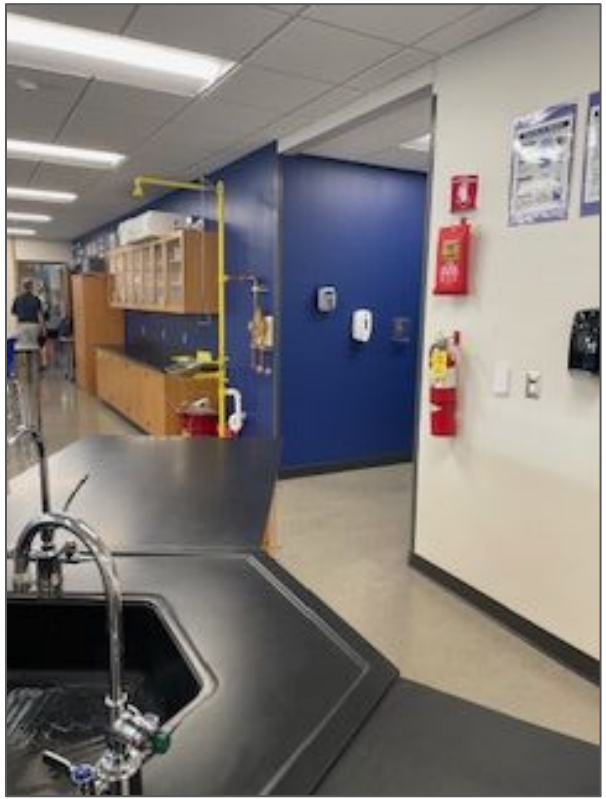
Modern learning environments have been proven to foster stronger educational outcomes.

Flexible classrooms, adequate natural light, functional science labs, updated technology, collaborative spaces, and modern performing and visual arts spaces will benefit students at all four secondary schools.

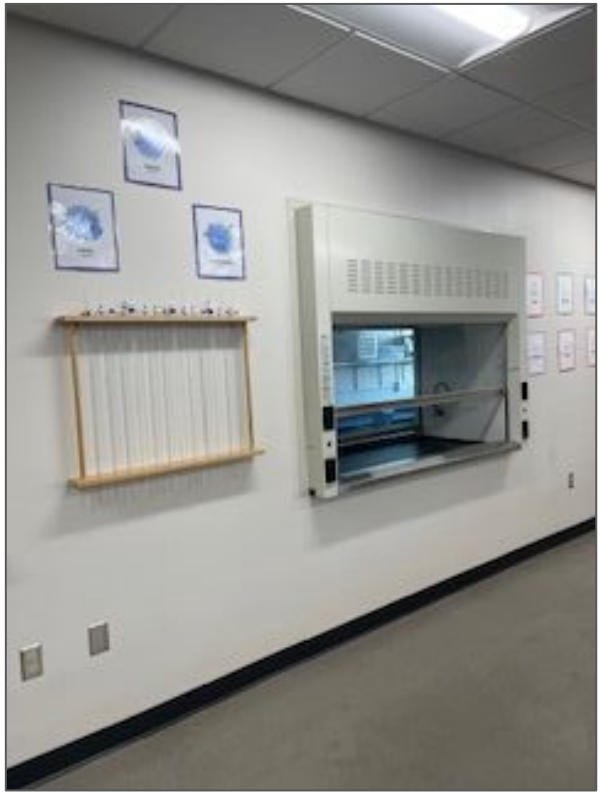
Provides students in all secondary buildings with highest quality of learning environment and not building dependant, providing equity across the district.

Modern Learning Spaces - Science

Nicolet High School

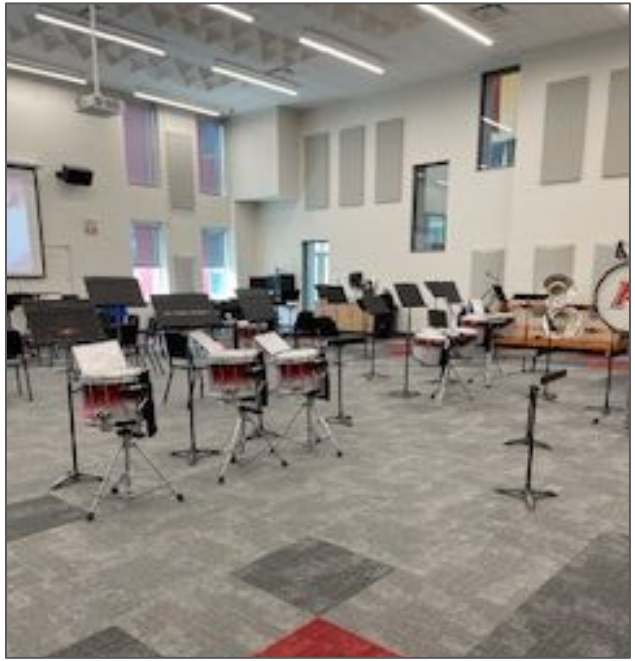


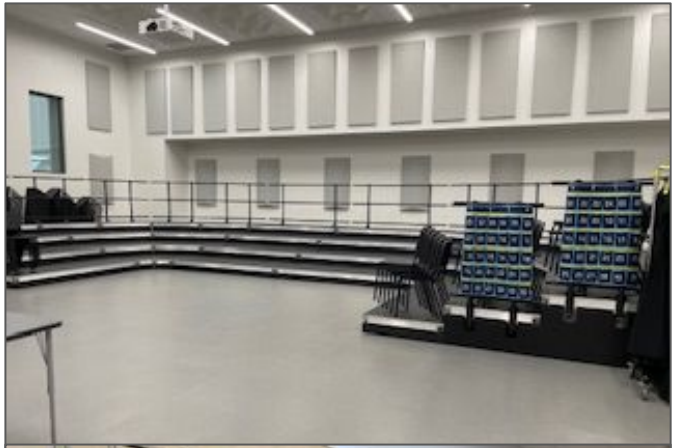




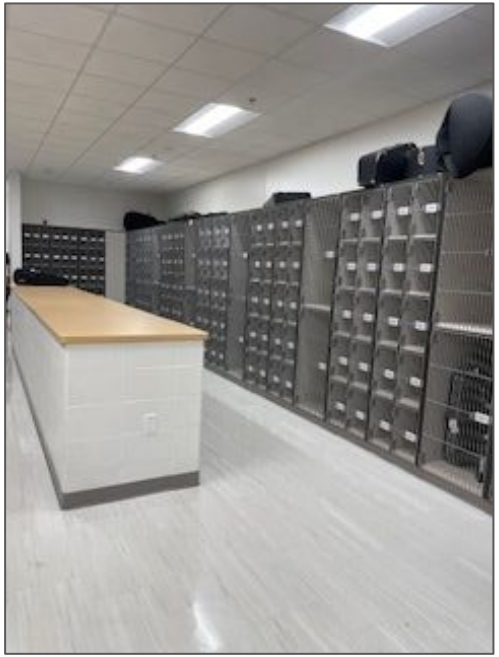
Modern Learning Spaces - Music

Neenah High School & Forest Park Middle School



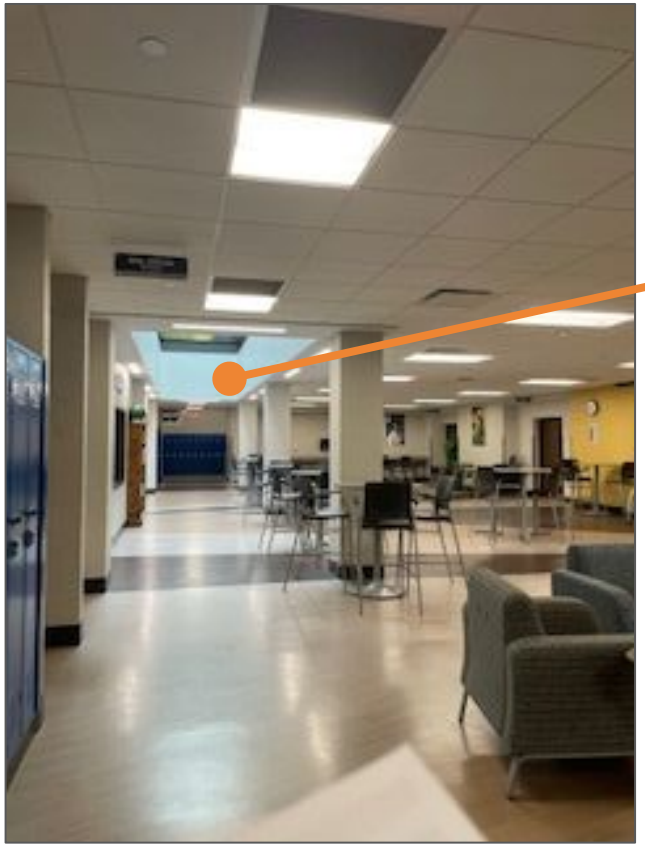




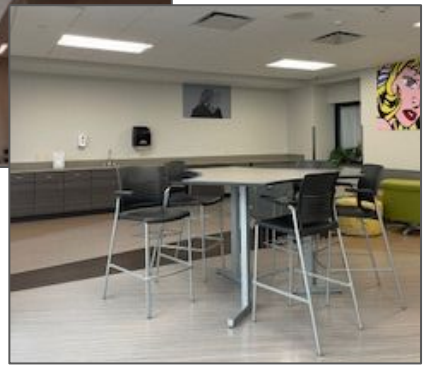


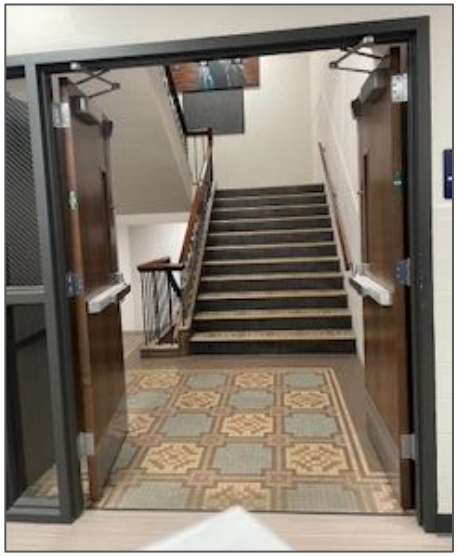
Modern Learning Spaces - Design Elements

Menasha High School









Considerations

“Don’t let perfect be the enemy of good.” There is no single, perfect answer to this problem, but doing nothing is not an option. The cost, both financially and to our children’s education, will continue to grow with inaction.

Operational costs will continue to be a concern. There is no facilities model which would solve this ongoing issue. WSD should continue to seek efficiencies that are not detrimental to education or student experience.

Considerations continued

Model F is not a final design. There is still room to change details, level of renovation, and prioritize where we invest our funds. Teacher input should be solicited in planning.

Model F aligns with the preferred alternative from the community survey. Beyond this Committee, the community needs to be behind the plan for the future of our schools.

Conclusion

There is no one perfect solution to the problem facing Wauwatosa School District. While the Committee did reach an overall consensus to recommend Model F as the best option, individual Committee members preferred other models as their top choice, or supported Model F as the preferred option, but not without concerns.

In support of transparency and to ensure that the voices of all the dedicated committee members are heard, these opinions are captured in our Final Report, under “Considerations,” “Dissenting Opinions” and “Notes in Strong Support of Other Models.”

Q&A

Additional members of the Committee will participate in providing responses to the Board, facilitated by Paige Richards.