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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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Mission Statement: We are committed to the success of every student!

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release
March 13, 2026

School Board approves new right-sizing plan for Alachua County Public Schools

Following months of discussion, public input and revisions, a plan to right-size Alachua County Public Schools has been approved by the School Board.

Under the plan, new school attendance boundaries will go into effect for the 2026-27 school year. It will be the first time the district has comprehensively adjusted attendance zones for elementary, middle and high schools since 2003. The new zones will better balance enrollment across the district and reduce both overcrowding and under-enrollment at local schools.

Like districts across the state and the nation, Alachua County Public Schools is facing significant declines in enrollment, driven largely by falling birth rates and an increase in school choice options, including Florida's universal voucher program. Districts are responding by rezoning, consolidating campuses and, in many cases, closing schools.

Alachua County Public Schools currently has 6,600 empty seats—enough to fill four elementary schools, two middle schools and more than half a high school.

Besides revising school attendance zones, the approved plan also closes at least three schools over the next three years. Foster Elementary, which has the fewest school-aged children living in its attendance zone, will close at the end of this school year. Williams Elementary, the district's oldest school at 89, is projected to close at the end of the 2027-28 school year. Lincoln Middle School, located next to Williams, will undergo major renovations and the construction of a new elementary building to become a kindergarten- through 8th-grade (K-8) school serving most of the current Williams students. Most Williams students will remain on the current campus until the K-8 facility is complete.

Alachua Elementary School's campus is projected to close at the end of the 2027-28 school year. It was proposed that Irby Elementary also be closed at that time, with both schools moving into a newly renovated and expanded K-8 facility at what is now Mebane Middle. However, The School Board asked district staff to present more information about any potential reconfiguration or consolidation of Irby Elementary, which could also have an impact on grade levels at Mebane. The Board is expected to make a final decision on Irby and Mebane in May.

Oak View Middle School in the city of Newberry will become a PreK-8 this fall, incorporating most of the current Newberry Elementary zone. The elementary is converting to an independently-operated charter, requiring the district to provide a traditional public school option for families in the area. Modular buildings used to house students during previous facilities projects will be moved to the Oak View campus this summer and plans will be developed for a new elementary building at the site.

"This plan will allow us to focus our resources on expanding and enhancing educational programs and updating our school facilities," said Superintendent Dr. Kamela Patton. "Instead of spending tens of millions of dollars on overhead costs and expensive repairs at underused buildings, we can invest those resources to create more learning opportunities and better learning environments for our students."

More information about the approved plan, including a link to the final zone maps and responses to frequently-asked questions, is available at alachuaschools.net/ourschoolsfutureready.

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