



**Shaler Area
School District**
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Building for Tomorrow
Family Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
Updated: October 14, 2025

Overview and Purpose

The *Building for Tomorrow* initiative represents the Shaler Area School District's long-term plan to modernize learning environments, align facilities with educational needs, and position our district for future success. Grounded in our *Engage, Empower, Excel* mission, this plan ensures that every student learns in a safe, innovative, and inspiring space.

Q: What is the goal of the Building for Tomorrow initiative?

A: The initiative's goal is to create a sustainable and future-ready district by modernizing facilities, enhancing learning environments, and aligning grade configurations to better serve students. It addresses long-term needs such as building capacity, instructional alignment, safety, and energy efficiency — all while being fiscally responsible.

Q: Why is the district considering changes to grade configurations?

A: Our current grade configurations were designed decades ago, and today's enrollment, educational programming, and facility needs have evolved. Moving to a K–5 elementary, 6–8 middle school, and 9–12 high school model strengthens academic alignment, supports students by minimizing transitions.

Enrollment and Growth

Q: How has enrollment changed over time?

A: Enrollment has steadily declined over the past two decades. In 2006, the Shaler Area School District enrolled nearly 5,785 students. As of today, our enrollment stands at approximately 3,801 students — a decline of nearly 2,000 students.

This long-term demographic shift has resulted in significant underutilization of school buildings, with some facilities operating at less than half capacity. The *Building for Tomorrow* initiative



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ensures that our resources — including staff, programs, and facilities — are aligned to meet current and future student needs in a sustainable and effective way.

Q: What does the future of enrollment look like for Shaler Area?

A: According to a demographic study completed in August 2025, the district's enrollment is expected to continue to decline modestly over the next decade. The study projects approximately a 5% reduction in student enrollment over the next five years, with an estimated total of 3,415 students by the 2033–34 school year.

This projection underscores the importance of long-range planning to ensure the district continues to provide high-quality educational experiences while maintaining fiscal responsibility. By right-sizing our facilities now, we can preserve academic excellence and protect resources for future generations of Titans.

Q: What about future residential growth in the community?

A: The demographic study also examined Student Yield Factors (SYF) to help determine how new residential development might impact future enrollment.

A Student Yield Factor estimates the number of students generated from new housing construction within the district. For Shaler Area, the study found that for single-family detached homes, the K–12 Student Yield Factor is 0.171. This means the district can expect to gain approximately 17 students for every 100 new single-family detached homes that are built within our boundaries.

Even with modest residential development, the district's overall enrollment is still projected to decline slightly in the coming years, suggesting that new housing growth will not offset the broader regional demographic trends impacting public school enrollment.

Instruction and Programs

Q: Will the district be furloughing or laying off employees?

A: No. The district does not anticipate any furloughs or layoffs as part of the *Building for Tomorrow* initiative.



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This plan is focused on restructuring facilities and grade configurations — not reducing staff. Shaler Area remains deeply committed to supporting our talented educators and staff members, whose expertise and relationships are essential to maintaining stability and excellence for our students. Any staffing adjustments that occur over time will be handled through attrition or reassignment, ensuring that all transitions are made thoughtfully and without job loss.

Q: What will happen to the programs and initiatives currently available at Shaler Area Elementary School (SAES)?

A: The district is reviewing all programs, supports, and enrichment opportunities currently available to students at SAES to ensure a smooth and thoughtful transition to the new K–5 and 6–8 models.

Our goal is to retain the strongest elements of the SAES experience — including academic supports, enrichment activities, and student leadership opportunities — while also reimagining programs that better fit the needs of students across the new grade configurations.

This review process will include input from teachers, building leaders, and staff to ensure continuity of learning and student experience during and after the transition.

Q: How will after-school activities be affected?

A: The district remains firmly committed to preserving and enhancing after-school programming for all students. As we transition to a new K–5 and 6–8 model, Shaler Area will review all after-school and extracurricular offerings to ensure they align with the developmental and academic needs of each age group.

This review will be conducted in collaboration with our staff, with a focus on maintaining meaningful enrichment, arts, and athletic opportunities that foster student engagement, leadership, and belonging. Families can expect continued communication as programming is refined to reflect the strengths of our new model.

Q: What will happen to the music and instrumental programming currently in the 4–6 curriculum?

A: Music and the performing arts are a vital part of the Shaler Area experience, and the district remains deeply committed to preserving and strengthening these programs through the transition.

As part of the *Building for Tomorrow* initiative, the district will maintain and realign instrumental and general music opportunities within the new K–5 and 6–8 structures to ensure that every



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student continues to have access to comprehensive music education.

District music educators will play a key role in this process, helping to design a seamless and developmentally appropriate sequence of vocal, instrumental, and ensemble experiences. The arts will continue to be a defining strength of Shaler Area and an essential part of our students' academic and personal growth.

Q: Will grades 4–5 remain team-taught as they are currently at SAES, or will they become self-contained classrooms?

A: The instructional model for grades 4–5 is currently under review. The decision on whether to retain teaming in one or both grade levels or transition to self-contained classrooms (similar to our K–3 primary schools) has not yet been determined.

This decision will be made collaboratively with our teachers and building leaders as part of the instructional planning process. The goal is to identify the structure that best supports academic growth, student relationships, and instructional continuity for learners in the upper elementary grades.

Q: How will the district ensure continuity of supports, services, and the overall student experience during this transition?

A: The district is deeply committed to maintaining the same level of academic, social, and emotional support that students currently receive at SAES and across all schools. As we transition to the new configuration, students will continue to have access to:

- Academic Support, Special education and learning support services
- School counseling and mental health supports
- SWPBIS initiatives
- Academic enrichment and intervention supports

Through the process, our goal is not only to maintain what we value but to enhance how we support students as learners and as individuals.



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Facilities & Infrastructure

Q: What schools will be affected by the proposed changes?

A: The proposal includes transitioning to a K–5 neighborhood elementary model, which will eventually lead to the closure of Shaler Area Elementary School (SAES) by 2027. Sixth grade will move to Shaler Area Middle School, and each remaining elementary school will serve grades K–5.

Q: When was Shaler Area Elementary School built, and how large is it?

A: Shaler Area Elementary School was built in 1957 and sits on approximately 22 acres of land. The facility itself is approximately 184,205 square feet in size. The age and scale of the building have contributed to increased maintenance costs and infrastructure challenges over time, reinforcing the need to evaluate the most effective long-term path for the district's facilities.

Q: How much would it cost to renovate Shaler Area Elementary School?

A: According to the 2022 Facility Study, it was projected that renovating Shaler Area Elementary School would cost upwards of \$30 million, not including additional expenses associated with renovating or replacing the swimming pool.

These projected costs, combined with declining enrollment and the age of the facility, make renovation an impractical long-term investment compared to modernizing and reinvesting in the district's other school buildings. The *Building for Tomorrow* plan allows the district to make strategic, future-focused investments that better support student learning and fiscal stewardship.

Q: How does this plan address building conditions and maintenance needs?

A: A key focus is to modernize our schools through prioritized investments in HVAC systems, roofs, and other infrastructure. The plan will allow the district to reinvest in fewer buildings at a deeper level, ensuring that all remaining facilities are safe, comfortable, and conducive to learning.

Q: What will happen to the Shaler Area Elementary School property?

A: The district is exploring redevelopment opportunities for the SAES site that align with community interests and fiscal responsibility. Input from families, residents, and local officials will



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guide how this property can best serve the community while generating reinvestment opportunities for the district.

Q: What is the status of the swimming pool and aquatics programs?

A: The swimming pool located at Shaler Area Elementary School has exceeded its useful lifespan and no longer meets modern standards for competition or instruction. As part of the *Building for Tomorrow* planning process, the district is reviewing options for the future of aquatics programming in collaboration with community partners.

This includes exploring potential partnerships, feasibility studies, and cost analyses to determine how swimming and related programs might be offered in the future. The goal is to ensure that any decision balances educational value, community interest, and fiscal sustainability.

Districtwide Benefits & Efficiencies

Q: What are some of the indirect benefits of this plan that may not be immediately visible?

A: While much of the Building for Tomorrow initiative focuses on visible facility and program changes, there are also significant indirect benefits that will strengthen the district's long-term sustainability and efficiency.

By operating fewer, right-sized schools, the district can:

- Streamline transportation routes, reducing total mileage, travel time, and fuel costs.
- Lower utility expenses by eliminating underutilized spaces and improving energy efficiency.
- Enhance safety and security systems, allowing resources to be concentrated across fewer campuses with consistent technology and protocols.
- Improve staff collaboration and resource allocation, ensuring each building operates at full instructional capacity.

These efficiencies will allow Shaler Area to redirect resources toward what matters most — students, staff, and high-quality learning experiences.

Implementation & Community Engagement

Q: How will this impact transportation?

A: Transportation routes and schedules will be adjusted as needed to reflect the new grade



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configurations. The district will continue to prioritize safe, efficient, and equitable bus routes for all students, with updated details communicated well in advance of any transitions.

Q: Will class sizes increase as a result of the reconfiguration?

A: No. The plan is designed to maintain appropriate class sizes across all grade levels. Consolidating grade levels allows for better distribution of students and staff, which helps ensure balanced class sizes and equitable access to educational resources.

Q: What is the timeline for implementation?

A: The planning phase is currently underway, with Board approval anticipated by November 2025. Implementation will occur in phases through 2027–28, ensuring a smooth transition for students, staff, and families.

Q: How is the community involved in this process?

A: Community voice is central to this initiative. The district is hosting Building for Tomorrow Community Forums, stakeholder workstreams, and feedback surveys to ensure that the perspectives of families, staff, and community members shape the final plan.

Q: What will be the school start and end times?

A:

2026-2027 School Year

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| • Grades K–4 | 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. |
| • Grades 5–6 | 8:11 a.m. - 3:05 p.m. |
| • Grades 7–8 | 7:40 a.m. - 2:50 p.m. |

2027-2028 School Year

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| • Grades K–5 | 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. |
| • Grades 6–8 | 7:40 a.m. - 3:05 p.m. |

Following the reconfiguration, the district will explore potential adjustments to start and end times across all school buildings to ensure consistency, operational efficiency, and alignment with student learning needs.



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Q: Can this decision be delayed?

A: While the district is committed to making this decision carefully and with full community input, delaying the *Building for Tomorrow* initiative would increase costs and prolong inefficiencies.

Many of the district's facilities are aging and require significant investment to remain functional, and enrollment trends continue to decline.

Postponing a decision would mean spending additional resources on short-term repairs instead of making long-term, strategic improvements that directly benefit students.

The timeline through 2025–28 allows the district to plan responsibly, engage stakeholders, and implement changes gradually — ensuring that decisions are well-informed and sustainable for the future.

Q: Will attendance boundaries remain the same when grades 4 and 5 transition to the neighborhood elementary schools?

A: As part of the *Building for Tomorrow* initiative, the district is reviewing attendance boundaries to ensure balanced enrollment and efficient use of space across all elementary schools.

At this time, there are no immediate plans to adjust attendance boundaries.

If adjustments become necessary in the future, they will be implemented gradually and thoughtfully — beginning only with a predetermined incoming kindergarten class to ensure that no currently enrolled student will be required to move to a different primary school during their time there.

This approach allows families and children to remain in their current school communities while providing a smooth and predictable transition to the neighborhood model over time. Families will receive ample notice and clear communication before any boundary changes take effect.

Q: Where can I find more information or ask questions?

A: Families can visit www.shalerarea.org/buildingfortomorrow for the latest updates, presentations, and FAQs.
