



Board of Education Agenda Abstract

Meeting Date: October 16, 2025

Agenda Type: Superintendent's Report/Information Item(s)

Subject: Update on Preliminary 2025-26 Student Enrollment Trends and Budgetary Impact

Division: Instructional Services and Equity & **Department:** Office of the Superintendent
Engagement Division

Person Responsible: Al Ciarochi **Feedback Requested From:** ISEED Staff and School Principals

Strategic Plan Alignment: Equitable and Transparent Fiscal Stewardship and Operations

Previous Work Session (Y/N): No **Date:**

Previous Discussion and Action (Y/N): No **Date:**

Attachment(s):

[BOE Copy of Our Changing District 10-2025 - Short Version.pdf](#)

PURPOSE:

Provide the Board of Education an update on the preliminary 2025-26 student enrollment trends and its budgetary impact.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past several years, Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools has experienced a period of significant demographic and enrollment change. While we continue to serve a vibrant, diverse, and high-performing community, the data reveal important shifts that carry both challenges and opportunities for the years ahead.

Trends

Our total district enrollment has shifted gradually over the past five years, even as the broader Triangle region continues to grow. Preliminary projections indicate that enrollment may continue to adjust modestly over the next three years if current patterns persist.

These changes are most visible at the elementary level, where several schools are operating below building capacity, while others remain at or above optimal enrollment.

Demographically, we are also seeing gradual but meaningful shifts:

- Our multilingual learner population continues to expand, requiring greater linguistic and instructional support capacity across schools.

- The percentage of students identified as EC has increased.
- The proportion of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch has increased, reflecting growing economic diversity within our community.

Implications

These changes have both immediate and long-term implications.

- **Resource Allocation and Staffing:** Shifting enrollment patterns influence how we staff schools, allocate resources, and maintain equitable class sizes. Some buildings may experience underutilization, while others remain stretched.
- **Facilities Planning:** Changing demographics and enrollment distributions have direct implications for capital planning and future building replacement projects.
- **Equity and Access:** As our student population becomes increasingly diverse, the district must continue to strengthen supports for EC students, multilingual learners, economically disadvantaged students, and those who are new to the district or community.
- **Community Dynamics:** The drivers behind enrollment change—particularly housing costs, mobility, and the availability of family housing—require continued partnership with our municipal and county partners.

In many ways, these shifts mirror broader community trends: changing housing patterns, affordability pressures, and the evolving preferences of families in our area. They also remind us that public schools remain deeply intertwined with the social and economic fabric of Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

Framing Questions

As we plan for the next several years, there are essential questions the district must collectively engage with the Board, our staff, and the community:

1. **Enrollment and Access:** How can we ensure every school remains vibrant, well-resourced, and equitably staffed as enrollment patterns evolve?
2. **Facilities and Boundaries:** How should these data inform future facilities planning, including potential attendance zone adjustments, consolidations, or targeted investments?
3. **Instructional and Programmatic Equity:** How do we adapt programs, language services, and instructional supports to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse student body?
4. **Community Partnerships:** What opportunities exist to work more closely with our municipal partners on housing, transportation, and family engagement to stabilize and strengthen enrollment?
5. **Strategic Communication:** How can we proactively share this data and its implications with our community to build understanding and partnership around potential changes?

As we continue to analyze these trends, our goal is not simply to respond to enrollment shifts but to plan thoughtfully for a sustainable, equitable, and student-centered future that allows our district to thrive. The story of our changing demographics is ultimately the story of our community, and our responsibility is to ensure that every student, in every neighborhood, continues to flourish in Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

None

PERSONNEL IMPACT:

None

SUGGESTED ACTION: The CHCCS Board of Education will receive an update on the preliminary 2025-26 student enrollment trends and its budgetary impact.

RESOLUTION: