



# CEC Presentation for Selectboards

# Background

- MAUSD faces ongoing and persistent **challenges to budget**
- Federal and State mandates pass **increasing costs** to local communities
- Benefit programs such as health care **escalate annually**
- School financing is accomplished equitably through **property taxes, as opposed to income taxes**
- MAUSD has met budget requirements **largely through staff attrition (43 positions** in the past 6 years) while settling on only a **1.51%** average annual budget increase
- Although student enrollment is stabilizing, it is down **324 students** in the past 10 years.
- Trust between voters and MAUSD is suboptimal; the **budget failed twice in 2024**
- The State long ago paused its school facilities support, leaving MAUSD with as much as **\$70 million** in maintenance and upgrades over time, of which **\$10 million** is of higher priority

# Historical Context

MAUSD is doing **more with less while demands are increasing.**

- Cutting teachers is unpopular
- Student performance is lagging, despite previous consolidation: **60% of 3rd graders are proficient in ELA, and 30% are proficient in math.**
- Since COVID student behavior getting more extreme: **46% of 6th grade students in 24/25 had at least 2 referrals** for a “major” behavior infraction such as **physical aggression, defiance, or leaving** their expected location in an unsafe manner.

# Historical Context, cont.

- **Something needs to change.** MAUSD wants to delivery high-quality education at a reasonable cost, but in some respects MAUSD's hands are tied.
- Previous attempts to economize did not gain taxpayer support. It's unclear how Act 73 will affect educational reform.
- Despite the uncertainty, MAUSD is **exploring several education delivery models for FY2028** and after through a lens of cost-effectiveness and sharing administrative and certain common responsibilities (such as special education) through regional cooperation (CESAs).
  - **Option 1:** 4 K-6 schools, 1 7-12 school
  - **Option 2:** 2 K-5 schools, 1 6-12 school (3 total schools)
  - **Option 3:** 1 PK-2 school, 1 3-5 school, 1 6-12 school (3 total schools)

# What We've Done

- **Step 1:** The Superintendent organized a district advisory council to research 16 different educational delivery options for presentation to MAUSD
- **Step 2:** MAUSD narrowed the options to 7 for further review
- **Step 3:** MAUSD solicited further information
  - Feedback from administrators, teachers, and staff
  - Independent architect firm presentation on facilities needs
  - Community survey
- **Step 4:** MAUSD narrowed the list to 3 options, listed above
- **Next Steps...**
  - Analyze information from the Vermont School Redistricting Taskforce
  - Research how each option would impact students and communities
  - Refining financial projections
  - Community presentations and feedback
  - Align on best option for FY 28

# Staff and District Advisory Council Feedback

## Staff Feedback:

- Gathered from all staff on 10/2 inservice
- Compiled by District Advisory Council
- MTEA *has not* endorsed any Education Delivery Option

## District Advisory Council Feedback:

- DAC is a group of 17 MAUSD teachers, support staff, and administrators representing all MAUSD schools
- Feedback based on educational impact of all 3 options

# Note on CESAs + Cost Savings

## What is a CESA, and why talk about it?

- CESA = cooperative educational service agency
- Sharing of services, such as special education, finance, administration, purchasing, technology, etc. with other nearby districts
- Recommended by the State Redistricting Task force

## Financial Impact

- According to Campaign for Vermont, we could save as much as **14%** on education budgets
- Potential savings shown are based on external estimates and have not been modeled or analyzed for applicability to any of the following 3 options.

# Education Delivery Options

**Option 1: 4 K-6 Schools, 1 7-12 School**

# Option 1: Pros

- Consistent with **Vermont values** and traditions
- **Fewer teacher and staff layoffs** than other options
  - Layoffs: 8.65 professional staff, 1 admin
- Educates students in their **own towns**
- Schools **deeply know** their students and families
- **Shorter bus rides** - important for attendance and school readiness
- Easier for **parents to volunteer** and engage in their school community
  - Intergenerational ties (volunteers, mentorship, local pride) integral to student well-being
- Supports town-based economic and social development
- Potential cost savings - as much as **\$1.57M** for FY 28

# Option 1: Cons

- **Collaboration challenges and stretched resources**
  - Lack of grade-level partners to share planning and strategy
  - Multi-age classrooms are difficult to undo
  - Lack of opportunities for specialization (grade level, content area, etc.)
- **Inconsistent experience across schools**
  - Different classroom models (multi-age in some schools, single-grade in others)
  - Smaller peer groups
  - Inefficient use of special education
- **Financial and sustainability concerns**

**Option 2: 2 K-5 Schools + 1 6-12 School**

## Option 2: Pros

- **Fewer schools potentially mean greater resources**
  - Easier teacher and interdisciplinary collaboration
  - More specialized curriculum for K - 5
  - Greater teacher and specialist concentration
- **More comprehensive and targeted support for struggling students**
  - Students on IEPs can get more specialized support to have their needs met
  - Increased ability for flexible groups responsive to student learning needs, interests, and progress.
- **Dedicated middle school** model with 6th grade at Mt. Abe
- **Fewer transitions between schools** so better community building, and understanding of student needs with knowing them throughout their elementary years.
- **Potential cost savings** - as much as **\$2.9 million** saved in FY 28

# Option 2: Cons

- Staff and teacher layoffs
  - 13.45 professional staff, 8.36 support staff, 2 admin
- Loss of community schools
  - Loss of school identity impacts students and adults alike
  - More challenging for parents to be engaged in schools outside of their towns
  - Transportation challenges - longer bus rides are a significant obstacle to attendance, student readiness, and equitable participation
  - Concerns about staff reassignments and reductions - could increase staff workload and undermine morale
  - Many community members feel a strong connection to their schools
  - Many community members feel students will do better in their local community schools
- Potential worries for shared staff having to teach in multiple schools
- Town vote needed before any school may be closed
- Possible social/emotional concerns with sixth graders at MS

**Option 3: Grade Banded Schools (PK-2, 3-5), 1 6-12 School**

## Option 3: Pros

- Professional support for “grade banding,” aka teaching all classes of each grade level in the same building
  - District Advisory Council says “this is the best option”
  - Dedicated staffing with deep expertise in developmental ages and academic areas
  - At least two classes per grade gives the ability to create balanced classes in terms of student behavior and ability
  - Most efficient use of special education and intervention staff
  - Transitions naturally create “checkpoint” moments for students and educators to reflect on progress, reset goals, and establish routines
  - Equitable access to specialists, interventionists, and nurses
  - Potential reduced workload for teachers as fewer grades allows deeper expertise and targeted planning
- Potential cost savings: as much as \$2.8 Million in FY 28

# Option 3: Cons

- Staff and teacher **layoffs**
  - 14.55 professional staff, 7.36 support staff, 1 admin
- **Loss of community schools**
  - Loss of school identity impacts students and adults alike
  - More challenging for parents to be engaged in schools outside of their towns
  - Transportation challenges - longer bus rides are a significant obstacle to attendance, student readiness, and equitable participation
  - Concerns about staff reassignments and reductions - could increase staff workload and undermine morale
  - Many community members feel a strong connection to their schools
  - Many community members feel students will do better in their local community schools
- Grade banding **difficult to undo**
- 2 transitions may be **harder for parents**
- Potential worries for shared staff having to teach in **multiple schools**
- Potential **loss of connections** between older and younger students
- **Town vote needed** before any school may be closed

THANK YOU!