Strategic Staffing Alignment

Staffing Standards

Board of Education
August 24, 2026

WEST DES MOINES
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Topics

1. **Strategic Staffing Alignment Philosophy**

2. **Benchmark Data**

3. **Staffing Standards**

Goal for Today

- **Remind you of the Staffing Philosophy**
- **Review draft Staffing Standards by level and department**
- **Understand what Questions or Additional Feedback/Input you have**

Strategic Alignment

Strategic Directions	Vision	Key Levers
Direction B Provide equitable structures, processes, and supports that meet each student's needs **Direction C** Foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace that nurtures a healthy and accountable culture **Direction E** Empower staff to leverage data to improve operations, decision-making, and organizational effectiveness	Inclusive and safe learning and work environments Academic excellence Robust growth opportunities and pathways for students and staff Fiscal responsibility and sustainability	– Enrollment – State Supplemental Aid – Misc. Income – Staffing – Collective Bargaining – Health Insurance

Staffing Trends

As the district is experiencing enrollment declines, we need to consider a staffing plan that is aligned and anchored to the budget process

Our Challenge is to **Align Enrollment and Staffing**

- Develop a **strategic staffing plan** that takes a proactive, systemic approach to aligning our workforce with enrollment and the WDMCS strategic plan

Project Overview

Project Description

- Develop a strategic staffing plan that aligns staffing with enrollment and budget targets.
- Develop staffing standards using benchmark and internal data.
- Develop a multi-year roadmap to implement the standards.

Project Team

Buildings	Departments
Tricia Kurtt, CR	Brett Zeller, Business Services
Kelley Harrison, HS	Tim Simpkins, Operations
Jenna Pressley, WH	Brianna Shanks, Nutrition
Cameron Wendt, IH	Chaz Olson, Transportation
Shannon Campbell, VA	Shahna Janssen, Community Ed
Megan Thomsen, VA	Ashley Kunz, Kids West
Michelle Lettington, TLS	Dau Jok, Culture and Access
Steve Schappaugh, TLS	David Maxwell, Culture and Access
Mike Sherman, Information Mgmt	Kristy Bentz, Special Education

Future State Philosophy

Core Pillars (The "Why" and "What")

- **Systemic Coherence -** We believe that equitable student outcomes are achieved through a unified, cohesive system rather than isolated school-site autonomy. Our staffing models are designed to align resources collectively, ensuring every student benefits from a structurally synchronized district network.
- **Culture, Climate, and Context -** We commit to evaluating quantitative data alongside the unique culture, climate, and experience of each context to ensure staffing placements are sustainable and impactful.
- **Standards and Needs -** While standardized ratios provide a baseline, we recognize that the needs of our students require us to shift our practices with more intention.

Future State Philosophy

Operational Principles (The "How")

- **Fiscal Responsibility –** We are accountable for fiscal responsibility and sustainability. In categorical programs, we will strive to spend within allocated funds.

- **Strategic Financial Investment -** We acknowledge that achieving our future state including specialized, high-impact programs requires deliberate and intentional resource allocation. We view staffing expenditures as vital investments in our strategic vision.

- **Targeted Alignment for Gap Closure -** We recognize that strategic staffing allocation is an essential tool for addressing systemic problems and closing achievement gaps. Staffing alignment will be intentionally directed to areas where resource deficits impede student success.

Future State Philosophy

Strategic Framework for Decision-Making

To operationalize this philosophy, leadership will continuously evaluate staffing models against these core inquiries derived from our current realities:

Enrollment & Core Definition

Staffing models must support "core instruction," align to enrollment fluctuations, and protect foundational learning experiences.

Alignment & Support

Decisions must look at the entire system; ensuring departmental support scales alongside classroom staffing.

Flexibility & Overages

Overages should be utilized as a dynamic, deliberate mechanism to address unique culture and climate contexts, unexpected needs, cushion transitions, and maintain stability, rather than as a reactive fix.

Benchmark Data

Student Enrollment (Fall BEDS)

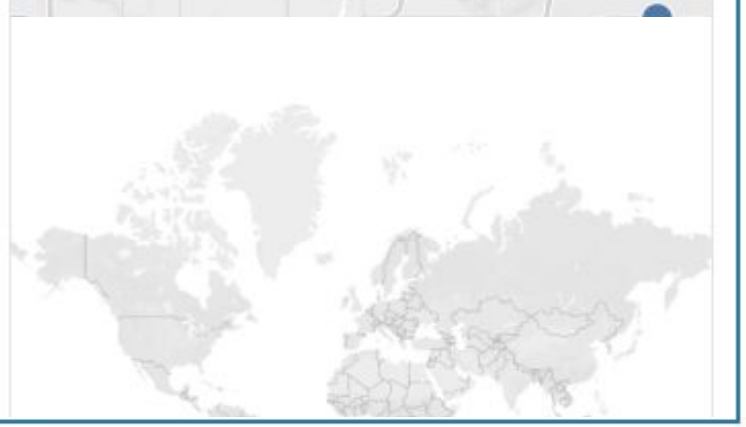
West Des Moines Comm School District Assessment Story

Peer Summary

District	County	District Enrollment	ELL % of Enrollment	Low Income % of Enrollment
Ankeny Comm School District	Polk	12,705	3.8%	18.02%
Johnston Comm School District	Polk	7,358	9.5%	29.90%
Norwalk Comm School District	Warren	3,599	2.1%	18.37%
Southeast Polk Comm School District	Polk	7,538	5.6%	38.59%
Urbandale Comm School District	Polk	4,056	12.1%	43.32%
Waukee Comm School District	Dallas	14,281	6.3%	20.24%
West Des Moines Comm School District	Polk	8,797	14.8%	48.26%



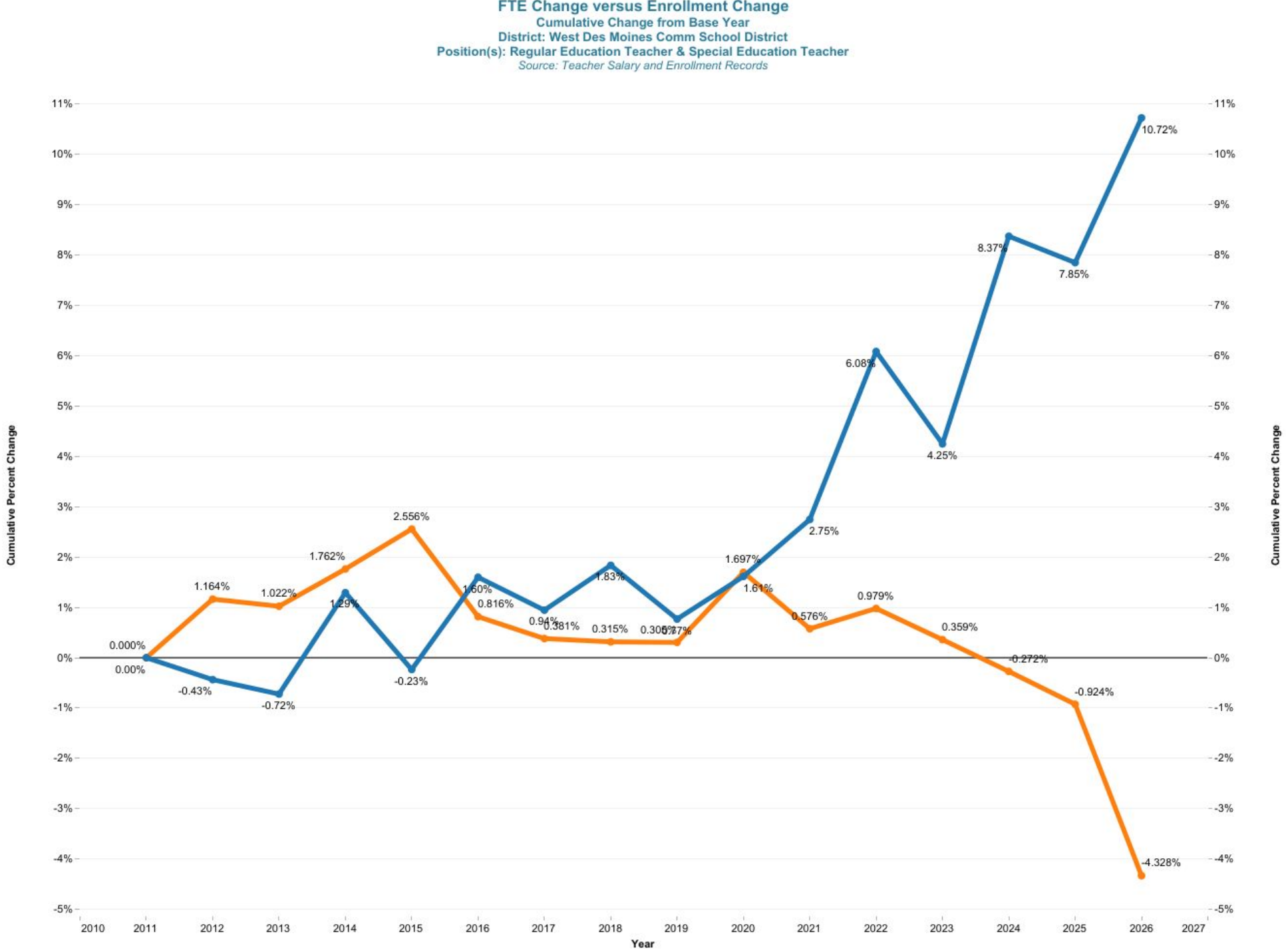
District	County	District Enrollment	ELL % of Enrollment	Low Income % of Enrollment
Cedar Rapids Comm School District	Linn	14,575	10.4%	52.15%
Davenport Comm School District	Scott	12,855	3.5%	52.69%
Iowa City Comm School District	Johnson	14,871	14.4%	38.49%
Linn-Mar Comm School District	Linn	7,368	2.7%	23.62%
Waterloo Comm School District	Black Hawk	10,361	13.2%	55.73%
West Des Moines Comm School District	Polk	8,797	14.8%	48.26%



Free & Reduced Lunch % of Enrollment
(From 2011 to 2025)

District	2011	2025
Des Moines	70.8%	63.6%
West Des Moines	**23.6%**	**48.3%**
Urbandale	23.2%	43.3%
Southeast Polk	29.3%	38.6%
Johnston	16.6%	29.9%
Waukee	13.3%	20.2%
Norwalk	17.9%	18.4%
Ankeny	11.4%	18.0%

District	2011	2025
Waterloo	64.5%	55.7%
Cedar Rapids	46.3%	52.2%
Davenport	55.7%	52.7%
West Des Moines	**23.6%**	**48.3%**
Iowa City	31.7%	38.5%
Linn-Mar	16.8%	23.6%



*All Certified Staff included

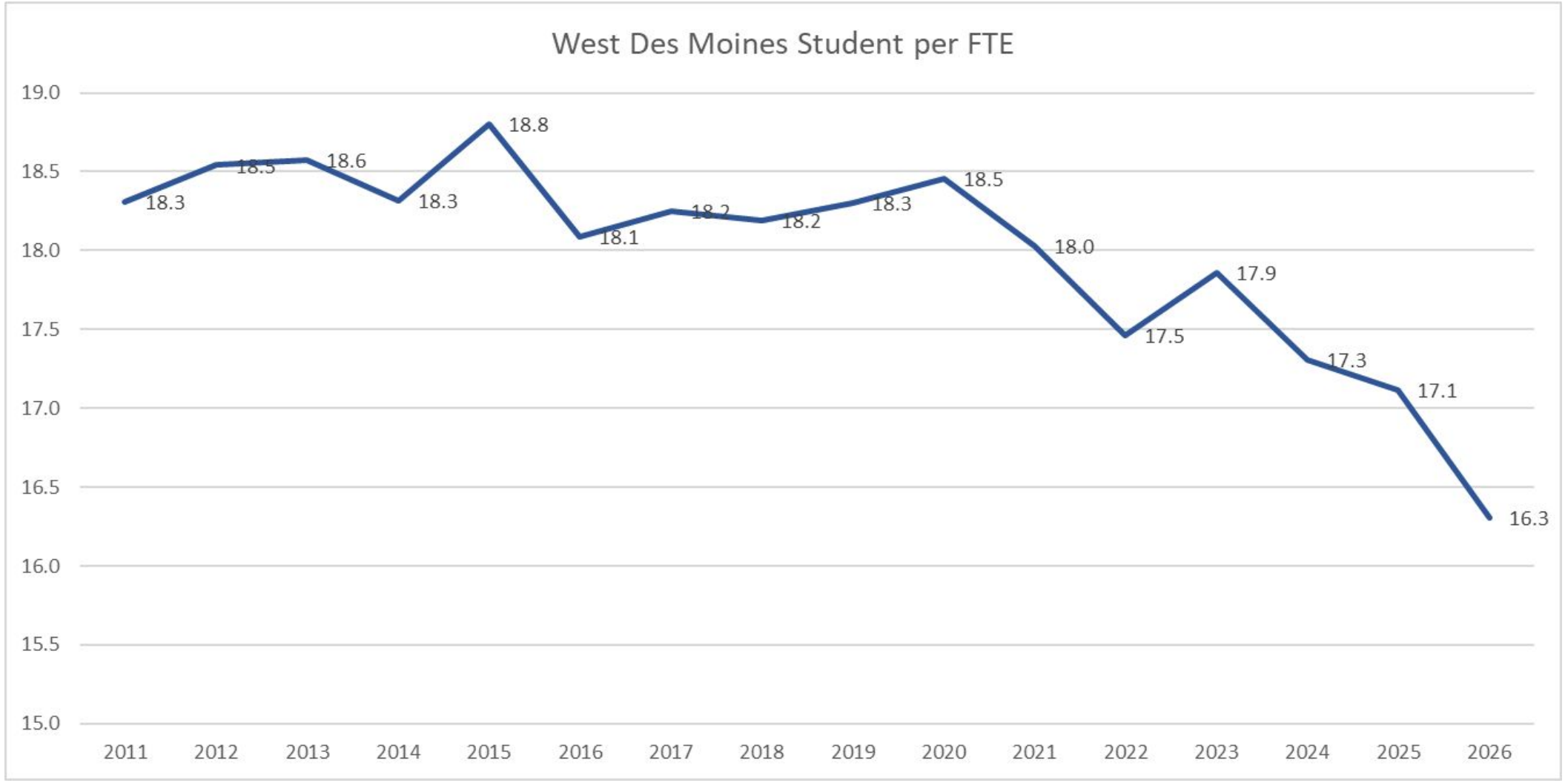
FTE Change vs. Enrollment

District	Enrollment (From 2011 to 2026)	Staffing (From 2011 to 2026)
Waukee	Increased 118.0%	Increased 113.0%
Ankeny	Increased 46.8%	Increased 60.3%
Norwalk	Increased 35.1%	Increased 30.1%
Southeast Polk	Increased 17.8%	Increased 23.8%
Johnston	Increased 15.9%	Increased 17.3%
Urbandale	Increased 3.3%	Increased 4.6%
West Des Moines	**Declined 4.3%**	**Increased 10.7%**
Des Moines	Declined 10.9%	Declined 8.5%

District	Enrollment (From 2011 to 2026)	Staffing (From 2011 to 2026)
Iowa City	Increased 24.7%	Increased 40.3%
Linn-Mar	Increased 17.8%	Increased 23.8%
Waterloo	Declined 2.8%	Increased 1.0%
West Des Moines	**Declined 4.3%**	**Increased 10.7%**
Cedar Rapids	Declined 14.1%	Declined 14.8%
Davenport	Declined 23.2%	Declined 12.4%

*All Certified Teachers

Student per FTE



*Certified Teachers without Special Education

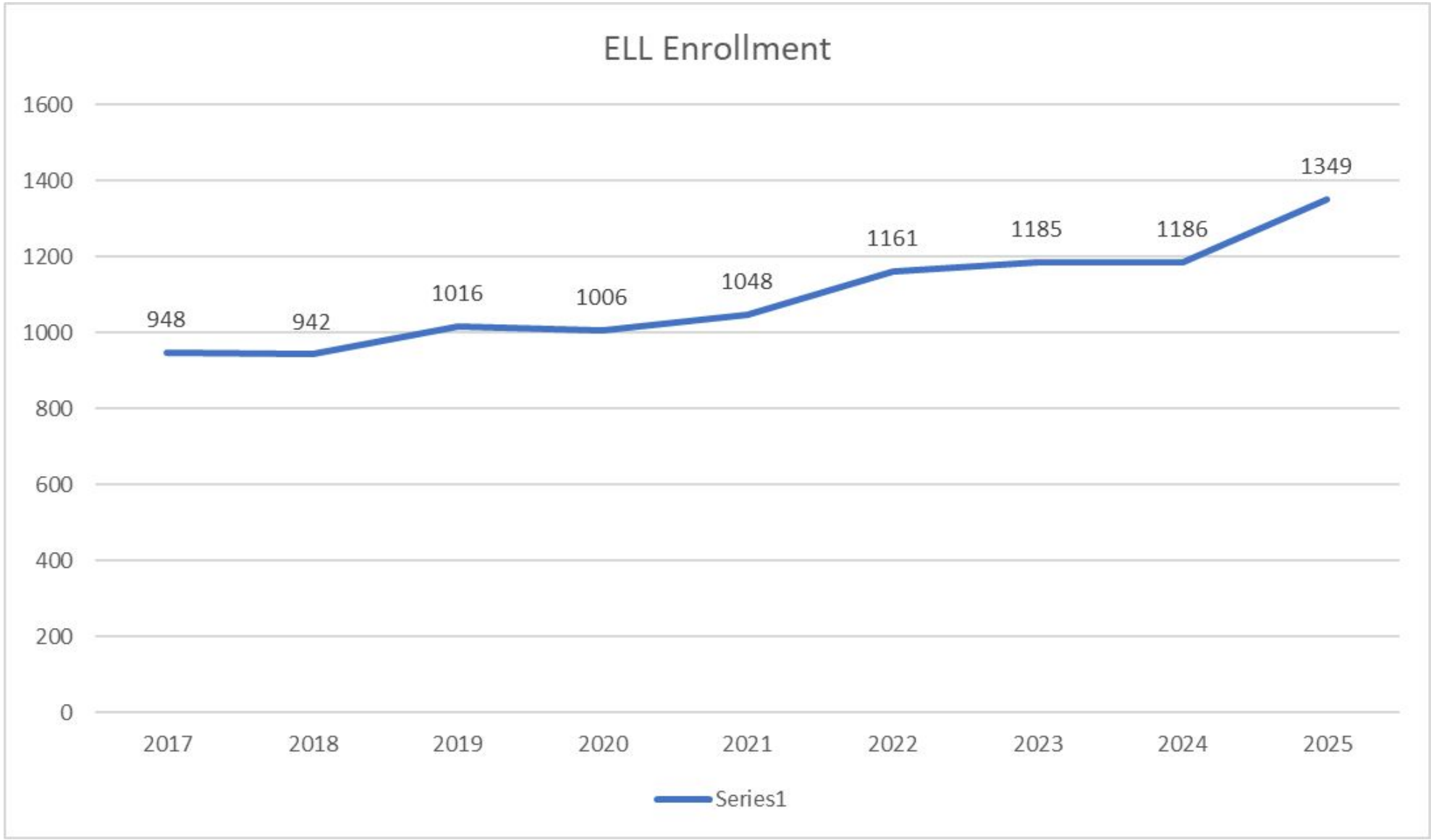
Student per FTE
(From 2011 to 2026)

District	2011	2026
Norwalk	18.2	19.1
Ankeny	19.6	19.0
Johnston	18.8	19.0
Southeast Polk	19.1	18.7
Waukee	17.7	18.6
Urbandale	17.3	18.1
Des Moines	18.5	17.6
West Des Moines	**18.3**	**16.3**

District	2011	2026
Linn-Mar	18.2	18.2
Cedar Rapids	18.1	17.9
Davenport	19.0	17.4
Waterloo	18.3	17.0
West Des Moines	**18.3**	**16.3**
Iowa City	18.4	16.2

*Certified Teachers without Special Education

West Des Moines



ELL % of Enrollment
(From 2011 to 2025)

District	2011	2025
Des Moines	15.0%	25.6%
West Des Moines	**6.4%**	**14.8%**
Urbandale	10.9%	12.1%
Johnston	2.6%	9.5%
Waukee	2.5%	6.3%
Southeast Polk	2.1%	5.6%
Ankeny	0.7%	3.8%
Norwalk	0.5%	2.1%

District	2011	2025
West Des Moines	**6.4%**	**14.8%**
Iowa City	3.7%	14.4%
Cedar Rapids	2.4%	10.4%
Waterloo	8.5%	13.2%
Davenport	2.8%	3.5%
Linn-Mar	1.8%	2.7%

Student per District Administrator
(From 2011 to 2026)

District	2011	2026
Ankeny	865.6	794.1
Waukee	624.0	595.0
West Des Moines	**1021.7**	**418.9**
Norwalk	475.7	409.0
Southeast Polk	1066.5	403.1
Urbandale	490.8	368.7
Johnston	396.5	367.9
Des Moines	954.1	130.3

District	2011	2026
Iowa City	921.6	817.1
Cedar Rapids	1475.7	747.5
Davenport	1195.5	714.2
Linn-Mar	575.8	566.8
Waterloo	987.3	518.1
West Des Moines	**1021.7**	**418.9**

Student per Building Administrator
(From 2011 to 2026)

District	2011	2026
Des Moines	432.5	495.3
Urbandale	392.6	405.6
Southeast Polk	426.6	396.7
Johnston	528.7	350.4
Waukee	436.8	348.8
West Des Moines	**383.1**	**303.3**
Ankeny	480.9	270.3
Norwalk	459.3	276.8

District	2011	2026
Linn-Mar	378.4	387.8
Iowa City	372.7	363.5
Davenport	348.7	338.3
West Des Moines	**383.1**	**303.3**
Cedar Rapids	353.6	303.6
Waterloo	296.2	296.0

Staffing Standards

Elementary Staffing Standards

Review Elementary Standards Attachment

Overview of Highlights and Major Changes

- Recommended shifts to allow for flexibility to respond to student needs
  - “Academic Interventionists” instead of identified reading and math interventionists
  - “General Education” associates instead of kindergarten and 1st grade associates
- Metric comparables vary but were considered alongside professional organization recommendations
  - No change to general education class sizes
  - No change recommendation to certified support staff
  - Band/Orchestra staff recommendation is general but will be determined by student participation
- Addresses need to scale resources for larger buildings (600+)

Secondary Staffing Standards

Review Secondary Standards Attachment

Overview of Highlights and Major Changes

- Recommended shifts to allow for more student agency
  - Junior High shift to 4 Core + PE + 2 Electives eliminates forced wheels & drives engagement
  - HS rotation & enrollment expectations shift
- Recommended Graduated Class Sizes
  - Junior High (1:28)
  - 9th Grade (1:30 for transition success)
  - 10–12th Grade (1:32)
- Minimum course enrollment threshold required
  - 25+ for annual courses
  - 16+ for bi-annuals
  - Adjustments for safety, as necessary

Secondary Staffing Framework (Review Junior & High School Standards Attachments)

ADMINISTRATIVE BRIEFING

Student Agency First
JH shift to 4 Core + PE + 2 Electives eliminates forced wheels & drives engagement. HS rotation & enrollment expectations shift.

Threshold Scaling
800+ student enrollment triggers secondary support, APs, and behavior staffing.

Peer Alignment
Ratios benchmarked against metro districts and state/national standards.

1. Instructional & Core Academics

- **Graduated Class Sizes:** JH (1:28), 9th Grade (1:30 for transition success), 10–12th Grade (1:32).
- **Student Choice & Electives:** Replaces rigid rotation wheels in JH; offers flexible student choice and potential building-shared roles.
- **Course Viability Rule:** Minimum enrollment threshold required (25+ for annual courses, 16+ for bi-annuals).

2. Leadership & Building Operations

- **Administrative Baseline:** 1 Principal & 1 Assistant Principal per building baseline across secondary. Examine calendar days for APs.
- **High School AP Scale:** Graduated model (1 AP for 9th grade, and 4 APs for upper grades to match metro peers).
- **Instructional Coaching:** 1 FTE dedicated at Junior High; 2 FTE dedicated at High School level.

3. Student Support & Counseling

- **Counseling Ratios:** Target ratio of 350:1 (aligns with IA avg of 340:1 and national avg of 375:1).
- **College & Career Focus:** Adds +1.0 FTE dedicated College & Career Counselor at High School.
- **Tiered Intervention:** Flexible 1:12–15 per block with targeted small groups (Tier 2 1:5–8 | Tier 3 1:1–3).

4. Specialized & Campus Services

- **Behavior & Monitoring:** 1.0 FTE base Behavior Interventionist + 600:1 ratio for campus safety monitors.
- **Gifted & Talented:** Manageable caseloads aligned with state averages (~40–47 stds at JH | 120:1 at HS).
- **Library & Health Model:** 7–12 Teacher Leader model with hourly staff support; Nurse baseline at 1:1500.

Key Administrative Takeaway: Transitioning from dense raw data to a clear, threshold-based framework streamlines decision-making, balances budget constraints with regional benchmarks, and protects student agency.

Special Education & ESOL Staffing Standards

Review Special Education and ESOL Standards Attachments

Overview of Highlights and Major Changes

Special Education - no major changes

- WDMCS District Delivery Service Plan
- Aligned to Iowa Administrative Code 41.408(2) Delivery system

ESOL - no major changes

- Weighted formula used internally based on language proficiency levels (Emerging, Progressing, Proficient/Monitored)
- State funding based on the Limited English Proficient (LEP) Weighting (identified students are funded for 5 years)

Departments Staffing Standards

Review Departments Standards Attachments

Overview of Highlights and Major Changes

- Benchmarked national recommended practices
- Reality is that there were minimal reference points
- Developed standards based on
  - Legal and regulatory guidelines (DHHS, USDA, State of Iowa, DOT/FMCSA)
  - Essential district roles (e.g., custodial staff & managers) directly enabling WDMCS to deliver safe, high-quality learning environments
  - Safety and managerial benchmarks established by national associations (CoSN, NAPT, ASBOI) guiding HR ratios and leadership structure
- No major changes

Departments Staffing Standards

Review Departments Standards Attachments

Pillars governing district departments staffing

Legal & Regulatory: Strict staffing thresholds mandated by federal & state authorities (DHHS, USDA, State of Iowa, DOT/FMCSA) where compliance is non-negotiable.

Recommended Practices: Safety and managerial benchmarks established by national associations (CoSN, NAPT, ASBOI) guiding HR ratios and leadership structure.

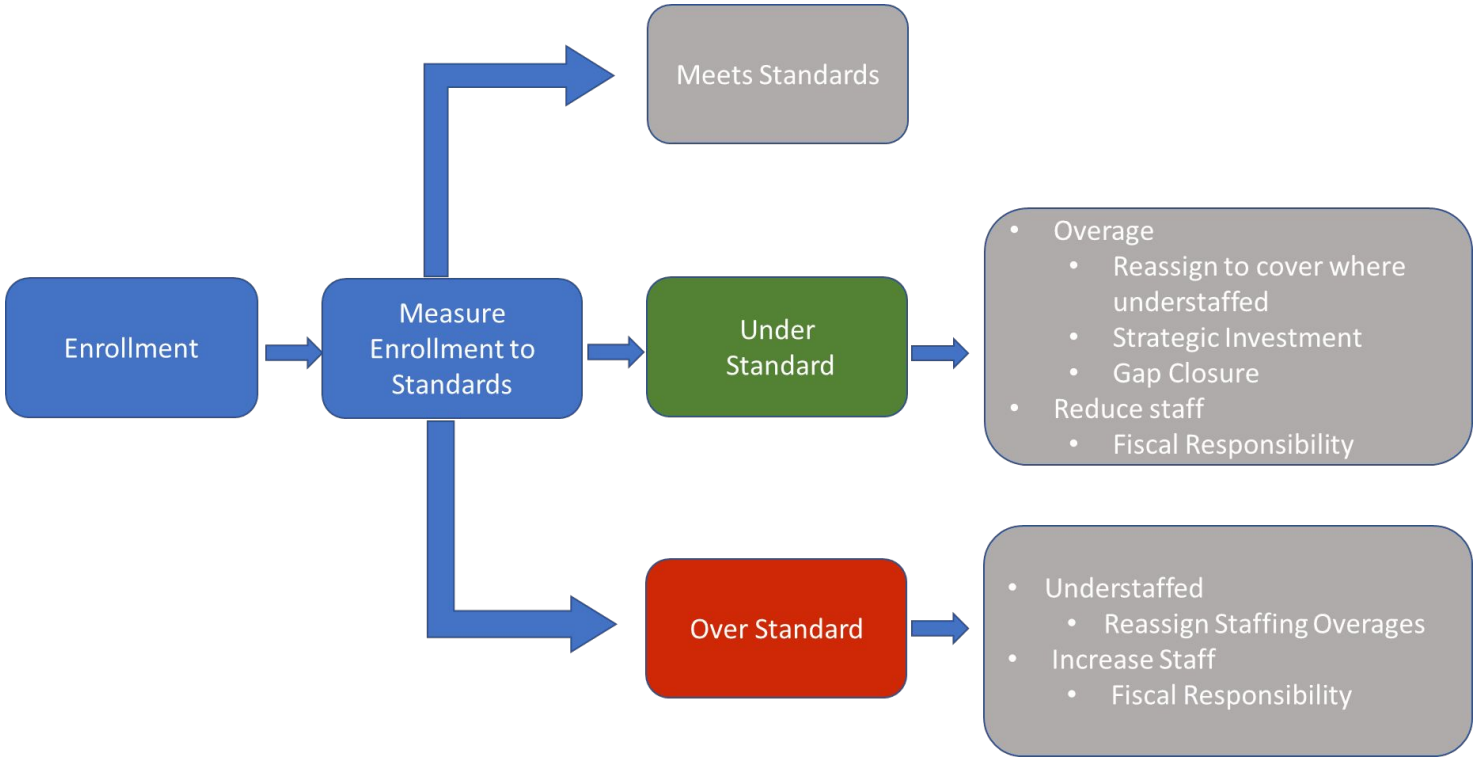
Reference Point Gaps: Operational areas (e.g., Kids West office staff) with minimal comparative staffing benchmarks despite clear core role definitions.

Strategic Plan Impact: Essential district roles (e.g., custodial staff & managers) directly enabling WDMCS to deliver safe, high-quality learning environments.

For examples…

Governing Entity	Operational Area	Compliance & Staffing Mandate Impact
DHHS & State of Iowa	Child Care / Early Ed	Mandates strict staff-to-student ratios, adult supervision, and safety credentials.
USDA National Lunch Program	Nutrition Services	Dictates kitchen staffing ratios, meal prep oversight, and dietary compliance.
DOT / FMCSA & NAPT	Transportation	Governs driver licensing, fleet inspection frequency, and safety management staff.
CoSN & ASBOI	Tech & Finance	Defines standard ratios for device-to-technician support and business office roles.

How will standards be applied and implemented?



2027-28 -Leverage standards through the budget process
2028-29 -Apply standards consistently by fully aligning with enrollment and scheduling processes

Strategic Staffing Alignment Plan

- Representative team to co-create 1) staffing philosophy, 2) alignment across the organization, & 3) staffing standards
- Strategic staffing alignment
  - Core for the HR function
  - Necessary regardless of whether we have budget constraints
  - Strategic staffing alignment ≠ budget cuts
  - Will be an input to the budget process

Questions & Feedback