

SEPTEMBER 28, 2026 · 7:00 PM · S.R.U. ELEMENTARY

Potential S.R.U. Elementary Closure

Public Hearing Presentation

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Superintendent, Athens Area School District



ATHENS WILDCATS

Tonight's purpose



1

Presentation

The proposal, the evidence, and the open questions

2

Public comment

Community testimony for the Board's record

3

Board review

No closure vote tonight

No closure vote will occur tonight. The hearing is livestreamed, and a stenographer is preserving the record.



Can the district sustain four instructional buildings and still protect the programs and services students need?

NOT IN QUESTION

S.R.U. is a strong school and an important part of the East Smithfield community.

WHAT THE BOARD MUST WEIGH

The district's long-term operating structure and the resources it can sustain.

Questions we have heard



Short answers now. Each is covered in more detail tonight and in the Community Information document.

Has the Board already decided?

No. There is no closure vote tonight. Potential Board action is January 12, 2027, after public input.

Is S.R.U. being considered because it is a bad school?

No. This is a question of district structure and sustainability, not the quality of S.R.U.'s staff or students.

Will classes be crowded?

The planning model shows kindergarten at 18, grades 1–3 at about 20–22, and grades 4–7 at about 23–26.

Will my child ride the bus longer?

Routes are not finished. Some rides may lengthen and some may shorten. Transportation savings are booked at \$0.

What happens to employees?

Fewer total positions would be needed. Retirements, vacancies, and reassignment come first. Furloughs cannot be ruled out.

What happens to the building?

The Board has made no decision about the future of the S.R.U. property.

Why the district is considering change



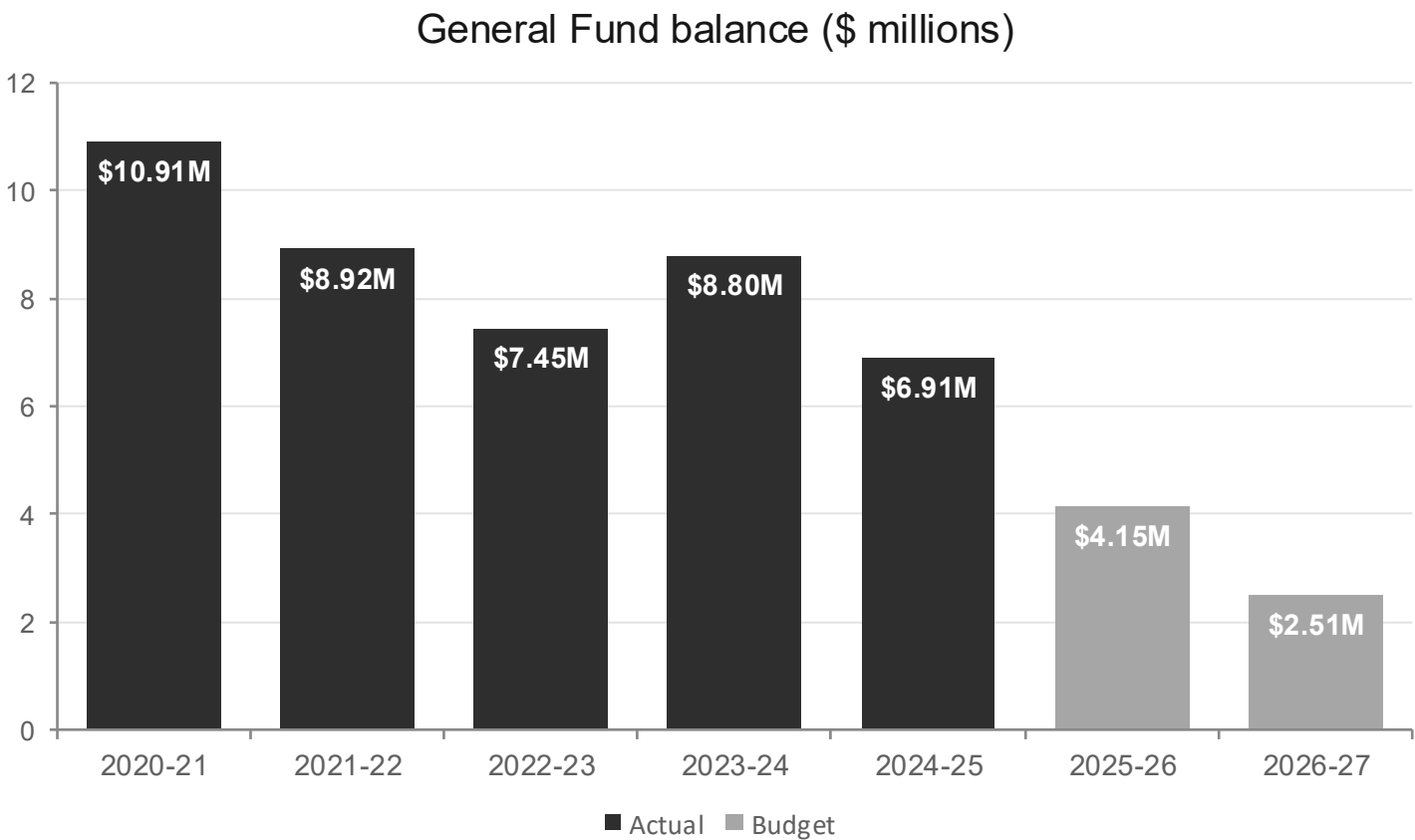
\$1.64M

operating loss in the 2026-27 budget year

Revenues \$47.26M

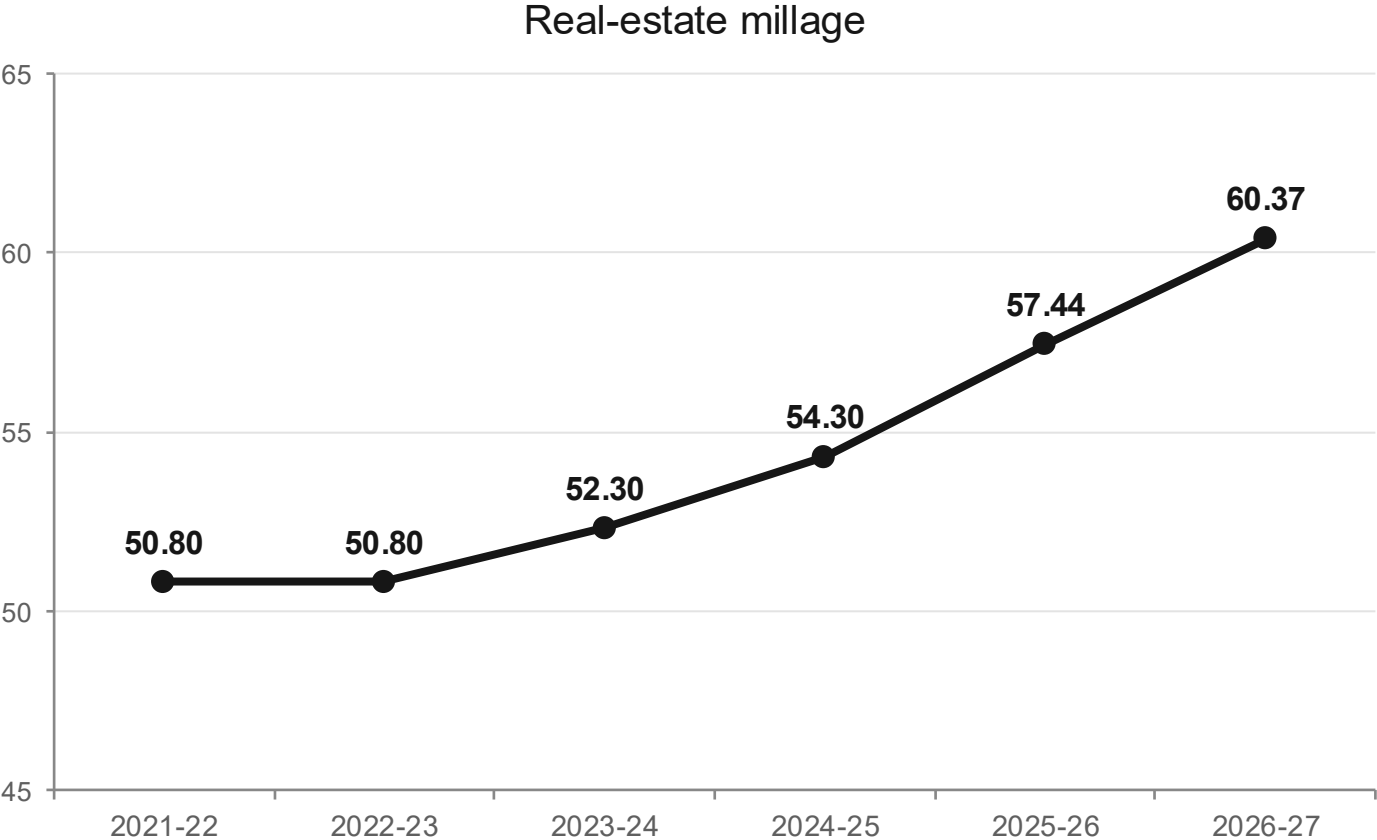
Expenses \$48.90M

Fund balance can cover a shortfall temporarily. It does not create recurring revenue.



Business Office actual balances through 2024-25; 2025-26 and 2026-27 are budget figures.

The Board has also considered the tax burden



60.37

2026-27 millage, a 5.10% increase

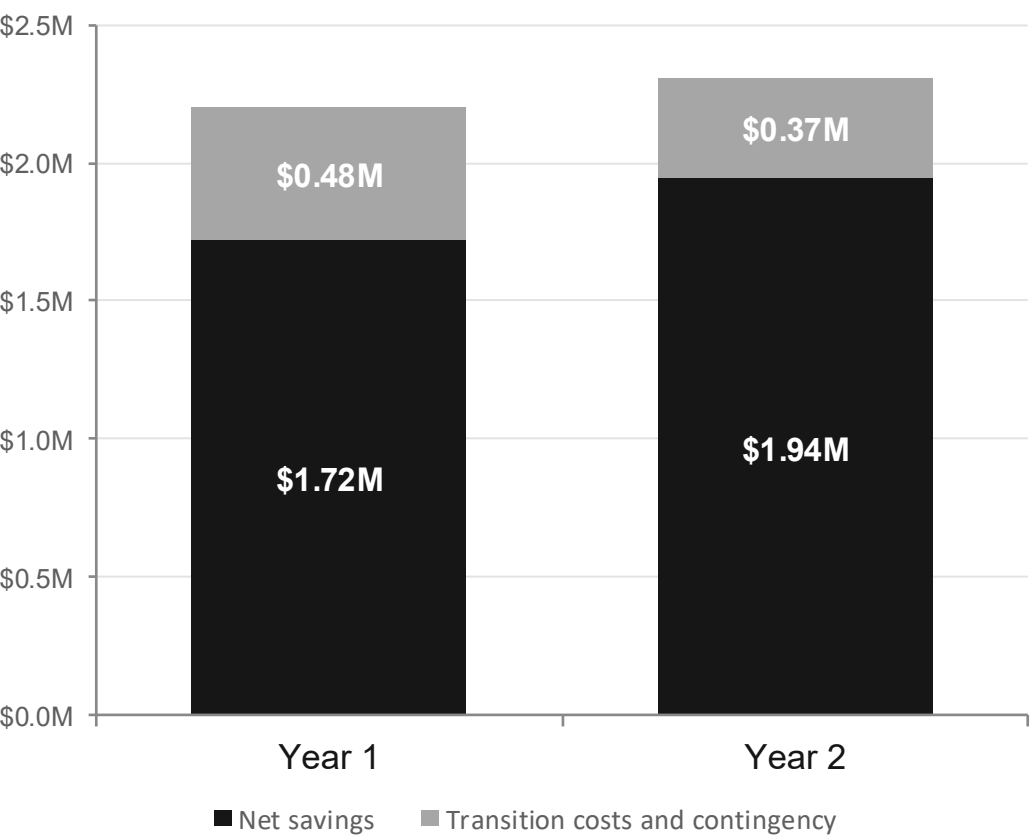
Even after budget reductions and tax increases, the budget still shows an operating shortfall.

Using fund balance can cover a gap temporarily. It cannot permanently pay recurring bills.

Conservative savings estimate



Business Office cost analysis if the Board approves closure



	Year 1	Year 2
Gross reduction	\$2.20M	\$2.31M
Less transition costs and contingency	(\$0.48M)	(\$0.37M)
Conservative net savings	\$1.72M	\$1.94M

- 1 \$0 transportation savings booked for now
- 2 \$240,000 modular classroom contingency retained each year
- 3 Full staffing implementation assumed; phasing would shift some savings to a later year

Business Office cost analysis. The figures will change if verified schedules or implementation assumptions change.

If the Board keeps four buildings



The recurring gap would still need a recurring answer of comparable scale.

1

Additional recurring revenue

Further tax increases beyond the 2026-27 rate

2

Fund balance

Covers a gap temporarily; does not replenish itself

3

Staffing reductions

Positions reduced across the existing four buildings

4

Program reductions

Reductions in programs and activities

5

Larger class sizes

Fewer sections across all buildings

6

Other expenditure cuts

Services, supplies, and operations

Closing a building is not the only possible response. Any alternative carries its own educational tradeoffs.

Working grade configuration



Recommendation under review for 2027-28, using the three buildings already on one central campus

K–3

Lynch-Bustin

506-student planning screen

4–7

Harlan Rowe

610-student planning screen

8–12

Athens Area High School

814 listed enrollment

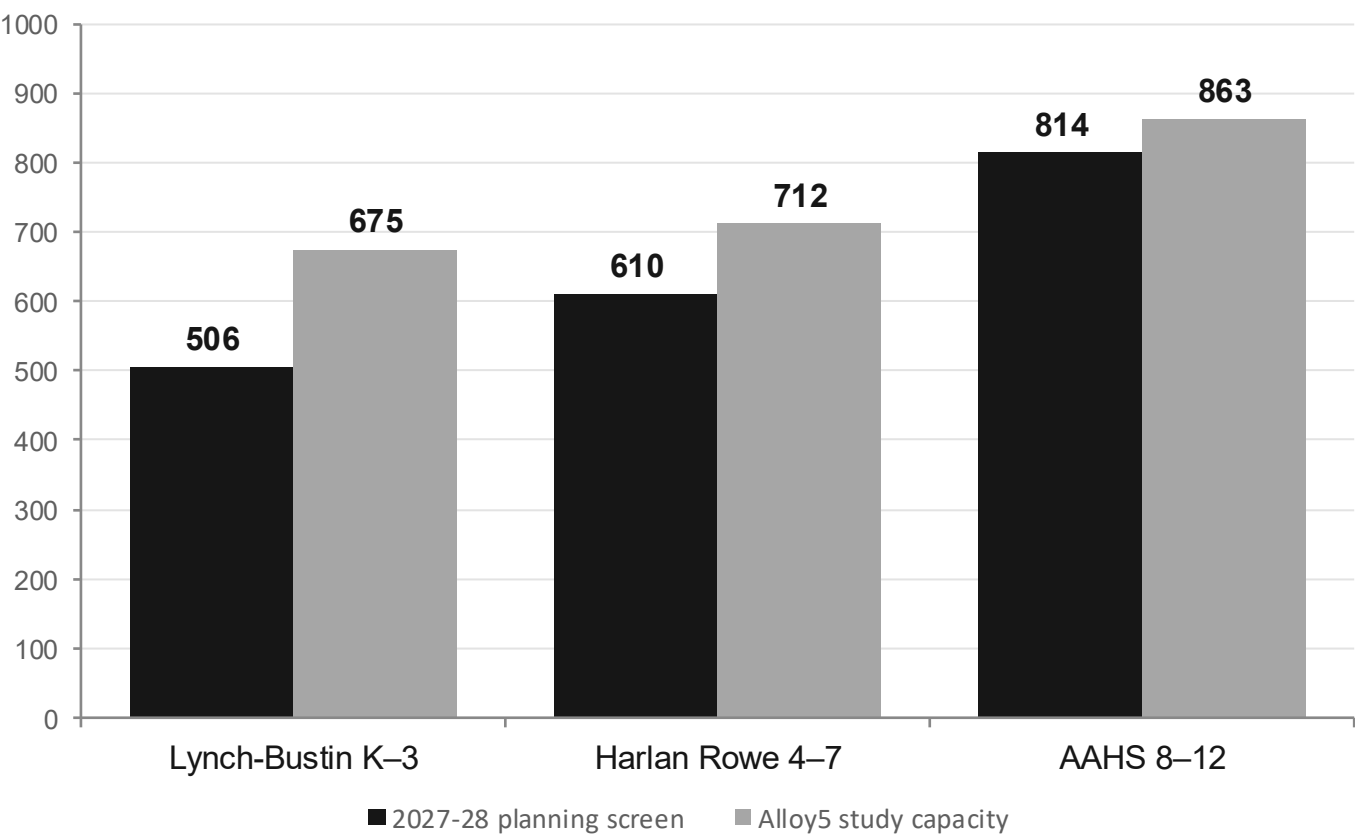
The Board has not decided whether to permanently close S.R.U.

No final classroom assignment, staff assignment, bus route, or property disposition has been approved.

Capacity planning screen



2027-28 planning screen compared with independent study capacity



SHARE OF STUDY CAPACITY

- 75.0%** Lynch-Bustin
- 85.7%** Harlan Rowe
- 94.3%** AAHS, listed enrollment (814)
- 85.6%** AAHS at 739, after known WOLA and non-attending records

The Alloy5 study recommends an 85% target capacity to leave room for growth and bubble years.

All-listed roll-forward screens, not certified in-person forecasts. Capacity does not replace room-by-room, schedule, special education, lunch, traffic, or supervision checks.

Lynch-Bustin K–3 plan



+8

students compared with the current listed enrollment (about 1.6%)

498

current

506

planned

The model does not depend on materially increasing the number of students in the building.

Grade	Students	Sections	Average class size
K	126	7	18
1	126	6	21
2	130	6	21–22
3	124	6	20–21
Total	506	25	20.2 avg.

Planning numbers, not final teacher or room assignments. Final room assignments remain open.

Harlan Rowe and AAHS



Harlan Rowe | Grades 4–7

610

students in 25 groups

24.4

students per group on average

- Grades 4–5 operate as one learning community
- Grades 6–7 form a second community with classrooms and specialty rooms
- Working class-size range: 23–26

AAHS | Grades 8–12

814

listed roll-forward enrollment

739

after known WOLA and non-attending records

- Grade 8 receives a home-base cluster and teacher team
- NTCC, WOLA, Open Campus, and School-to-Work reduce simultaneous occupancy
- The final daily schedule remains unfinished

Student experience safeguards



01

Grade-level learning communities

Students need a clear school identity and age-appropriate routines.

02

Special education and intervention

Schedules and rooms must preserve required supports and services.

03

Art, music, PE, labs, and library

Consolidation must protect access to the full program.

04

Safe daily operations

Arrival, dismissal, passing, lunch, recess, and supervision require deliberate plans.

A room-count exercise alone cannot establish readiness.

Staffing plan and timing



A three-building model would require fewer total positions.

1 Timing remains open

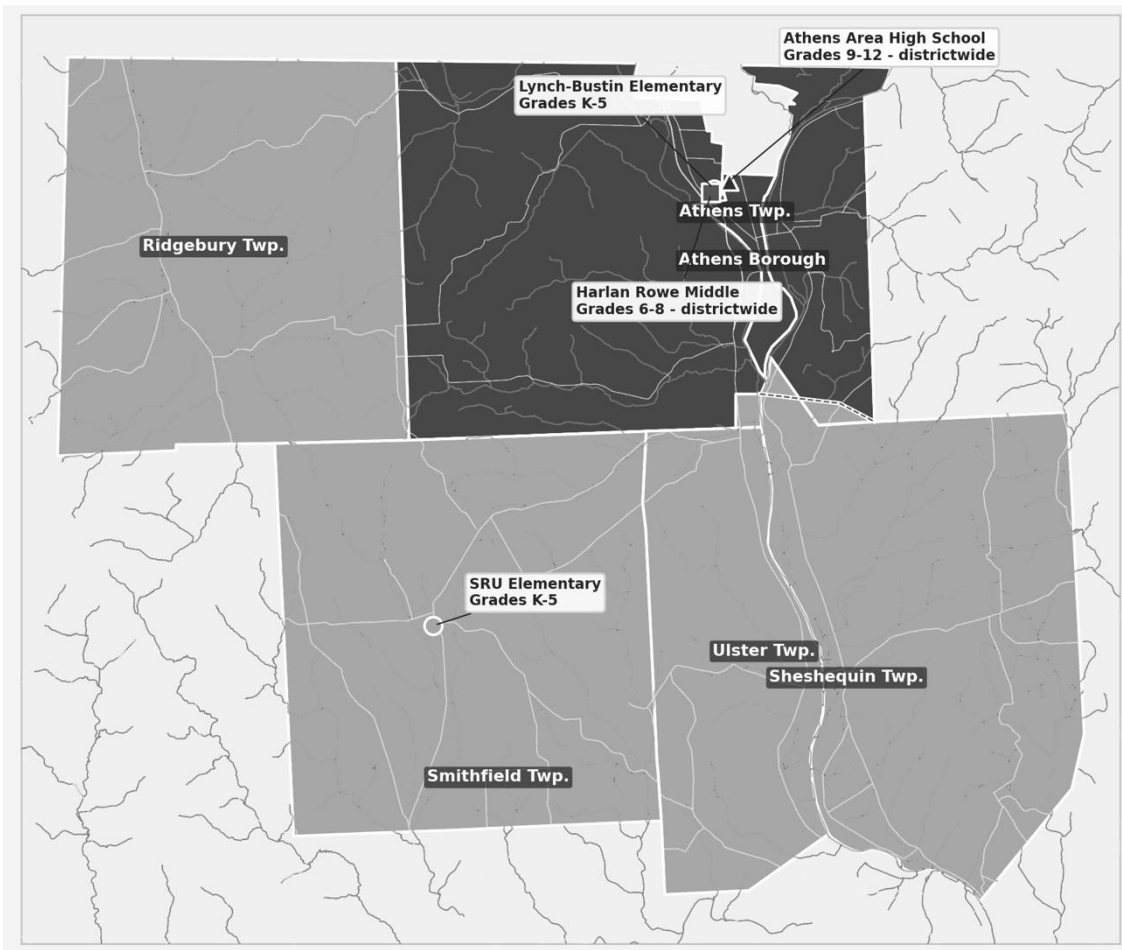
Board direction on the budget and implementation pace could place reductions in one year or phase them across two years.

2 How the district would proceed

Use retirements, resignations, vacancies, and reassignment wherever possible. Follow certification, seniority, contracts, and required notice. Furloughs may still be necessary.

The staffing model identifies functions. It does not determine individual employees.

Transportation analysis



Current elementary attendance areas, shown for geographic context. This is not a proposed route map.

\$2.33M

2026-27 contracted transportation baseline

\$0

transportation savings in the current closure model

PRELIMINARY EXPECTATION

We do not expect any conventional ride to exceed today's longest conventional bus ride.

RouteFinder must still confirm student-level times, specialized service, vehicle assignments, and net cost.

S.R.U. and the facilities question



S.R.U. Elementary, East Smithfield

1919

High school

1989

Middle school

2012

Elementary

Serving this community since 1919

109,154 sq. ft. | Study capacity 500

\$29.8–\$32.2M

2024 planning-level renovation range (Alloy5)

This estimate does not mean the building is unsafe. It is not an annual maintenance estimate.

The recommendation combines recurring savings, future capital exposure, and the operating advantages of the three schools already on one campus.

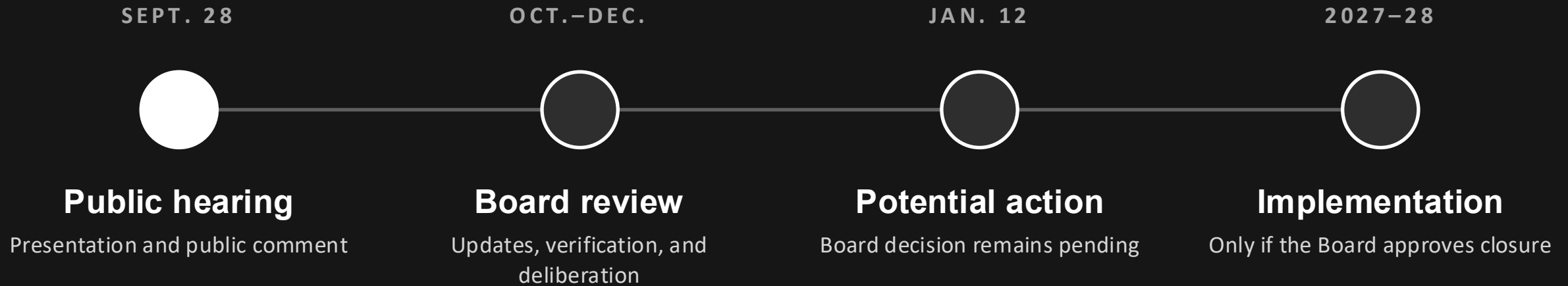
Work required before a final decision



1	Master schedules and room assignments	Prove that the daily program works in each receiving building.
2	Special education and related-service space	Protect mandated services and workable student support.
3	Route-by-route transportation analysis	Show ride-time impact, vehicle assignments, and net cost.
4	Staffing and employment implementation	Apply certification, seniority, contracts, and notice requirements.
5	Building preparation and transition costs	Confirm the work and resources required for 2027-28.

Unfinished work should remain visible to the Board and the public.

Public process and next steps



The Board must decide which structure gives students the strongest sustainable program.

Final action remains pending while the Board reviews public input and verified operating details. The full Community Information document is posted on the district website.

WHAT I AM TRYING TO PRESERVE

My goal is for every Athens child, no matter where they begin school, to graduate a Wildcat at 401 West Frederick Street.



PUBLIC COMMENT FOLLOWS

Athens Area High School

