

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A Plan in Search of a Problem: Lakewood City School District Leadership Continues Pushing District-wide Elementary Changes With No Financial Analysis, Shifting Savings Claims

A year after a board member voted no for lack of financial analysis, the district still hasn't produced one—while its savings estimate has dropped from \$1.5 million to \$600,000

LAKEWOOD, Ohio, Aug. 26, 2026 — Nearly a year after a Lakewood City Schools board member voted against a district-wide elementary consolidation for lack of any financial analysis, the district is pushing the same plan again—still without one. It remains a single option, a centralized early childhood center, advanced with no alternatives evaluated and no documented case that it saves money. At [the board's August 24 meeting](#), district leadership offered an oral "preliminary estimate" of up to \$600,000 in first-year savings but provided no written analysis or documentation, even after a board member had requested a financial analysis for that meeting.

Friends of Lakewood Schools (FLS) is concerned that the district is once again moving toward a major system-wide decision about its elementary schools without first demonstrating the need, the financial benefit, or the strategic purpose behind it, and without considering alternative options.

The settlement reached between FLS and the district on August 4, 2026, was intended to provide an opportunity to reopen deliberations, engage the community, and conduct a new public process—not simply to revisit a concept and predetermined outcome.

FLS continues to support an open, evidence-based process that evaluates multiple solutions and gives residents a meaningful opportunity to participate before another vote is taken. Several concerns remain, including:

- The administration has offered no substantiation to its suggestion that this plan would save the district money, and the claim has shifted. In October 2025, the then-treasurer projected roughly \$1.5 million in annual savings. At the August 24 meeting, the treasurer offered a brief oral comment that the “preliminary estimates” suggest the plan may save up to \$600,000 in year one. The treasurer provided no actual financial analysis, evidence of market demand, or documentation of this assertion. This is despite the fact that one school board member voted against the original recommendation last October—nearly a year ago—due to a lack of financial analysis, and the fact that a different school board member requested a financial analysis for yesterday’s school board meeting.
- The administration continues to advance the false narrative of declining enrollment and birthrates as the central point behind the decision to repurpose an elementary school. While districtwide enrollment has declined over the years, elementary school enrollment

has stabilized, with elementary enrollment growing 3.4% over the past five years.¹ This data has been documented and communicated by the district's own consultant.

- The publicly-elected school board is declining to meet with or speak to its constituents when asked. Therefore, the only engagement happening is one-way, in three-minute public comments. Per the Ohio School Board Association, "School board members need to be strong district ambassadors to the community and work to build public support and understanding of public education...Members are the chief advisers to the superintendent on community attitudes."

Without a financial analysis or strategy, no one can say the single centralized early childhood center option is better for taxpayers and families—which is why alternatives have to be on the table. FLS is asking the board to use this process to evaluate multiple options against actual financial and enrollment data—not to move a predetermined outcome to a second vote. This is the evaluation the district's own Elementary Task Force was conducting when its work was set aside; given the job of weighing options, that task force was preparing a report that would not have recommended closing any of the seven schools.

"Right now, this feels like a plan in search of a problem," said Anson Hall, Friends of Lakewood Schools board member. "The district has an idea for a single centralized early childhood learning center, but it has yet to demonstrate why Lakewood needs one, what demand it would meet, or how spending yet even more taxpayer dollars on this makes financial and strategic sense."

As of now, there is expected to be a special board of education meeting held on Tuesday, September 8, during which the superintendent will present the district's final recommendation to the school board.

Elected school board members are obligated to know the views of their constituents so they can advocate for policies that best represent the community's interests. As [published on the district website](#), Lakewood residents can contact the school board members directly by phone or email to share questions, concerns, and valuable knowledge:

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¹ As part of the Elementary Task Force work, the district's lead consultant, FutureThink, conducted an extensive enrollment study in November 2024. In the talking points provided to district leadership, FutureThink stated "Elementary school enrollment has stabilized over the last 4 years; previously it had been decreasing each year. In Districts with declining enrollment it is difficult to predict when enrollment will start to level off. The stabilization of elementary school enrollment is an indicator that it is that time... Birth counts have not continued to drop like previously seen from 2014 to 2020. They held steady in 2022 and 2023 and increased in 2021." This FutureThink study directly undercut the rationale the district used for convening the Elementary Task Force. FutureThink's study proposed talking points were then grossly misrepresented to the Elementary Task Force at the next meeting convened by the superintendent.

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About Friends of Lakewood Schools

Friends of Lakewood Schools is an Ohio nonprofit formed in May 2025 by Lakewood residents and parents of public-school students. Lakewood has nonprofit organizations supporting its parks, arts, public health, and athletics; none existed to support the long-term success of its schools. FLS was formed to fill that gap—advocating for strategic planning, good governance, and community engagement in the district, and for accountability when those are absent.

Friends of Lakewood Schools has been entirely volunteer-led since its formation and has neither raised nor spent any money.

FLS will continue attending and reporting on board meetings, tracking public records, and pressing for the strategic and facilities master planning the district does not currently have, well past the September vote.

FLS is a separate organization from Preserve Lakewood Schools, a political action committee.

For more information and to get involved, visit <https://www.friendsoflakewoodschools.org/>

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