



## Staff and Community Engagement on the Grade Alignment Scenario

### Purpose and Guiding Principles

The Vinton-Shellsburg Community School District is considering a shift to a “whole-grade” alignment that would bring students together at earlier ages and reorganize elementary grades across Tilford and Shellsburg. To make an informed decision, it is critical that the school board hear from the teachers, staff, families, students and broader community who will be affected. Engagement should be inclusive, transparent and equitable. Stakeholders must feel that their voices are valued and that their feedback genuinely informs the board’s deliberations.

### Stakeholders to Engage

- Teachers, educational support staff and administrators across all grade levels.
- Parents and caregivers of current and future students.
- Students, including older elementary and middle school students who have experienced transitions.
- Community members, including residents without children in the schools.
- Local businesses, civic organizations and municipal leaders.
- Parent-teacher associations and booster clubs.

### Communication Plan

- Provide clear, plain-language explanations of the current configuration, the proposed alignment and the reasons it is being considered. Avoid educational jargon and focus on how students, families and staff might be affected.
- Share information across multiple channels: district and school websites, social media, newsletters, email blasts, local newspapers, radio and community bulletin boards.
- Create a dedicated page on the district website that includes background information, frequently asked questions, a timeline, meeting dates, copies of presentations and a form for submitting questions.

### Phase 1 (Week 1): Launch and Communications

- **Announcement and information release** – Publish a clear explanation of the proposal on the district’s website and distribute it through email newsletters, social media, school handouts and local media. Summarise why the district is considering the change, how it would affect each grade level and what decisions remain open.
- **Dedicated information hub** – Create a page on the district website with background materials, an FAQ, the engagement schedule and an online form for submitting questions or comments. Provide information in multiple languages.
- **Staff briefing** – Hold an initial virtual or in-person meeting with principals and teacher leaders to review the engagement timeline and solicit ideas for communicating the proposal to colleagues and families. Encourage them to share the announcement widely.

## **Phase 2 (Weeks 2–5): Listening Sessions, Staff Consultations and Surveys**

- **Community forums** – Rather than general sessions at “varied times,” the district will host four public meetings on set dates. All meetings begin at **6:30 PM**:
  - **October 6** – Middle School
  - **October 9** – Shellsburg Elementary
  - **November 10** – Shellsburg Elementary
  - **November 13** – Tilford ElementaryAt each forum, district leaders will present the proposal, answer questions and invite participants to share reactions.
- **Staff consultations** – Grade-level and departmental meetings are scheduled in two rounds to allow staff to discuss impacts on instruction, collaboration and resource allocation:
  - **September 26, 2025** – Middle school meeting at **1:30 PM** and high-school meeting at **2:30 PM**
  - **October 17, 2025** – Tilford Elementary meeting at **1:30 PM** and Shellsburg Elementary meeting at **1:30 PM**(board members will split between the two sites)  
Notes from these sessions will capture concerns and suggestions.
- **Student voice** – Middle-school students who have experienced transitions will be invited to share insights during advisory or homeroom periods. An age-appropriate survey or drawing activity will be offered to younger students to capture their perspectives.
- **Surveys** – Concise surveys for parents, staff, students and community members will be available both online and on paper. Questions will gauge levels of support or concern and solicit ideas for addressing logistical issues (e.g., transportation). Survey links will be shared via email and social media and paper copies will be made available at fall parent-teacher conferences to maximize participation.

## **Phase 3 (Week 6): Analysis and Synthesis**

- **Collate feedback** – Compile notes from listening sessions and staff consultations alongside survey results. Identify recurring themes, top concerns and suggestions for adjustments.
- **Identify actionable ideas** – Work with building leaders and district administrators to assess which suggestions are feasible (e.g., staggering bus schedules, providing more parent communication about pick-up procedures, offering professional development for staff transitions).

## **Phase 4 (Weeks 7–8): Reporting and Response**

- **Share preliminary findings** – Publish a summary of the engagement findings on the district website and distribute it through regular communication channels. Highlight what participants appreciated about the proposal and what concerns were raised.
- **Host a feedback review meeting** – Hold a final public meeting where district leaders present the major themes and explain how feedback will inform any adjustments to the proposal. Allow attendees to ask clarifying questions.

- **Prepare board report** – Provide the school board with a concise report that outlines participation numbers, summarizes stakeholder perspectives and describes any revisions made to the proposed alignment in response to feedback.
- **Communicate next steps** – After the board discussion, inform staff and the community about the timeline for a final decision and how they can stay involved as the process moves forward.