

Three District School Data Comparison

Mechanicsburg Area Cumberland Valley and West Shore School Districts

This report gives citizens and school board members a practical way to compare three neighboring school districts using Pennsylvania public data. It connects enrollment, professional staffing, audited spending, student proficiency, and Safe Schools reporting. The comparisons identify questions that deserve explanation. They do not establish that a program, employee, or expenditure is unnecessary.

Main finding

The same state datasets produce three different oversight stories. Mechanicsburg faces continued growth and a specific Algebra I question. Cumberland Valley combines rapid growth, comparatively low spending, and strong academic results. West Shore shows stable to declining enrollment and unusual Safe Schools reporting patterns that require clarification.

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Source hub <https://forgechange.org/citizen-resources>

Regional Findings

Pennsylvania enrollment fell 5.2 percent between 2019-20 and 2025-26. Mechanicsburg and Cumberland Valley grew during the same period, while West Shore declined by 2.8 percent. Current staffing, spending, and outcome data show that the three districts should not be judged by a single statewide average.

Three District Stories

District	Primary question	Why it warrants review
Mechanicsburg Area	Growth and deployment	Enrollment rose 6.7 percent. Professional staffing grew faster, and Grade 11 Algebra I proficiency trails the Pennsylvania result.
Cumberland Valley	Capacity and sustainability	Enrollment rose 11.4 percent. Spending per ADM is low, teacher staffing is lean, and academic results are strong.
West Shore	Reporting and service alignment	Enrollment declined modestly. Reported incidents and suspensions are high, while reported truancy and vaping are unusually low.

What the Evidence Supports

- Public data can identify trends, unusual relationships, and questions for district leaders.
- Per-student and FTE measures improve comparisons across districts of different sizes.
- Several years of consistent data are more persuasive than a single-year result.

What the Evidence Does Not Establish

- A statewide average does not prove that a district has too many or too few employees.
- Higher spending does not prove waste, and lower spending does not prove efficiency.
- Reported safety incidents do not measure school climate without consistent definitions and underlying records.

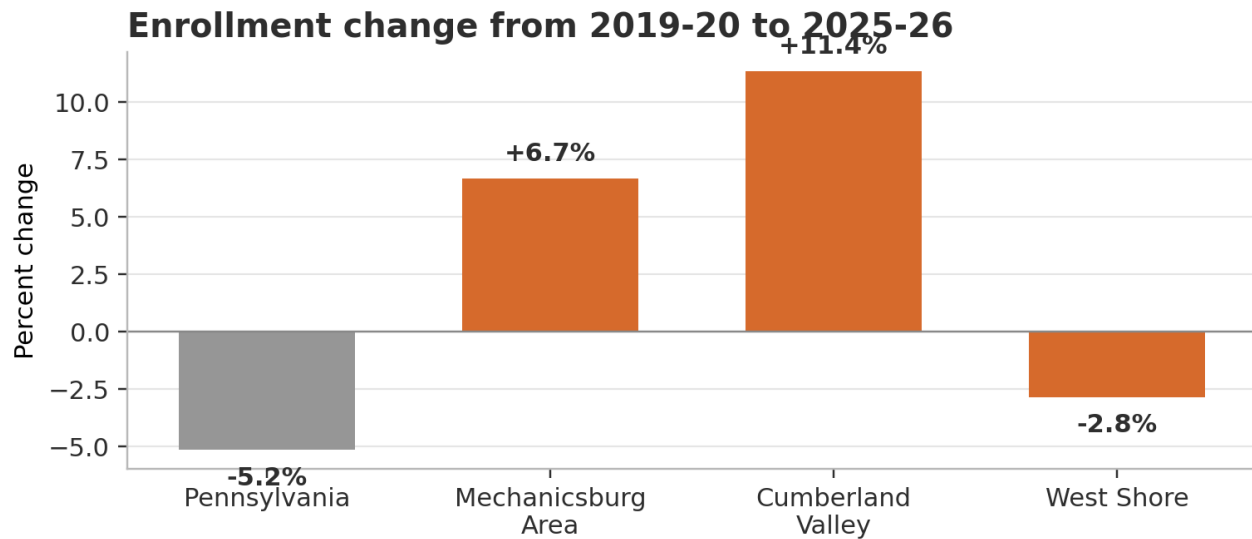
Comparison at a Glance

The table uses a statewide weighted average when the measure represents students or reported events. It uses the Pennsylvania district median for expenditures because very large and very small districts can distort a single statewide amount.

Measure	PA benchmark	Mechanicsburg	Cumberland Valley	West Shore
Enrollment change 2019-20 to 2025-26	-5.2%	+6.7%	+11.4%	-2.8%
Students per classroom teacher FTE 2025-26	14.6	15.6	17.5	15.7
Total expenditures per ADM 2024-25	\$22,898	\$22,359	\$17,828	\$21,221
PSSA ELA proficient or advanced 2025	50.4%	58.4%	66.8%	52.9%
PSSA Math proficient or advanced 2025	44.0%	47.2%	61.0%	49.0%
Keystone Algebra I proficient or advanced 2025	47.2%	43.4%	70.9%	43.8%
Reported incidents per 100 students 2024-25	14.26	11.87	12.21	21.84
Out of school suspension sanctions per 100 students 2024-25	7.86	6.00	3.42	9.21
Reported truancy 2024-25	7.88% median	5.09%	7.21%	0.60%

ADM means average daily membership. Staffing ratios use primary-assignment classroom teacher FTE, not simple employee headcount. Safe Schools incident and suspension figures count reported events or sanctions and may include repeated activity involving the same student.

Enrollment and Staffing



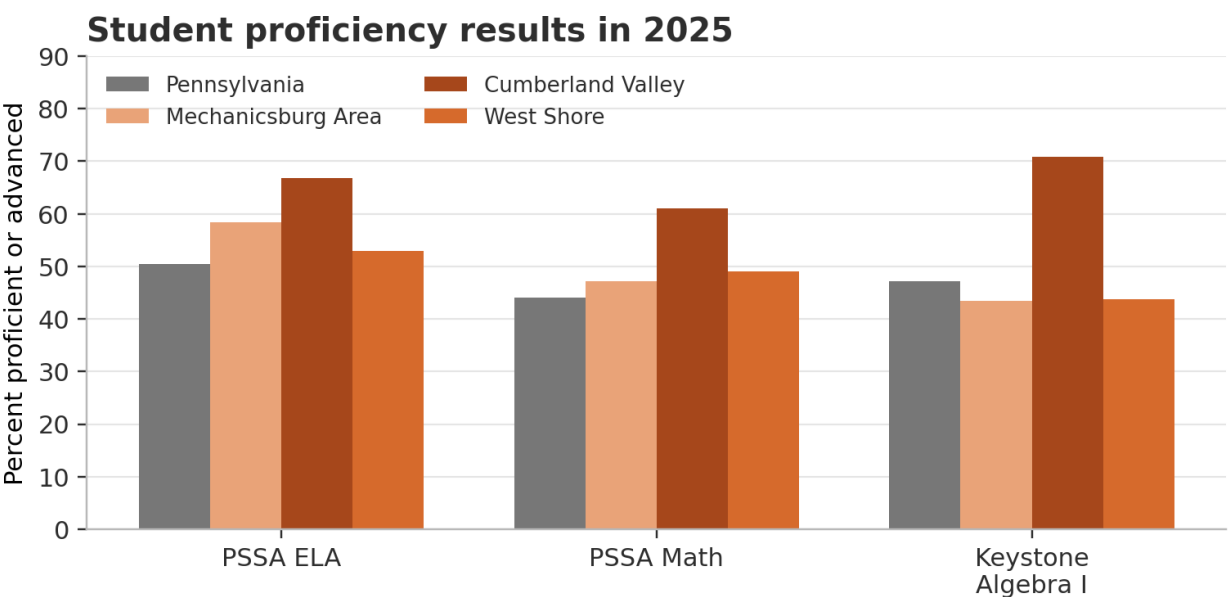
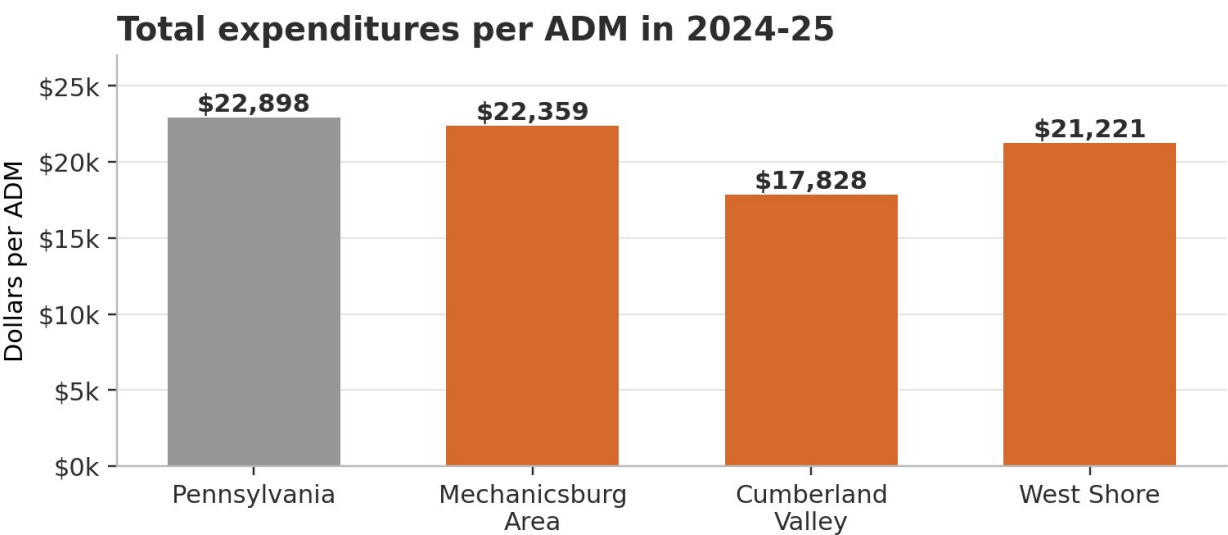
Mechanicsburg and Cumberland Valley grew while statewide district enrollment declined. West Shore also declined, but less sharply than Pennsylvania overall. Those different enrollment paths change the staffing question for each district.

Current Classroom Teacher FTE

District	Students per teacher FTE	Interpretation
Pennsylvania	14.6	Statewide enrollment divided by classroom teacher FTE
Mechanicsburg Area	15.6	Slightly more students per teacher FTE than the statewide ratio
Cumberland Valley	17.5	The leanest classroom teacher ratio among the three districts
West Shore	15.7	Similar to Mechanicsburg despite a different enrollment trend

A districtwide ratio is not an average class size. Special education assignments, planning periods, course offerings, part-time positions, and nonclassroom duties can produce different classroom experiences.

Spending and Student Outcomes



Cumberland Valley records the lowest expenditures per ADM and the strongest results in the three displayed subjects. That relationship warrants study, but it does not prove that spending reductions would improve another district. Mechanicsburg and West Shore perform above Pennsylvania on PSSA ELA and Math, while both trail Pennsylvania on Grade 11 Algebra I.

Questions Raised by the Comparison

- Which spending categories explain the difference in cost per ADM?
- Do class size, course access, special education obligations, and employee experience differ materially?
- Are Algebra I pathways and testing cohorts comparable across the districts?

Mechanicsburg Area School District

Mechanicsburg enrollment increased from 4,468 students in 2019-20 to 4,766 in 2025-26. Pennsylvania projections cited in the district report reach approximately 5,535 students by 2034-35. Classroom teacher headcount increased 9.2 percent and all professional personnel increased 13.2 percent during the six-year comparison period.

What Stands Out

- Enrollment grew 6.7 percent while statewide enrollment declined 5.2 percent.
- PSSA ELA and Math results exceed Pennsylvania results.
- Grade 11 Algebra I proficiency is 43.4 percent, compared with 47.2 percent statewide.
- The district reports more students per classroom teacher FTE than Pennsylvania overall, even though historical professional headcount grew faster than enrollment.

Questions for the Board and Community

- What grades, student groups, and course pathways account for the Algebra I result?
- How many students complete Algebra I before Grade 11, and how are those students represented in the Keystone calculation?
- What positions account for the growth in professional personnel beyond classroom teachers?
- Why did district or no-building assignments increase, and where are those employees actually deployed?
- What enrollment or capacity thresholds would trigger additions, redistricting, or grade reconfiguration?

Where to Dig Further

Request master schedules, course-level Algebra I results, intervention rosters, position-level staffing by building and FTE, housing and enrollment assumptions, building capacities, and the district criteria used for future construction or redistricting.

Cumberland Valley School District

Cumberland Valley enrollment increased from 9,436 students in 2019-20 to 10,507 in 2025-26. Classroom teacher headcount increased 14.0 percent and all professional personnel increased 13.2 percent. Full-time support staffing increased by 163 positions in the earlier district review.

What Stands Out

- Cumberland Valley has the largest enrollment increase among the three districts.
- The district spends \$17,828 per ADM, compared with a Pennsylvania district median of \$22,898.
- It has 17.5 students per classroom teacher FTE, the leanest ratio in this comparison.
- Its PSSA and Keystone results substantially exceed the statewide results displayed in this report.

Questions for the Board and Community

- How does the district maintain course access and manageable class sizes with a lean teacher FTE ratio?
- What services, programs, and student needs account for the increase in support staffing?
- Are staffing and building plans sustainable if enrollment reaches the projected peak?
- What are the trigger points for construction, additions, modular classrooms, redistricting, or schedule changes?
- What practices contribute to the district academic results, and can the district demonstrate that they are consistent across schools and student groups?

Where to Dig Further

Review actual class sizes, teacher course loads, unfilled positions, support positions by program and funding source, special education caseloads, school-level subgroup results, capacity studies, developer projections, and the adopted capital plan.

West Shore School District

West Shore enrollment declined from 7,731 students in 2019-20 to 7,511 in 2025-26. Classroom teacher headcount declined 2.4 percent, all professional personnel increased 1.6 percent, and support headcount declined. The district also reorganized grade configurations, which complicates school-level comparisons across years.

What Stands Out

- Enrollment declined modestly, while teacher staffing remained broadly aligned with enrollment.
- PSSA ELA and Math are above Pennsylvania results, while Algebra I is below the statewide result.
- Reported incidents and out-of-school-suspension sanctions exceed the statewide rates.
- The 0.60 percent reported truancy rate and two reported vaping incidents are unusually low compared with the other two districts.

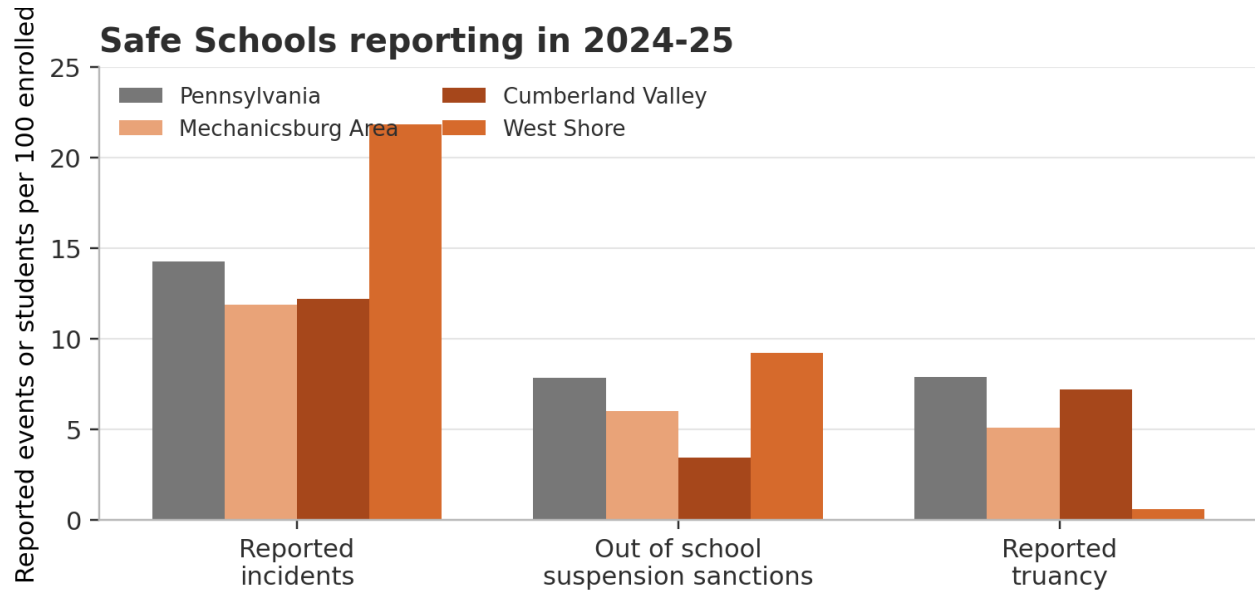
Questions for the Board and Community

- Are the incident and suspension totals concentrated in particular schools or grade levels?
- How does the district define, document, and report truancy to Pennsylvania?
- Are vaping incidents recorded under another category, including the local code of conduct?
- Do all schools use the same incident and discipline definitions?
- What student services changed as support staffing declined, and did those changes affect safety, attendance, or behavior response?

Where to Dig Further

Request school-level incident logs with student information removed, discipline coding guidance, attendance and truancy procedures, vaping referral records, repeat-offender counts, support staffing by school, and three to five years of consistent safety and attendance data.

Safe Schools Data and Reporting Questions



The Safe Schools file is valuable because it helps identify patterns by school and incident type. It also requires caution. Reported incidents are not necessarily unique students, and a low rate may reflect different coding or reporting practices rather than fewer problems.

Reported category	Mechanicsburg	Cumberland Valley	West Shore
Fighting	8	39	39
Bullying	5	10	15
Weapons	7	10	18
Controlled substances	14	34	55
Vaping	31	67	2
Assault on students	3	19	28
Assault on staff	6	3	7

The table shows reported event counts. District enrollment differs, so use rates and school-level concentration before comparing severity.

A Useful Citizen Review Sequence

1. Notice an unusual number without drawing a conclusion.
2. Confirm the state definition and the district coding practice.
3. Compare at least three years and review school-level concentration.
4. Ask for the underlying records with student information removed.
5. Return to the board with a specific question supported by the records.

Citizen and School Board Action Guide

Ten Questions Worth Asking

1. How does the district reconcile budgeted positions, filled positions, PDE-reported staff, and actual FTE?
2. Which staffing changes were driven by enrollment, special education, new programs, compliance requirements, or vacancies?
3. What are the actual class sizes, course loads, caseloads, and service levels by school?
4. How does spending per student compare with similar districts after accounting for program differences?
5. Which student groups and schools explain the districtwide assessment result?
6. What corrective action follows when a result remains below the district or state benchmark?
7. How are safety, discipline, vaping, and truancy events defined and checked before state submission?
8. Are unusual rates caused by student behavior, reporting practice, school concentration, or repeat incidents?
9. What measurable result was expected from each major staffing or spending increase?
10. When will the board receive a recurring public dashboard linking enrollment, staffing, costs, vacancies, and outcomes?

Records That Move the Review Forward

- A position-level staffing roster showing job title, building, program, FTE, funding source, vacancy status, and budget status.
- Master schedules, section enrollments, teacher loads, special education caseloads, and student support caseloads.
- A budget-to-position reconciliation showing additions, eliminations, transfers, vacancies, and midyear changes.
- School-level assessment, attendance, incident, discipline, and intervention data for at least three years.
- Enrollment forecasts, building capacities, housing assumptions, capital plans, and decision trigger points.

Sources and Method

Primary data source Pennsylvania Department of Education spreadsheets compiled on the Forge Change Citizen Resources page <https://forgechange.org/citizen-resources>

Datasets reviewed 2019-20 and 2025-26 public school enrollment 2025-26 professional personnel 2024-25 Annual Financial Report revenues and expenditures 2025 PSSA and Keystone results 2024-25 Safe Schools reports

Calculation method State proficiency and reported event rates are weighted by the number of students tested or enrolled. Spending uses the Pennsylvania district median. The statewide staffing ratio divides total district enrollment by primary-assignment classroom teacher FTE. District historical staffing statements are taken from the separate Forge Change enrollment and staffing reports.

Reporting limitation Finance, assessment, safety, enrollment, and staffing data cover different reporting periods. Comparisons identify questions for public review and should be reconciled with district records before conclusions are reached.