

Long Range School Organization Planning

Two Important Reminders

1. Why did we initiate a long range planning process?

Four major factors lead us to initiate a process to develop a long range plan for school utilization and needed facility upgrades

- a. **Absence of a Long Range Plan for Facility Utilization** – There is clear evidence that the way our schools – those serving students in grades Pre-K to 8 – were organized and used represented district ongoing efforts to match changes in student enrollments to available space on an annual basis without the guidance of an adopted formal plan for school utilization (see Attachment A for the varying school usages in 2010-11).
- b. **Need to Minimize Annual Operating Costs** – How many schools we operate, how these schools are used and even the size of the school has a significant impact on our annual operating costs¹. We owe it to both our students and our taxpayers to focus our limited resources on maintaining and strengthening our instructional programs and services by reducing other operating costs.
- c. **Desire for Greater Stability** – Continually making annual changes to the way schools are used creates difficulties and challenges for students, their families and our staff. The most effective way of providing real stability for our students is to have and implement an adopted long range plan with clear expectations that changes will be phased-in over time.
- d. **Building Condition Survey** – As required by SED, the district contracted with a major architectural and engineering firm to conduct a complete review of all district facilities during the 2010-12 school year. The resulting report clearly shows that many of our school have a wide range of needs the must be addressed (See Attachment B).

¹ It is interesting to note that the district continues today to incur additional operating costs (e.g., transportation) associated with various school use changes made in the past.

2. What was learned from the Community Engagement process conducted in December 2011 and how does this shape the work the Long-Range Planning Steering Committee?

- a. During the second week of December 2011 special sessions were organized and conducted to seek the views of our school community – residents, parents and staff. In addition to these sessions, the district website was used to provide those who could not attend one of these sessions with an opportunity to express their views.
- b. The general consensus was that there is no “ideal” grade level configuration, but there are “ideal” characteristics. The vast majority of the individuals who attended the sessions were from our two K-8 schools and they clearly expressed a strong preference for the way their schools are currently organized. The primary reason for their high level of support was “*Having more grade levels in the same school*” which they cite:
 - i. Reduces the number of transitions for students and families
 - ii. Keeps siblings together longer
 - iii. Provides for greater consistency of school expectations
 - iv. Strengthens staff/parent relationships
 - v. Strengthens student/teacher relationships
 - vi. Older students can be good role models (some disagree)
 - vii. Creates a sense of a smaller learning community
 - viii. Promotes greater parent involvement in schools
- c. Other observations and findings
 - i. Parents strongly differ in their views over whether 6th grade students belong in elementary or middle schools – there is a clear split among parents on this topic
 - ii. There is strong support for both K-6 neighborhood schools and K-8 schools
 - iii. Concerns over equity are very strong – that is, equity in programming and funding needs to be available to the students in all of our schools
- d. A vision that provides for both K-6 neighborhood schools, along with enough K-8 schools to accommodate those who would choose such an option – with equity of programming and resources across all schools – would be very responsive to what was learned through this community engagement process.
 - i. The Long Range Planning Steering Committee charges were developed with the clear expectation that the results summarized above would be the starting point for the committee’s work.
 - ii. If we are to develop the needed level of community understanding and support for a vision statement to be successful, it is essential to honor and respect to the views collected during the community engagement process.

Thoughts on Completing the Vision Statement

1. While the Community Engagement process established a clear starting point – that is, a blend of K-6 and K-8 schools – for the Long Range Planning Steering Committee, there are many long term issues that need to be addressed by the committee to finalize a general vision statement.
 - a. Some questions that need to be address include:
 - i. What about the size and location of the Pre-K program?
 - ii. Are K-6 schools to be zoned and K-8's to be schools of choice?
 - iii. Do we use clusters? If so, how many? How do we determine the location of clusters?
 - iv. Are schools of choice zoned or city-wide?
 - v. What is the right number of schools of choice?
 - vi. What are the general rules about choice?
 - vii. Other questions????
 - b. Two key points to be remembered while addressing these questions
 - i. Stick to the vision statement level and avoid getting to far into the plan level of details
 - ii. Test answers against the committee's definition of equity
 - c. Prepare a final draft of the vision statement
 - i. Do not over wordsmith – it is should be a simple statement of general direction about how district schools should be organized in the future (not next year)
2. Other Key Task to be Addressed
 - a. Prepare list of critical planning assumptions, along with supporting rational and data
 - i. Capacity targets, class size targets, school sizes, room requirements, etc.
 - b. Review current school facilities to assess each school's potential capacity
 - i. List needed changes and improvements
 - c. Begin shaping the geographic dimensions of school location

Givens and Thoughts on District Facilities and Finances

1. District School Facilities – A barrier or avenue to improved equity?

- a. The district owns 18 school facilities and leases another 3 school facilities
- b. Beginning in September 2012, seventeen of these facilities will be used to serve students in grades Pre-K to 8; two (Schenectady High and Steinmetz Career & Leadership Academy) will serve students in grades 9-12; one (Washington Irving) will serve students in need of special tutoring and GED programs, plus adult and continuing education programs and one facility (Oneida) will be closed.
- c. Collectively these school facilities are old (average age of 85) and vary considerably in terms of their current physical conditions and suitability to accommodate currently offered instructional programs and services.
 - i. Additions and other modifications may be needed in some schools to address suitability issues
 - ii. New York State will cover most the costs for approved capital projects, including site work, equipment and furniture through building aid – in our case, about 95% of the project costs.
- d. The size of a school facility, together with the size of the property it is located on can have a significant impact on both how it can be used and on annual operating costs.
 - i. Not every one of our facilities has the potential of supporting a K-8 school
 - ii. Operating cost per student for some of our schools is considerable greater than others (see Appendix C for a simple comparison of costs for different school sizes)
- e. Leased facilities present unique issues related to long range facility use planning
 - i. All three of the leased facilities (Keane, FDR, Blodgett) are small and district is not free to make physical changes to the facilities without an agreement of the owner
 - ii. FDR and Blodgett are on short term (4 year) leases and Keane has just over 10 years remaining on its lease
- f. Although Oneida will not be operated as school beginning this September, it remains as a district asset
 - i. Oneida maybe the most saleable of the district owned properties – Ellis Hospital has expressed an interest in the property
 - ii. This asset could provide a source of funds needed to address other district facility needs

2. School District Finances – We will continue to face a very bleak outlook for finances

- a. Just as the sun will rise tomorrow, we will face unavoidable increases in our annual operating costs.
- b. Unfortunately, that cannot be said for our two primary sources of revenues – state aid and property taxes.
 - i. State Aid – New York continues to project state budget deficits for the near future reflecting a rather slow and weak economic recovery from the “Great Recession.” Thus, it would be unrealistic to assume increases in state aid sufficient to cover operating cost increases.
 - ii. Property Taxes – The property tax base in Schenectady continues its downward trend, increasing the burden on our taxpayer to just stay even (e.g. While the tax levy for 2012-13 was actually less than the tax levy for 2011-12, the final tax rate increased by about 3% due to an overall reduction in the property tax base).
- c. This long range planning process provides a unique opportunity to reduce annual operating costs.
 - i. How many schools we operate, how we organize and use these schools and even the size of these schools have a significant impact on our annual operating costs.
 - ii. As noted earlier, New York State will cover most the costs for approved capital projects. Thus it is possible to have the state cover most of the costs (about 95%) for additions and renovations to facilities that could ultimately reduce other annual operating costs.
 - iii. One possibility for covering the local share (about 5%) would be the sale of Oneida. While we do not know the market value of that property, it is possible to show the potential of this option. For example, if it sold for \$750,000, this would cover the local share of up to \$15 million of capital projects – if sold for \$1,000,000 this would cover \$20 million of capital projects, and so on.
- d. Universal Pre-K Program – New York State has provided us with special grant funds to operate our Pre-K program. That initial Universal Pre-K grant was set many years ago and the state has held the funding at the same level over all of these years; even though our costs have increased each year.
 - i. An expansion of this program would have to be financed with local tax dollars

Attachment A

Schenectady City Schools															
Student Enrollment as of October 6, 2010															
School	PreK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Early Childhood Education Centers	159	162	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	341
1 Fulton Early Childhood Education Center	108	95	20												223
2 Howe Early Childhood Education Center	51	67													118
Elementary Schools	17	453	583	535	493	533	481	457	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,552
1 Elmer Avenue Elementary		66	75	59	51	58	64	51							424
2 Hamilton Elementary		70	74	74	70	64	39	50							441
3 Keane Elementary		38	53	65	47	43	45	26							317
4 Lincoln Elementary	17	36	45	49	49	73	52	64							385
5 Paige Elementary		54	68	67	74	78	64	64							469
6 Franklin D. Roosevelt Elementary		1	30	32	16	19	14	20							132
7 Van Corlaer Elementary		64	83	70	79	74	66	60							496
8 Woodlawn Elementary		59	75	59	49	61	61	65							429
9 Zoller Elementary School		65	80	60	58	63	76	57							459
Magnet Schools	36	216	261	242	250	223	253	173	117	137	0	0	0	0	1,908
1 Academy of Culture & Communication Magnet School at Pleasant Valley		71	83	81	85	66	72								458
2 Yates Arts-In-Education Magnet School		44	81	56	57	45	50	57							390
3 Central Park K-8 International Magnet School	18	37	54	42	60	49	66	45	75	86					532
4 Dr. Martin Luther King K-8 Math, Science, Technology, Invention Magnet School	18	64	43	63	48	63	65	71	42	51					528
Middle Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	105	672	556	0	0	0	0	1,333
1 Mont Pleasant								105	314	240					659
2 Oneida									324	266					590
3 Kathrine B. Blodgett Success Academy for Middle School Students									34	50					84
Schenectady High School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	804	722	618	638	2,782
1 Career and Leadership Academy											106	77	59	64	306
2 G.E. School of Humanities and Culture											144	162	158	137	601
3 School of Business and International Studies											212	164	81	141	598
4 School of Fine Arts											152	176	158	151	637
5 School of Math, Science, Technology											190	143	162	145	640
Totals	212	831	864	777	743	756	734	735	789	693	804	722	618	638	9,916
K-12 Enrollments			K-6						7-8		9-12				9,704
			5,440						1,482		2,782				

A. PreK students attending other schools - 195; B. Home Schooling Students - 113

Schenectady City Schools							
Summary of 2011 Building Condition Survey							
School	Total Square Feet	2011-12 Enrollment	Sq. Ft. per Student	Overall Rating	Estimated Capital Costs		
					Total	Per Sq.Ft.	Per Enrollment
PreK and Kindergarten Schools	79,256	375	211	1 Satisfactory 1 Unsatisfactory	\$5,226,605	\$66	\$13,938
1 Fulton Early Childhood Education Center	29,206	201	145	Unsatisfactory	\$2,993,743	\$103	\$14,894
2 Howe Early Childhood Education Center	50,050	174	288	Satisfactory	\$2,232,862	\$45	\$12,833
K-6 Schools	563,360	4,426	127	3 Satisfactory 8 Unsatisfactory	\$27,394,717	\$49	\$6,189
1 Elmer Avenue Elementary	54,732	428	128	Unsatisfactory	\$3,156,369	\$58	\$7,375
2 Hamilton Elementary	40,560	403	101	Satisfactory	\$3,266,393	\$81	\$8,105
3 Keane Elementary*	44,238	345	128	Unsatisfactory	\$3,811,978	\$86	\$11,049
4 Lincoln Elementary	40,000	370	108	Unsatisfactory	\$3,143,085	\$79	\$8,495
5 Paige Elementary	57,204	475	120	Unsatisfactory	\$1,579,546	\$28	\$3,325
6 Pleasant Valley	38,600	497	78	Unsatisfactory	\$4,158,112	\$108	\$8,366
7 Franklin D. Roosevelt Elementary*	27,450	163	168	Unsatisfactory	\$1,389,309	\$51	\$8,523
8 Van Corlaer Elementary	63,000	444	142	Unsatisfactory	\$2,522,424	\$40	\$5,681
9 Woodlawn Elementary	70,282	461	152	Satisfactory	\$1,331,980	\$19	\$2,889
10 Yates Elementary School	67,000	370	181	Unsatisfactory	\$2,083,973	\$31	\$5,632
11 Zoller Elementary School	60,294	470	128	Satisfactory	\$951,548	\$16	\$2,025
K-8 Magnet Schools	180,348	1,143	158	2 Satisfactory 0 Unsatisfactory	\$4,641,558	\$26	\$4,061
1 Central Park Magnet School	109,600	596	184	Satisfactory	\$2,830,924	\$26	\$4,750
2 Dr. Martin Luther King Magnet School	70,748	547	129	Satisfactory	\$1,810,634	\$26	\$3,310
7-8 Middle Schools	367,374	1,221	301	0 Satisfactory 3 Unsatisfactory	\$19,468,871	\$53	\$15,945
1 Mont Pleasant	247,000	561	440	Unsatisfactory	\$12,186,728	\$49	\$21,723
2 Oneida	106,000	597	178	Unsatisfactory	\$5,524,941	\$52	\$9,255
3 Kathrine B. Blodgett - SAMMS*	14,374	63	228	Unsatisfactory	\$1,757,202	\$122	\$27,892
9-12 High Schools	491,600	2,681	183	0 Satisfactory 2 Unsatisfactory	\$16,635,827	\$34	\$6,205
1 Schenectady High School	378,400	2,431	156	Unsatisfactory	\$12,300,788	\$33	\$5,060
2 Steinmetz Career and Leadership Academy	113,200	250	453	Unsatisfactory	\$4,335,039	\$38	\$17,340
Totals of 20 Schools	1,681,938	9,846	171	6 Satisfactory 14 Unsatisfactory	\$73,367,578	\$44	\$7,452

* Leased facility

** Does not include Washington Irving, which has 39,600 sq. ft. and estimated capital costs of \$3,797,982.

Pre-K to 6 Elementary School Staffing Model and Cost Comparison

Type	Staff			Salary and Benefits		
	187	356	517	187	356	517
Number of Students	187	356	517	187	356	517
School Leadership						
Principal	1.00	1.00	1.00	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
School Secretary	1.00	1.00	1.00	\$54,000	\$54,000	\$54,000
Instruction						
Pre-K						
Pre-K - Teacher	1.00	1.00	1.00	\$87,500	\$87,500	\$87,500
Pre-K - Para	1.00	1.00	1.00	\$29,000	\$29,000	\$29,000
Regular Classes						
Classroom Teachers	7.00	14.00	21.00	\$612,500	\$1,225,000	\$1,837,500
Special Education						
SE Teachers - General	3.00	4.00	5.00	\$262,500	\$350,000	\$437,500
SE Teachers - Self-Contained	1.00	2.00	2.00	\$87,500	\$175,000	\$175,000
Program Paras	5.00	9.00	11.00	\$145,000	\$261,000	\$319,000
Early Intervention Team						
T.L.C - I.S. - Reading Spec.	1.00	3.00	3.00	\$87,500	\$262,500	\$262,500
Special Areas						
Art	.50	1.00	1.20	\$43,750	\$87,500	\$105,000
General Music	.50	1.00	1.20	\$43,750	\$87,500	\$105,000
Instrumental Music	.40	.60	.60	\$35,000	\$52,500	\$52,500
Physical Education	.60	1.00	1.40	\$52,500	\$87,500	\$122,500
Librarian	.20	.50	.50	\$17,500	\$43,750	\$43,750
Student Support						
Social Worker	.50	1.00	1.00	\$43,750	\$87,500	\$87,500
Psychologist	.50	.50	.50	\$43,750	\$43,750	\$43,750
Nurse	.70	1.00	1.00	\$39,900	\$57,000	\$57,000
Para	3.00	5.00	7.00	\$87,000	\$145,000	\$203,000
Facilities						
Custodial Staff	2.00	3.00	3.00	\$118,000	\$177,000	\$177,000
Totals	27.90	48.60	61.40	\$1,836,400	\$3,259,000	\$4,145,000
Students/Staff - Cost/Student	6.7	7.3	8.4	\$9,820	\$9,154	\$8,017
				Base	(\$666) (6.8%)	(\$1,803) (18.4%)