

# **Oneida City School District**

**Oneida, New York**

## **A Study to Examine the Utilization of the District's Schools**



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**June 12, 2018**





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## CHAPTER 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oneida City School District, like many upstate school districts, has recently experienced declining student enrollment and financial challenges impacted by the property tax cap and uncertain state aid. To fulfill their responsibilities as stewards of the district's finances and facilities, the Oneida Board of Education chose to engage in a study to ascertain the best use of its facilities for the future. The main focus of this study was framed by the following "critical question" the Board of Education and administration asked that the consultants address:

***In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future?***

The timeline called for initiation of this study in July 2017 with the final report due to the Board of Education in June 2018. The Board of Education selected Castallo & Silky LLC, an educational consulting firm from Syracuse, New York to conduct this study. Mr. Alan Pole and Dr. Jessica Cohen led this study for the firm. An advisory committee was appointed by the Board of Education to provide input and context for the report. The consultants met six times with the advisory committee prior to reviewing a draft report with them.

The district has seen declining enrollments that will likely continue for at least the next six years. K-12 enrollment has declined over the past six years (2,211 in 2012-13 to 1,948 in 2017-18) by 263 students or 11.9%. This decline is projected to continue through 2024-25 (-499 students/-22.60%). This future decline will impact all three grade ranges – elementary, middle school, and high school.

The district's schools are organized into 3 K-5th grade buildings and 1 Pre-K-5th grade building serving their neighborhoods as well as a 6th-8th grade middle school and a 9th – 12th grade high school serving the entire district. The district's facilities are generally in good shape although the New York State required Building Condition Survey in 2015 identified approximately \$20,000,000 of work that might be needed over time.

**Options.** Over the course of the study, a number of options were considered for the elementary, middle, and high schools. Because of the current enrollment at the middle and high school, there were no feasible and desirable options for those levels at the current time. Options that were discussed for the district's facilities included:

- **Option 1-Status Quo.** The neighborhood school concept has been embraced by Oneida for the location of its elementary schools. Under this model, each elementary school contains all elementary grades and is generally organized around neighborhoods. The status quo option maintains this arrangement.
- **Option 2-A Grade Center Plan** that would create two primary schools housing grades K-2 and two intermediate schools housing grades 3-5. In addition to offering a number of instructional advantages, grade centers create equity of class/section sizes and teacher loads across the district. In addition, moving from the current number of 48 elementary sections to 40 with the grade center plan would conservatively reduce eight elementary classrooms/teachers equaling annual savings of \$830,256 (average cost of a teacher with salary and benefits = \$103,782 X 8 = \$830,256)



- **Option 3-Close One of the Elementary Schools.** An examination of the number of students currently enrolled in the elementary grades compared with the number of available classrooms shows that, at the current time, there is not enough room to house the elementary students in three schools.
- **Option 3a-Close One of the Elementary Schools in 2022-23** as enrollment decreases. Oneida's school district enrollment has declined from 2,211 in 2012-13 to the current level of 1,948 in 2017-18; it is projected to continue to decline to 1,771 in 2022-23. In grades K-5, the enrollment has declined from 980 in 2012-13 to 878 in 2017-18; it is projected to continue to decline to 783 in 2022-23. At the elementary level, this is a decline of 197 students since 2012-13. Because enrollment is projected to continue to decline in Oneida, it is very possible that the K-5 population will fit into three buildings by the 2022-23 school year. Should Oneida close one of its elementary schools, significant savings would accrue to the district. Using the same parameters for individual class sizes, operating the elementary program in three buildings would require 36 sections/common branch classrooms compared with the current 48 sections. Closing a building would also generate considerable other savings as well. It is conservatively estimated that the following savings would accrue should a school building be closed. Reduction of 12 elementary classroom teachers, 1 Physical Education teacher, 1 Library Media Specialist, 1 nurse, 2 cafeteria staff, 2 custodial staff, 1 principal, and 1 12-month clerical = Savings of \$1,878,165. In addition to the staff savings, approximately \$15,000 in utility costs would be realized.
- **Option 4-Combine Low Enrollment Sections at Willard Prior.** Combining the small sections in Kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade at Willard Prior would conservatively save three elementary classrooms/teachers equaling annual savings of \$311,346 (average cost of a teacher with salary and benefits = \$103,782 X 3 = \$311,346). In addition to the savings that would be realized, it would also be possible to sell the current administration building and move those offices into the area of Willard Prior that would be freed up by combining six classrooms into three. This would generate a one-time revenue of approximately \$300,000 by selling the administration building.

### **Recommendations**

1. It is recommended that the district convene a facilities planning committee whose role it will be to develop and monitor a long term facilities plan for the district. This committee should be provided with annual enrollment projections to guide their planning as they consider topics that might include the closure of one or more of the school buildings, the scope of work to be performed from the Building Condition Survey, the long term design of appropriate school facilities and the financing of these initiatives. This committee should be comprised of both school staff and members of the community.
2. It is recommended that, effective with the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, the Board of Education implement Option 4 and consolidate the low enrollment sections of Kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade at Willard Prior.
3. It is recommended that, effective with the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, the Board of Education continue to implement Option 1, the status quo option for all schools except Willard Prior.



4. It is recommended that, during the 2018-19 school year, the district convene the facilities committee to begin the development of a 3-5 year facilities plan that will result in the closure of one of the district's elementary schools. While there are a number of instructional and financial benefits to the grade center plan, it is recommended that this option not be considered as the changes associated with the implementation of grade center schools would be too unsettling as the district prepares for the closure of one of its elementary schools.
5. It is recommended that the district use the attrition method for reducing staff should any staff reductions be realized from this initiative.
6. It is recommended that the Board of Education conduct at least one public hearing/comment period on these options for the general public to express opinions.



## CHAPTER 2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A study with this purpose and magnitude would not be possible without the support, cooperation, and encouragement of many individuals. We would first like to express our appreciation to the members of the advisory committee appointed by the Oneida Board of Education. The members of the committee included:

Dr. John Costello	Megan Kelly
Jennifer DePerno	Chad Mack
Jodie Gardner	Stephanie Neff
Molly Hagan	Dawn Paz
Randy Hirschey	Robert Sayles
Carrie Isabelle	Lillian White
	David Wright

These committee members gave generously of their time to help ask the right questions and to provide direction in finding answers. Without their assistance this study would not be nearly as complete and responsive to the information needs of the Board of Education and residents of the Oneida City School District.

Superintendent Mary-Margaret Zehr, her most helpful secretary Melanie Fountain, and her staff were also generous with their time as we often requested information. Without their willingness to accommodate our requests, the timeliness of this study would not have been achieved.

Finally, we wish to thank the members of the Oneida Board of Education. As all responsible school leadership teams, they took the risk of examining the use of their district facilities knowing full well that simply asking questions about how to better use district buildings might raise some very uncomfortable issues. Despite this, they supported the study and actively followed the progress of the study, while always ensuring that all members of the community would be heard on this most important issue. This was no easy task, but they accepted the challenge and allowed the study process to run its course!



**CHAPTER 3  
BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

This first chapter provides background as to the need for the study. It offers a context within which to place the consideration of various grade/facility options and associated costs and benefits. This context offers perspective for the decisions the Oneida City School District Board of Education has before it over the next few years.

*Background*

The Oneida City School District is located in Oneida, New York, a small city in Madison County, located between Syracuse and Utica. The district encompasses communities in Madison and Oneida Counties and covers 40 square miles serving primarily the City of Oneida as well as the townships of Lenox, Lincoln, Vernon, Sherrill, Verona, and Vienna. The district’s facilities include four Pre K-5 elementary schools (Durhamville, North Broad, Seneca Street, and Willard Prior), the Otto Shortell Middle School (6-8), and the Oneida High School (9-12).

The Oneida City school community has consistently shown its support for the education of resident students by passing school budgets in nine of the past ten years, as shown in table 3.1. In addition, district residents have also passed two capital projects since 2007 (2007 and 2016) as well as 13 bus propositions since 2005.

<b>Table3.1 District Budget Vote History</b>			
Year	Yes Votes	No Votes	Total Votes
2017	354	125	479
2016	593	206	799
2015	371	105	476
2014	384	155	539
2013	487	261	748
2012	586	268	854
2011	588	428	1,016
2010	583	322	905
2009	846	349	1,195
2008*	277	437	714
<i>*Board adopted contingency budget</i>			

Nevertheless, finding the balance between the provision of a good education and the ability of a local community to provide the financial resources is an on-going challenge for any board of education and administration. Given the current economic condition of our country and our state and the continuing pressures to educate all children to higher levels, this challenge has become even more daunting over the past few years. It is the Board’s appreciation and understanding of the fundamental significance of this challenge that served as the stimulus for this study. As with all good boards of education, the Oneida City School District Board of Education chose to examine possible ways to organize grades and buildings in the district in light of the challenges mentioned above.

The main focus of this study was framed by the following “critical question” the Board of Education and administration asked that the consultants address:



***In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future?***

The timeline called for initiation of this study in July 2017 with the final report due to the Board of Education in June 2018.

The Board of Education selected Castallo & Silky LLC, an educational consulting firm from Syracuse, New York to conduct this study. Mr. Alan Pole and Dr. Jessica Cohen led this study for the firm. Castallo & Silky LLC has extensive experience in working with school districts in New York State that have considered a variety of reorganizational options.

To answer the “critical study question,” a study design, which is presented in the next chapter, was developed with the express purpose of being transparent and complete. In order to emphasize the openness of this process, the consultants committed to the following guidelines for the study:

1. The study will be conducted in an open and fair manner;
2. All data will be presented to the Board of Education; and
3. Recommendations will:
  - a. benefit student learning,
  - b. be sensitive to the unique cultural context of Oneida,
  - c. not be influenced by special interest groups,
  - d. be educationally sound,
  - e. be fiscally responsible and realistic, and
  - f. provide a five to seven year perspective.

The study concludes with this final report to the Board of Education. While the advisory committee had significant input into the development of this study, the recommendations contained in this document represent those of the consultants and are presented as a vehicle for engaging the Board, the staff, and the community in discussion regarding the best organization of the district, its programs, and its facilities.





## CHAPTER 4 STUDY METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study was based upon what is commonly known as “responsive evaluation.” In essence, this methodology requires the design of data collection methods *in response to* a critical study question. In this specific study, the Board of Education posed the following question that drove this study.

***In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future?***

The major activities undertaken as part of the study design began with the gathering of data from the district and other agencies. These data were summarized and analyzed as they were received. The data gathering was focused by the questions that drove the study. A Board appointed advisory committee met with the consultant team on six occasions to review data that had been gathered, share thoughts and opinions, and to critique tentative recommendations before the study was concluded. Finally, a draft of this report was shared with the advisory committee to seek final thoughts from the group.

The final report was presented to the Board of Education in a public session on June 12, 2018.



## CHAPTER 5 STUDENT ENROLLMENTS AND POPULATION TRENDS IN THE AREA

This section of the report provides a picture of the current status of the Oneida City School District's student enrollment as well as an overview of the population trends in the area. Accurate enrollment projections are essential data for district long-range planning. Virtually all aspects of a district's operation (educational program, staffing, facilities, transportation, finances, etc.) are dependent on the number of students enrolled. For this reason, updated enrollment projections are crucial for this study and serve as the launching pad for our analysis.

The procedure for projecting student enrollments is referred to as the Cohort Survival Methodology. This methodology is highly reliable and is the most frequently used projective technique for making short-term school district enrollment projections. To calculate enrollment projections, the following data and procedures are used:

- Six-year history of district enrollment by grade level
- Calculation of survival ratios by grade level
- Kindergarten enrollment projections based on resident live births

A survival ratio is obtained by dividing a given grade's enrollment into the enrollment of the following grade a year later. For example, the number of students in grade 3 in any year is divided by the number of students in grade 2 of the previous year. The ratios indicate the proportion of the cohort "surviving" to the following year. Cohort refers to the enrollment in a grade for a given year.

Using grade-to-grade survival ratios, an average of these ratios for each cohort progression is obtained. This average is referred to as an average projection survival ratio. This ratio is then multiplied by each current grade enrollment to obtain the projected enrollment for the next successive year. The multiplicative process is continued for each successive year.

Survival ratios usually have values close to one, but may be less than or greater than one. Where the survival ratio is less than one, fewer students "survived" to the next grade. Where the survival ratio is greater than one, more students "survived" to the next grade. Grade-to-grade survival ratios reflect the net effects of deaths, dropouts, the number of students who are home schooled, promotion/retention policies, transfers to and from nonpublic schools, and migration patterns in and out of the school district.

Since estimating births introduces a possible source of error into the model, it is advisable to limit enrollment projections to a period for which existing data on live residential births can be used. This means that enrollment projections are possible for five years into the future for the elementary grades, which is usually sufficient for most planning purposes. Beyond that point, the number of births must be estimated and the projective reliability is greatly reduced. Enrollment projections for grades 7 and 8 and for grades 9-12 can be projected for ten years into the future but elementary projections are limited to approximately a five-year period.

The methodology considered for this study was to extrapolate to kindergarten enrollment cohorts from live birth data. Birth data is provided for school districts by the New York State Department of Health and is based upon the address of the mother at the time of the birth. Live birth data for the Oneida City Schools from 2002 to 2016 is shown in the following table:



<b>Table 5.1</b>	
<b>Number of Live Births, 2002 – 2016</b>	
Calendar Year	Live Births
2002	173
2003	174
2004	182
2005	188
2006	206
2007	186
2008	186
2009	179
2010	167
2011	161
2012	176
2013	155
2014	159
2015	159
2016	151

Table 5.1 provides a 15-year history of the births in the Oneida City School District. It is clear from looking at the progression of the numbers that there has been a decrease over time in the number of children being born to mothers living in the school district. The average for the past 10 years from 2007 to 2016 is 168 births. Over the past 5 years, the average number of births has decreased to 160.

Live births are then used to project the kindergarten enrollment five years into the future...babies born in 2014 will be in kindergarten in 2019-20, babies born in 2015 will be in kindergarten in 2020-21, and babies born in 2016 will be in kindergarten in 2021-22. An average ratio of live births to kindergarten enrollment five years later is then calculated. This ratio is then used to project future kindergarten enrollments from actual and estimated live births. These projections enable the development future school enrollment as shown in table 5.2. It should be noted that Pre-K enrollments are not factored into the enrollment projections because Pre-K is a voluntary program and the relationship between Pre-K enrollments and enrollments at other grade levels is questionable at best.



<b>Table 5.2</b>													
<b>Oneida K-12 Enrollment History and Projections-2012-13 to 2024-25</b>													
Grade	2012 -13	2013 -14	2014 -15	2015 -16	2016 -17	2017 -18	2018 -19	2019 -20	2020 -21	2021 -22	2022 -23	2023 -24	2024 -25
Births 5 Years Before	186	186	179	167	161	176	155	159	159	151	160	160	160
K	178	176	174	155	150	137	158	139	143	143	136	144	144
1	171	173	171	176	156	148	136	157	138	142	142	134	142
2	165	160	154	159	156	143	135	124	143	126	129	129	123
3	157	168	153	148	151	151	139	131	120	139	122	125	125
4	151	144	163	153	147	152	148	136	128	117	135	119	122
5	158	154	151	162	153	147	154	149	137	130	119	137	121
6	162	160	161	152	174	156	152	159	154	142	134	123	142
7	187	161	160	162	152	163	154	150	157	152	140	132	121
8	171	184	150	152	162	141	156	148	144	150	146	134	127
9	209	167	182	144	158	161	140	155	146	142	149	145	133
10	172	202	163	179	135	153	156	135	150	142	138	144	140
11	157	168	189	155	175	132	147	150	130	144	136	133	139
12	173	162	178	196	153	164	133	149	152	132	146	138	134
<b>K-12 Total</b>	<b>2211</b>	<b>2179</b>	<b>2149</b>	<b>2093</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>1948</b>	<b>1907</b>	<b>1881</b>	<b>1842</b>	<b>1800</b>	<b>1771</b>	<b>1737</b>	<b>1712</b>
K-5 Total	980	975	966	953	913	878	869	836	809	796	783	789	777
6-8 Total	520	505	471	466	488	460	462	456	454	444	420	389	389
9-12 Total	711	699	712	674	621	610	576	589	578	560	569	559	546

Note: 2021-22 to 2024-25 births are the average of the five previous years. Consequently, from 2022-23 to 2024-25 the early grade estimates are quite speculative.

As is apparent from the above table, K-12 enrollment has declined over the past six years (2,211 in 2012-13 to 1,948 in 2017-18) by 263 students or 11.9%. This decline is projected to continue through 2024-25 (-499 students/-22.60%). This future decline will impact all three grade ranges – elementary, middle school, and high school.

Additionally, when we just consider the four elementary schools, we see that all but North Broad has had a decline in student enrollment over the past six years. This decline is noted in the following table. As can be seen, the enrollment decline varies from +.8% (North Broad to -28.3%. (Willard Prior) over this time period. The decrease in the number of K-5 students being served in these buildings was 10.1% or 99 students.



School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	% Change
Durhamville	262	260	246	258	254	252	-3.8%
North Broad	255	245	249	253	239	257	+8%
Seneca Street	223	244	240	225	223	200	-10.3%
Willard Prior	240	226	231	217	208	172	-28.3%
Total	980	975	966	953	924	881	-10.1%

Note: These totals may vary from the district-wide total as ungraded special class students are counted in the numbers above and not in the district-wide table.

As the focus of this study is on the facilities for the future, it is important to look at the projections by grade level over the next five year period to determine if there are indicators that changes in facility organization will be possible or required. Table 5.4 provides such a summary for the period from 2018-19 to 2022-23.

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Change from 2017-18
K - 5	869	836	809	796	783	86 (9.9%)
6 - 8	462	456	454	444	420	42 (9.1%)
9 - 12	576	589	578	560	569	99 (1.2%)

The enrollments continue to decline at the elementary and middle school level by almost 10% at the elementary and 9% at the middle school level. Combined with the 10% decrease over the previous five years, it becomes apparent that the declining enrollments may allow some facilities reorganization in the future.

The overall district enrollment decline cannot be attributed to other factors such as increase of students being taught at home or non-resident students no longer attending the district. The number of home-schooled students has remained relatively constant over the past five years, as noted in table 5.5.

School Year	Number of Students
2012-13	34
2013-14	43
2014-15	45
2015-16	50
2016-17	39



The number of resident students attending non-public schools has been declining since 2012-13 from a high of 108 students in 2012-13 to the current number of 73 students in 2016-17.

School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
St. Patrick's	68	50	41	44	39
Holy Cross	22	26	28	26	30
Christian Brothers Academy	1	3	4	3	3
Manlius Pebble Hill	13	11	1	1	1
Notre Dame	4	3	0	0	0
Faith Heritage	0	0	3	0	0
	108	93	77	74	73

The number of Oneida resident students attending other public schools is minimal with only 10 or 11 students a year enrolled in other districts, as shown in table 5.7.

School District	2015-16	2016-17
Canastota	4	6
Clinton	2	3
Morrisville-Eaton	0	1
New Hartford	1	1
Westmoreland	1	0
Total	10	11

As table 5.8 indicates, there are few students from other districts that attend school in Oneida. In fact, during the 2016-17 year there were no students from other districts enrolled in Oneida schools.

District	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Canastota	2	1	2	1	0
Morrisville-Eaton	0	1	0	0	0
Vernon-Verona-Sherrill	0	2	0	0	0
Total	2	4	2	1	0

It is clear from the review of this information that the other factors that may influence enrollment projections have little impact on the enrollment in Oneida.

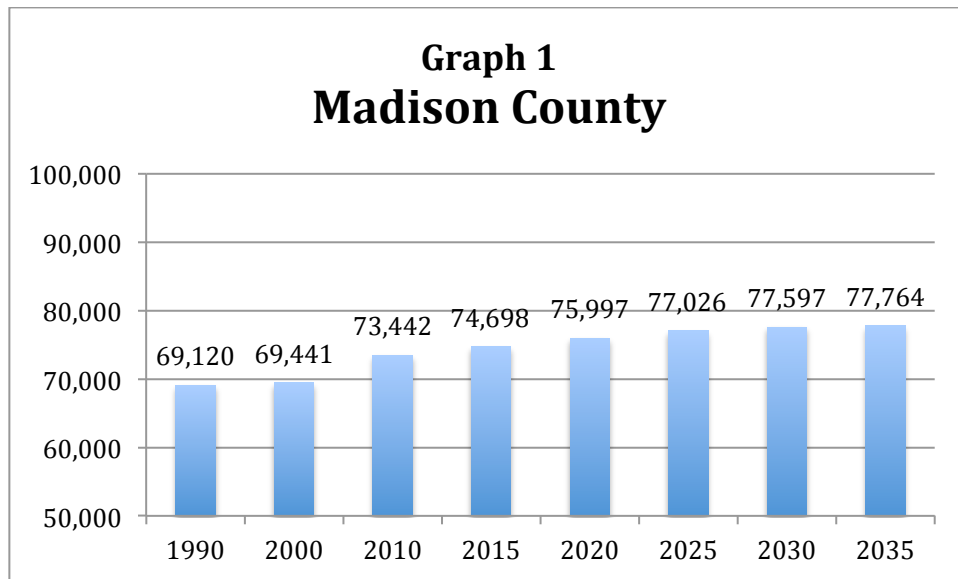
The enrollment decline in the Oneida schools has also been seen in other school districts in the county. As table 5.9 indicates, all of the districts in Madison County have been losing



enrollment since 2000-2001 and the decline in enrollment in the Oneida City Schools District is actually less than five of the other six districts.

District	2000-01	2010-11	2015-16	Change
Camden	2,857	2,324	2,134	-723 (25.3%)
Canastota	1,578	1,542	1,363	-215 (-13.6%)
Cazenovia	1,823	1,664	1,469	-354 (-19.4%)
Chittenango	2,700	2,228	1,923	-777 (-28.8%)
Oneida	2,593	2,325	2,093	-500 (-19.3%)
Stockbridge Valley	581	489	399	-182 (-31.3%)
V-V-S	2,445	2,014	1,873	-572 (-23.4%)

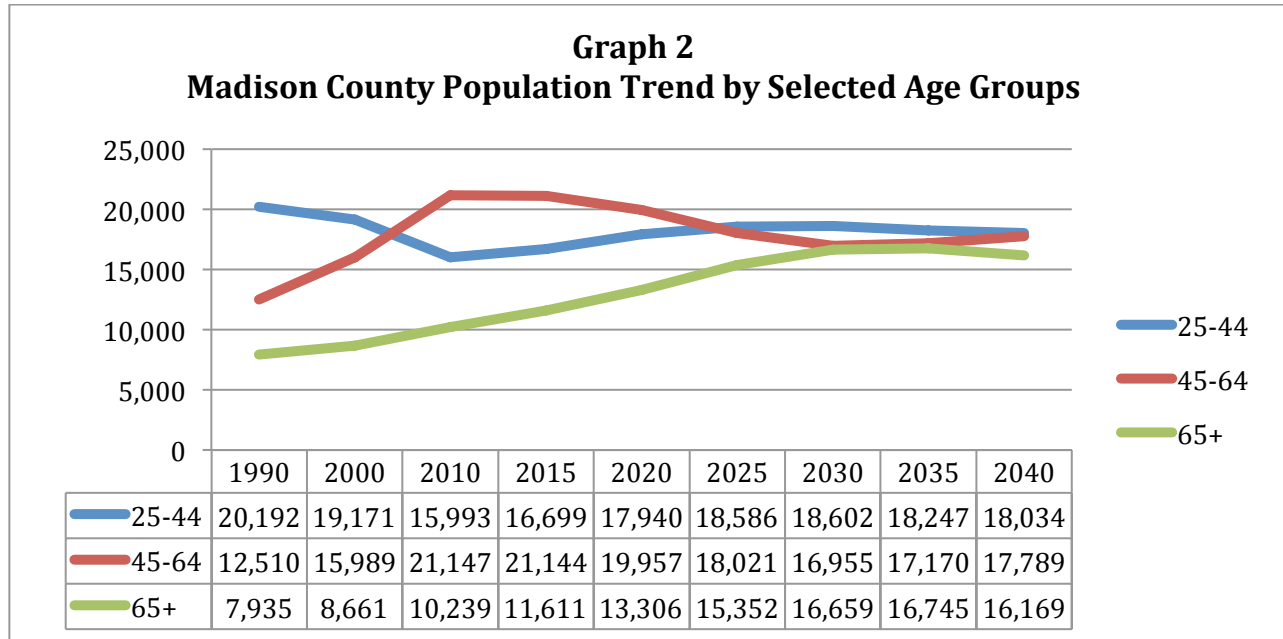
The recent decline in school district enrollment is not surprising given the overall population trends in upstate New York. However, it is interesting to note that there has been a slight growth in population in Madison County noted in the decennial census from 1990 to 2010. This change of 4,332 over the 20 years is an increase of about 6%. The census projects that there will continue to be small increases in population over the next few decades.



Interestingly enough, the small increase in population does not lead to an increase in the school age population. Graph 2 provides some insight into the reasons why increasing population may not translate into an increase in the school age population. When you examine the cohort of adults in various age ranges as is shown in Graph 2, you see an increase in the cohort of individuals age 65 or greater as well as an increase in the 45-64 age group. Adults in the childbearing age are typically 25-44 years of age. This is the cohort of adults who are most likely to have children, a factor that would influence the number of children being educated



in the school district. As the graph below illustrates, the number of residents in this critical age range has declined significantly over the past 20 years. While projections show a slight increase over the next decade, the increase is minimal.



Given the recent school district enrollment trends, and in light of the demographic variables studied, we do not believe adjustments in the future enrollment projections provided in table 5.2 are appropriate. However, we caution the district to engage in annual enrollment projecting with an eye to current demographic trends in the county and school district.

**Summary**

- The district has seen declining enrollments and will likely continue to see enrollments decline over the next five years.
- Enrollment projections should be updated annually.





**CHAPTER 6  
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

This chapter provides selected descriptors of the educational program at the elementary, middle, and high school levels that will assist in making decisions about future facilities changes or reorganizations. The information provided is an overview and not an in depth analysis of the educational programs and is designed to highlight certain areas.

The most important function that any school district provides is to give its students a quality educational experience. In today’s educational world, school districts are charged with providing an educational program that will ensure that its students are college and career ready. Being ready for college means that a high school graduate has the knowledge and skills necessary to qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses without the need for remedial coursework. Being ready for a career means that a high school graduate has the knowledge and skills needed to qualify for and succeed in the postsecondary job training and/or education necessary for their chosen career (i.e., community college, technical/vocational program, apprenticeship or other significant job training). The Oneida City School District provides a comprehensive program for its students in pursuit of these goals.

The district schools are organized in a fairly common grade arrangement. Oneida has four elementary schools each housing grades K-5. Willard Prior also houses the district’s Pre-K programs. The middle school includes grades 6 – 8 and the high school grades 9-12. While there are a variety of grade configuration arrangements used in New York State and across the country, the research on grade arrangements indicates that there is “no one best way” to arrange the grades. Student success is not enabled by the organization of the school but by the interactions in the school and classrooms.

<b>Table 6.1 2017-18 Grade Configuration</b>	
Building	Grade Levels
Durhamville Elementary	K - 5
North Broad Elementary	K - 5
Seneca Street Elementary	K - 5
Willard Prior Elementary	Pre-K - 5
Otto Shortell Middle School	6-8
Oneida High School	9-12

Most school districts consider reorganization due to changes in available space in schools because of increases or decreases in enrollment. An examination of class sizes in the elementary school is important in a facilities study to determine the need to change. If class sizes are small, it is generally accepted that reorganization of the elementary grades is at least a topic for consideration. On the other hand, if class sizes are very large in the elementary grades, it might be difficult to reorganize grades to achieve any efficiency. In Oneida, we find class sizes that would at least allow discussion on whether or not elementary school grades could be reorganized. The four elementary schools currently have 2 sections at every grade level as evidenced by the following table.



Grade	Number of Sections and Class Size of Each Section			
	Durhamville	North Broad	Seneca Street	Willard Prior
Pre-K	-	-	-	46, 45 (1/2 day)
K	19, 18	21, 23	13, 15	11, 11
1	22, 22	23, 22	16, 18	12, 11
2	22, 23	21, 22	16, 16	10, 10
3	23, 23	21, 20	19, 17	14, 12
4	20, 20	21, 21	20, 18	15, 14
5	20, 20	20, 22	17, 15	15, 14
<b>K-5 Total</b>	<b>12/252 (21.0 avg)</b>	<b>12/257 (21.4 avg)</b>	<b>12/200 (16.7 avg)</b>	<b>12/149 (12.4 avg)</b>

An examination of table 6.2 shows that the district has been able to maintain very reasonable class sizes in the elementary schools. However, it is apparent that there is a considerable difference in the section sizes among the schools. Willard Prior has significantly smaller section sizes (average of 12.4 students per section) than the other three elementary schools. Similarly, Seneca Street has an average class size of 16.7 students as compared to Durhamville and North Broad that have section sizes of 21 and 21.4, respectively. While none of these section sizes are considered large, it is clear that there are differences among the buildings that might allow for some thinking about different ways of organizing the schools.

Elementary programs across New York State tend to have many similarities. The Oneida school district provides a comprehensive program for its elementary school students in all four buildings. All students receive the core instructional program in English Language Arts, math, science, and social studies. In addition, students are exposed to the variety of special subjects including art, music, physical education, library, and technology. In the Oneida schools, all elementary schools receive the same amount of special subject time with the exception of a small difference in the way library and technology is provided. Table 6.3 provides a summary of the art, music, and physical education schedules.

Grade	Art	Music	PE
K	1 X 40 min/6 day	1 X 30 min/6 day	3 X 30 min/6 day
1	1 X 40 min/6 day	1 X 30 min/6 day	3 X 30 min/6 day
2	1 X 40 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day	3 X 30 min/6 day
3	1 X 40 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day	2 X 45 min/6 day
4	1 X 50 min/6 day	1 X 40 min/6 day	2 X 45 min/6 day
5	1 X 50 min/6 day	1 X 40 min/6 day	2 X 45 min/6 day



The provision of library and technology is the same in Durhamville, North Broad and Willard Prior Elementary Schools with the students in those buildings having library for 30 minutes two times every six days. Seneca Street Elementary offers 45 minutes of Library/Technology to its 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> graders in addition to 30 minutes of library each six day cycle. This is reported in table 6.4.

<b>Table 6.4</b>				
<b>Elementary Schools Library/Technology Schedules (classes per 6 day rotation)</b>				
Grade	Durhamville	North Broad	Seneca Street	Willard Prior
K	2 X 30 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day
1	2 X 30 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day
2	2 X 30 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day	1 X 30 min/6 day 1 X 45 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day
3	2 X 30 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day	1 X 30 min/6 day 1 X 45 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day
4	2 X 30 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day	1 X 30 min/6 day 1 X 50 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day
5	2 X 30 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day	1 X 30 min/6 day 1 X 50 min/6 day	2 X 30 min/6 day
Seneca Street offers 45 minutes of Library/Technology to its 2-5 <sup>th</sup> graders in addition to 30 minutes of library each six day cycle.				

To gain a more complete understanding of instructional programs it is somewhat helpful to look at student achievement. This section will review recent results on the New York State standardized tests in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. For decades, New York State has provided standardized assessments to measure the extent to which students in all schools are achieving standards that have been established by the state. For many years, New York tested students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. Since 2005-06, New York State, pursuant to the No Child Left Behind requirement, has tested all students in grades 3-8 in English/ Language Arts and Mathematics.

State assessments are designed to help ensure that all students reach high learning standards. They show whether students are getting the knowledge and skills they need to succeed at the elementary, middle, and high school levels and beyond. The State requires that students who are not making appropriate progress toward the standards receive academic intervention services.

Because of some changes in the format and content of the assessments over the past few years, comparability from year to year is somewhat problematic. However, comparing a district to the state average or to other similar districts will yield some insight into the relative readiness of students to move on to the next level.

Proficiency on these assessments is defined by the state as achieving either Level 3 or Level 4 on the assessments. These levels indicate that at Level 3, the students are meeting the learning standards and demonstrating an understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level. Students at level 4 demonstrate a thorough understanding of the content expected in the subject and the grade level. Given these performance levels, students who score at Level 3 and Level 4 are deemed to be making adequate progress in school and are on track to successfully complete their school experience. Regulations of the Commissioner of Education



require that students who score at Level 1 and Level 2 receive academic intervention services. The purpose of these services is to remediate student learning in order that students might be successful in school.

Tables 6.5 and 6.6 provide a summary of the past four years' NYS ELA and Math scores for 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

<b>Table 6.5</b>				
<b>% of Students Scoring at Levels 3 &amp; 4</b>				
<b>3-5 NYS Assessments in ELA</b>				
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Durhamville	30% (106)	26% (31)	44% (59)	33% (70)
North Broad	25% (106)	17% (46)	35% (62)	33% (73)
Seneca Street	45% (95)	45% (44)	58% (55)	52% (63)
Willard Prior	29% (108)	20% (40)	33% (51)	21% (70)
NYS average	31%	31%	38%	40%
( ) Number of Students Taking Assessment				

<b>Table 6.6</b>				
<b>% of Students Scoring at Levels 3 &amp; 4</b>				
<b>3-5 NYS Assessments in Math</b>				
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Durhamville	48% (104)	39% (31)	62% (55)	53% (70)
North Broad	52% (101)	39% (44)	45% (56)	51% (67)
Seneca Street	54% (94)	70% (43)	73% (52)	64% (66)
Willard Prior	52% (104)	46% (37)	55% (44)	41% (71)
NYS average	36%	38%	39%	40%
( ) Number of Students Taking Assessment				

In ELA the assessments show mixed results with some significant differences among the schools. Scores are generally below the state average in three out of four of the elementary schools. Math scores are more consistent and tend to be above the state average. As stated previously, it is somewhat difficult to draw firm conclusions from the state assessments because of the changes from year to year as well as the increased number of students who opted out of the assessments each year.

In summary for the elementary grades, Oneida has a very comprehensive elementary program that is quite similar across the district's four elementary schools.

The next area for analysis involves the program that is available to the middle and high school students in Oneida. The schedule for middle school students expands beyond the core to give students the opportunity to explore a variety of courses. In addition, school districts in New York State are required to allow acceleration into high school level courses in math and at least one other academic area for their eighth grade students. Oneida does this in math, science, Foreign languages and art. Table 6.7 provides a summary of the offerings and the number of sections and section sizes.



<b>Table 6.7 Middle School Course Offerings 2017-18</b>	
Course	# of Sections & Section Sizes
English 6	23, 22, 19, 21, 22, 18, 20
English 7	22, 25, 23, 13, 25, 22, 24
English 8	14, 21, 20, 21, 13, 23, 14, 20
ELA 6 - 8	9, 13, 10
English 12:1	10, 10
Math 6	18, 18, 14, 18, 17, 13
Advanced Math 6	16
Math XL 6	15, 16
Math 7	16, 25, 23, 24, 25
Math XL 7	24, 25
Math 8	23, 13, 22, 22, 21, 19
Algebra 1	12, 13
Math 12:1	9
Math Lab 6	6, 7
Math Lab 7	3, 5, 2
Math Lab 8	3, 4
Math Lab 6 – 8	11, 7
Social Studies 6	25, 25, 25, 25, 22, 23
Social Studies 7	16, 22, 21, 25, 25, 24, 22
Social Studies 8	21, 22, 14, 12, 20, 21, 21, 14
Social Studies 6 – 8	9, 11
Social Studies 12:1	9
Science 6	25, 25, 25, 25, 23, 22
Science 7	17, 24, 21, 23, 24, 23, 25
Science 8	21, 16, 22, 24, 22
Science 6 – 8	9, 11
Science 12:1	10
Living Environment	20, 20
Living Environment Lab	20,20
Spanish 7	27, 26, 26, 27
Spanish 1	15, 23, 21, 21, 20
French 7	23, 24
French 1	13, 17, 2
Music 6	20, 17, 21, 18, 20, 20, 20, 20



Music 7	10, 10, 10, 10, 18, 20, 14, 18, 11, 13, 14, 14
Chorus 6	49, 34
Chorus 7	38, 24
Chorus 8	28, 32
Band 6	57
Band 7	52
Band 8	27
Art 6	18, 19, 20, 17, 22, 23, 21, 21, 19, 21
Art 7	18, 18, 16, 17, 25, 23
Art 8	13, 17, 12, 11
Studio Art 1	13, 13, 17, 17
Enrichment 6	20, 18, 23, 22, 22, 23, 19, 16, 14, 13
Technology 6	15, 12, 14, 10, 16, 13, 15, 16
Technology 7	22, 21, 22, 23, 20, 21, 18, 17
Technology 8	21, 18, 13, 14, 20, 24, 18, 19
Home and Careers 6	21, 23, 24, 25, 8, 25, 23
Home and Careers 8	21, 14, 20, 13, 23, 21, 18, 18
Health 6	25, 25, 24, 25
Health 8	17, 21, 20, 18, 223, 23, 14, 11
Physical Ed. 6	38, 39, 40, 39
Physical Ed. 7/8	40, 39, 57, 51, 27, 29, 26, 27, 24, 26
Basic Skills	13
Reading Skills	6, 6, 3
Learning Lab 6	8, 11
Learning Lab 7	10, 13, 13
Learning Lab 8	10, 7, 11
Resource Room 6	3
Resource Room 7	4
Resource Room 8	2
Literacy Lab 6	5, 6
Literacy Lab 7	6, 6
Reading Lab	4, 4, 4, 4, 5

Class sizes at the middle school vary but generally remain on the average to small size. The smallest class sizes are in those classes for students with disabilities. The table above shows a comprehensive program available to the middle school students in Oneida. All of the elective



courses that are required of middle school students are in place; acceleration in math, science, foreign language and art is available to the students in order to gain high school credits.

The purpose of a high school course of studies is to provide students with the courses necessary to achieve a high school diploma and to provide a variety of electives in order to enrich the high school experience for these students. A complete overview of high school program in Oneida is provided in tables 6.8 – 6.10 that follow. This information is a snapshot in time and shows the enrollments as of October 27, 2017.



Course	# of Sections and Section Sizes
English 9 R	24, 16, 15, 14, 16, 22
English 9 R Honors	23, 7
Basic English 9	16
English 10 R	24, 25, 21, 21, 23
English 10 Honors	23
Basic English 10	10, 17
English 11 R	15, 22, 11, 19, 20
English 11 R Honors	22
Basic English 11	7
English 12	20, 21, 20, 20, 21
Basic English 12	8
Unified English 9/10	11
Unified English 11/12	2
AP English	9
Sports Lit	5
Film and Literature	10
Public Speaking	8
Journalism	1
Yearbook	10
Pre-Algebra	12, 14
Algebra 1 CC RPT	12
Algebra 1 CC	15, 18, 16, 11, 16, 17, 19, 20
Geometry Accel	23
Geometry	18, 16, 19, 13, 18
Algebra 2 CC Accel	11, 14
Algebra 2 CC	20, 15
Intermediate Algebra 2	6, 5
Pre-Calculus	25, 30
Math 12	6
AP Statistics	15
AP Calculus	22
AP Computer Science	5
Math/Finance	18, 14, 9
Accounting 1	16
Accounting 2	11
Math Lab	1, 1
Basic Computer Programming	10
MS Computer App 1	19, 16, 16, 20, 14, 19
MS Computer App 2	11
Topics in Geometry	9





<b>Table 6.9 High School Course Offerings in Science &amp; Social Studies 2017-18</b>	
Course	# of Sections and Section Sizes
Living Environment	9, 21, 16, 23, 15, 20
Living Environment Lab	9, 21, 16, 23, 15, 20
Living Environment CT	13, 11
Living Environment CT Lab	13, 11
Unified Science	4
Earth Science R	22, 22, 21, 21, 22, 21, 20
Earth Science Lab	22, 22, 21, 21, 22, 21, 20
Earth Science R 11/12	16, 22
Earth Science R 11/12 Lab	16, 22
Chemistry R	22, 15, 18, 19
Chemistry Lab	22, 19, 18, 15
Physics R	20, 22, 16
Physics Lab	20, 22, 16
AP Biology	13
AP Biology Lab	13
AP Chemistry	15
AP Chemistry Lab	15
Science/Food Supply	14
Anatomy & Physiology	9
Environmental Science	18, 7
Global R Honors	23
Global 9 R	13, 20, 17, 24, 20, 17
Unified Global 9/10	11
Basic Global 9	18
Global 10 R	22, 22, 6, 13, 22
Basic Global 10	8, 11
Unified Social Studies 11/12	2
Resource	1, 3
American History R	25, 25, 25
Basic American History	8
Participation in Govt.	19, 16
Economics	21, 11, 15, 13
MVCC Govt.	12, 19
MVCC Economics	18, 17
Psychology	8
Sociology	12
AP World History	19, 19
AP American History	17, 10, 19



<b>Table 6.10 High School Course Offerings in LOTE, Health, Technology, Art and Music 2017-18</b>	
Course	# of Sections and Section Sizes
Spanish 1	13
Spanish 2	17, 17, 20 13, 20
Spanish 3	10, 13, 22, 11, 20
Spanish 4	20, 21
AP/MVCC Spanish	11
French 1	20
French 2	21, 7
French 3	20
MVCC French 4	12
Health	17, 20, 17, 21
Parenting	9
Design/Drawing/Production	15, 14, 19
Principles of Engineering	10, 8
Civil Engineering	12
Computer Integrated Manufacturing	5
Engineering/Design/Development	6
Residential Structures	4
Carpentry 1	9
Production Systems	6
Photography	15, 14
Computer Graphics 1	6
TV/Video	5
Studio Art 1	12, 15, 12, 13, 14
Studio Art 2	6, 5, 9
Mechanics of Drawing	6
Ceramics & Sculpture	15
Drawing and Painting	15, 15
MVCC Drawing	9
AP Studio Art	5
Mixed Chorus	46
Concert Choir	63
Music Appreciation	7
Wind Ensemble	53
Band 19	



At the high school level, the program offered to the students is impressive. In examining the tables of high school courses above, we notice that the district has been able to maintain a very comprehensive list of offerings for its students including a range of Honors, Regents, Basic, and Unified courses. In the core academic subjects, honors and enriched courses along with advanced placement courses are all part of the course of study. The district offers two foreign languages, French and Spanish for its students. The district also has a number of technology, art and music courses for its students. In addition, 9 Advanced Placement Courses are offered as well as courses offering college credit through Mohawk Valley Community College.

Athletics and extra-curricular activities are an important part of the well-rounded academic experience and are important to consider in facilities studies. Oneida offers a variety of sports at the varsity, junior varsity and modified levels as noted in table 6.11. The need for gyms, fields, and other practice facilities needs to be considered as facilities changes are considered.

Sport	Varsity	Junior Varsity	Modified
Baseball	16	11	16
Basketball, Boys	12	13	15
Basketball, Girls	10	9	12
Cheerleading, Fall	12		
X-Country, Boys	12		5
X-Country, Girls	13		8
Field Hockey	15	12	26
Football	42	24	23
Golf, Boys	14		
Golf, Girls	6		
Soccer, Boys	20	13	13
Soccer, Girls	22	16	14
Softball	16	9	14
Swimming, Boys	15		
Swimming, Mixed	6		
Tennis, Boys	11	5	
Tennis, Girls	12	10	
Track, Boys	45		38
Track, Girls	39		37
Volleyball, Boys	12	12	
Volleyball, Girls	13	12	18
Wrestling	15		8

In addition to the program offered at the high school, Oneida students have the opportunity to take career and technical education classes at the Madison-Oneida BOCES. Thirty-three percent of the district’s juniors and seniors took advantage last year of the career and technical education courses as evidenced by the following table.



<b>Table 6.12 Percentage of Students Attending Career &amp; Technical Education Classes at Madison-Oneida BOCES 2017-18</b>		
	Juniors	Seniors
Number of Students in Class	133	167
Number of Students Attending BOCES	47	51
% of Students Attending BOCES	35.3%	30.5%

Special education services are provided to students identified as needing support by the Committee on Special Education. In 2017-18, the district had 379 special education students. This is a classification rate of approximately 19%. Table 6.13 shows the number of special education students the district has educated in each of the past six years and whether they were placed in district programs or elsewhere.

<b>Table 6.13 Summary of Special Education Classification and Placement 2012-13 to 2017-18</b>						
Placement	Number of Students by School Year					
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
In-District	274	279	296	305	281	305
Out-of-District	59	50	74	63	71	74
Total SWD	333	329	370	368	352	379
Source: District records using October enrollments. Special education placements change throughout the year. For this snapshot, the October numbers were utilized.						

Oneida, like all school districts is committed to placing students in the “least restrictive environment”. Consequently, a few special needs youngsters are placed out-of-district for their educational program. However, in a few instances out-of-district placement is determined by the Committee on Special Education to be the most appropriate educational setting. Out-of-district placements were primarily in Madison-Oneida BOCES programs but some students were placed at the Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES, the School for the Deaf, and UCP.

### Summary

- The grade configuration in the Oneida City School District of elementary (Pre-K – 5), middle school (6 – 8) and high school (9-12) is the most common grade configuration in NY and the United States.
- The elementary instructional program is comparable across all four schools.
- The Middle School and High School Programs are comprehensive and typical for a school district of this size



**CHAPTER 7  
BUILDING ORGANIZATION**

Since this study focuses on a possible grade and/or building reconfiguration, the current utilization of district buildings is studied. It is first important to examine how the schools are being used this academic year, and to gauge how enrollments may impact them in the future. Table 7.1 provides an overview of the district’s schools.

<b>Table 7.1 Overview of Oneida School Buildings</b>						
Schools	Durhamville	North Broad	Seneca Street	Willard Prior	Middle School	High School
Address	Main St Durhamville	230 N Broad St Oneida	436 Seneca St Oneida	East Ave Oneida	Markell Dr Wampsville	560 Seneca St Oneida
Year of Original Building	1958	1912	1978	1957	1967	1958
Sq. Ft. in Current Building	41,810	35,568	30,178	38,224	84,965	131,300
Number of Floors	1	3	1	1	1	2
Grades Housed	K-5	K-5	K-5	Pre-K-5	6-8	9-12
Students Served- 2017-18	252	257	200	149 + 46	488	621
Architect	King and King					
NOTES: All information was taken from the NYS Building Condition Survey completed in 2015 except the enrollments that were drawn from the 2017-18 academic year.						

As can be seen from table 7.1 above, North Broad, with three floors, is the only elementary school with more than one floor. It is also forty-five years older than any of the other school buildings.

Given the capacity of the buildings involved in this study, the consultants then determined the current use of the regular classrooms with respect to class sizes and numbers of sections at each grade level. This analysis produced the following table 7.2 for the elementary school grades.



Grade	Number of Sections and Class Size of Each Section			
	Durhamville	North Broad	Seneca Street	Willard Prior
Pre-K	-	-	-	46, 45 (1/2 day)
K	19, 18	21, 23	13, 15	11, 11
1	22, 22	23, 22	16, 18	12, 11
2	22, 23	21, 22	16, 16	10, 10
3	23, 23	21, 20	19, 17	14, 12
4	20, 20	21, 21	20, 18	15, 14
5	20, 20	20, 22	17, 15	15, 14
<b>K-5 Total</b>	<b>12/252 (21.0 avg)</b>	<b>12/257 (21.4 avg)</b>	<b>12/200 (16.7 avg)</b>	<b>12/149 (12.4 avg)</b>

Oneida has embraced the neighborhood school concept for the organization of its elementary schools. This means that students go to the elementary school that is relatively close to the neighborhood in which they live. As can be seen from table 7.2 above, each elementary school has two sections of each grade level from Kindergarten through grade 5. All of the district’s Pre-K programs are located at Willard Prior.

While the neighborhood school concept is convenient for parents and for transportation, it often results in unequal class sizes. In Oneida, for example, Durhamville and North Broad average approximately 21 students per class, Seneca Street averages almost 17 students per class and Willard Prior averages just over 12 students per class.

As different grade level configurations are considered, it is important to understand the thinking behind grade level organization. It is clear that most school districts consider reorganization due to changes in available space and enrollment and that virtually any grade configuration can be found somewhere. The most common grade configuration pattern in New York State is K-5, 6-8, 9-12 while the second most common is K-4, 5-8 and 9-12. Over the past 30 years there has been a shift from the K-6, 7-9, 10-12 grade pattern to a K-5, 6-8, 9-12 arrangement due to the emergence of the middle school movement. However, given all the options that exist, researchers agree there is no “one best way” to arrange the grades. “What” a district does with the grade configuration, not “which” grade configuration is used, is what best determines student success.

In addition to the grade alignment by building, it is important to determine how each of the district’s current buildings is currently being utilized. Tables 7.3-7.6 that follow show the current year utilization of the district’s four elementary schools.



<b>Table 7.3</b> <b>Durhamville Elementary School Classroom Usage 2016-17</b> <b>(Includes Gym, Auditorium/Cafeteria, Art, Music, &amp; Library)</b>				
School Building	No. of Full-Size Rooms	Grade Level Classrooms (12)	Other Usage of Full-Size Rooms (3)	Usage of Small Rooms, Not Full-Size, Other Than Offices
Durhamville	15	K-2 1-2 2-2 3-2 4-2 5-2	K-1 Special Ed-1 2-3 Special Ed-1 4-5 Special Ed-1	Reading-1 OT/PT-1 Child/Family Support-1 Speech-1 Teacher Workroom-1 Counselor-1

<b>Table 7.4</b> <b>North Broad Street Elementary School Classroom Usage 2016-17</b> <b>(Includes Cafeteria/Gym, Art, Music, &amp; Library)</b>				
School Building	No. of Full-Size Rooms	Grade Level Classrooms (12)	Other Usage of Full-Size Rooms (2)	Usage of Small Rooms, Not Full-Size, Other Than Offices
North Broad	14	K-2 1-2 2-2 3-2 4-2 5-2	Staff Room-1 Reading-1	PT/PT/Speech-1 Conference Room-2 Work Room-1 Resource Room-1



<b>Table 7.5</b>				
<b>Seneca Street Elementary School Classroom Usage 2016-17</b>				
<b>(Includes Cafeteria/Gym, Art, Choral Music, Instrumental Music, &amp; Library)</b>				
School Building	No. of Full-Size Rooms	Grade Level Classrooms (12)	Other Usage of Full-Size Rooms (1)	Usage of Small Rooms, Not Full-Size, Other Than Offices
Seneca Street	13	K-2 1-2 2-2 3-2 4-2 5-2	Multi-Use-1	Staff Room-1 Speech/OT-1 Counseling-1 AIS-1 Special Ed/ESL-1 Music Lessons-1

<b>Table 7.6</b>				
<b>Willard Prior Elementary School Classroom Usage 2016-17</b>				
<b>(Includes Cafeteria , Gym, Art, Music, &amp; Library)</b>				
School Building	No. of Full-Size Rooms	Grade Level Classrooms (15)	Other Usage of Full-Size Rooms (3)	Usage of Small Rooms, Not Full-Size, Other Than Offices
Willard Prior	18	Pre-K-3 K-2 1-2 2-2 3-2 4-2 5-2	Spec Ed-12:1:1-2 UCP-1	Counseling-1 Speech-1 Reading-1 Resource Room-1 Faculty Room-1

In looking at tables 7.3 through 7.6, the following table 7.7 shows how many more full size classrooms each elementary school has in addition to those spaces devoted to K-6 education.

<b>Table 7.7</b>				
<b>Summary of Elementary Class Sections by Building</b>				
School	Grade Levels	# of Students	# of Common Branch Classrooms	# of Full Size Classrooms
Durhamville	K-5	252	12	15
North Broad	K-5	257	12	14
Seneca Street	K-5	200	12	13
Willard Prior	Pre-K-5	149 + Pre-K (46)	12 + Pre-K (3)	18





Comparing the number of common branch classrooms in each building with the number of full size classrooms, and allowing for special education, remedial, and other spaces, it is apparent that there is not an abundance of space in these buildings. Willard Prior has the most space which is one of the reasons why the district’s Pre-K program is located in that building.

Tables 7.8 and 7.9 that follow shows how the space in the middle school and the high school is currently being used.

<b>Table 7.8</b> <b>Shortell Middle School Classroom Usage 2016-17</b> <b>(Includes Gym, Cafeteria, Band, Chorus, Art (2) &amp; Library)</b>				
School Building	No. of Full-Size Rooms	Grade Level Classrooms (23)	Other Usage of Full-Size Rooms (13)	Usage of Small Rooms, Not Full-Size, Other Than Offices
Middle School	36	English-5 Social Studies-4 Math-6 Science-4 French-4	Computer Lab-6 Special Ed/AIS-1 Special Ed-6-8-1 AIS-1 AIS-Learning Lab-1 Weight Room-1 Tech-2	ISS-1 Testing Center-1

<b>Table 7.9</b> <b>High School Classroom Usage 2016-17</b> <b>(Includes 3 Gyms, Cafeteria, Auditorium, Instrumental Music, Vocal Music, 3 Art Rooms &amp; Media Center)</b>				
School Building	No. of Full-Size Rooms	Core Academic Classrooms (28)	Other Usage of Full-Size Rooms (19)	Usage of Small Rooms, Not Full-Size, Other Than Offices
High School	47	English-6 Social Studies-6 Math-6 Science-8 LOTE-2	Special Education-3 Business-3 Technology-2 Greenhouse-1 Health-1 Home & Careers-1 Teachers Lounge-1 English Workroom-1 Math Workroom-1 Computer Center-1 Library Conference-1 Conference Room-1 Wrestling Room-1 Open-1	ISS-1 Remedial-2 Testing Center-1



As can be seen from tables 7.8 and 7.9 above, there are 83 full size classrooms, 51 of which are being used for core academic classrooms. There are 32 other classrooms that are being used for related instructional services including six computer labs in the middle school and seven special education/AIS rooms across the two buildings. While there certainly is some room, there does not appear to be an abundance of space in these two buildings. In addition to the assigned use for each of the rooms in the middle school and the high school, it is also important to see how often each of these rooms is used each day. Table 7.10 and 7.11 that follow shows that period-by-period utilization for each room in both schools.

Room	1	2	3	4	5	6L	6C	7L	7C	8	9	Total	% Usage	Notes
100	1	1	1	1					1	1	1	7	78%	Choral
101	1	1	1		1						1	5	56%	Band
102		1	1	1				1				4	44%	
103	1		1		1		1			1	1	6	67%	
104	1	1		1	1		1			1		6	67%	
105	1		1		1		1			1	1	6	67%	
106	1	1	1				1			1	1	6	67%	
107	1		1	1	1				1			5	56%	
108	1	1	1	1	1				1		1	7	78%	
109	1	1	1	1	1				1	1		7	78%	
110	1	1		1	1		1			1	1	7	78%	
111	1		1	1	1		1			1	1	7	78%	
112	1	1		1	1		1			1	1	7	78%	
113	1	1		1	1		1				1	6	67%	
114	1	1	1		1				1	1	1	7	78%	
115		1	1	1	1		1			1	1	7	78%	
116	1	1		1	1		1			1	1	7	78%	
118	1	1	1	1	1				1	1	1	8	89%	
119	1	1	1		1					1	1	6	67%	
120	1	1	1	1					1	1	1	7	78%	
121	1	1	1						1	1		5	56%	
122		1			1				1	1	1	5	56%	
124	1	1	1		1		1			1	1	7	78%	
130	1	1	1		1					1	1	6	67%	
130A	1		1		1				1		1	5	56%	
130B	1	1	1				1			1	1	6	67%	
												Average	69%	



Table 7.11 Room Utilization – High School												
Room	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total	% Usage	Notes
100	1	1	1		1	1		1		6	67%	
102	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	8	89%	
104	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	8	89%	
106	1	1		1		1	1	1	1	7	78%	
108	1	1		1	1		1		1	6	67%	
109	1	1	1	1	1	1			1	7	78%	
110	1	1	1	1		1			1	6	67%	
111A												ISS
112		1	1		1	1		1		5	56%	
114	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	7	78%	
116	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	8	89%	
117												Bookstore
118	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	7	78%	
119	1		1	1	1	1	1		1	7	78%	
120	1	1		1	1				1	5	56%	
122		1	1	1	1		1	1	1	7	78%	
123	1	1	1		1		1		1	6	67%	
124	1	1	1			1		1	1	6	67%	
125	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	7	78%	
126	1	1	1		1			1		5	56%	
127	1	1	1	1	1				1	6	67%	
128	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	7	78%	
129	1		1	1	1	1		1	1	7	78%	
130	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	7	78%	
132		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	89%	
134	1	1	1					1		4	44%	
135	1		1			1		1	1	5	56%	
136					1		1			2	22%	Chorus Band
138	1	1		1						3	33%	
218		1	1	1		1	1	1	1	7	78%	
219		1	1	1			1	1	1	6	67%	
220	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	7	78%	
221	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	8	89%	
222	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	7	78%	
225	1	1	1	1				1	1	6	67%	
228	1	1		1		1	1	1	1	7	78%	
229	1		1	1		1		1	1	6	67%	
230	1		1	1	1		1	1		6	67%	
231	1	1		1	1		1	1	1	7	78%	
233	1	1		1		1	1		1	6	67%	
236	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	7	78%	
237	1	1	1		1		1	1		6	67%	
238	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	8	89%	
240	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	100%	
										Average	71%	



Tables 7.10 and 7.11 provide another method for measuring the effective utilization of the middle school and the high school by looking at the use of the rooms on a period-by-period basis. This is a more detailed analysis than simply identifying the major use of the rooms in the building. For example, tables 7.8 and 7.9 show us that a room might be used for English but the tables do not tell us whether the room is used every period of the day or not. The previous tables 7.10 and 7.11 show that analysis for the middle school and the high school, based on the nine period schedule for that building.

The data from tables 7.10 and 7.11 show that the typical classroom in the middle school and the high school is used an average of approximately 70% of the time. It is impossible to schedule any school building at 100% utilization. If school districts use their facilities to 80-85% capacity, they generally feel as if they are making good use of the buildings. Therefore, a building that is scheduled at 70% utilization is a building that has space that is fairly well utilized. That is not to say that there is not extra space in both of these buildings. However, the amount of space that might be available would not be sufficient to accommodate a grade level of students, there by impacting the alignment of grades across the district.

Lastly, a cursory review was undertaken of the district's athletic facilities. Like nearly every other school district, gym space is at a premium during the winter sports season. While there are generally enough playing fields, additional fields would be needed if additional sports were to be added, such as lacrosse. The district does not have a field with an artificial playing surface; therefore a field maintenance plan is needed. Given these fairly traditional needs for the athletic department, it does not appear that any of these items will impact the grade organization of the school buildings.

### ***The Building Condition Survey***

In addition to space utilization, another important aspect for determining future facility use is the overall physical condition of the buildings themselves. The New York State Education Department requires all school districts to conduct a Building Condition Survey (BCS) every five years.

The surveys for all school districts were required to be updated in 2015. The table below summarizes the estimated cost of improvements for each of Oneida's facilities.



<b>Table 7.12 Building Condition Survey Summary-2015</b>	
High School	\$7,086,221
Willard Prior	\$2,084,765
North Broad	\$673,750
Seneca Street	1,461,566
Durhamville	\$885,550
Middle School	\$5,348,310
Oneida Castle	\$1,537,250
Administration Building	\$39,650
Power Shop Annex	\$119,120
Maintenance Warehouse	\$90,000
Transportation Building	\$155,400
Transportation Storage	\$78,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$19,560,082</b>

In further consideration of this data, table 7.13 that follows shows the Building Condition summary data for the school buildings.

<b>Table 7.13 Cost of Improvements from 2015 Building Condition Survey</b>			
Building	BCS Costs	# of Square Feet	Cost/Square Foot
Durhamville Elementary	\$885,550	41,810	\$21.18
North Broad Elementary	\$673,750	35,568	\$18.94
Seneca Street Elementary	\$1,461,566	30,178	\$48.43
Willard Prior Elementary	\$2,084,765	38,224	\$54.54
Middle School	\$5,348,310	84,965	\$62.95
High School	\$7,086,221	131,300	\$53.96
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$17,540,162</b>	<b>362,045</b>	<b>\$48.44</b>

Not all of the items in the Building Condition Survey are urgent. On the other hand, there are items associated with each of the buildings that require attention in the near future and other items that are nearing the end of their useful life. It is just a matter of time before some of these matters become more urgent and major sources of significant expense. Central to the question of facilities planning is the determination of the amount of money that is going to continue to be spent to maintain school buildings that are between sixty and one hundred five years old. In this planning, it is also important to remember that New York State will reimburse Oneida at the rate of 87.2% of all approved building expenses.

In any study of a district’s facilities, it is important to identify the issues noted in the Building Condition Survey. Having said that, however, the items identified in the BCS are not an integral matter for this study. Whether or not this study was undertaken, the district would have had to plan for addressing the needs identified in the BCS. The capital work associated with items in the BCS as well as the financing that is necessary to accomplish this work are items that



the district must consider and plan for, whether or not it decides to make any changes to its grade structure and building organization.

As the district considers options for organizing its schools, understanding the current utility costs for each building is important. Table 7.14 that follows shows the 2016-17 utility costs for each of the district’s six school buildings.

	D’ville	North Broad	Seneca Street	Willard Prior	Middle School	High School	District Office
Electric	24,108	18,407	16,005	20,746	48,279	110,574	4,257
Natural Gas/Oil	23,435	11,077	12,075	9,936	20,037	33,901	584
Total	47,543	29,484	28,080	30,682	68,316	144,475	4,841
Savings @ 40%	19,017	11,794	11,232	12,273	27,326	57,790	1,936

In considering the possible closure of one of the elementary schools, it is important to calculate the utility cost savings that might accrue to the district. It is assumed that the district will maintain ownership of the closed school, will not be renting the facility, and will be responsible for the cost of the utilities for the closed building so that the building remains in good repair. As a rule, it is estimated that savings of 40% will accrue to the district when comparing an open building versus a closed building. Given the total financial scope of these facilities decisions, the savings that accrue to the district are fairly insignificant.

Now that the baseline data about facilities has been determined, the consultants and the advisory committee next began discussion about alternatives to the current grade configurations. We first looked at direction for class sizes. While the general procedure in Oneida is that grades K-3 are capped at 24 students and grades 4-5 are capped at 25 students, the following highlights the district’s policy on class size:

- *The Oneida City School District is committed to reasonable class sizes, while at the same time respecting the integrity of the neighborhood school. Decisions on class size are based upon enrollment, student needs, budgetary constraints, and space availability.*
- *Twice a year, June/September, the Superintendent of Schools will review enrollments with the Board of Education and make recommendations. Whenever factors for individual classes such as class needs, individual needs, social interaction, or classroom space are of concern, options will be discussed.*
- *If necessary, a variety of approaches will be explored. Options:*
  - *voluntary transfer*
  - *capping of a class/classes*
  - *redistricting*
  - *additional aide time*
  - *additional teaching time*
  - *consider other alternatives*



In addition to this policy guidance on class size, the teacher contract on this topic was also researched. It states, in part, as follows:

*The District will make every reasonable effort to maintain appropriate class size at the elementary level (K-6). In such instances where the class size at the elementary level shall equal or exceed thirty (30) regularly assigned pupils, the District, at its sole option, shall either:*

- 1. Assign a full-time Teacher Aide to the class as promptly as possible to work with the teacher as soon as it is apparent that the class size will equal or exceed 30 regularly assigned pupils for a reasonable period of time; or*
- 2. Pay the regularly assigned teacher \$800 for each quarter of the school year that the number of regularly assigned pupils equals or exceeds 30.*

*In the event class size at the Kindergarten level equals or exceeds 25 students, the District shall provide one hour of aide time daily for half day kindergarten programs and two hours of aide time daily for a full day kindergarten program for each class exceeding such standard.*

*In the event class size in Grades 1-3 equals or exceeds 26 students, the District shall provide two hours of aide time daily for each class exceeding such standard.*

*In the event class size in Grades 4-6 equals or exceeds 28 students, the District shall provide two hours of aide time daily for each class exceeding such standard.*

Examining the district direction for class size, it is apparent that no firm limits for class size exist in Oneida. As a result, in generating options for the future, the guideline of 24 students for grades K-3 and 25 students for grades 4 and 5 will be used. Before considering alternatives, the starting point is to again review the elementary structure for the current year as shown in table 7.15 that follows.

<b>Table 7.15</b>				
<b>Class Sizes-2017-18 for Each Elementary School</b>				
Grade	Number of Sections and Class Size of Each Section			
	Durhamville	North Broad	Seneca Street	Willard Prior
Pre-K	-	-	-	46, 45
K	19, 18	21, 23	13, 15	11, 11
1	22, 22	23, 22	16, 18	12, 11
2	22, 23	21, 22	16, 16	10, 10
3	23, 23	21, 20	19, 17	14, 12
4	20, 20	21, 21	20, 18	15, 14
5	20, 20	20, 22	17, 15	15, 14
<b>K-5 Total</b>	<b>12/252 (21.0 avg)</b>	<b>12/257 (21.4 avg)</b>	<b>12/200 (16.7 avg)</b>	<b>12/149 (12.4 avg)</b>

**Summary**

- The neighborhood school concept has been embraced by Oneida for its elementary schools.
- The Building Condition Survey has identified approximately \$20,000,000 of work to be completed in the district’s facilities.



- The current elementary school class sizes are well below guidelines set by policy, general procedures, and the teacher contract.





**CHAPTER 8  
STAFFING**

Education is a people intensive business. School districts routinely spend 70-75% of their operating budgets on salaries and fringe benefits for the people who work in their schools. As school districts examine how to “educationally and fiscally” reconfigure their grades and/or facilities, consideration of the staffing needs of the school district is important. This chapter of the report examines staffing patterns in Oneida as well as the staffing implications should changes in grade levels and/or facilities be considered.

With respect to instructional staff, Oneida currently has 181 teachers, 5 teaching assistants, and 37 teacher aides. From a building administrative perspective, Oneida has eight building principals. The data associated with these instructional staff members can be seen in table 8.1 that follows.

<b>Table 8.1 Staffing Overview-2016-17</b>		
Title	Number of Staff	Average Salary
Aide	37	\$12,652
Bus monitor	2	\$11,900
Bus driver	28	\$28,017
10 mo. clerical	6	\$29,675
11 mo. clerical	10	\$38,045
12 mo. Clerical	3	\$37,234
Custodian	15	\$38,345
Food Service	19	\$11,499
Maintenance	5	\$50,665
Nurse	6	\$42,362
Principal	6	\$109,979
Asst. Principal	2	\$89,430
11 mo. Admin	2	\$108,205
Teacher	181	\$70,600
Teaching Assistant	5	\$26,399

In addition to salaries paid to employees, there are obligations that accrue to the school district for the cost of fringe benefits. In addition to health insurance costs, the district has costs for employee retirement plans, workers compensation, and social security. The percentage cost of fringe benefits varies greatly for each employee group. In general, employees with lower salaries will have fringe benefit costs that are a larger percentage while higher paid employees may have fringe benefit costs that are higher but represent a lower percentage of costs for the district. For purposes of this study, it will be estimated that fringe benefit costs for the district represent 47% of all salary costs. Table 8.2 that follows shows staffing costs with fringe benefits included.



<b>Table 8.2 Staffing Overview with Fringe Benefits-2016-17</b>			
Title	Number of Staff	Average Salary	Average Cost with 47% Fringe Benefits
Aide	37	\$12,652	\$18,598
Bus monitor	2	\$11,900	\$17,493
Bus driver	28	\$28,017	\$41,185
10 mo. clerical	6	\$29,675	\$43,622
11 mo. clerical	10	\$38,045	\$55,926
12 mo. Clerical	3	\$37,234	\$54,734
Custodian	15	\$38,345	\$56,367
Food Service	19	\$11,499	\$16,904
Maintenance	5	\$50,665	\$74,478
Nurse	6	\$42,362	\$62,272
Principal	6	\$109,979	\$161,669
Asst. Principal	2	\$89,430	\$131,621
11 mo. Admin	2	\$108,205	\$159,061
Teacher	181	\$70,600	\$103,782
Teaching Assistant	5	\$26,399	\$38,807
NOTE: Fringe benefits include costs for health insurance, retirement, social security, workers compensation, unemployment insurance, etc.			

One of the options being considered in this facilities study is the possible closure of one of the district's elementary schools. Should the district decide to close one of the elementary schools, significant cost savings in the area of staffing could be realized. In order to calculate this staff savings, table 8.3 is presented to show the current staffing levels in each of the district's schools.



Position	DV	NB	SS	WP	OSMS	OHS	Total
Pre-K-5	12	12	11	13.5	-	-	48.5
Grade 6	-	-	-	-	7	-	7
Special Education	3	1	1	2	5	4	16
English					3	7	10
Social Studies					3	8	11
Math					3	7	10
Science					3	8	11
LOTE					2.5	3	5.5
Business						3	3
Technology					2	3	5
Health					1	1	2
Home & Careers					1		1
Reading	1	1	1	2	1	-	8
AIS					3	1	2
LMS	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Art	.5	1	.5		2	3	7
Music	1			1	2.5	2	6.5
Physical Education	1	1	1	1	2	4	10
Guidance					1	3	4
Speech	.5			1.5			2
Intense Management				1			1
Nurse	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Library Clerk					1.5	2	3.5
Teacher Aide	8	7	4	11	3	3	36
Cafeteria	3	2	2	2	4	7	20
Custodian	2	2	2	2	3	4	15
Sec'y/Keyboard Spec	1	1	1	1	3	6	13
Total	35	30	25.5	40	58.5	81	270

\*In addition to the positions listed above, the district has staff serving the buildings in the following areas: Music, Speech, Occupational Therapy, Technology, and 2 Psychologists

Staff savings raise a number of complicated issues. Generally speaking, there are two different options for reducing staff:

- ✓ Involuntary Reductions-Staff reductions are more predictable, cause more anxiety, and maximize savings.
- ✓ Attrition-Reductions are driven by decisions individual staff make, reductions are generally well accepted, and the savings accrue when appropriate vacancies occur.

Usually districts are reluctant to involuntarily reduce staff. Rather, districts often prefer to realize staff reductions as a result of attrition. Attrition occurs when teachers voluntarily leave



their positions and, as a result, vacancies occur. The advisory committee asked for information about the number of teachers that resign annually in Oneida to ensure that the attrition methodology would be effective in realizing the staff savings that would be identified. Table 8.4 that follows shows the most recent five-year history of resignations that have occurred made in Oneida.

Table 8.4 Oneida Teacher Resignations/Retirements for the Past Five years		
Year	Level	Years of Service
2016-17	High School	31
	High School	23
	High School	1
	Elementary	23
	Elementary	17
	Elementary	21
2015-16	High School	30
	High School	30
	High School	16
	Middle School	10
	Middle School	16
	Elementary	12
	Elementary	22
	Elementary	31
2014-15	Middle School	15
	Elementary	28
2013-14	High School	37
	Middle School	28
	Middle School	16
	Elementary	38
	Elementary	32
2012-13	High School	25
	High School	31
	High School	4
	Middle School	21
	Middle School	0.3
Summary: Over the past 5 years, teachers have resigned across all levels with an average of 22.3 years of experience in Oneida		

Based on an analysis of table 8.4, it is clear that the attrition approach to reducing staff positions in Oneida is a very viable option. As the table shows, approximately 5 instructional staff have resigned annually in Oneida over the past five years. There is no reason to believe that



this general trend will not continue in the future. As a result, it is recommended that Oneida use attrition as the method for reducing staff. This means that no staff member's job would be lost involuntarily as a result of the decisions that the board will make related to this study.

**Summary:**

- Education is a people intensive business. School districts routinely spend 70-75% of their operating budgets on salaries and fringe benefits for the people who work in their schools.
- It is recommended that any reductions in positions arising from this study be accomplished through attrition.



## CHAPTER 9 TRANSPORTATION

Like most upstate school districts, the Oneida City School District transports many children to school on a daily basis. Oneida's transportation fleet consists of 40 buses, including 34, 65 and 66, passenger buses as well as several smaller buses used for transporting students with disabilities. The district is in the process of implementing a 5-year replacement plan for its fleet of buses to ensure that buses are safe and up-to-date.

The majority of students are bused to school following the Board of Education's policy. Current numbers indicated that 14 students walked to school at North Broad Elementary, 4 students walked to school from Seneca Street Elementary and Willard Prior Elementary, and there were no walkers from the Durhamville Elementary School.

The small number of students who walk to school is due to both the neighborhood school concept and board of education policies that provide transportation to virtually all students. Students in Pre-K and Kindergarten are picked up at home. Students in Grades 1 – 6 are picked up at a stop up to .2 miles from home. Students in Grades 7 – 12 are picked up at a stop of .5 miles or less from their home. The district is committed to making a reasonable attempt to limit the maximum bus route time to one hour. The average time on a bus is approximately 40 minutes, with the shortest time being 3 minutes and the longest being about 85 minutes. The State Education Department's general guideline is that no student should be on a bus longer than one hour when feasible. The longest bus routes are those that transport students out of the district for special education programs.

The district employs a double trip daily routing plan to get students to and from school. This means that the elementary students ride to and from school on one bus run while the middle and high school students ride a separate second run. The early bus run picks up the secondary students then a second bus run transports the elementary children. In the a.m., the high school and middle school bus runs are between 6:15 am and 7:40 a.m. The elementary bus runs go from 7:40 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. In the afternoon, a similar pattern is used with high school and middle school routes going from 2:00 p.m. to 3 p.m. and the elementary routes going from 3:00 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. There are 56 trips daily.

Out-of-district bus runs go to the Vernon-Verona-Sherrill middle school and the JD George and McAllister elementary schools where BOCES operates programs for students with disabilities. Other out of district runs for students with disabilities include the New York State School for the Deaf, UCP Chadwicks, and the OHM BOCES. In addition, there are bus runs to the Madison-Oneida BOCES complex in the morning, mid-day, and afternoon for students attending special education, career and technical education, and alternative education classes.

In addition to the regular bus routes transporting students to and from their home to school and the routes that take students to out of district locations, there are a number of shuttles that bring Pre-K students home mid-day and pick up those afternoon Pre-K students. Shuttles are also used for BOCES work programs and the mid-day BOCES shuttle for students attending the career and technical education program. Three late buses also pick up students at the middle and high school from 3:10 to 4:30 p.m.

The district currently uses Transfinder, a professional routing software program to design the most effective routes for its students.



**Summary**

- The district has few students who walk to school. The average ride for students is about 40 minutes.
- The district uses a double trip system bringing high school and middle school students to school early and elementary students on a later a.m. run. This is reversed in the afternoon. There are 56 regular trips daily.



**CHAPTER 10  
FINANCE**

Effective management of finances is an important requirement for any school district. It is particularly important in a challenging national and state economy like we have seen over the past seven or eight years.

As noted previously, one important measure of a Board of Education’s ability to find the balance between the quality of education that the community wants for its children with the community’s ability to support this education is the annual school district budget vote. The following table summarizes the results from school district budget votes from 2008 to 2017. As can be seen, the budget has passed every year with 2008 being the lone exception.

<b>Table 10.1 District Budget Vote History</b>			
Year	Yes Votes	No Votes	Total Votes
2017	354	125	479
2016	593	206	799
2015	371	105	476
2014	384	155	539
2013	487	261	748
2012	586	268	854
2011	588	428	1,016
2010	583	322	905
2009	846	349	1,195
2008*	277	437	714
<i>*Board adopted contingency budget</i>			

In addition, the Oneida school community has supported the purchase of school buses for each of the past thirteen years as shown in table 10.2 that follows.





<b>Table 10.2 Bus Votes</b>		
Year	Yes	No
2017	366	113
2016	611	187
2015	390	83
2014	399	141
2013	464	227
2012	564	254
2011	554	376
2010	539	329
2009	842	298
2008	352	338
2007	371	145
2006	395	127
2005	483	131

In addition to the outstanding record on school budget votes and school bus purchases, the Oneida community has also supported capital project votes in 2007 and 2016. All of these expressions of voter support show a school district that is strongly supported by its community.

A second window into the district’s current fiscal situation is through examining the history of the full value tax rate for the district. The five-year history of the tax rate is shown in table 10.3 that follows.

<b>Table 10.3 Five-Year History of Full-Value Tax Rates Per \$1,000</b>					
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Tax Levy	\$14,994,733	\$15,676,766	\$16,261,654	\$16,478,579	\$16,638,500
Full Value	\$726,828,498	\$731,391,464	\$710,334,251	\$718,114,178	\$712,961,388
Full Value Tax Rate	\$20.56	\$21.43	\$22.89	\$22.95	\$23.34
% Change		+4.23%	+6.81%	+0.26%	+1.70%

The full value tax rate is determined by dividing the assessed valuation of taxable property of the district by the equalization rate(s) of the city, town(s), or village(s) that make up the school district. This means that the full value tax rate can be increased either by the tax levy increasing, the full value decreasing, or both. The loss in full value evidenced in 2014-15 is unusual and is largely responsible for the 6.81% increase in the tax rate. That unusual year notwithstanding, the increase in the tax rates has been very well managed by the district over time.



The next area that was explored is the history of the assessed value tax rates. The assessed tax rate is calculated by town/city and is the rate that actually shows up on the property owner’s tax bill. The five-year history of assessed tax rates for the Oneida City School District is shown in table 10.4 that follows.

<b>Table 10.4</b>					
<b>Tax Rates Per \$1,000 of Assessed Value</b>					
City/Town	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Oneida	20.56	21.43	22.89	22.95	23.34
Lenox	20.56	21.43	22.89	23.18	23.34
Lincoln	20.56	21.43	22.89	23.18	23.34
Vernon/Sherrill	27.43	28.59	30.52	32.09	31.75
Verona	25.70	26.79	29.35	31.01	31.54
Vienna	32.90	34.57	37.53	36.72	38.90

The reality of financing in virtually every school district is that the tax rate increases every year. Such is the case in Oneida as well. However, while the tax rates have been increasing, a slow and steady increase is shown. Districts that are not well managed financially will show spikes in these tax rates, something which is never popular with the taxpayers. The trend of the increases in Oneida is another indicator that this district is well managed from a fiscal standpoint.

To assess the district’s overall fiscal position, it is important to focus on the number and amount of reserve accounts the district maintains. Reserve accounts are similar to school district savings accounts and are defined as part of the fund balance that a school district maintains. There are different types of reserve accounts, each with a different focus. The restricted reserve or restricted fund balance is a savings account defined for specific purposes that are defined in the table that follows. The history of the restricted fund balance account in Oneida is shown in table 10.5 that follows.

<b>Table 10.5</b>					
<b>Restricted Fund Balance: A Five Year Summary</b>					
Category	6/30/13	6/30/14	6/30/15	6/30/16	6/30/17
Debt Service	262,265	230,108	197,754	165,365	132,937
Unemployment	491,575	477,497	477,799	478,068	478,274
Accrued Liability	812,460	793,658	794,160	794,607	794,950
Retirement	1,571,970	1,574,030	1,575,027	1,575,913	1,576,592
Property Loss	669,014	669,891	670,315	670,692	670,981
Liability	657,122	657,984	658,401	658,771	659,055
Capital	21,634	21,663	21,676	21,689	21,698
Repairs	556,453	557,183	557,536	557,849	558,090
Tax Certiorari	131,290	119,422	119,498	119,565	119,617
Total	\$5,173,783	\$5,101,436	\$5,072,166	\$5,042,519	5,012,194

Table 10.5 shows a very stable restricted fund balance over a period of five years. The ability to maintain the restricted reserves at approximately \$5,000,000 for each of the past five years is an enviable record and again shows prudent management of the district’s resources.



Next we examine the amount of money Oneida uses to hold down the tax rate each year; that is, money the district has on hand at the end of the previous year that it applies to the revenue side of the ledger for the upcoming year. This is called the assigned or appropriated fund balance. From the 2016-17 general fund budget, Oneida applied \$1,739,429 to hold the tax rate down. If it had not done so, the district would have had to raise this additional revenue from the local taxpayers to support the 2017-18 school year operation. The end result however is that the district will again have to have at least \$1,739,429 excess revenue this year to do the same procedure for the 2018-19 school year or the local residents will have to make up any difference that is short of this amount. A five-year history of the assigned fund balance is shown in table 10.6 that follows.

<b>Table 10.6</b>	
<b>History of Assigned Fund Balance</b>	
Year as of June 30	Assigned Fund Balance
2011	1,600,000
2012	1,600,000
2013	1,600,000
2014	1,136,846
2015	536,239
2016	1,472,805
2017	1,739,429

Table 10.6 shows that, over the period of seven years, Oneida has maintained a fairly constant amount of assigned fund balance to control the tax rate increase each year. This is another indicator of planned, prudent management of the district’s finances.

A third type of reserve account that many school districts maintain is the unassigned fund balance. This is often referred to as the rainy day fund in that its major purpose is to help school districts deal with unforeseen expenditures that come up during the year. Table 10.7 that follows shows the history of Oneida’s unassigned fund balance over a period of the last seven years.

<b>Table 10.7</b>	
<b>History of Unassigned Fund Balance</b>	
Year	Unassigned Fund Balance
2011	\$1,832,285
2012	\$1,863,191
2013	\$1,877,389
2014	\$2,180,533
2015	\$3,055,704
2016	\$2,996,975
2017	\$3,459,648

In a time of financial challenges for school districts, it is admirable that Oneida has been able to not only maintain its unassigned fund balance but actually increase it over the past seven years. This is an enviable trend for the school district and again is reflective of a school district



that is very well managed with respect to its financial resources. Not all school districts are in this condition! The financial standing of the Oneida schools is a tribute to the board of education, the superintendent, and the business official for their outstanding leadership in managing the district's finances.

Now that the reserve accounts have been examined, it is appropriate to look at an overview of the school district's budget. The 2017-18 school budget is \$44,230,233, up from the 2016-17 budget of \$42,757,677. Expense categories for the current budget are as follows:

- Instruction-80.3%
- General Support-8.6%
- Transportation-7.1%
- Food Service-2.0%
- Debt Service-2.0%

These data show us that the vast majority of money spent in the school district is for supporting the instructional program. This is not surprising in that the core function of schools is to educate children.

Revenue to support the expenses of the school district comes from the following sources:

- State and Federal Aid-53.6%
- Property Taxes-38.4%
- Grants-5.5%
- Other-1.3%
- Charge for Services-0.7%
- OIN Settlement-0.5%

It is interesting to note that more than half of the school district's revenue is coming from state and federal aid. This makes future revenue projections quite precarious since state and federal aid is often unpredictable. The economy, competing state and federal priorities, and politics often drive decisions about aid that is very much out of the hands of school district officials. This is a crucial factor for school district leaders who do their best to financially plan for the future. Increasing salaries, health insurance premium increases, and pension cost increases will all drive up school district costs in the future. The property tax cap and uncertain increases in state aid will limit revenues for school districts and will make future financial planning very difficult.

There was some discussion with the committee about whether closing the any of the district's schools would adversely impact local property values. To explore this issue, the consultants reviewed the professional literature regarding the closing of a school and its impact on home values and the research on any link between a school district reputation and home values. After reviewing the literature, the consultants concluded that local property values *could* be negatively impacted because the elementary school children could be attending school further from their home. On the other hand, the research indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between a school district reputation and home values—the better the district's reputation, the higher the home values. Consequently, if closing an elementary school building results in an improved perception of the quality of the school district, home values *could* be positively impacted. In summary, the consultants have concluded that if one of the elementary schools were to close, it is unclear if local property values would be adversely impacted.



A second window into the possible impact of school closure on local property values was through examining at least one rural school district that has fairly recently dealt with the issue of school closures in its community. Altmar-Parish-Williamstown in Oswego County closed three elementary schools. The following table illustrates either the assessed or full value of property in the townships surrounding the closed elementary school in A-P-W.

<b>Table 10.8</b>				
<b>A-P-W Closed Elementary School Townships and Total Assessed Property Value in the Townships Before and After Closing the Elementary Schools</b>				
Year	Schools			Total Assessed Value
	Altmar	Parish	Williamstown	
2007-08	\$71,003,677	\$93,663,049	\$55,530,142	\$220,196,868
2008-09	\$76,149,128	\$93,609,716	\$58,193,389	\$227,952,233
2009-10	\$89,177,362	\$94,497,871	\$65,829,816	\$249,505,049
2010-11	\$89,868,246	\$93,596,737	\$65,879,683	\$249,344,666
2011-12	\$77,210,580	\$117,707,782	\$58,874,237	\$253,792,599
2012-13	\$92,084,907	\$140,318,700	\$66,303,225	\$298,706,832
2013-14	\$89,952,721	\$138,048,935	\$66,526,050	\$294,527,706
2014-15	\$92,978,097	\$141,411,076	\$66,574,411	\$300,963,584
2015-16	\$92,208,868	\$141,727,312	\$67,458,888	\$301,395,068

NOTES: (1) Shaded cells indicate the years prior to school closure  
 (2) The Village of Altmar dissolved in 2012

Finally, table 10.9 that follows summarizes the utility costs for all district schools from May of 2016 through April of 2017.

<b>Table 10.9</b>							
<b>Utility Costs-May 2016-April 2017</b>							
	D'ville	North Broad	Seneca Street	Willard Prior	Middle School	High School	District Office
Electric	24,108	18,407	16,005	20,746	48,279	110,574	4,257
Natural Gas/Oil	23,435	11,077	12,075	9,936	20,037	33,901	584
Total	47,543	29,484	28,080	30,682	68,316	144,475	4,841
Savings @ 40%	19,017	11,794	11,232	12,273	27,326	57,790	1,936

As stated earlier in this report, in considering the possible closure of one of the elementary schools, it is important to calculate the utility cost savings that might accrue to the district. It is assumed that the district will maintain ownership of the closed school, will not be renting the facility, and will be responsible for the cost of the utilities for the closed building so that the building remains in good repair. As a rule, it is estimated that savings of 40% will accrue to the district when comparing an open building versus a closed building. Given the total financial scope of these facilities decisions, the savings that accrue to the district are fairly insignificant.

In summary, we have concluded that the Oneida City School District is in relatively good



condition from a financial standpoint. District staff have provided the type of leadership in managing the district's finances that has positioned the district well for the future. Having said that, the financing of public schools in New York State has a very challenging future. The uncertainty of state aid, the ever-increasing costs associated with operating school districts, and the local tax cap that realistically limits the ability of a school district to raise local revenues will make the future financing of schools most daunting.

### **Summary**

- The community has been very supportive of the school district as evidenced by its positive votes on referenda for the annual budget, school busses, and capital projects.
- The district has effectively managed its finances as evidenced by the controlled increases in its tax rates.
- The district has effectively planned for its future by maintaining appropriate fund balance accounts.
- The financial future of the district will continue to be challenging given increasing costs and limited/uncertain means for raising revenues.



## CHAPTER 11 RESEARCH AND LITERATURE ON GRADE REORGANIZATION

Before the feasible options are presented, a brief overview of the relevant research and literature that were fundamental to the study is presented. Grade configuration study is common for school districts around the country; thus substantial research and literature exist. Key research findings were shared with the advisory committee.

First, it is important to note that many school districts that embark on grade configuration study do so because of too much or too little capacity in their schools. In other words, space rather than educational considerations drives the decision. Oneida wanted to look at the educational implications in the context of the current fiscal realities. It approached the study of grade configurations with one primary purpose in mind—how the district can think about the arrangement of schools to achieve positive educational outcomes for students while balancing the community’s ability to financially support the schools. Oneida’s Board of Education and Superintendent are to be commended for addressing grade configuration for the right reasons.

Examination of school districts around the country finds virtually any possible grade configuration. For example, a K-4, 5-8, 9-12 pattern is common in suburban school districts. Some districts have adopted a grade center plan, with all K-2 students in one building and all 3-5 students in another. The K-8, 9-12 grade arrangement is still found in many small rural districts and is a recent trend in the urban areas. The oldest grade configuration is K-12, and is still seen in many small rural districts, even in New York State. The most common pattern of organizing grades in New York State today is K-5, 6-8, 9-12, which is what Oneida Schools have.

Over the past thirty years there has been a trend by districts to change from the K-6, 7-9, 10-12 configuration to K-5, 6-8, 9-12. The impetus for this large scale and pervasive shift has been due to what is commonly known as “the middle school movement.” The middle school movement is an effort to provide a transition phase of schooling—taking children from the cloistered setting of an elementary school to the less structured environment of a high school. Middle school age children have unique needs during this rapidly changing phase of life that may not be adequately addressed in either the typical elementary school or high school.

Unfortunately, school district planners cannot look to the research for the “one best way” to configure the grades. While there is evidence that one can locate to support any grade configuration, there is no conclusive research that indicates that one alignment is necessarily any better than another. A general conclusion that most researchers have reached is that it is “what” a district does with the grade configuration that ultimately determines success or failure, rather than “which” grade arrangement is endorsed. For example, many districts that changed their grade configuration to either a 5-8 or 6-8 middle school never adopted the philosophy and necessary practices to have a true middle school (for example, team teaching, advisor-advisee programs). Consequently, these districts have been unsuccessful in achieving the positive outcomes advanced by middle school advocates.

Finally, the research indicates that school districts studying grade configuration typically must confront a set of common issues. Indeed, some of these surfaced as this study progressed. Specifically, the cost and length of travel for children to get to and from school; how long will students be on the school bus is always a concern that must be addressed if a reconfiguration is to occur. The favorable or unfavorable impact of parent involvement in a child’s schooling is an element that arises in every instance. The manner in which students will be grouped for instruction (i.e., teaming at the middle school level) is a frequent issue.



Research has found that the number of transitions during a student's K-12 experience should be considered. Each time a student moves from one school to another the educational process is disrupted. Although the student recovers, it is important to minimize the number of transitions in a student's education.

Interaction between various age groups and the influence of older students on younger is usually a significant consideration for districts considering reconfiguration. How will fifth or sixth graders be impacted by proximity to eighth graders?

And finally, the relationship of a building's design for accommodating the instructional program of different grade configurations must be examined. This, too, was a focus of advisory committee consideration.

### **Summary**

- The research indicates that there is no best way to configure the grades in schools.
- Issues faced in considering changes to school organization include ease of parental involvement, cost and length of travel time, grouping and transitions.





**CHAPTER 12**  
**OPTIONS FOR MAINTAINING AND/OR RECONFIGURING THE**  
**BUILDING/GRADE ORGANIZATION OF THE DISTRICT**

When evaluating the current status of Oneida’s grade and facility organization, the consultants first attempted to identify “feasible” options—in other words, how *could* the grades/facilities be arranged. Following this, the next step was to identify the “desirable” options—among the feasible ways, what is/are the option(s) that make the most educational and fiscal sense. Following is a discussion of the “feasible” options with advantages and disadvantages of each followed by the consultants’ prioritization of the “desirable” options.

***The Purpose of the Study***

In considering 2-3 prioritized options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future?

***Identification and Discussion about Feasible Grade/Facility Options***

The consultants and the advisory committee identified options throughout the study process. These options were then the focus of discussion with members of the advisory committee. The advisory committee was asked to critique the options, either agree or disagree with the options, and critique the pros and cons. The advisory committee was also asked to add additional advantages and disadvantages to each option. Finally, the advisory committee was asked to add any additional options that they thought would be appropriate.

***Background for Considering Facilities Options***

Examining the district direction for class size, it is apparent that no firm limits for class size exist in Oneida. As a result, in generating options for the future, the guideline of 24 students for grades K-3 and 25 students for grades 4 and 5 will be used.

It is also assumed that the district will accept the recommendation of the consultants that any reductions in staff be accomplished through attrition.

Even though the options are focused on potential changes to the elementary schools, this was a comprehensive K-12 study that examined all of the buildings in the district. The elementary schools were more susceptible to reorganization than either the middle school or the high school. The number of students in the middle and high schools, the current utilization rate of the classrooms, the need for outdoor athletic facilities, and other similar considerations made it unrealistic to consider reorganization of those buildings.

Before considering alternatives, the starting point is to again review the elementary structure for the current year as shown in table 12.1 that follows.



<b>Table 12.1</b>				
<b>Class Sizes-2017-18 for Each Elementary School</b>				
Grade	Number of Sections and Class Size of Each Section			
	Durhamville	North Broad	Seneca Street	Willard Prior
Pre-K	-	-	-	46, 45
K	19, 18	21, 23	13, 15	11, 11
1	22, 22	23, 22	16, 18	12, 11
2	22, 23	21, 22	16, 16	10, 10
3	23, 23	21, 20	19, 17	14, 12
4	20, 20	21, 21	20, 18	15, 14
5	20, 20	20, 22	17, 15	15, 14
<b>K-5 Total</b>	<b>12/252 (21.0 avg)</b>	<b>12/257 (21.4 avg)</b>	<b>12/200 (16.7 avg)</b>	<b>12/149 (12.4 avg)</b>

It should be noted that the current organization of the elementary schools has 48 sections/common branch classrooms for grades K-5.

***Option 1-Status Quo***

The neighborhood school concept has been embraced by Oneida for the location of its elementary schools. Under this model, each elementary school contains all elementary grades and is generally organized around neighborhoods. The advisory committee was asked to identify pros and cons of the current system and developed the following listing:

**Pros**

- Strong sense of community and tradition
- Relationships with families
- Community happiness with model
- Less transitions for students
- All elementary students in each family are in the same school
- Families seem happy with the current situation
- There are different opportunities in each school
- Smaller class size (but only accurate in some of the schools)
- Experienced teachers at schools

**Cons**

- Student sometimes need to be placed outside of their neighborhood school for ELL and special education classes
- Too small for class placement options
- Two sections per grade level doesn't always support grade level planning well



- Schools aren't currently balanced now in terms of enrollment – would need to redistrict
- Need for redistricting to deal with different class sizes across schools

**Option 2-Grade Center Plan**

The grade center plan is also known as the Princeton Plan or as stacking. In this model, each elementary school is generally organized around grades, often creating primary schools and intermediate schools within a school district. In Oneida's case, this would be the creation of two primary schools with grades K-2 and two intermediate schools with grades 3-5. Assuming an equal distribution of students across the school buildings, a grade center model would be structured as shown in table 12.2 that follows.

<b>Table 12.2</b> <b>Grade Center Plan Assuming Equal Distribution of Students</b> <b>(Maximum of 24 (K-3) &amp; 25 (4-5) Students/Classroom)</b>			
Grade Level	# of Students	# of Sections	Average Section Size
K	65/66	3/3	21.8
1	73/73	4/4	18.3
2	70/70	3/3	23.3
3	74/75	4/4	18.6
4	74/75	3/3	18.6
5	71/72	3/3	23.8
Total	858	40	21.5

Table 12.2 above would create two primary buildings with grades K-2 and two intermediate buildings with grades 3-5. Compared with the current arrangement of elementary classrooms that has 48 sections/common branch classrooms, the grade center model would have 40 sections/common branch classrooms. The advisory committee was asked to identify pros and cons of the grade center concept and developed the following listing:

**Pros**

- Equity of class /section size
- Teacher/student load would be similar
- Cost benefit of moving from 48 sections to 40
- Advantages for grade level planning
- More options for student placement
- Advantages for scheduling specials
- More pupil personnel support
- Less need for students with disability to be moved
- Outdoor space could be better suited to age levels



- Might ease the transition to middle school as students would know students from other areas – ease culture shock



**Cons**

- Increased transitions for students that would be harder for students who are currently dealing with significant socio-emotional issues due to poverty and related issues. Students would lose the sense of family and wouldn't have older siblings to help them with adjustments
- Would increase class size in some schools and the impact of transitions
- Complicates transportation
- Parents might have to go to multiple buildings to drop students off or visit teachers
- Change is hard
- Teachers would move from grade to grade more if there were ongoing reductions of grade levels

**Option 3-Close One of the Elementary Schools**

Closing one of the elementary schools would result in the district operating with three elementary schools instead of the four elementary schools that currently operate.

<b>Table 12.3</b> <b>Student Enrollment with 3 Elementary Schools Assuming an Equal Distribution of Students</b> <b>(Maximum of 24 (K-3) &amp; 25 (4-5) Students/Classroom)</b>						
Grade	# of Students	# of Students Per School	School A	School B	School C	# of Sections
K	131	44	22, 22	22, 22	22, 21	6
1	146	49	16, 16, 17	16, 16, 17	16, 16, 16	9
2	140	47	23, 24	23, 24	23, 23	6
3	149	50	16, 17, 17	16, 17, 17	16, 16, 17	9
4	149	50	16, 17, 17	16, 17, 17	16, 16, 17	9
5	143	48	24, 24	24, 24	24, 23	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>288</b>				<b>45</b>
<b>AVERAGE</b>			<b>Avg.=19.2</b>	<b>Avg.=19.2</b>	<b>Avg.=18.8</b>	

Table 12.3 above would create three elementary schools, each housing grades K-5. Compared with the current arrangement of elementary classrooms that has 48 sections/common branch classrooms, closing one of the elementary schools would have 45 sections/common branch classrooms. The advisory committee was asked to identify pros and cons of closing one of the elementary schools and developed the following listing:

**Pros**

- Cost savings through reduction of staffing
- Some savings in transportation



**Cons**

- Class sizes would be close to the “capped” size but over time enrollment would level off because of enrollment decline
- Class size would be increased
- It will be hard to fit into three school buildings
- District would have to deal with the sale of another building
- The impact of closing another building would be significant on the community

There was a significant amount of committee discussion about whether or not the current elementary school population would fit into three elementary schools. While the feeling was generally that there would not currently be room for all of the students in three buildings, some committee members discussed the future projected decline in enrollment in Oneida and submitted a related option of closing one elementary school in 2022-23. For purposes of this study, this will be called **Option 3a** and can be shown in table 12.4 that follows.

<b>Table 12.4</b>			
<b>Projected Class Sizes-2022-23 for Each Elementary School....1 School Closed</b>			
<b>36 Sections</b>			
<b>(Oneida’s Practice--Maximum of 24 (K-3) &amp; 25 (4-5) Students/Classroom)</b>			
Grade	Number of Sections and Class Size of Each Section		
	School A	School B	School C
Pre-K	-	-	47, 48
K	22, 23	22, 23	23, 23
1	23, 24	23, 24	24, 24
2	21, 22	21, 22	21, 22
3	20, 21	20, 21	20, 20
4	22, 23	22, 23	22, 23
5	19, 20	20, 20	20, 20
Total	12/260 (21.7 avg)	12/261 (21.8 avg)	12/262 (21.8 avg)

Because the student enrollment in Oneida is expected to decline through 2022-23, there is a far greater chance that the elementary enrollment will fit in three schools five years from now.

***Option 4-Combine Low Enrollment Sections at Willard Prior***

In examining the current structure for the elementary classrooms, we notice that Durhamville, North Broad, and Seneca Street have class sizes that are somewhat similar, even though the average at Seneca Street is somewhat lower than the other two schools. The one building that has much smaller average class sizes is Willard Prior as can be seen in table 12.5 that follows.



Grade	Number of Sections and Class Size of Each Section			
	Durhamville	North Broad	Seneca Street	Willard Prior
Pre-K	-	-	-	46, 45
K	19, 18	21, 23	13, 15	11, 11
1	22, 22	23, 22	16, 18	12, 11
2	22, 23	21, 22	16, 16	10, 10
3	23, 23	21, 20	19, 17	14, 12
4	20, 20	21, 21	20, 18	15, 14
5	20, 20	20, 22	17, 15	15, 14
K-5 Total	12/252 (21.0 avg)	12/257 (21.4 avg)	12/200 (16.7 avg)	12/149 (12.4 avg)

As can be seen in table 12.5 above, the average class sizes in Durhamville and North Broad are nearly double the average in Willard Prior. Section sizes in grades K-2 are especially low in Willard Prior. Combining the sections in those three grade levels in Willard Prior would yield the following structure that as shown in table 12.6.

Grade	Number of Sections and Class Size of Each Section			
	Durhamville	North Broad	Seneca Street	Willard Prior
Pre-K	-	-	-	46, 45
K	19, 18	21, 23	13, 15	22
1	22, 22	23, 22	16, 18	23
2	22, 23	21, 22	16, 16	20
3	23, 23	21, 20	19, 17	14, 12
4	20, 20	21, 21	20, 18	15, 14
5	20, 20	20, 22	17, 15	15, 14
K-5 Total	12/252 (21.0 avg)	12/257 (21.4 avg)	12/200 (16.7 avg)	9/149 (16.6 avg)

Compared with the current arrangement of elementary classrooms that has 48 sections/common branch classrooms, consolidating the sections at Kindergarten, first, and second grade at Willard Prior would reduce the number of sections/common branch classrooms to 45.

### ***Other Options***

Throughout the study process, discussions with the advisory committee yielded additional options that were not discussed or studied with the depth that the first five options received. Some of these additional options included the following:

- a. Rebuild the middle school attached to the high school and move all elementary students to the middle school-The middle school has 36 classrooms and 481 students; the 4



elementary schools have 60 classrooms and 858 students; there would not be room for all of the elementary students to fit in the middle school. This would also leave four vacant elementary school buildings in the community.

b. Move the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to the elementary school to provide more space at the middle school-There are 156 students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade meaning 8 elementary sections; there are not 8 extra classrooms in the elementary schools; there is also no compelling data to show that the middle school needs more space.

c. Build a campus model-Relocating all the students on one campus would be exceedingly expensive; there is a question about whether or not there is sufficient property on the high school campus to house all the students; the elementary school would be extremely large housing nearly 900 students; this approach would leave 5 vacant school buildings in the community.

d. Transition Willard Prior to a single section per grade level and use the extra room at Willard Prior for the suspended student program-Consolidating all of the sections in Willard Prior would create class sizes of 26 students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 29 students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and 29 students in 5<sup>th</sup> grade...this exceeds any class size guidelines or practices that Oneida has been using; there is also neighborhood opposition to locating the suspended student program at Willard Prior.

e. Sell the administration building and move that staff into one of the school buildings-This might become part of another option in the future.

***Discussion: Option 1-Status Quo***

The status quo is always an option. Therefore, this was the first possible future option shared with the committee. Some of the major advantages include not creating controversy in the community and allowing for growth of enrollment should it occur. However, one of the purposes of this study is to examine the fiscal implications of reorganizing the school buildings and the status quo option saves no money.

***Discussion: Option 2-Grade Center Plan***

The grade center plan would create two primary schools housing grades K-2 and two intermediate schools housing grades 3-5. In addition to offering a number of instructional advantages, grade centers create equity of class/section sizes and teacher loads across the district. In addition, moving from the current number of 48 elementary sections to 40 with the grade center plan would conservatively reduce eight elementary classrooms/teachers equaling annual savings of \$830,256 (average cost of a teacher with salary and benefits = \$103,782 X 8 = \$830,256)

***Discussion: Option 3-Close One of the Elementary Schools***

An examination of the number of students currently enrolled in the elementary grades compared with the number of available classrooms shows that, at the current time, there is not enough room to house the elementary students in three schools.





***Discussion: Option 3a-Close One of the Elementary Schools in 2022-23***

Oneida's school district enrollment has declined from 2,211 in 2012-13 to the current level of 1,948 in 2017-18; it is projected to continue to decline to 1,771 in 2022-23. In grades K-5, the enrollment has declined from 980 in 2012-13 to 878 in 2017-18; it is projected to continue to decline to 783 in 2022-23. At the elementary level, this is a decline of 197 students since 2012-13. Because enrollment is projected to continue to decline in Oneida, it is very possible that the K-5 population will fit into three buildings by the 2022-23 school year.

Should Oneida close one of its elementary schools, significant savings would accrue to the district. Using the same parameters for individual class sizes, operating the elementary program in three buildings would require 36 sections/common branch classrooms compared with the current 48 sections. Closing a building would also generate considerable other savings as well. It is conservatively estimated that the following savings would accrue should a school building be closed.

Reduction of 12 elementary classroom teachers, 1 Physical Education teacher, 1 Library Media Specialist, 1 nurse, 2 cafeteria staff, 2 custodial staff, 1 principal, & 1 12-month clerical = Savings of \$1,878,165. In addition to the staff savings, approximately \$15,000 in utility costs would be realized.

***Discussion: Option 4-Combine Low Enrollment Sections at Willard Prior***

Combining the small sections in Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at Willard Prior would conservatively save three elementary classrooms/teachers equaling annual savings of \$311,346 (average cost of a teacher with salary and benefits = \$103,782 X 3 = \$311,346).

In addition to the savings that would be realized, it would also be possible to sell the current administration building and move those offices into the area of Willard Prior that would be freed up by combining six classrooms into three. This would generate a one-time revenue of approximately \$300,000 by selling the administration building.

***Summary of Financial Savings by Option***

Financial savings of the options under consideration may be summarized as follows in table 12.7.



<b>Table 12.7</b>	
<b>Savings by Option-Includes Fringe Benefits</b>	
Option	Staffing Savings
1-Status Quo	None
2-Grade Center Plan	Reduction of 8 sections/teachers @ \$103,782/teachers = \$830,256
3-Close 1 Elementary School	None-current population of students won't fit in three elementary schools at this time
3a-Close 1 Elementary School in 2022-23	Reduction of the following positions:  12 classroom teachers @ \$103,782..... \$1,245,384 1 PE teacher @ \$103,782.....\$103,782 1 LMS @ \$103,782.....\$103,782 1 nurse @ \$62,272.....\$62,272 2 cafeteria workers @ \$16,904.....\$33,808 2 custodians @ \$56,367.....\$112,734 1 principal @ \$161,669.....\$161,669 1 secretary @ \$54,734.....\$54,734 STAFFING TOTAL.....\$1,878,165 Savings in Utilities.....15,000 TOTAL SAVINGS.....\$1,893,165
4-Combine K, 1, & 2 sections at Willard Prior	Reduction of 3 sections/teachers @ \$103,782/teacher = \$311,346

***Recommendations***

1. It is recommended that the district convene a facilities planning committee whose role it will be to develop and monitor a long term facilities plan for the district. This committee should be provided with annual enrollment projections to guide their planning as they consider topics that might include the closure of one or more of the school buildings, the scope of work to be performed from the Building Condition Survey, the long term design of appropriate school facilities and the financing of these initiatives. This committee should be comprised of both school staff and members of the community.

2. It is recommended that, effective with the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, the Board of Education implement Option 4 and consolidate the low enrollment sections of Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at Willard Prior.

3. It is recommended that, effective with the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, the Board of Education continue to implement Option 1, the status quo option for all schools except Willard Prior.



4. It is recommended that, during the 2018-19 school year, the district convene the facilities committee to begin the development of a 3-5 year facilities plan that will result in the closure of one of the district's elementary schools. While there are a number of instructional and financial benefits to the grade center plan, it is recommended that this option not be considered as the changes associated with the implementation of grade center schools would be too unsettling as the district prepares for the closure of one of its elementary schools.

Discussion about closing any school building will generate significant emotion from many people. In considering which elementary school should be closed as part of this planning process, the following factors might provide some guidance for the committee and district staff to consider.

1. Which school has the smallest enrollment as this will impact the fewest students, staff, and families;
2. Which building is the oldest?
3. Which building has discretionary square footage of building to accommodate new students?
4. Which building has geographic proximity to other schools to facilitate transportation and sharing of students and staff?
5. Which building has the most challenging site considerations for parking, play fields, and a bus loop;
6. Which building will require the most renovation as a result of those items identified in the Building Condition Survey;
7. Which building has multiple stories; a single story building is better;

Even using these criteria, it will become obvious very quickly that not one school building will be the answer for all of these criteria. There is no easy answer as to which school building should be closed. However, diligent work by dedicated individuals who put the needs of the students first will come up with the solution that is best for Oneida.

5. It is recommended that the district use the attrition method for reducing staff should any staff reductions be realized from this initiative.

6. It is recommended that the Board of Education conduct at least one public hearing/comment period on these options for the general public to express opinions.



## **APPENDIX**



Appendix A: Minutes from Advisory Committee Meetings



**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Oneida Facilities Study Advisory Committee  
FROM: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen  
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of September 28, 2017  
DATE: October 1, 2017

**Attendance:** Committee Members: Dr. John Costello, Jennifer DePerno, Jodie Gardner, Molly Hagan, Randy Hirschey, Carrie Isabelle, Megan Kelly, Chad Mack, Stephanie Neff, Dawn Paz, Robert Sayles, Lillian White, and David Wright

Consultants: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen

Observers: Tina Lane, Jim Rowley, and Mary-Margaret Zehr

Location: Oneida High School

1. Superintendent Mary-Margaret Zehr welcomed everyone to the meeting, provided an overview for the purpose of the study, and introduced the study consultants. Committee members were asked to introduce themselves and discuss their connection with the school district.

2. Alan Pole reviewed the purpose of the study which is to answer the following question:

***In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future?***

3. Meetings of the Advisory Committee will be held from 6:30-8:30 pm as follows:

Date	Topic	Location
September 28	General overview of the study process including the committee’s role; student enrollment projections	High School
October 26	The instructional program	Middle School
December 7	The district’s facilities	North Broad
January 25	Transportation; Begin exploring possible future facility options	Willard Prior
February 27	Staffing; Continued implications of options	Durhamville
April 19	Finances; Continued implications of options	Seneca Street
May 24	Review of draft report and tentative recommendations	High School



June 12	Presentation of final report to the Board of Education	Board Room
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While the meetings of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 pm, optional tours of the six schools will be held before each of the next six meetings beginning at 5:45 pm. These tours are for committee members and for anyone that will be observing the business meeting that will follow.

4. A contact list of the members of the advisory committee was shared with email addresses. Members of the group were asked to verify the accuracy of the information since email will serve as the primary means of communication between the consultants and the committee members. Meeting materials will be emailed to all committee members prior to the meeting. Paper copies of the materials will also be made available at each meeting.

5. Meeting notes will be provided after each meeting. The notes will be emailed to all committee members and copied to the superintendent. It will be the responsibility of the superintendent to distribute the notes within the district, as she deems appropriate. It is anticipated that, at a minimum, notes will be provided to board members and posted on the district’s website. The PowerPoint that is used at each meeting will also be posted on the district’s website after the meeting occurs.

6. All meetings of the advisory committee will be open. Members of the public will be welcome at these meetings. At the conclusion of each meeting, observers will have the opportunity to offer comments or ask questions.

7. Alan Pole presented a PowerPoint overview of the study process and the role of the advisory committee. He indicated that the function of the committee is to advise the Board of Education and the consultants and to communicate with the public about the process. In addition, the committee will add a cultural context for Oneida as the various aspects of the study emerge. The superintendent is not a member of the committee but serves as a resource to the committee. Committee members are expected to attend all committee meetings, freely express their points of view, be key communicators with stakeholder groups, and be a respectful, contributing member of the committee.

He emphasized that the consultants bring an outside, unbiased perspective and will ensure that the process is open. They will produce meeting notes after each committee meeting and will be responsible for the final report. The recommendations in the report will benefit student learning



and will be educationally sound and fiscally responsible. They will also be independent of special interest groups.

8. Jessica Cohen presented an overview of past enrollments for Oneida as well as projected future enrollments for the district. The study begins by reviewing enrollment trends since enrollments influence all decisions regarding staffing, course and curricular offerings, facilities, transportation, and finances.

Enrollment has been declining slightly since at least 2011-12 when the analysis began. Since 2011-2012, the enrollment in Oneida has declined from 2,244 students to 2,022 students in the 2016-17 school year, a decrease of 222 students or 10%.

To predict future enrollment, the consultants employ the Cohort Survival Projection method that uses information on the number of births in each school district over a period of years and calculates patterns of enrollment. A cohort survival ratio is developed that tracks how each cohort of students changes as it moves through the grade levels. This ratio, used with the live birth information, predicts what the enrollment will be for a period of years given consistent and predictable conditions. It does not take into account significant economic development changes such as a major employer leaving or entering the area and other similar changes.

Using this method, the enrollment in Oneida is predicted to decrease from 2,022 in 2016-17 to 1,799 students in the 2023-2024 school year, an additional decrease of 223 students or 11%. The number of home schooled students, non-resident students, and resident students enrolled in non-public schools are all factors that are considered in projecting enrollment. It does not appear that any of these factors will significantly influence the enrollment projections that were made for Oneida. Jessica also reviewed demographic information for Madison County. This review indicated that the population of the county is increasing slightly. The percentage of the population that is of child-bearing age has decreased while the population over 65 is increasing. Jessica mentioned that updated live birth counts and enrollment numbers for this school year will be collected and projections will be updated at a later meeting. This is a process we are going through and the consultants will make corrections and updates at the beginning of each meeting. Jessica also reviewed the “big picture take-aways” that were identified for this meeting as follows:





- ✓ The purpose of the study is to answer the question, “In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future?”
- ✓ The study process will be open to ensure there is not a perception it is being conducted behind closed doors.
- ✓ The Advisory Committee was formed to assist the consultants throughout the process, but the final recommendations will be the consultants.
- ✓ The district has seen declining enrollments and will likely continue to see enrollments drop slightly.

9. In response to questions from committee members, additional information on enrollments in other districts as well as census data will be provided at the next meeting.. The meeting was then opened up to the observers for questions and comments.

10. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Thursday, October 26, 2017 at the Middle School. An optional tour of the school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The meeting of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on September 28. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact us. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Thanks again for agreeing to serve on this committee. Looking forward to seeing you again on October 26. The tour will begin at 5:45 and the meeting will start at 6:30!!

C: Mary-Margaret Zehr



**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Oneida Facilities Study Advisory Committee  
FROM: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen  
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of October 26, 2017  
DATE: October 31, 2017

**Attendance:** Committee Members: Dr. John Costello, , Molly Hagan, Randy Hirschey, Carrie Isabelle, Megan Kelly, Chad Mack, Stephanie Neff, and Robert Sayles

Consultants: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen

Observers: Tina Lane, Jim Rowley, and Mary-Margaret Zehr

Location: Middle School

1. Alan Pole started the meeting by thanking Mandy Larsen, Vice Principal of the Middle School, for hosting the meeting and conducting the tour of the school for interested committee members.. The agenda for the meeting was presented and reviewed as well.
2. Alan then reviewed the purpose of the study which is to answer the following question:  
*In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide sound instructional now and in the future?*  
He indicated that this purpose will be shared at each meeting to keep the committee focused on what the Board has asked the consultants to accomplish.
3. The September 28 meeting notes were approved by the committee without any changes.
4. Alan reviewed the enrollment history for area school districts. Comparing enrollment changes from 2000-01 until 2015-16, Alan noted that all of the districts in the Madison County have seen decreases of between 13.6% and 31.6%. Oneida’s enrollment decrease is less than five of the other districts. Jessica followed up with a review of the estimated population change in the Oneida City School district which showed that the population is projected to be fairly stable.
5. The grade organization of the district (PK-5, 6-8, 9-12) was shared with the committee and it was noted this is a very common grade arrangement pattern in New York. Jessica provided a brief overview of the educational research on grade level patterns. She reported that the bottom line is that there is no one best way to organize school grades and that “what” a district does with



its grade arrangement is more critical to student success than “which” grade organization it has adopted.

6. Jessica then provided an overview of the 2017-18 elementary class sizes in each of the four elementary schools. Jessica said that the class sizes are reasonable; current class sizes at Willard Prior are significantly lower than in the other three buildings. Average class size is 21.0 at Durhamville and 21.4 at North Broad but 16.7 at Seneca street and 12.4 at Willard Prior.

7. A summary of recent elementary (grades 3 -5) student scores on the New York State ELA and math tests was shared with the committee. It was pointed out that it is difficult to make comparisons on these assessments because of the large number of students who opted-out of the tests beginning in the 2015 school year. Comparisons are also difficult to make because of the changes in the assessments.

8. The elementary school special area subject offerings were presented to the committee as an indicator of the curricular breadth in grades K-5. Jessica noted that these opportunities are part of providing a rich program of study for students. There is comparability across all four elementary schools in art, music, and physical education. Seneca Street provides additional library/technology time for its students beginning in second grade.

9. An overview of the district’s special education program was discussed. Jessica offered a five-year summary of the number of students in the district that have special educational needs and whether they are receiving their educational program in the district or elsewhere. She indicated that the district currently has 379 students (or 15.6% of total enrollment) identified as having special educational needs. This is less than the 17% average percentage of Students With Disabilities in the state. About 80% of the students are educated in-district.

10. Jessica reviewed the middle school and the high school curricular offerings. This included a review of the number of students in each course section for all subject areas this year including English, Social Studies, Math, Science, Foreign Language, Family & Consumer Science, Technology, Music, Art, PE, and Health as well as a few other electives. She pointed out that the district offers a very comprehensive secondary program.

11. A summary of the number of high school junior and seniors that attend the BOCES for various career and technical education classes was presented. In total this year there are 57 juniors (33% of the class) and 41 seniors (27%) of the class.



12. The presentation concluded with four big ideas or take-aways that the consultants reviewed:

1-The grade configuration (K-5, 6-8, 9-12) is a common arrangement. 2-The most common grade configuration of schools the country is K-5, 6-8, 9-12 although there is no research that indicates that one grade pattern is necessarily better for student learning than another. 3-The elementary instructional program is comparable across all four schools. 4-The Middle School and High School programs are typical for a school district of this size.

13. Alan asked the committee for comments and/or questions. Some corrections were made to the information on elementary specials and global studies.

14. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Thursday, December 7 in the North Broad Elementary School. An optional tour of the school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The meeting of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on October 26. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on December 7 at North Broad Elementary School.

C: Mary Margaret Zehr



**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Oneida Facilities Study Advisory Committee  
FROM: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen  
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of December 7, 2017  
DATE: December 9, 2017

**Attendance:** Committee Members: Dr. John Costello, Jennifer DePerno, Molly Hagan, Randy Hirsche, Carrie Isabelle, Megan Kelly, Chad Mack, Stephanie Neff, Robert Sayles, Lillian White, and David Wright

Consultants: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen

Observers: Tina Lane, Jim Rowley, Mary-Margaret Zehr, Eric Coriale, Bryn Mancarella, Julia Abel, and Gabby Catalone

Location: North Broad Street School

1. Jessica Cohen started the meeting by thanking Eric Coriale, Principal of the North Broad School, for hosting the meeting and conducting the tour of the school for interested committee members. The agenda for the meeting was presented and reviewed as well.

2. Jessica then reviewed the purpose of the study that is to answer the following question:

***In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide sound instructional now and in the future?***

She indicated that this purpose will be shared at each meeting to keep the committee focused on what the Board has asked the consultants to accomplish.

3. The October 26 meeting notes were approved by the committee without any changes.

4. Jessica reviewed the takeaways for the last two meetings regarding student enrollment and the instructional program.

5. Alan Pole provided an overview of the district's facilities. He began with a table providing information on the age, square footage, grades housed, and students served in each of the six buildings. He noted that the North Broad building was built in 1912 and is more than 40 years older than any of the other buildings. It was also noted that North Broad has the most students and the second smallest square footage. The square footage of the buildings ranges from 30,178 square feet in the Seneca Street School to 131,300 square feet in the High School.

6. Alan then reviewed the school classroom usage in each of the six building. The Durhamville School has 15 full-size rooms and 12 are used for grade level classrooms with three used for



special education classes. In North Broad, there are 14 full-size classrooms with 12 being used for grade level classes. Seneca Street has 13 full-size classrooms with 12 being used for grade level classes; Willard Prior has 18 full size classrooms with 15 being used for grade level classrooms, 2 for 12:1:1 special education classes and one by UCP. At the middle school, there are 36 full-size classrooms with 23 being used by core courses and 13 being used for special education, AIS, computer labs, a weight room, and technology. The High School has 47 full size classrooms with 28 being used for core academic classes and 19 used for special education, business, technology, health, home and careers courses as well as for workrooms, conference rooms, and a teachers lounge. There is one room noted on the floor plans as open. He concluded that it doesn't appear that there are a lot of empty classrooms in any of the buildings. Alan also talked about the concept of classroom usage and indicated that one type of analysis would be to look at how many periods of the 9 period day classrooms were used. The analysis that has been done thus far just examines the stated use of the rooms but not the percentage of class periods that the room is used. Depending on the options considered, that type of analysis might be done in the future.

7. A brief review of the athletic facilities indicated that while there are currently enough fields, there might be a need to add more if new sports were added. The district does not have any fields with artificial surfaces.

8. Alan explained that all school districts and BOCES have a building condition survey (BCS) done every five years that provides an analysis of building needs by an architect. NYS law requires this. A summary of the projected costs of repairs/renovations listed in Oneida's 2015 BCS survey indicated that a cost of approximately \$20 million dollars would be required to address all of the issues. He also said that no district ever addresses all of the issues. Alan explained that this was a typical type of listing for a district the size of Oneida.

9. In order to provide information to assist the committee in considering alternative arrangements, Alan provided information on the district's class size policy and requirements regarding class size from the teachers' contract. The current class size policy indicates that the district is committed to reasonable class sizes, while at the same time respecting the integrity of the neighborhood school. The policy also provides for review of enrollments by the Superintendent with the Board of Education twice a year to discuss any possible recommendations. The general procedure is to cap K-3 classes at 24 students per section and



grades 4-5 at 25 students per section. The teacher contract provides for options for additional teacher's aides or teacher pay if the class size exceeds 30 students. In addition if kindergarten class size exceeds 25 or grades 1-3 equals or exceeds 26 students or grades 4 – 6 exceeds 28 students, the district will provide extra hours of aide time.

10. A review of the current elementary section sizes in each building, average section sizes and the total students per grade level were discussed. Across the four buildings there are 8 section of each grade level K-5 for a total of 48 sections. The average section size ranges from 21.4 in North Broad, to 12.4 at Willard Prior. Average section size overall is 17.9 students.

11. Alan then discussed the two common approaches to organizing elementary attendance zones: (A) the neighborhood school concept in which each elementary school contains all elementary grades and is generally organized around “neighborhoods;” and (B) the grade center concept or Princeton plan in which each elementary school is generally organized around grades, often creating primary schools and intermediate schools within a school district. An analysis of a potential grade center plan for Oneida’s elementary schools was shared assuming an equal distribution of students and a maximum class size of 24 students (K-3) and 25 students (4-5) per section. This would result in 40 sections and an average section size of 21.5 students.

12. The presentation concluded with four big ideas or take-aways that the consultants reviewed: 1-The neighborhood school concept has been embraced by Oneida for the location of its elementary schools. 2-The Building Condition Survey has identified approximately \$20,000,000 of work to be completed in the district’s facilities. 3-The current elementary school class sizes are well below guidelines set by policy, general procedures, and the teacher contract. 4-The concept of grade center schools would reduce the number of elementary sections by approximately 8.

13. Alan asked the committee to divide up into groups to discuss three questions:

- What are the pros and cons of the current system of elementary school organization?
- What are the pros and cons of the grade center approach?
- What other options would you consider?

After discussion, the groups identified the following:

### **Current system of grade level organization**

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### **Pros**

- Strong sense of community and tradition
- Relationships with families
- Community happiness with model
- Less transitions for students
- All elementary students in each family are in the same school
- Families seem happy with the current situation
- There are different opportunities in each school
- Smaller class size
- Experienced teachers at schools

### **Cons**

- Student sometimes need to be placed outside of their neighborhood school for ELL and special education classes
- Too small for class placement options
- Two sections per grade level doesn't always support grade level planning well
- Schools aren't currently balanced now in terms of enrollment – would need to redistrict

## **Grade Center organization**

### **Pros**

- Equity of class /section size
- Teacher/student load would be similar
- Cost benefit of moving from 48 sections to 40
- Advantages for grade level planning
- More options for student placement
- Advantages for scheduling specials
- More pupil personnel support
- Less need for students with disability to be moved
- Outdoor space could be better suited to age levels
- Might ease the transition to middle school as students would know students from other areas – ease culture shock

### **Cons**

- Increased transitions for students
- Complicates transportation
- Parents might have to go to multiple buildings to drop students off or visit teachers
- Change is hard
- Teachers would move from grade to grade more if there were ongoing reductions of grade levels

## **Other options to consider**





- Consolidate “extra” buildings to schools, eg. Administration building
- Build a campus model
- Transition Willard Prior to single section per grade level; use extra room at Willard Prior for suspended student program
- Develop a K–12 school day – single trip bus routing
- Redistrict all elementary schools
- Move from 4 elementary buildings to 3

13. Alan asked the committee and the audience for comments and/or questions.

14. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Thursday, January 25, 2018 in the Willard Prior Elementary School. An optional tour of the school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The meeting of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on December 7. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on January 25 at Willard Prior Elementary School.

Happy Holidays!

C: Mary Margaret Zehr



**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Oneida Facilities Study Advisory Committee  
FROM: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen  
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of January 25, 2018  
DATE: January 29, 2018

**Attendance:** Committee Members: Dr. John Costello, Jennifer DePerno, Randy Hirschey, Carrie Isabelle, Megan Kelly, Chad Mack, Stephanie Neff, Dawn Paz, Robert Sayles, Lillian White, and David Wright

Consultants: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen

Observers: Tina Lane, Jim Rowley, Mary-Margaret Zehr, Casey Chapin, Robin Bienkowski, Sara Haag, Samantha Haynes, Kym Dirig, Sara Willis, Kathryn Zangrilli, Renee Fuller, Moira Yardley, Andrew McHugh, Gail Whipple, Sarah Gaw, Michele Stewart

Location: Willard Prior Elementary

1. Alan Pole began by welcoming everyone to the meeting. He explained that this was a meeting of the advisory committee and that the committee would conduct its work for the majority of the meeting. Toward the end of the meeting, those in the audience would be able to ask questions. Alan thanked Moira Yardley, Principal of the Willard Prior Elementary School, for hosting the meeting and conducting the tour of the school for interested committee members. He reviewed the meeting schedule for future meetings.

2. Alan then reviewed the purpose of the study that is to answer the following question:

***In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide sound instructional now and in the future?***

He indicated that this purpose would be shared at each meeting to keep the committee focused on what the Board has asked the consultants to accomplish.

3. The committee approved the December 7 meeting notes with changes. Added to the notes was a comment that those buildings that were landlocked would not be able to easily expand. Also added to the notes was the clarification that the comment regarding moving Willard Prior to a single section per grade level school and using the extra space for a program for suspended students was just a brainstorming idea and not a recommendation of the advisory committee.



4. Alan reviewed the takeaways for the last three meetings regarding student enrollment, the instructional program, and facilities.
5. Alan discussed the follow up from the last meeting including a review of Option 1 – Status Quo, Option 2 – Grade Center Plan, and Option 3 – Closing 1 elementary building. He reviewed the information for each of these options including the number of students per grade level and number of sections for each of the options. He indicated that the advisory committee would continue discussing the pros and cons of these options during the meeting.
6. Jessica Cohen provided an overview of transportation in the district and talked about how any change in school organization would impact transportation. She thanked Jim Rowley and Michael Klenotiz for providing information on the Oneida transportation system.
7. The district has 40 buses that transport students to and from school each day. The district has been implementing a 5-year replacement plan for its fleet of buses that provides for a financially stable approach to maintaining the health of the bus fleet.
8. Oneida’s policies regarding transportation indicate that Pre-K and Kindergarten students are picked up and dropped off at their homes; students in grades 1-6 have to walk no more than .2 of a mile; grades 7-12 have to walk no more than .5 mile. These limits result in the district having less than 20 walkers at the elementary level. Board policy also indicates that a reasonable attempt shall be made to limit the maximum bus route time to one hour. Current bus routes average about 40 minutes with the longest being 1 hour and 25 minutes for students who are transported out of the district to special education programs.
9. The district uses a double trip system that brings middle and high school students to school early and elementary students on a later a.m. bus run. That order is reversed in the afternoon. The district currently has 56 trips daily including shuttles to St. Patrick’s, Holy Cross, Pre-K, and BOCES.
10. If the district moved to a grade center plan, it is not anticipated that students would be on buses substantially longer. Costs would also not be increased for additional runs. Closing a building might reduce the number of trips daily from 56 to 49 and would cut about 10 hours of staffing costs daily.
11. The presentation on transportation concluded with four “takeaways.” The first takeaway is that the district has few students who walk to school and that, of those who ride buses to school, the average time is about 40 minutes. The second “takeaway” is that the district uses a double trip



system that brings the high school and middle school students in on an early run and the elementary school students to school on a second, later bus run. The process is reversed in the afternoon. The third “takeaway” is that moving to a grade center plan would not impact transportation significantly. Closing one elementary building would reduce the number of trips daily and show savings in transportation staffing.

13. Alan asked the committee to divide up into groups to discuss three questions:

- Are there additional pros and cons that should be added to the consideration of the status quo and grade center organization?
- Identify the pros and cons for closing an elementary building?
- What other options would you consider?

After discussion, the groups identified the following (additions added in italics):

### **Current system of grade level organization**

#### **Pros**

- Strong sense of community and tradition
- Relationships with families
- Community happiness with model
- Less transitions for students
- All elementary students in each family are in the same school
- Families seem happy with the current situation
- There are different opportunities in each school
- Smaller class size (*but only accurate in some of the schools*)
- Experienced teachers at schools

#### **Cons**

- Student sometimes need to be placed outside of their neighborhood school for ELL and special education classes
- Too small for class placement options
- Two sections per grade level doesn't always support grade level planning well
- Schools aren't currently balanced now in terms of enrollment – would need to redistrict
- *Need for redistricting to deal with different class sizes across schools*

### **Grade Center organization**

#### **Pros**

- Equity of class /section size



- Teacher/student load would be similar
- Cost benefit of moving from 48 sections to 40
- Advantages for grade level planning
- More options for student placement
- Advantages for scheduling specials
- More pupil personnel support
- Less need for students with disability to be moved
- Outdoor space could be better suited to age levels
- Might ease the transition to middle school as students would know students from other areas – ease culture shock

#### **Cons**

- Increased transitions for students *that would be harder for students who are currently dealing with significant socio-emotional issues due to poverty and related issues. Students would lose the sense of family and wouldn't have older siblings to help them with adjustments*
- *Would increase class size in some schools and the impact of transitions*
- Complicates transportation
- Parents might have to go to multiple buildings to drop students off or visit teachers – *the logistics for parents would be harder*
- Change is hard
- Teachers would move from grade to grade more if there were ongoing reductions of grade levels

#### **Closing a school**

##### **Pros**

- Cost savings through reduction of staffing
- Some savings in transportation

##### **Cons**

- Class sizes would be close to the “capped” size but over time enrollment would level off because of enrollment decline
- Class size would be increased
- It will be hard to fit into three school buildings
- District would have to deal with the sale of another building
- The impact of closing another building would be significant on the community

#### **Other suggestions**

- Rebuild the middle school attached to the high school and move all elementary students to the middle school.
- Redistrict all elementary students



- Sell district office and move it into Willard Prior. Reduce sections at Willard Prior to single sections per grade level.
- Move the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to the elementary school to provide more space at the middle school
- Look at facility issues at the middle and high schools

13. Alan asked the committee and the audience for comments and/or questions. Community members expressed concerns regarding the development of a program for suspended students at Willard Prior as was suggested in the previous meeting notes. Members of the advisory committee indicated that it was just part of the brainstorming process. Questions were also asked about the motivation for the study. Alan responded that the board of education asked for the study to understand what options might be given declining enrollments and the fiscal issues facing all schools. Moira Yardley, principal of Willard Prior, thanked everyone for coming and visiting her building. Mary-Margaret Zehr, Superintendent, also thanked the community for their interest and the committee for their work to date.

14. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 27, 2018 at the Durhamville Elementary School. An optional tour of the school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The meeting of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on January 25. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on February 27 at Durhamville Elementary School.

C: Mary Margaret Zehr



**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Oneida Facilities Study Advisory Committee  
FROM: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen  
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of February 27, 2018  
DATE: March 10, 2018

**Attendance:** Committee Members: Jennifer DePerno, Molly Hagen, Randy Hirschey, Carrie Isabelle, Megan Kelly, Chad Mack, Dawn Paz, Robert Sayles, and David Wright

Consultants: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen

Observers: Collette Letourneaux, Kathryn Zangrilli, Renee Fuller, Dave Dampf, Amber Herzog, Peggy Visalli, Tina Lane, Jim Rowley, and Mary-Margaret Zehr

Location: Durhamville Elementary School

1. Jessica Cohen began by welcoming everyone to the meeting. She explained that this was a meeting of the advisory committee and that the committee would conduct its work for the majority of the meeting. Toward the end of the meeting, those in the audience would be able to ask questions. Jessica thanked Peggy Visalli, Principal of the Durhamville Elementary School, for hosting the meeting and conducting the tour of the school for interested committee members. She reviewed the meeting schedule for future meetings.
2. Jessica reviewed the purpose of the study that is to answer the following question:  

***In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide sound instructional now and in the future?***

She indicated that this purpose would be shared at each meeting to keep the committee focused on what the Board has asked the consultants to accomplish.
3. The committee approved the January 25 meeting notes with no changes.
4. Jessica summarized the takeaways for the last four meetings regarding student enrollment, the instructional program, facilities, and transportation. She reminded the group that no decisions have been made about the recommended options and that we are still in the process of considering the different suggestions and determining the feasibility and desirability of each one. She also thanked Carrie Isabelle and Megan Kelly for reviewing the distributed meeting materials and identifying several areas needing adjustment.
5. Follow up from previous meetings included presentation of the updated enrollment projections based on the 2017 BEDS day (October 4, 2017) enrollment. The district's



enrollment continues to decline and projections indicate that in five years the enrollment will have gone from the 2017-18 enrollment of 1,948 to a projected 1,771.

6. Alan Pole followed up by talking about the feasibility – *Is it possible* and the desirability of options – *Is it a good idea?* He then reviewed the four options discussed to date. The status quo is described as Option 1 and maintains the 48 common branch sections in the four elementary schools. Moving to a grade center plan is the second option and would organize the schools around grades with two schools having K – 2 classes and two schools having 3 – 5 classes. This would move the district from the current neighborhood schools approach to an approach organized around grades. Because this option would allow equalizing of section size, the grade center option would have 40 sections, or 8 fewer than the status quo. The third option would be to close one of the elementary schools reducing the number of sections from 48 to 45 creating average class sizes of approximately 19 students per section. The fourth option discussed previously would be to combine several small class sections Willard Prior resulting in 45 total sections.

Other options discussed at previous meetings include building an addition at the high school to house the middle school students and moving all elementary students to the middle school. Looking at the number of classrooms and students at the middle school (36 classrooms and 481 students) as compared to the 4 elementary school with 60 classrooms and 858 students, it does not appear that this is a feasible option. An additional option would be to redistrict all of the elementary students. Another option from previous meetings was to move the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to the elementary school to provide more space at the middle school. Since there are 156 students in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade that would require placing 8 sections at the elementary schools. This does not seem to be a feasible solution as there doesn't appear to be 8 extra classrooms in the elementary schools.

7. Questions were asked at the previous meeting about the usage of classrooms in the middle and high school buildings, Alan provided two tables that looked at how the current middle and high school classrooms are being used and found that middle school classrooms are used about 69% of the day and high school classrooms are being utilized approximately 71% of the day. Alan concluded that the buildings are being fairly well utilized.

One committee member said that the middle school gymnasium is in fire code violation whenever an assembly is held. The fire code states 450 maximum. Currently the middle school





has 455 students and approximately 60 staff members. There were 520 students in the middle school in 2012-13.

8. Alan reminded the advisory committee that the purpose of the study was to look at both the educational impact of facilities changes as well as the fiscal impact. Since about 70-75% of school budgets are costs for staffing, it is important to look at staff costs. An overview of building level staffing was discussed indicating teachers and teacher aides comprise the majority of staff. He discussed the average salary of each grouping of staff (teachers, administrators, aides, custodians, etc.) as well as the average cost of fringe benefits for health insurance, pension, workers compensation, unemployment insurance, and social security. Based on the information provided by the district an average cost of fringe benefits is approximately 47% of salary.

9. He indicated that there are two options typically used for implementing staff reductions: involuntary reductions and attrition. While involuntary reductions are more predictable and maximize savings, they also cause more anxiety in the system. Attrition is driven by decisions staff make and is generally well accepted. Savings accrue when appropriate vacancies occur. Alan stated that we would recommend that the district use attrition if any positions are to be reduced. He provided a table of recent Oneida resignations that indicated the number of staff resigning/retiring and their length of service in the district. The majority of staff who have left over the past five years have worked for the district for more than 20 years.

10. Information on staff savings by option was discussed. In summary, there would be no savings if the status quo were maintained, a staff savings of approximately \$830,256 for the grade center option, staff savings of \$944,127 for closing one elementary school, and \$311,346 for combining the sections at Willard Prior. Alan pointed out that while closing one elementary school would save the most money, it is not a truly feasible option since the current elementary population would not fit in three schools.

11. The presentation on staffing concluded with three “takeaways.” The first takeaway is that for this study, 3 feasible options have been identified: status quo, grade centers, and consolidation of sections at Willard Prior. Redistricting elementary school boundaries might also be another option. The second “takeaway” is the recommendation that any reductions in positions arising from this study be accomplished through attrition. The third takeaway is that savings can be



realized by creating grader center schools or by consolidating the number of sections at Willard Prior.

12. The committee discussed the presentation and asked a variety of questions including the impact of redistricting and if facilities changes would also restructure special education. It was also suggested that the consultants look into moving the administrative building into Willard Prior as well as consolidating some sections.

13. Alan asked the audience for comments and/or questions. A question was asked about whether the enrollment drop is a result of the district closing schools previously. Alan indicated that the decline in enrollment in the Oneida schools was similar to all of the schools in the region and throughout much of upstate New York.

14. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Thursday, April 19, 2018 at the Seneca Street Elementary School. An optional tour of the school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The meeting of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on February 27. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on April 19 at the Seneca Street Elementary School.

C: Mary Margaret Zehr



**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Oneida Facilities Study Advisory Committee  
FROM: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen  
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of April 19, 2018  
DATE: April 27, 2018

**Attendance:** Committee Members: John Costello, Jennifer DePerno, Molly Hagen, Randy Hirsche, Megan Kelly, Chad Mack, Stephanie Neff, Dawn Paz, Lillian White, and David Wright

Consultants: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen

Observers: Renee Fuller, Jennifer Raux, Joanne Makarchuk, Tina Lane, Jim Rowley, and Mary-Margaret Zehr

Location: Seneca Street Elementary School

1. Alan Pole began the meeting by thanking Molly Hagen and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students Sylvia Walter and Lois Smith for providing a tour of Seneca Street Elementary School. The agenda for the meeting was presented and reviewed. Alan reviewed the protocol for the meeting and the meeting schedule. He reminded everyone that the next meeting on May 24 would be to review the draft report.

2. Alan then reviewed the purpose of the study:

*In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future?*

3. The February 27 meeting notes were approved by the committee without any changes.

4. Alan reviewed the summary of the takeaways for the first five meetings regarding student enrollment, instructional program, facilities, transportation, and staffing. He indicated that this is the last meeting that will deal with new content; the next committee meeting on May 24 will focus on a review of the draft report.

5. The updated enrollment projections were used to determine projected class sizes in the 2022-23 school year. The total number of elementary sections is projected to remain at 48 sections, assuming an equal distribution of students across the 4 schools and 2 sections at each grade level. Class sizes would average 16.3 students per section. Alan also projected the closing of one



school in the 2022-23 school year. Assuming two sections of each grade in the three schools, there would be 36 sections, a reduction from the 48 sections currently existing.

6. Also presented was an estimate of the utility cost savings if one building was closed. If the district still owned the building that was closed, there would continue to be some costs for utilities. Architects have estimated that the savings for closing a building are about 40% of the current utility costs. This would mean savings of between \$11,000 and \$19,000 if one of the elementary buildings were closed. Alan pointed out that compared to the savings in staffing, the savings in utilities costs are not nearly as significant.

7. Alan reminded the advisory committee that the purpose of the study was to look at both the educational impact of facilities changes as well as the fiscal impact. To provide a financial overview, Alan began with a summary of the budget vote history indicating strong positive support for the school district for the past 10 or more years. Similar conclusions can be drawn from examining the history of the bus and capital project votes. The picture is really one of a community that supports its schools.

8. To provide a full picture of the financial overview of the district, Alan shared information on the history of full value tax rates over the past five years as well as the history of the tax rates per \$1,000 of assessed value. He noted that while the increases in the full-value tax rates were 4.23% and 6.81% in 2013-14 and 2014-15, they have been significantly lower in 2015-16 (.26%) and 2016-17 (1.7%).

9. An important part of the fiscal picture of the district is the way that the district plans for future expenditures. He discussed the history of the restricted fund balance as well as the designated and undesignated fund balance. These are all similar to savings accounts that the district uses to plan for anticipated expenses (restricted fund balances) like unemployment insurance, accrued liability, retirement, workers' compensation, capital expenses, and tax certiorari as well as funds to help hold down future years' tax rates (assigned fund balance). Also discussed was the unassigned fund balance that is used as a "rainy day" fund for those occasions when emergencies occur. Alan emphasized that the Oneida School District fiscal affairs are well managed.

10. The 2017-18 budget for the district is \$44,230,233. The vast majority of the budget is spent on direct instruction (80%). Revenue for the district comes from state and aid (54%), and property taxes (38%). Alan reminded the committee that since more than ½ of the revenues for



the school district comes from state aid, the district's fiscal health is impacted by the politics of the state.

11. Alan reviewed the financial implications for the various options beginning with the status quo. While keeping things as they are will produce little anxiety, there will be limited financial savings by keeping things as they are. The second option of moving to the grade center plan will create two primary level buildings (Pre-K – 2) and two intermediate elementary buildings (Grades 3 - 5). This approach will result in a reduction of 8 elementary classrooms/teachers for a savings of approximately \$830,000. The third option discussed was to close 1 elementary school beginning in the 2022-23 school year. This will result conservatively in a reduction of 12 elementary classroom teachers, 1 PE teacher, 1 school library media specialist, 1 nurse, 2 cafeteria staff, 2 custodial staff, 1 principal, and 1 clerical staff resulting in savings of \$1,878,165. The fourth option discussed was to combine sections at Willard Prior in those sections that have few students. This would save three sections and would result in a reduction of 3 elementary classrooms/teachers for a savings of \$311,346. This might also allow for the relocation of the district office into 4 classrooms at Willard Prior and a one-time revenue of \$300,000 for the sale of the administration building.

11. Alan asked the committee to think about the four options and provide input as to the strengths and weaknesses of each. Committee members indicated that combining the sections at Willard Prior makes the most sense initially. Concerns were raised about moving to a grade center approach because the redistricting needed would raise anxiety in the community. Closing a building would be the most emotional for the community although it might make the most sense fiscally. Concerns were also raised about moving to larger class sizes given the significant needs of students.

12. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Thursday, May 24, 2018 in the high school beginning at 6:30 p.m. A tour of the high school will begin at 5:45 p.m. The meeting will focus on a review of the draft report.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on April 19. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on May 24 at the high school.

C: Mary-Margaret Zehr



**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Oneida Facilities Study Advisory Committee  
FROM: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen  
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of May 24, 2018  
DATE: May 29, 2018

**Attendance:** Committee Members: John Costello, Molly Hagan, Randy Hirschey, Carrie Isabelle, Megan Kelly, Lillian White, and David Wright

Consultants: Alan Pole and Jessica Cohen

Observers: Tina Lane, Jim Rowley, and Mary-Margaret Zehr

Location: High School

1. Alan Pole began the meeting by thanking the advisory committee members for their participation in the facilities study process. He indicated that their contributions were essential to developing a report that will meet the needs of the district.
2. Alan then reviewed the draft report that was distributed prior to the meeting. He highlighted the findings and the options considered. Jessica Cohen reviewed the recommendations made in the report.
3. The committee discussed the report and indicated that it was consistent with the information shared and the committee discussions.
4. The report will be finalized and presented to the Board of Education on June 12. All committee members are encouraged to attend the meeting.
5. Alan once again thanked all of the committee members for their participation.

C: Mary-Margaret Zehr