

Ticonderoga Central School District Study of Building Realignment

December 2019 Report

Proposal to be studied:

Would there be benefits to the District's long term sustainability and effectiveness if the students in grades 7 and 8 were relocated to the current high school building and that building therefore become a Junior Senior High School building?

Rationale for a study

The idea of realigning the buildings has been discussed in recent years. The impact of such a move has not been thoroughly studied and to date no plan has been developed to implement such a change.

Costs that exceed the funds available given the 2% tax cap and the imperative to seek long term fiscal stability have led to this idea being seriously considered.

The Board of Education has directed a team of volunteers, a strategic planning team, from the school community to embark upon an evaluative process through which this concept of realigning the grade levels assigned to each of the two building be examined.

What was needed was a thoughtful consideration of the concept and the impact of such a change moving forward.

The District's Strategic Planning Team was charged with exploring the various aspects involved in and how best to PRESERVE a quality education program, to meet the needs of a changing student population while responding to the challenges created by the various pressure just outlined. The team was directed to study the feasibility of realignment.

Background

Declining enrollment and fiscal restraints have contributed to a reduction in staff over the past several years. Most of these reductions have occurred through attrition but have had an impact on the programs and curriculum offered to the students.

Ticonderoga Central School District maintains a strong sense of tradition. It's constituents and staff appreciate stability and the resulting continuity over the years. While not being particularly comfortable with change, change has been happening.

Declining Enrollment:

Over the past 14 years enrollment has had a 16% decline since 2009, and is estimated to reach a 23% decline by 2024.

Decline in Aid (money coming to the District):

Over the past 10 years, Federal aid has declined by 54%, and State aid has increased but only by 14.1% = average of 1.4% each year.

Increased costs:

Costs generally increase. To maintain program, schools have found it necessary to spend more than the amount of funds that may be raised annually through the tax levy and aid combined.

There are new mandates every year. Generally these are not funded by the entity creating the mandate.

Employee health insurance has nearly doubled over the last 10 years

Use of Fund Balance:

The Ticonderoga Central School District lost \$3.2 million dollars in expected revenue due to the Gap Elimination Adjustments. Money that had been anticipated and counted upon.

To maintain program and meet the mandates, the local budget has needed to increase 34.5 % over the last 10 years, an average of 3.45 % each year.

As part of the budgeting process, decisions have been made each year to pull from the fund balance. The fund balance is unallocated funds a District may hold in trust to use in the event of an emergency or an unforeseen cost increase. Much like an individual might use funds from their savings accounts to balance a household budget.

Areas to be considered and studied:

- *Enrollment*
- *Staffing*
- *Programming*
- *Facilities*
- *Transportation*
- *Custodial and maintenance loads*
- *Is it possible for efficiencies to be recognized if this plan were to move forward?*
- *Identify the concerns of students, parents and staff*

Enrollment

Enrollment drives decisions in any District. The size of classes, what curriculum may be offered, the number of teachers and staff, facilities and related spending.

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Total Population*</u>
2009-10	851
2010-11	862
2011-12	806
2012-13	774
2013-14	800
2014-15	795
2015-16	785
2016-17	770
2017-18	745
2018-19	750
2019-20	731

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Total Population*</u>
Estimates:	
2020-21	717
2021-22	712
2022-23	677
2023-24	650

*Population includes Putnam students entering 7th grade and St. Mary's students entering 9th grade.

Staffing

Instructional staff being shared between buildings:

Currently there are six teachers being shared, utilized in both buildings. In order to offer acceleration options for students in eighth grade, students move from the middle school building to the high school building for three classes. They therefore miss instructional time due to transportation.

Attrition:

When teachers have left the District they have often not been replaced. As a result, middle school teachers are teaching multiple grades and in doing so have no time to which they may offer the remedial instruction beyond the class to those students who would benefit from that extra instruction from their classroom teacher. Instead such remediation is provided by other teachers and often lacks the best coordination.

Programming

Districts are required to offer specific courses throughout the K-12 experience. In addition a number of credits beyond these courses in the area of electives are required for a student to earn a diploma.

Enrichment in the form of electives provides students a more well rounded education. Acceleration offerings, for students who are capable of taking courses earlier, affords them the opportunity to advance and take additional and more challenging coursework. *(Appendix A)*

Facilities

There is adequate space within the high school building to provide for classrooms and shared spaces for all 9-12 students. There are unused classroom spaces as well. Adding the seventh and eighth grade students and their classrooms would be feasible.

In the middle school wing, the space is adequate for classrooms. In the Pre-K - 5 wing, space is limited. There are special teachers and service providers who are sharing instructional space or who may be limited in what they may offer given the size of their instructional space. This group would benefit from an expanded floorspace.

The shared spaces within the high school building, such as the cafeteria, the library and the gymnasium have sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional students. The concerns for scheduling will be addressed within that section of the study.

Cafeteria

An increase in the number of students in the current high school building and a decrease at the current PK-8 building may require a shift in assignments for the food service staff throughout the District. The physical space will accommodate the increased number of students.

Transportation

Currently all students (K-12) ride the bus to and from school together, this will remain the same.

Custodial and Maintenance Loads

An increase in the number of students in the current high school building and a decrease at the current PK-8 building may require a shift in assignments for the custodial staff throughout the District.

Concerns and Fears

The committee identified the concerns of the staff regarding the realignment. If the decision is made to move forward with this plan, students and parents will be consulted to identify their concerns as well. The implementation plan will be designed to mitigate these fears from becoming a reality. (*Appendix B*)

Efficiency and Cost Containment

Is it possible for efficiencies to be recognized if this plan were to move forward?
Would there be employees cuts if this plan moves forward and would they result in lowering cost?

Financial

Budget Analysis (*Appendix C*)

Research

The team made contact with other similar size Districts to learn how they align their buildings and their experience with a change such as that which is being considered here at Ticonderoga. Learning from other schools as to how they handle any number of the issues that have been identified as concerns and or fears. (*Appendix D Questions & Appendix E Findings*)

Appendix A - Programming

<u>Subject Area</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Units of Study</u>	<u>Min. Requirement</u>	<u>Min. w/ Acceleration</u>
English Language Arts	7 & 8	2	Eng. 7 / Eng. 8	NA
Social Studies	7 & 8	2	Soc. Stu. 7 / Soc. Stu. 8	NA
Science Living Env.	7 & 8	2	Science 7 / Science 8	Science 7 &
Math	7 & 8	2	Math 7 / Math 8	Math 7 & Alg 1
Technology	7 & 8	* 1	½ Tech 7 / ½ Tech 8	NA
Physical Education	7 & 8	1	½ PE 7 / ½ PE 8	NA
Family & Consumer Science	7 & 8	* .75	3 quarters over two years	NA
Health	7 & 8	.50	2 quarters over two years	NA
Arts: Visual	7 & 8	.50	1 quarter each year: Art 7/ Art 8	Art 7 & Studio Art
Music	7 & 8	.50	.25 credits/ year: General Music	
Language	7 & 8	2	Exposure Spanish 7 & Spanish 8 (Completion of Proficiency = Spanish I credit)	
English	9	1	English 9	NA
Social Studies	9	1	Global 9	NA
Science	9	1	Living Environment	Earth Science
Math	9	1	Algebra I	Geometry
Language	9	1	Algebra IA	NA
Physical Education	9	.50	Spanish II	NA
Arts: Visual	9	1	PE	NA
Music	9	.50	Studio Art	Draw. & Painting
		.50	Band	NA
			Chorus	NA
English	10	1	English 10	NA
Social Studies	10	1	Global 10R	NA
Science	10	1	Earth Science	Chemistry
Math	10	1	Geometry R	Algebra II
Language	10	1	Algebra IB	NA
Physical Education	10	.50	Spanish III	NA
Arts: Visual	10	1	PE	NA
Music	10	.50	Drawing & Painting	Mixed Media
		.50	Band	NA
			Chorus	NA
Technology	10	1	Materials Processing	NA
Health	9 - 12	.50	HS Health	NA
English	11	1	English 11	AP Language
Social Studies	11	1	US History	AP US History
Science	11	1	Chemistry / Elective	Physics
Math	11	1	Algebra II	Pre-Calc / NCCC Geo.
Language	11	1	Geometry NR	NA
Spanish	11	1	Spanish IV	SUNY Albany
Physical Education	11	.5	PE	NA
Arts: Visual	11	1	Mixed Media	NCCC Art 100
Music	11	.5	Band	NA
		.5	Chorus	NA
Technology	11	1	Intro to Building Trades	NA
CV-TEC	11	3	Variety of Program Majors	
English	12	1	English 12	AP Literature /
NCCC Eng. 101				
Social Studies	12	1	PIG / Econ.	NA
Science	12	1	Physics / Elective	NCCC Bio 101 / Bio 102
Math	12	1	Pre-Calc/ Trig/ Occ. Math	NCCC Geometry
			NCCC Geometry	AP Calculus
Language	12	1		Spanish V SUNY ALBANY

<u>Subject Area</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Units of Study</u>	<u>Min. Requirement</u>	<u>Min. w/ Acceleration</u>
Physical Education	12	.5	PE	NA
Arts: Visual	12	1	NCCC Studio Art	Indep. Study
Music	12	.5	Band	NA
		.5	Chorus	NA
Technology	12	1	Industrial Design	NA
CV-TEC	12	3	Variety of Program Majors (second year)	

Graduation Requirements/ Courses / Regents Exams

Required:

Electives	9 - 12	3.5
Regents (minimum)	1 Social Studies (Global or US History)	
	1 Comp. English	
	1 Math	
	1 Science	
	+ 1 Pathway	

**** May be completed while in 5th or 6th grade***

Appendix B - Concerns and Fears

Would there be a negative influence when having older students in close contact with younger students?

The changes will negatively impact students' education (academic, extracurricular, etc.). Will there be fewer opportunities for students in grades 7 and 8 when they are in the high school building than they have now in a middle school setting? (extracurricular: clubs, sports, dances, etc. or academic offerings: acceleration, electives, etc)

The District will go forward with realignment and the District will still be in fiscal crisis.

Changes will be made but appropriate support will not be provided (for all stakeholders faculty, student, parent, community). Fears not addressed in the implementation plan.

Bathroom access? There are currently limited bathrooms available for student use in the high school building. Are there others that are functional which could be opened for use? Would older students be using the same facilities as the younger students?

Class size change. Would there be a loss in teaching staff that results in larger class size?

Class size in specials. Are the rooms currently allocated for special classes (art, music, technology, family and consumer science) large enough for the class sizes currently set for grades 7 and 8?

Social Integration. Students will lose their "own place". Will students in grades 7 and 8 grade be fully integrated with students in grades 9 - 12 or will they have a separate space to call their own?

Discipline to be age appropriate? Students in grade 7 have different needs from those in older grades. Will the administration and staff have these differences in the forefront of their mind and be able to adapt to meet the needs of the younger students?

Job loss. Is this a move to reduce staff? Will there be a reduction in programs and offerings as a result? Or is this downsizing vs right sizing/ putting resources at the most effective place?

What are the unique aspects of middle school that might change if the physical location changed?

Which should be preserved if possible?

Retaining key _____(traditions, elements, activities) of what makes these academic years unique.

Might we have two bell schedules in the 7-12 building to afford students to move at different times?

Appendix C - Budget Analysis

	<u>2008-09</u>	<u>2018-19</u>	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Percentage change</u>
<i>Total General Fund Budget</i>	\$ 16,669,482.	\$ 22,416,587.	\$ 5,747,105.	+ 34.5%
<i>Total State Aid w/o Building Aid</i>	\$ 5,731,802.	\$ 6,538,257.	\$ 806,455.	+ 14.1%
<i>Total State Aid w/ Building Aid</i>	\$ 6,311,012.	\$ 8,066,736.	\$ 1,755,724.	+ 27.8%
<i>Total Federal Aid</i>	\$ 1,248,977.	\$ 604,040.	-\$ 644,937.	- 52%
<i>Total Federal & State Aid w/o Building Aid</i>	\$ 6,980,779.	\$ 7,142,297.	\$ 161,518.	+ 2.3%
<i>Total Federal & State Aid w/ Building Aid</i>	\$ 7,559,989.	\$ 8,670,776.	\$ 1,110,787.	+ 14.7%
<i>Tax Levy</i>	\$ 8,895,869.	\$ 11,653,259.	\$ 2,757,390.	+ 31%

Appendix D - Questions for Other Districts

Why: Root causes / Reasons for change

Why did you restructure your District?

Financial

Were there any financial advantages of the change?

Program

What programs have you planned to add and did you?

Did you lose any programs due to the move?

Enrollment

Facilities

What does the building(s) look like in terms of classroom locations (high school vs middle school)?

Were there building configuration problems?

Did you separate lower grades from upper grades?

Communication

How did you communicate the changes to community?

How did you use the support for change to your advantage?

How did you address the resistance?

Parent concerns? (how did you learn of those concerns and address them?)

How did you communicate the change with families, community and students?

Resistance/ Support

What was the level of resistance to the change (faculty, student, parent, etc.)?

What was the level of support for the change?

Now / Results

What have been the pros and cons?

What do you know now you wish you knew then?

Did you lose staff? If yes % (what positions and why?)

How did the staff handle the change? (what support did you provide?)

How did the students handle the change? (in what ways were they supported?)

Scheduling

What do your physical education classes look like and lunches look like?

Did you find that you needed to/ or were able to make other curricular changes?

What accelerated course did you offer 8th grade as a result of the move? (7th or 6th perhaps)

Appendix E - Findings from Conversations with Districts

What we learned:

Many of our concerns were shared by them when they made similar changes but time has proven that some did not develop as had been feared, some were planned for and had little impact and some just were not real when the change actually took place.

Ex: Influence of older students on the younger student for instance - either it wasn't as had been feared, older students ignored the younger or more often the older students see a responsibility to be a leader and model for the younger students.

Advantages were identified:

Ex. With middle school and high school separated geographically, there are few or no opportunities for teamwork across grade levels, teachers rarely have instructional conversations, rarely work together (lack of department chairs) little or no alignment. Being in the same building improves teacher communication and working together.

Acceleration is made more easily and staffing is more efficient

One District made the move to 6-12 grades in one building and has found that 6th graders struggle, too immature.

7- 12 buildings have similar teacher certification making those cross grade level assignments easier.

Acceleration for 7th graders might even become possible. Fewer transitions for students throughout their school years

Disadvantages or things they learned for which we should plan ahead to avoid included:

Loss of trips commonly at those different grade levels

Loss of dances for the younger students, student council, clubs

How to handle attendance during Regents week

Time to keep grades separate not co-mingled: lunch, physical education

Discipline and student support needs are different for grades 7 and 8

Teachers and staff need support too, this age is different than the older teen

There is a need for a community to be established for them: their own space