

Onteora Central School District



Summary of Final Report of the

Grade Level Configuration and School Building Utilization Study

January 21, 2020 Presentation to the Board of Education and Community

Dr. Kevin Baughman & Associates

Deciding What to Share Tonight was a Challenge



1. Thank you to students, staff, parents, community, board members and administration
2. Detailed comprehensive study
3. About 40 -50 minutes presentation
4. So much to share
5. Let's Get Started!

What to Expect Tonight



1. How Did We Get Here? *An Overview of Study & Content*
2. Key Findings of the Study *Highlights*
3. Overview of Six Grade Level Scenarios
4. The School/Community Survey *Limitations & Results*
5. Final Thoughts & Possible Next Steps
6. Questions & Discussion

The Consultant – Dr. Kevin Baughman & Associates

[Kevin Baughman, Ph.D.](#)



- Over 25 years school leadership
- 11 years Superintendent of Schools
- Retired College of Saint Rose professor and program coordinator
- Strategic planning, organizational analysis, leadership searches, etc.

[Deborah Shea, Ed.D.](#)



- Served as school principal and Assistant Superintendent
- Extensive expertise in curriculum, instruction & special education
- Current professor and program coordination at College of Saint Rose



How Did We Get Here?

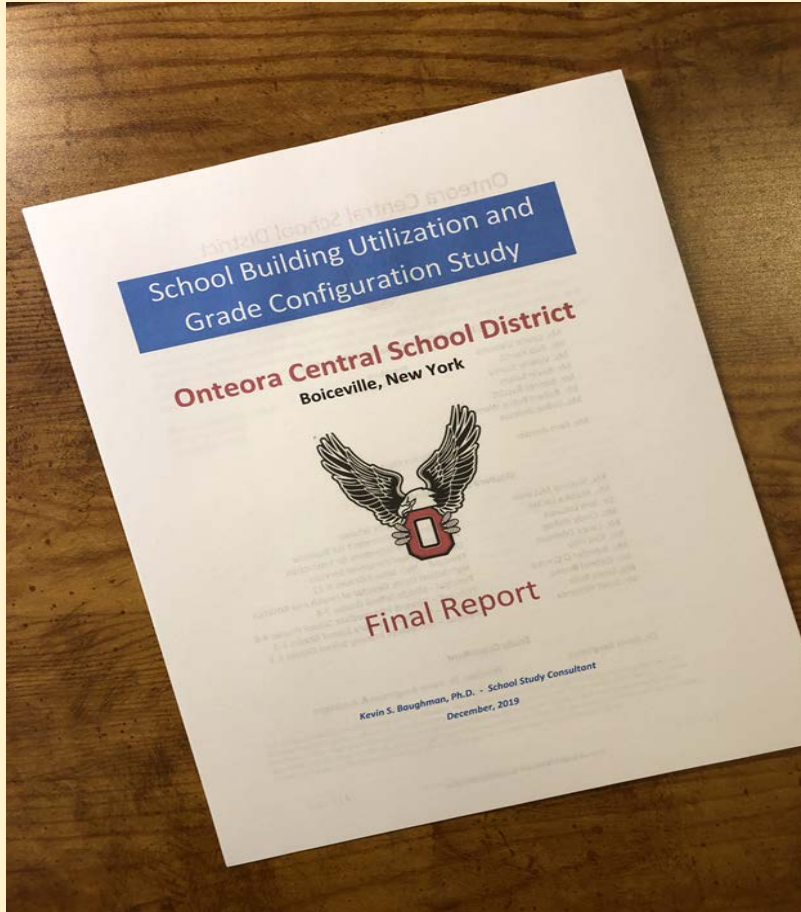
1. District studied various grade level configurations since early 2000's
2. 2012 – Present configuration ... But ***enrollment is still declining***
3. ***Study is a framework & gateway to future planning & decisions***
4. Future decisions need to be ***long term focused***, flexible, ***adaptable*** to changing enrollment



How Was Information Collected?

1. A **document** review, student *achievement & enrollment* analysis
2. 1:1 **Interviews** with school board & administration
3. 1:1 or small group interviews with *teachers, students, parents & community*
4. Met with approximately **110 people**
5. School & community **public forums**, district **survey**
6. Final Study Report – well over **230** hours of study

What's in the Study Report?



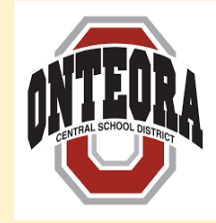
1. 70 Pages
2. Analysis of Enrollment, Student Achievement, & Research on Configuration
3. Analysis of School-Community Survey
4. Review of Six Scenarios
5. Key Findings (20)
6. Final Thoughts & Suggestions

Selected Key Findings from the Study



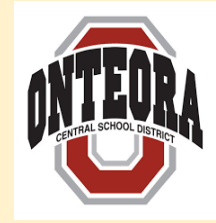
1. Projected declining enrollment over next ten years challenges use of current grade level configuration and use of all five schools *due to a need for*:
 - a) **equity of class sizes** between schools
 - b) providing **continuum of services** for children with special needs
 - c) improved **communication** and **consistency of practice**
 - d) configuration plan that can **adapt to declining enrollment**
 - f) **long term more efficient use** of limited resources

Selected Key Findings from the Study



2. Long term, current grade configuration **requires most bus runs, provides least educational advantages, and generates greatest recurring costs** of all scenarios studied.
3. Student enrollment loss over past ten years 430 students. Next ten-years projected to decline another 195 students, or **38% decline over 20-year** period (**625** students total = 35 classrooms).
4. Research indicates **achievement adversely affected when children make transitions to new schools**. Current configuration has 3.

Selected Key Findings from the Study



5. Alternative scenarios include bus routing based on average 45-50 minute bus rides for grades K-5, and 40-45 minutes for grades 6-12.
Bus ride times equal to present
6. Adding grade level to middle school (e.g. grade 6), ***greater flexibility in student scheduling and spreading out time to meet credit requirements*** of NYS over three years

Selected Key Findings from the Study



7. Both ***Scenario D and E (central campus)*** provide ***greatest cost savings (\$979,000+)***, offer ***greatest redirection of funding to enhance program***, and most equitable distribution of resources and staffing, but closes two K-3 buildings.
8. Two grades of students (7 & 8) are ***insufficient to form a separate middle school identity*** and function effectively as a school. ***Physical restructure and adding one or more grades*** to the middle school will help create an appropriate supportive learning and social environment for the emerging adolescent.

Comparison of the Six Grade Configurations

<i>Comparisons</i>	Scenario A: Phoenicia & Woodstock K-5, close Bennett, MS 6-8, HS 9-12	Scenario B: Phoenicia & Woodstock K-4, close Bennett, MS 5-8, HS 9-12	Scenario C: (Present) Phoenicia & Woodstock K-3, Bennett 4-6, MS 7-8, HS 9-12	Scenario D: Close Phoenicia & Woodstock, Bennett K-5, MS 6-8, HS 9-12	Scenario E: Close Phoenicia & Woodstock, Bennett K-4, MS 5-8, HS 9-12	Scenario F: Close Phoenicia or Woodstock, (two) K-5 with Bennett, MS 6-8, HS 9-12
<i>1. Number of student transitions between buildings (affects academic performance per research):</i>	2	2	3	2	2	2
<i>2. Requires capital project(s) of building modification and/or additions? (Needs to be determined by school architect)</i>	3-5 rooms @Phoenicia Modification @MS	8-10 rooms @MS Modifications @MS	None	8-10rms @Bennett Gym @ Bennett & Modifications to MS	4-6 rms @Bennett Modifications to MS	3-5 rooms @Phoenicia Modification @MS
<i>3. What are the estimated annual combined savings from this scenario that could be redirected to other district needs?</i>	\$534,000	\$534,000	\$0	\$979,000	\$979,000	\$414,000
<i>4. Maintains two community/village elementary schools?</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
<i>5. What school buildings would be closed?</i>	Bennett	Bennett	None	Phoenicia & Woodstock	Phoenicia & Woodstock	Phoenicia <u>or</u> Woodstock
<i>6. Can future enrollment declines/changes be easily adapted to with this configuration? (Flexible, adaptable, long term)</i>	Somewhat Flexible	Somewhat Flexible	Somewhat Flexible	Very Flexible	Very Flexible	Somewhat Flexible
<i>7. Configuration provides full continuum of special education services in each school building?</i>	Likely	Likely	No	Yes	Yes	Likely
<i>8. Configuration require constantly shifting “elementary attendance borders” to balance enrollment?</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
<i>9. Increased opportunity for district wide K-4 or K-5 Instructional/Pedagogical alignment and consistency?</i>	More than present	More than present	No	Yes	Yes	More than present
<i>10. Flexibility in MS scheduling (access to more curricular opportunities by spreading out credit attainment)</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>11. General sentiment from the 2019 Community Survey regarding Positive comments and Concerns</i>	More Positives than Concerns	More Concerns than Positives	Generally Equal Positives & Concerns	Slightly more Concerns than Positives	More Concerns than Positives	More Concerns than Positives
<i>12. Environmental Impact of Regular and Diesel Bus Routes and CO² released into environment (est.)</i>	1,050,625	1,050,625	1,500,000	700,000	700,000	950,000

Repurposing School Buildings



1. Bennett

- District office & Buildings and Grounds Departments
- Transportation offices and bus garage
- Gr 9-12 Performing Arts Center or Alternative Education Center

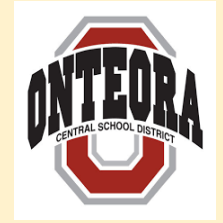
2. Phoenicia

- Community center or Town Hall (or both)
- Ulster BOCES, Ulster Community College or SUNY New Paltz
- Technology Park for start ups, Other commercial use
- Assistance from Rural Ulster Preservation Company (RUPCO)

3. Woodstock

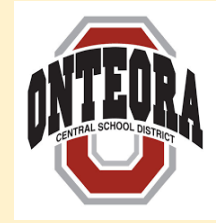
- Original deed restricts sale for non-commercial residential use only
- Many of same non-commercial uses listed for Phoenicia
- Assistance from Rural Ulster Preservation Company (RUPCO)

Survey Process



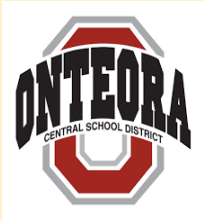
1. Five Questions:
 1. Group identification
 2. Factors to use to decide grade configuration
 3. Thoughts on Middle School grades
 4. Thoughts on the six grade scenarios
 5. Open ended response – “share anything else”
2. Web site survey link, notices home, copies in libraries, media, available in Spanish
3. Textual analysis: Word clouds, Common Phrasing, Review of Individual Text
4. Survey respondents anonymous (IP Address blocked)

Limitations of Survey Analysis

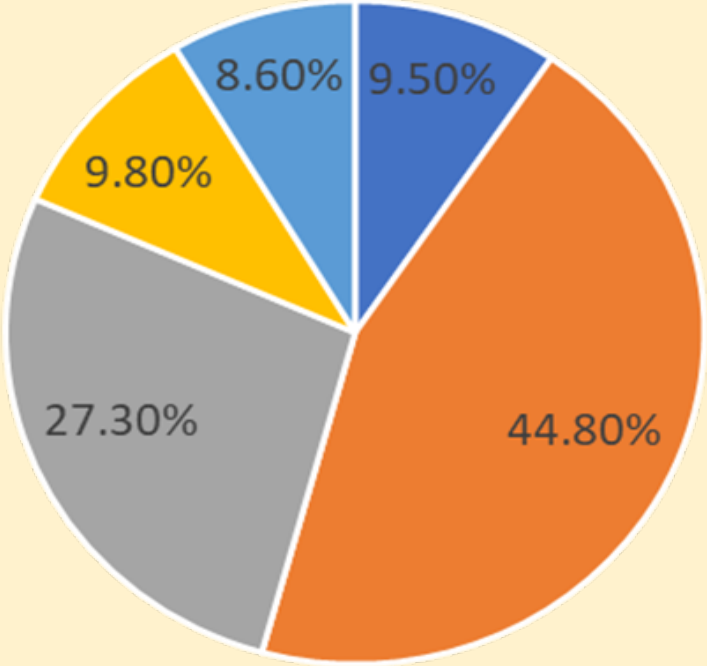


1. Lack of background information for each question for respondents
2. Small sample size of some sub groups required combining
3. Difficulty of interpretation of meaning from text
4. Protecting survey privacy (block IP address) permitted potential multiple surveys completed from single computer
5. Trade off: *Ensure privacy and encourage community input* or ...
Limit responses to a single user per computer?

Highlights of Survey - Response



Respondents - 560



- Students
- Parent/Guardian
- Community
- Teacher K-12
- Other District Staff

Survey: Factors to Help Decide Configuration



Most/Least Important Factors

<i>Most Important</i> Factors Deciding on Grade Alignment & Building Use <i>Ranked from Most to Less Important</i>	Number Respondents	% of Respondents
1. <i>Learning needs</i> of children	388	70.7%
2. <i>Social/emotional</i> needs of children	330	60.1%
<i>Least Important</i> Factors Deciding on Grade Alignment & Building Use <i>Ranked from Less to Least Important</i>	Number Respondents	% of Respondents
9. Ensure school <i>buildings fairly distributed</i> geographically across district	230	41.9%
10. <i>Research</i> on grade level configuration, and school size	224	40.8%
11. <i>Maintain neighborhood schools</i>	192	35.0%
12. Number of <i>student transitions</i> between schools from grades K-12	189	34.4%
13. <i>Community use</i> of school buildings after school hours	142	25.9%

1. Aggregate responses indicate factors to include in decision
2. Highest rated factors *focus on children's needs*
3. Lower rated generally focus on *geo-political, academic and community needs*
4. Sub group responses mostly similar for each factor

Survey: Middle School Configuration

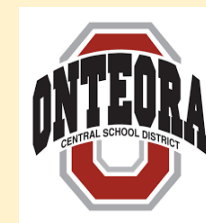


1. Survey most **positive about a grade 6-8 middle school** configuration – *generally consistent among sub groups*
2. Grade 5-8 raises concerns about **too wide** of developmental span
3. Concerns about **lack of physical separation** between grade 7-8 and 9-12 high school students interacting in common hallways, bathrooms, offices, etc.



Survey: Scenarios & Comments

1. Focus of concerns on grade configuration:
 - a) **Separation of the youngest** from the older children
 - b) Potential length of a **bus ride**
 - c) Possible **overcrowding**
 - d) **Impact** on communities – if closing school
 - e) Long term **enrollment decline**
 - f) Need for **cost** reduction

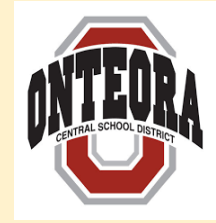


Possible Next Steps

1. Fully ***understand the data and findings*** of the study – deep read
2. The ***school architect could determine*** building cost estimates
3. The Board of Education ***could determine future action taken***

In closing, final comments come from the Executive Summary

Final Thoughts ...



“The school district benefits from a large tax base, multiple fiscal reserves, and an average annual low tax increase over the past decade. Despite underutilized buildings and high per student costs, there is little short-term threat to program or service elimination that would likely spur a decision. *Long term, the continued declining enrollment must be inevitably addressed for fiscal, political and pedagogical reasons.* This study data can form the framework for initiating that process.”

*Onteora School Building Utilization and Grade Configuration Study
Executive Summary - December, 2019*

Questions & Discussion

