

ONTEORA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
BOICEVILLE, NEW YORK 12412**

The Onteora Central School District Board of Education approved the following at the Workshop Meeting held on May 2, 2023:

WHEREAS, the Board of Education of the Onteora Central School District (“Board” or “District”) adopted a goal for the 2022-2023 school year to:

“Support the development of the District’s long-term, district-wide plan that addresses current challenges and opportunities that have already been identified, including declining enrollment, staff shortages, facilities needs, budget, student achievement, community impact, and the expansion of the middle school to add sixth graders”; and

WHEREAS, the Board adopted a similar goal for the 2018-2019 school year, and retained School Study Consultant Kevin S. Baughman, Ph.D., to conduct a thorough School Building Utilization and Grade Configuration Study, which was completed in December 2019; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Baughman’s findings revealed that projected declining enrollment in the District would challenge the use of the current grade level configuration due to a need for equity of class sizes among schools, providing a continuum of services for students with special needs, improved communication and consistency of practice, use of content and common vocabulary among staff, and long-term availability of resources; and

WHEREAS, in furtherance of its goal for the current 2022-2023 school year, the Board took several steps, including:

- Discussing grade reconfiguration at several meetings, including those held on October 25, 2022, January 10, 2023, January 24, 2023, and February 7, 2023:
- Scheduling a viewing of Dr. Baughman’s presentation in the High School auditorium;
- Obtaining feedback from the Shared Decision-Making team on Dr. Baughman’s report;
- Creating a Board Ad Hoc Committee on December 6, 2022, which then led to three World Café events being held on January 31, 2023, February 28, 2023, and March 28, 2023, to engage in conversation with the community on topics including equity of class sizes among schools, providing a continuum of services for children with special needs, and a configuration plan that can adapt to declining enrollment;
- Seeking further input through a Community Survey conducted from mid-

February to mid-March of 2023, which was advertised by a postcard mailed to all taxpayers in the District and through social media, and also a Community Forum that was held on March 30, 2023; and

- Offering presentations at several Board meetings and posting links on the District's website to share long-term planning information; and

WHEREAS, the extensive review undertaken by the Board and District administration of the District's current building utilization and grade configuration reveals that the District will continue to face significant challenges related to the underutilization of elementary school space, the efficient use of staff due to factors including travel among buildings, the equity of services for students located in different elementary schools, the length of bus rides for elementary students, and the use of one school resource officer for all school buildings; and

WHEREAS, the Board voted on January 24, 2023 to reconfigure existing grade levels so as to move 6th grade from Bennett Elementary School to Onteora Middle School, starting in September 2024; and

WHEREAS, with the best interest of District students as its paramount concern, the Board believes that it must take further steps to meet the challenges faced by the issues of declining enrollment, improving educational programming, maximizing staff efficiency, minimizing the length of bus rides for the majority of students as well as the number of bus routes for the District, promoting equity of services, and keeping students safe, all while serving as fiscal stewards of the District's finances; and

WHEREAS, the Board has reviewed and considered the data presented by the Ad Hoc Committee, the Superintendent, and the Assistant Superintendents with regard to grade reconfiguration in the District; and

WHEREAS, the majority of students attending the Phoenicia School are currently traveling by bus past the Bennett School; and

WHEREAS, reconfiguring Woodstock Elementary School and Bennett Elementary School, such that each encompasses grades K through 5, and closing Phoenicia Elementary School would allow for improved instructional experiences for students, fewer transitions between school buildings, more efficient transportation, more effective use of faculty and staff, and greater alignment of resources and practices

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, , that in order to address the challenges faced by the District, the Board of Education of the Onteora Central School District plans to undertake steps regarding the reconfiguration of grade levels with an ultimate goal of locating all grade levels in buildings located on one central campus by 2028, with an acknowledgment and understanding that working toward this goal will require multiple steps and be guided by ongoing collaboration with the District community, with such steps to include:

- Visioning exercises with students, teachers, families, and members of the community to address the hierarchy of needs and explore innovative ideas.

- Consultation with the District's architects and fiscal advisors regarding building conditions and capital project planning, including determining the design and scope of work that would be necessary for a centralized campus, budget planning, and environmental review.
- Voter authorization to fund such a project.
- Review and approval of design plans by the New York State Education Department, a competitive bidding process for the award of contracts, and the commencement and completion of construction work.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Onteora Central School District hereby reconfigures the elementary school buildings and grade levels as follows for the start of the 2024-2025 school year: (1) Phoenicia Elementary School will be closed at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 school year; (2) Woodstock Elementary School and Bennett Elementary School will each encompass grades K-5; and (3) the District will work toward a unified central campus by 2028.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Superintendent of Schools shall provide recommendations and a plan to the Board to effectuate the purposes of this Resolution.

Motioned: Trustee Storey

Seconded: Trustee Bishop

Result: 6 yea, 1 nay, 0 abstain

Yea: Trustee Sherry, Trustee Bishop, Trustee Storey, Trustee Wallis, Trustee Reimondo, Trustee Taylor

Nay: Trustee Hemingway Lynch

Date: 5/3/2023



Amanda Gates
District Clerk