



Readout: Board of Education Input on Task Force Programming Questions

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This summary captures the Board of Education's discussion of seven programming questions posed by the task force. This discussion took place during the September 15, 2026 Board of Education meeting. A recording of the meeting will be available on the Board of Education's YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/@nhpsboardofeducation734>

Questions and administrative responses are produced verbatim as written in the initial email (questions) and in the handout provided during the meeting (administrative input).

All direction is non-binding and reflects the Board's current, directional view only.

DIRECTION AT A GLANCE

#	Topic	BOE Direction
1	Separate Gym and Cafeteria	High-priority must-have if schools consolidate, with cost awareness.
2	Number of Pre-K Classrooms	Plan for three Pre-K classrooms; reassess annually.
3	Life Skills and Outplaced Special Education Services	Supported for cost savings; recognized as competing for space in consolidation.
4	Grade Configuration (Grade 2 with Grades 3–6)	Keep PreK–2 and 3–6 groupings separate.
5	Separate Art and Music Spaces	Lean toward separate rooms in new/renovated space; lower priority than separate gym/cafeateria
6	Bringing Back Previously Offered Programs	Leave room for world languages (incl. ASL) as a lower-priority nice-to-have.
7	Central Office in a School Building	Nice-to-have; consider only with consolidation, via Antolini renovation.

Framing Statement from the Administration

ADMINISTRATIVE INPUT

"Over the past few budget seasons, it has become clear that maintaining our facilities is competing with student educational needs. Therefore, our goal is to future proof education for the students of New Hartford by investing in our schools now."

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

- Kristin clarified that this paragraph was written by the administration, not the task force.
- Kristin explained the purpose of bringing the questions to the Board: the administration's programming inputs shaped the current school floor plans, and the task force needs to confirm that the Board of Education agrees with those recommendations and how it would prioritize them.
- A longtime board member said general maintenance requests have been cut every year (sometimes by 50–90%), that the buildings have been neglected as a result, and that consolidation is unlikely to save money. He stated "yes, I support it," while questioning whether the Board of Finance and the town would fund it.
- Kristin reframed the question as whether the Board of Education would advocate for these priorities, since the town will make any final decision. The task force does not want to send up recommendations the Board would never consider, and these programming questions are the biggest variable driving square footage and cost across the options.

BOE DIRECTION

The Board broadly supports the future-proofing principle; questions are to be answered as priorities the Board would advocate for, not binding commitments.

Question 1: Separate Gym and Cafeteria

QUESTION POSED BY THE TASK FORCE

"If the schools were consolidated, is separation of the gym and cafeteria considered a must have?"

ADMINISTRATIVE INPUT

"Yes. It is currently a barrier now with shared space for eating and physical education. Currently limits the amount of time our students are active. Shared space requires custodial cleanup and setup. Physical education space requires breakdown and setup of equipment. More students would mean more physical education time. Cafeteria equipment impedes usable floor space for physical education. Academic programming will be impacted."

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

- One member said he would advocate planning for two separate spaces if the district consolidates. Another called it "a high priority must have," while noting there is a point where cost becomes too much.
- A member asked how the district managed feeding and exercising students 15–20 years ago, when enrollment was higher.
- The administration explained that the constraint is the number of sections, not total headcount:

- Each section must receive required PE time; when lunch is in session, PE cannot happen in that space.
- The building schedule also has to fit art, music, library and other specials – "a huge jigsaw puzzle."
- Adding a grade level adds roughly three sections, which "can't happen" without compromising the schedule.
- The gyms at Bakerville and New Hartford Elementary are undersized compared to what would be built today. Gym size and amenities vary widely across the three schools and should be uniform for students.
- Space for school assemblies may also factor in, depending on the configuration.
- Lunch overlap between grades is currently limited to about five minutes to protect scheduling and teachers' contractual lunch periods.
- Kristin noted this question also applies if Bakerville or New Hartford Elementary were closed and PreK–2 combined into one existing building. She invited any strong objections; none were raised.

BOE DIRECTION

If schools consolidate, the Board supports advocating for separate gym and cafeteria spaces as a high-priority must-have, while remaining mindful of cost.

Question 2: Number of Pre-K Classrooms

QUESTION POSED BY THE TASK FORCE

"How many pre-k classrooms should be planned for in future scenarios?"

ADMINISTRATIVE INPUT

"Will be based on ratios of student needs. Will be based on enrollment and demand. We have always had a waiting list when we had two sections. Three sections should be planned for. More special education preschool students are eligible for three years of preschool due to the change in kindergarten start age. Recent information provided by the Office of Early Education (OCE) reported that Birth to Three referrals to the district "more than doubled between FY24 and FY25."

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

- A member expressed strong support for including Pre-K classrooms in any new construction.
- A member asked whether four sections could be needed given the kindergarten age change. The administration said it is possible but unlikely: three sections leave room within ratios, the waitlist is small, and needs are reviewed every year.

- Kristin added that the task force's enrollment projection keeps student population roughly flat over the next ten years; enrollment has fluctuated by only about 15–20 students since the 2016–17 school year.
- The administration noted the kindergarten age change has already been absorbed into current classroom counts, and that Pre-K sections, like any grade, are set by student numbers and need.

BOE DIRECTION

Plan for three Pre-K classrooms, with enrollment and demand reviewed annually.

Question 3: Life Skills and Outplaced Special Education Services

QUESTION POSED BY THE TASK FORCE

"Does the Board of Education intend to bring life skills or other outplaced special education services back into our school buildings?"

ADMINISTRATIVE INPUT

"Yes. The Encompass program could include Rooms 25, 27, and 29. The collaborative grant was awarded to New Hartford Canton/Public Schools. This does not guarantee that every outplacement will return, as the program will support students with specific needs. We will have the capability to grow and expand with various student needs."

Kristin noted that Rooms 25, 27, and 29 are the former Oak Hill classrooms across from the library at Antolini, which are not currently allocated. The question informs whether classrooms should be allocated to this program in future plans.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

- A member asked whether the district would accept students from other districts who pay tuition. The answer was yes; that is part of the revenue model, but only possible when classroom space is available. Canton is a partner in the collaborative.
- A member said it is difficult to weigh in without knowing full costs. Kristin responded that the question is about setting educational standards and program priorities; costs will change, and any approved configuration would go to a building committee to work out details.
- **Key tension:** the program could save money in the current configuration by reducing outplacement costs, but it occupies classroom space and could become an obstacle to consolidation.
- A board member raised the idea of planning Pre-K and life skills space together (Questions 2 and 3), so that rooms could flex between the two programs as needs change year to year, rather than planning separate rooms for each. Kristin noted that a flexible room would need to be built to the larger Pre-K standard (about 1,200 sq. ft., versus about 1,000 sq. ft. for a life skills room).

BOE DIRECTION

No objection raised; the Board leans toward supporting in-district life skills and special education programming for its cost savings, while recognizing it competes for space in a consolidation scenario.

Question 4: Grade Configuration (Grade 2 with Grades 3–6)

QUESTION POSED BY THE TASK FORCE

"Is the Board open to changes in grade configurations, specifically grouping second graders with third through sixth graders in one school?"

Kristin clarified that the question concerns a possible PreK–1 / Grades 2–6 split if the district consolidated to two schools.

ADMINISTRATIVE INPUT

"No, Without significant changes to the school programming, physical structure, additional staffing. Pre-K-2 is the common configuration because those grades are considered to be early childhood education that has its own set of practices for building functionality (smaller furniture, playground, bathroom facilities, staffing needs for supervision, etc.) Grade 3-6 is a common configuration for upper elementary with similar considerations for programming and facilities. 2-6 configuration is not ideal nor recommended."

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

- Kristin shared that the task force reviewed similar Connecticut districts: most use PreK–2 and 3–6, and only one other district places grade 2 with grades 3–6.
- A member asked whether all PreK–2 students could fit in one existing building. Kristin said the short answer is no given the programming needs: modeling Bakerville into New Hartford Elementary left two classrooms that do not fit a close-fit footprint, with a similar result at Bakerville. Consolidation would require renovation that expands the building footprint based on the programming inputs being discussed.
- Portables have not been modeled; current planning assumes permanent construction. Bakerville's portables are beyond end of life and could not be certified if significant construction occurs there.

BOE DIRECTION

The Board follows the administration's recommendation to keep PreK–2 and Grades 3–6 as separate groupings; a Grades 2–6 configuration is not being pursued.

Question 5: Separate Art and Music Spaces

QUESTION POSED BY THE TASK FORCE

"Is it a priority to provide separate art and music spaces rather than continuing with combined spaces?"

ADMINISTRATIVE INPUT

"Yes, we are seeking to improve the quality of our programming and offerings to our students. When students attend specials, our staff is engaged in professional learning and planning for instruction. Art, music, p.e., library will all lose significant time in instructional time, again negatively impacting student learning and experiences. Ensuring a place for each special ensures that both students and staff receive the time necessary to succeed."

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

- Art and music currently share a room at Bakerville (combined art, music and health) and New Hartford Elementary; they are separate at Antolini. The question matters most for how much space a consolidated PreK–2 building would need.
- Kristin explained that new construction would separate these rooms, with easy-to-clean flooring for art and better insulation and placement for music. Today, teachers swap materials in and out of the shared room based on the day.
- One member said it would be hard to call this a priority, but that if the town is building, it should not cut corners to save "a couple dollars."
- Kristin outlined the programming standard being used:
 - One dedicated art room per school
 - One or two music rooms per school (the second supports band in grades 5–6)
 - One health classroom per school
 - Art and music rooms: about 1,200 sq. ft. (same as a kindergarten classroom); health room: about 800 sq. ft.

BOE DIRECTION

The Board leans toward separate art and music rooms in any new or renovated construction, treating it as a lower priority than the gym/cafeateria separation.

Question 6: Bringing Back Previously Offered Programs

QUESTION POSED BY THE TASK FORCE

"Does the Board anticipate bringing back any previously offered programs, such as world languages, theater, or similar offerings, that should be considered in long term planning?"

ADMINISTRATIVE INPUT

"The Board is always interested in expanding enrichment offerings."

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

- A member said that as schools begin coordinating curriculum K–12, the district needs to preserve the ability to meet that need, and world languages would likely be part of it. The same member placed this at "a much lesser level" than Question 1, more of a "that'd be great" stretch goal.
- Another member noted that sign language is used across many classrooms and should be considered just as important as Spanish or another language. Kristin confirmed that ASL generally falls under world languages from a curriculum perspective and would be under consideration.

BOE DIRECTION

Preserve flexibility for world languages (including ASL) in long-term planning as a lower-priority nice-to-have rather than a must-have.

Question 7: Central Office in a School Building

QUESTION POSED BY THE TASK FORCE

"Is it a priority for the Board to consider bringing central office functions into a school building?"

ADMINISTRATIVE INPUT

"Central Office is six people running the functions of the school district. It promotes collaborative efforts instead of disconnect between the district leadership and staff. Currently, inefficiency in travel time is a barrier. Seeing the work is more powerful than being disconnected from it."

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

- Kristin noted the Central office currently operates from the 3rd floor of Town Hall, and there is not high demand for that office space from other town departments. The district does not pay rent for the space.



- The administration described current challenges: no storage space (records kept in restrooms, a utility closet and a warehouse), transporting mail between buildings, additional internet fees, and a feeling of disconnection. The administration characterized the move as "ideal. It's not necessary."
- A member said it makes more sense if the district consolidates.
- Kristin explained that both lower-elementary consolidation estimates (into Bakerville or New Hartford Elementary) already include renovation work at Antolini. If prioritized, Central office would be incorporated into that Antolini work.

BOE DIRECTION

Treated as a nice-to-have rather than a must-have; worth including only in a consolidation scenario, as part of Antolini renovation plans.