The superintendent's remarks and presentation to the Board of Education and Pal-Mac Community | October 6, 2026

This transcript has been lightly edited to improve clarity.

Good evening, thank you very much. I am pleased to present the recommendations on the study that the Board asked to be done going back to April of 2026 during a challenging budget season.

This morphed out of where we are at in New York State. This is not just a Pal-Mac issue. This is a New York State public school issue in terms of finances and making sure that schools can be sustainable into the future.

Interestingly tonight, you saw an example of our schools from 1961, and those students had their experience in the 1960s. This building was built in 1924; it's over 100 years old and lots of students have had experiences in this building. Now it's time to think about our youngest students who sat on the carpet here and make sure the class of 2040 has the same opportunities and experiences that the 100 years of kids before them had here at Pal-Mac.

As we think about these recommendations tonight, it's natural for people to say, "Dr. Ike, you can do anything you want except (fill in the blank).” There are sacred cows, or things that we just cannot let go of.

But at the same time, and rightfully so, we have taxpayers and community members who say, "Why haven't you already (fill in the blank)?" The work that we do primarily is about our kids, and it comes back to what needs to happen to ensure our kids' success for the future. That involves our taxpayers, who are a significant part of providing revenue to our district, our staff and their livelihoods are an important component of the decisions that are made by the Board of Education and the district.

With that comes these recommendations that I'm going to speak to tonight.

Do I wish I was in this spot to make this presentation? No, but it's the job that I have to lead the school district. For the last couple of years in particular, we have, along with many other schools, limited options in terms of how we generate revenue for the programs that we have for an over $50 million annual budget.

The limitations that have come into play around revenue are two major factors: state aid and the local tax levy. It's been made very clear by our governor that they have fully funded Foundation Aid, and the increases beyond that are minimal.

The second part of that is in New York State we have a tax levy limit, or often referred to as the tax cap. What can a school district or a municipality raise? What are the limitations around that? We are faced with those two issues of generating revenue that are incredibly limited and have become more and more limited.

The other side of that is expenditures. That's the other way to address the financial circumstances of a school district, and as we said, the majority of a school district's budget is people. That is what we do, we're a people business. When you reduce expenditures, it translates to people. If you go back to the original initial plan of this study that came out in September, you'll see a host of recommendations that could be considered.

I'm going to speak to those tonight in terms of what I recommend.

[SLIDESHOW PRESENTATION SHOWS ROTATING JAR ON DISPLAY]

You look at this jar and see two handles. But as it spins, you see that there's a third handle. This story has existed in Pal-Mac for some time, and it comes from a college graduation in the late '90s, as a person who gave the speech talked about this idea of a third handle.

These first two recommendations speak about if we looked at that ceramic jar as just having two handles. The first is to raise taxes. My recommendation is that we need to keep tax levy increases within the tax levy limit. We already have high taxes, we're a high-tax state, and we have people on a range from limited incomes to the other end of the spectrum that are part of the constituency of our school district that need to be considered. The second handle is we can cut programs, and I'm recommending we need to preserve our core student programs instead.

To do that, given what I shared about revenues and expenditures, we need to consider a third handle. Is there an alternative way to consider this before we look at those other two options? What else can we consider creatively to make sure that we make

decisions about Pal-Mac for the long term, for the kiddos and their friends who sat here earlier, and the time they're going to spend with us till they graduate in 2040 and beyond?

The first recommendation I would ask is to transition Pal-Mac to a three-building instructional model. On July 1st, we would begin offering programs in the Primary School here at Canandaigua Street, the Intermediate School (grades 3-6) at 163 Hyde Parkway, and 7-12 in the High School at 151 Hyde Parkway.

It is an issue of one word: proximity. That proximity has a significant impact beyond asking the question about just dollars or savings. It spreads into proximity in terms of teacher certifications, shared programs, and opportunities for kids that we cannot offer without this. The three-building instructional model is significant, but we bring students together to emphasize a sense of belonging, not about the building location, but about the what, the how, the why, and the who in that place. That's the important part, to make sure that we preserve what we have for the children coming here every single day.

I want to illustrate this, because in 1969 and 1970, that was the highest enrollment for Pal-Mac, and in the current high school building, there were 1,243 students enrolled in that building. In 2007-08, there were 741.

On July 1st, with a 7-12 high school, there will be 684 students, which is still less than those other two. The 163 Hyde Parkway building, the current middle school that will house grades 3-6, the highest year enrollment was 1972-73, which was right after the middle school was built and opened, with 953 students. In 2007-08, there were 500 students, and in grades 3-6, there would be 461 students next year. Enrollment has changed significantly. It is not the school of 1969, it's not the school of 2007. The school of 2026 and beyond is what we're looking at.

We have to do something different; we have to change.

The next recommendation is to consider a policy for tuition-based enrollment. One of the primary functions of the Board of Education is governance and looking at policy. This is not a recommendation to do or not to do, this is a recommendation to consider. Once upon a time, Pal-Mac had a tuition-based enrollment policy. That was discontinued, and it needs to be studied, it needs to be reviewed.

What does this look like if Pal-Mac accepted tuition-paying students outside of the Pal-Mac school district boundaries? The question needs to be asked: is this a benefit?

The next recommendation is to complete a comprehensive review of Special Education and student support services. This is already underway in terms of what we call a program review. It's to expand that program review to involve other experts from the State Education Department to just look at our programs, look at every single student that has a special need, and determine if we are appropriately using the resources that we have. I share this not to focus on special needs students, but simply because we're talking about school finance and the cost of services has skyrocketed. It's about using the third handle approach when we consider special education. What programs can we offer at Pal-Mac versus what programs might be appropriate to share with other districts or BOCES?

The next recommendation is to review every course and program for student value. This is something that's embedded in what we do, and it needs to become a regular ongoing practice. We're working directly with students to begin thinking about this idea called a pathway. How do students unleash their passions instead of earning credits or sitting in a seat because the State Education Department says they have to get so much time?

Next, we continue to align staffing with enrollment and student needs. We're at that critical point of saying we're either going to have to compromise what some may call "nice-to-haves" or electives.There are requirements we must adhere to, and then there are things we do because it's why kids come to school; to get reading support, to be involved in the arts, to be on the athletic field. I am not willing to let us be in that position until I know we've done everything else possible.

Recommendation H is to participate fully in the Wayne-Finger Lakes Regional Optimization Study. We need to be open to looking at data and having others on the outside say, "Here's the situation and here are some things that need to be considered." There are 22 school districts in our BOCES partnering on this study. We are doing this because every single day, students from Gananda walk into Pal-Mac High School as a Pal-Mac High School student as part of our engineering program. It's possible, doable, and happening.

And recommendation I, we have an opportunity with a facility in Macedon to partner with the Town of Macedon. The Town of Macedon is an incredible group of people whose

staff, community, and children come into our buildings all the time. So it does not mean we are closing a school. We are going to open a partnership with the Town of Macedon to say, how can we come together, just like you saw with the homecoming sign “Two towns, one community.” It's the same thing. We have a resource and asset that is valuable to all of us and we need to partner with those at the Town of Macedon.

So at the board meeting on Monday, November 2nd, I would ask for the board's consideration of these recommendations.

Why now? The work of school happens now. We're scheduling, we're planning, we're getting things together, we're already thinking about 2027-28. Budget planning comes in 60 days. So the timing is critical to make sure our kids have what they need. This isn't going to change politically.

Our kids and our community deserve nothing less of us than to try to look at that third handle and say we can do this. We need to pause and breathe and have an opportunity over the next couple weeks to let me share this with the school staff tomorrow, to begin a conversation with the Town of Macedon Board.

Thank you.