

Oneida City School District

Oneida, New York

School Facilities and Grade Organization Study Recommendations



**Castallo and Silky LLC
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December 12, 2023

To: Oneida Board of Education

From: Steve Bociolatt

Re: Facilities and Grade Organization Study Recommendations

Date: December 12, 2023

Background

The Oneida City School District, like many districts across New York State, has experienced a significant decline in student enrollment. Since the 2012-13 school year, K-12 student enrollment has decreased by 572 students (2,211 to 1639) or 26 %. For this study, actual student enrollment numbers were used from the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years when considering space utilization in the elementary buildings, rather than the lower student enrollment projections. However, it is projected that future enrollment for the district will continue to decline, although at a slower rate than has occurred over the past 10+ years.

The Oneida City school community has consistently shown its support for the education of its students. However, finding a balance between the educational needs of its students and the needs of the community to provide the financial resources is an on-going challenge for any board of education and administration. The challenge is even greater, especially post-pandemic, to educate all students to higher levels. As a result, the Board of Education and administration chose to engage in a study to examine possible ways to organize the grades and buildings in light of these challenges.

The main purpose of the study was framed around the following “critical question”:

In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future?

Options that were discussed for the grade configuration of the elementary schools are as follows;

Four Elementary School Buildings

- Option 1 - Status Quo - (4) K- 5 Neighborhood Schools (Pre-K at WP)
- Option 2 - Transition to a Grade Center Plan (Grades PreK-2; 3-5)
 - (2) buildings - grades PreK-2
 - (2) buildings - grades 3-5

Three Elementary School Buildings

- Option 3 - Close an Elementary School - (3) K-5 Neighborhood Schools (Pre-K at WP & DV)
- Option 4 - Close an Elementary School - (3) Grade Center Schools
 - Transition to a Grade Center Plan (Grades K-1; 2-3; 4-5)
 - (1) School - Grades K-1
 - (1) School - Grades 2-3
 - (1) School - Grades 4-5

The next several pages describe the four options that have been reviewed and discussed by various stakeholder groups in the district. Nine school community advisory committee meetings were held along with many internal individual and small group administrative meetings. In addition, presentations were given to the administrative staff, elementary faculty and staff, all interested school staff (voluntary meeting), parent/community members and the Board of Education. Following the information on the various options, recommendations are given for your consideration.

- **Option 1 (Status Quo):**

The neighborhood school concept has been embraced by Oneida for the location of its elementary schools. The advisory committee was asked to develop advantages and disadvantages of the current K-5 grade configuration. Common themes were developed from the list of advantages and disadvantages discussed in four sub-groups of the committee during an advisory meeting. The common themes are listed in the chart below:

**K-5 Grade Configuration
(Common Themes - Advantages and Disadvantages)**

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Transportation – living close to school -Sense of community/community within a community/sense of home on a personal level/building relationships. -Consistency for families to have their children in one building. Participation of family members at school events. -Vertical alignment/collaboration -Peer role models -Less transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Single graded buildings/levels – no teaching partner to collaborate with. Students are with the same group every year. -Scheduling for shared staff -Inequities - inefficient use of resources, shared spaces/single grade/class size not balanced - Horizontal alignment - lack of consistency across grade levels in the district/collaboration issue - Lack of exposure to diversity/isolating community in each building -Social grouping issues (going into middle school) -Limits ability to provide push-in support to students with special needs/least restrictive problems (special education)

Currently, as noted in the chart below, there are a total of sixty-nine full size classrooms in the four elementary buildings. Three (DV, SS, WP) of the four elementary schools are utilizing all of their full-size classrooms for Pre-K, grade level sections, special education services, art, music and reading (WP). Most other smaller spaces in these buildings are being utilized for support services. NB utilizes its full size classrooms for grade level sections, art, music, reading, math, staff room, family room, and a meeting room.

North Broad is the only building with extra full size classrooms that it uses for two music rooms instead of one, a math room, a staff room, a family room, and a meeting room. The full size classrooms in the column “# of other full size classrooms” are utilized as follows:

DV: 1 classroom shared for art and music

NB: 9 classrooms - (1) OT/PT/Speech, (1) art, (2) music, (1) reading, (1) math, (1) staff room
(1) family room, (1) meeting room

SS: 2 classrooms - (1) art and (1) music

WP: 7 classrooms - (4) Pre-K, (1) art, (1) music and (1) reading

Summary of PreK-5 Elementary Full Size Classrooms

2023-24 Summary of PreK-5 Elementary Full Size Classrooms by Building As of 10/04/2023						
School	Grade Levels	# of Students	Total # of Full Size Classrooms	# of Full Size Grade Level Classrooms	# of Full Size Classrooms for Special Education Services	# of Other Full Size Classrooms
Durhamville	K-5	222	17	12	4	1
North Broad	K-5	151	17	8	0	9
Seneca Street	K-5	231	15	12	1	2
Willard Prior	PreK-5*	148*	20	6	7	7*
Total	K-5	752	69	38	12	19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Full Day Pre-K Program is located at WP using Four Full Size Classrooms with 72 students. The # of Pre-K students are not included in the total number of students at WP 						

Student enrollment:

As noted in the chart below, there are 701 students in K-5 grade level sections across four school building. The average number of students in grade level classrooms across the four school buildings is approximately 175 students per building with a range of 107 students in WP to 231 students in SS. There are an additional 51 students in special education self-contained classrooms (10 students at DV and 41 students at WP) and 72 students in full day Pre-K classrooms at WP.

2023-2024 PreK-5 Grade Configuration

2023-2024 Class Sizes for each Elementary School – 38 Sections As of 10/04/2023						
Grade		Current Number of Sections and Class Size of Each Section				
	Total # of Students by Grade	Durhamville	North Broad	Seneca Street	Willard Prior	# of Sections
Pre-K		-	-	-	72*	
K	114	18,18	19	19,20	20	6/19.0
1	103	16,17	19	19,19	13	6/17.2
2	117	20,21	19	19,21	17	6/19.5
3	131	18,19	18,19	20,20	17	7/18.7
4	127	16,16	16,16	21,20	21	7/18.1
5	109	16,17	25	16,16	19	6/18.2
K-5 Total	701 Students	12 Sections 212 Students (17.7 avg.) 222 Students with 10 Students in a Self-Contained Special Education Classroom	8 Sections 151 Students (18.9 avg.)	12 Sections 231 Students (19.3 avg.)	6 Sections 107 Students (17.8 avg.) 148 students with 41 students in Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms	38 Sections 701 Students (18.4 avg.) 752 Students with 51 students in Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms
Note: * The Pre-K program is a full day program. Pre-K students are not included in the total number of students.						

Listed below is the total student enrollment by grade level, by grade level with special education students and by grade level with special education students and Pre-K students.

	Grade Level	With Special Education	With Special Education and Pre-K
DV:	212 students	222	222
NB:	151 students	151	151
SS:	231 students	231	231
WP:	<u>107</u> students	<u>148</u>	<u>220*</u>
	701	752	824

* Includes 72 Pre-K students

Space utilization:

Currently, there are a total of thirty-eight grade level sections in the four elementary buildings with the number of grade level sections varying by building (DV 12; NB 8; SS 12; WP 6). In the near future, there will be a single classroom section in each grade in two of the K-5 school buildings.

Similar to Option #2, #3, #4, the total number of grade level sections in this option would be reduced from 38 sections to 36 sections. In this option, there would be twelve sections at DV, six sections at NB (a reduction of 2 sections at NB), twelve sections at SS and six sections at WP.

Note: In order for a cost savings to occur for the 2024-2025 school year, it is anticipated that two sections at NB would be reduced. However, the current class size of the two grade level sections in grades 3 and 4 would not be able to be incorporated into one section without some students transferring to another elementary school.

Pre-K classrooms are included in the buildings and would continue to be housed at WP.

Special Education Classrooms (15-1, 12-1-1, 8-1-1 and 6-1-1) are housed in two of the four school buildings.

- Three 15-1 special education classrooms (grades K-1; 2-3, 4-5) are housed at Durhamville
- Six special education classrooms are housed at WP
 - Three 12-1-1 classrooms (grades K-1; 2-3; 4-5)
 - Two 8-1-1 classrooms (grades K-2; and 3-5)
 - One 6-1-1 classroom (grades K-1)

Transportation - There are four elementary attendance zones. In April 2023, approximately 153 students or 21% of students are transported out of their attendance zone to another elementary school with a range of 20 students or 9% from DV to 70 students or 39 % from NB.

Financial Savings – Estimated cost savings for option 1 would be \$230,000 if the number of elementary grade level sections were reduced from 38 sections to 36 sections. This cost savings would be similar to the cost savings in Option 2, but significantly less than the cost savings if an elementary school is closed. **Use of average salary for the teacher salaries may make these estimated cost savings lower or higher than actual savings depending on the salary of the person leaving the district (least senior person, resignation or retirement).**

- **Option #2 (Transition to a Grade Center Plan (Grades PreK-2; 3-5))**
 - (2) buildings - grades PreK-2**
 - (2) buildings - grades 3-5**

This grade center plan would create two primary schools housing grades K-2 and two intermediate schools housing grades 3-5. In this grade configuration there will be two elementary attendance zones instead of the four elementary attendance zones currently used for the four K-5 elementary schools. Students in each of the two attendance zones would attend school together in one building for grades K-2 and that same group of students would continue to a second school for grades 3-5 (sister schools).

- For illustration purposes only:
 - WP and NB residences could be one attendance zone. In this scenario, students would attend WP for grades K-2 and NB for grades 3-5.
 - SS and DV residences could be the second attendance zone. Students in this attendance zone would attend SS for grades K-2 and DV for grades 3-5.
 - Four full day Pre-K classrooms would be housed in the two K-2 school buildings.
- Student enrollment:

As shown in the chart below, balancing class size and class composition (three sections per grade level, three grade levels per building) in each building would be somewhat easier than in a building with one section per grade level.

As in Option 1, there are 701 students in K-5 grade level sections across four school buildings. However, the number of students in each of the two grade bands (K-2; 3-5) varies based on the size of each of the three grade levels in that particular building (166/168; 182/185). There are an additional 51 students in special education self-contained classrooms (17 students at DV, 3 students at NB, 3 students at SS, 28 students at WP) and 72 students in full day Pre-K classrooms split between SS and WP.

Listed below is the total student enrollment by school building, by grade level, by grade level with special education students and by grade level with special education and Pre-K students. The change in student enrollment by building and the total number of students in each building is not significant from the current K-5 grade configuration. It is likely special area spaces will be able to handle the change in student enrollment from option 1. However, the district will need to re-examine these areas with building principals and affected staff to determine if they have the capacity to provide the services.

These areas include:

- Cafeteria/kitchen
- PE/gymnasium
- Special subject areas of art, music, and library
- Music (Band and Chorus)
- Support services

	Grade Level	With Special Education	With Special Education and Pre-K	Change from Option 1
DV:	185 students	202	202	-20
NB:	182 students	185	185	+34
SS:	168 students	171	207*	-24
WP:	<u>166 students</u>	<u>194</u>	<u>230*</u>	+10
	701	752	824	

* Includes 36 Pre-K students

Grade Center Configuration With Four Elementary Schools

2023-2024 Student Enrollment as of 10/4/2023 Possible K-2; 3-5 Grade Center Configuration with 4 Elementary Schools 36 Total Sections (9 Sections Per School)							
Grade	Total # of Students by Grade	# of Students Per School	Willard Prior (K-2)	Seneca (K-2)	North Broad (3-5)	Durhamville (3-5)	# of Sections/ Avg. Section Size
Pre-K	72*		18,18	18,18			4/18.0
K	114	57	19,19,19	19,19,19			6/19.0
1	103	51 or 52	17,17,17	17,17,18			6/17.2
2	117	58 or 59	19,19,20	19,20,20			6/19.5
3	131	65 or 66			21,22,22	22,22,22	6/21.8
4	127	63 or 64			21,21,21	21,21,22	6/21.2
5	109	54 or 55			18,18,18	18,18,19	6/18.2
K-5 Total	701		166/9 Sections	168/ 9 Sections	182/9 Sections	185/9 Sections	36/19.5
Average			Avg. =18.4	Avg. = 18.7	Avg. = 20.2	Avg. 20.6	

*The Pre-K program is a full day program. Pre-K Students are not included in the total number of students.

Space utilization:

Currently, there are a total of 38 grade level sections in the four elementary buildings with the number of grade level sections varying by building (DV 12; NB 8; SS 12; WP 6).

Similar to option 1, the total number of grade level sections would be reduced from 38 sections to 36 sections. There would be nine grade level sections (three sections per grade level, three grade levels per building) in all four school buildings.

Pre-K classrooms are included in the buildings and would be housed at WP and DV.

In this option, there is no change in the program delivery or location of the special education classrooms. All current special education classrooms (15-1,12-1-1, 8-1-1 and 6-1-1) are housed in all of the four school buildings and aligned as much as possible by the grade level bands (K-2; 3-5). WP still has the most special education classrooms of the four buildings.

Special Education Classrooms (15-1, 12-1-1, 8-1-1 and 6-1-1) are housed in all four school buildings.

- Two special education classrooms are housed at Durhamville
 - One 15-1 classroom (grades 4-5)
 - One 12-1-1 classroom (grades 4-5)
- Five special education classrooms are housed at WP
 - Two 15-1 classrooms (grades K-1, 2-3)
 - Two 12-1-1 classrooms (grades K-1; 2-3)
 - One 6-1-1 classroom (grades K-1)
- One 8-1-1 (K-2) special education classroom housed at SS
- One 8-1-1 (3-5) special education classroom housed at NB

Financial Savings – Estimated cost savings for option 2 would be \$230,000 if the number of elementary grade level sections were reduced from 38 sections to 36 sections. This cost savings would be similar to the cost savings in Option 1, but significantly less than the cost savings if an elementary school is closed. **Use of average salary for the teacher salaries may make these estimated cost savings lower or higher than actual savings depending on the salary of the person leaving the district (least senior person, resignation or retirement).**

Transportation – In this configuration there will be two elementary attendance zones instead of the four attendance zones currently used for the four K-5 elementary schools. The impact of any grade configuration changes would need to be determined.

- **Option #3 - Close an Elementary School - (3) K-5 Neighborhood Schools (Pre-K at WP & DV)**

Option 3 would close an elementary school and keep the remaining three elementary schools as K-5 neighborhood schools. The following key question needs to be answered if a school building is closed. Is there enough space in each building to house elementary students in three schools rather than four schools based on the current number of students and current level of programming in each building?

In this option, the number of students in Willard Prior will increase significantly mainly due to the increase in the total number of grade level sections in the building. In grades K-5, each grade level would increase from one grade level section to two grade level sections. Also, there would be five less special education classrooms that would need to be relocated or the program delivered in a different manner.

Overall, the total number of full size classrooms would be reduced from 69 classrooms to 54 classrooms if SS is closed or 52 classrooms if NB is closed. In order for a school to close, based on the current level of programs and services in each building, the district would need to:

- Further reduce the total number of grade level classroom sections.
- Change the program delivery or location of some of the special education programs (Inclusion, BOCES). There are five special education classrooms not included in the three school buildings and a few other spaces noted below that may need to be addressed.
- Move the Pre-K classrooms to another location.
- Some combination of the above options

Student Enrollment:

In option 1 and option 2, there are 701 students in grades K-5 across four school buildings. In this option, as shown in the chart below, the average number of students in grade level classrooms across the three school buildings is approximately 234 students per building with a range of 232 students in WP to 236 students in DV. There are an additional 39 students in special education self-contained classrooms (10 at DV, 0 at NB or SS, and 29 at WP) and 72 students in full day Pre-K classrooms at WP.

- Note (1): The number of students per building shown in the chart below assumes an equal distribution of students in each building. However, the number of students per building will vary slightly based on the actual location of the households with children in each attendance zone and location of special education programs.

PreK-5 - Close One of the Elementary Schools

Based on 2023-2024 Student Enrollment with 3 Elementary Schools Assuming an Equal Distribution of Students Reducing 38 sections to 36 Sections (12 Sections Per School)						
Grade	Total # of Students by Grade	# of Students Per School	Willard Prior	North Broad or Seneca Street	Durhamville	# of Sections
Pre-K	72*		(2) Pre-K*	—	(2) Pre-K*	
K	114	38	19,19	19,19	19,19	6/19.0
1	103	34 or 35	17,17	17,17	18,17	6/17.2
2	117	39	20,19	20,19	20,19	6/19.5
3	131	43 or 44	22,21	22,22	22,22	6/21.8
4	127	42 or 43	21,21	21,21	21,22	6/21.2
5	109	36 or 37	18,18	18,18	19,18	6/18.2
K-5 Total	701	232, 233, 236	232/12 Sections	233/12 Sections	236/12 Sections	36
Average			Avg. = 19.3	Avg. = 19.4	Avg. = 19.7	Avg. = 19.5
* Full day Pre-K Program – Pre-K student enrollment and classroom sections are not included in the K-5 total student enrollment and grade level sections at WP and DV.						

In addition to the student enrollment in grade level sections, listed below is the total student enrollment by school building by grade level, by grade level with special education students and by grade level with special education and Pre-K students.

	Grade Level	With Special Education	With Special Education and Pre-K	Change from Option 1
DV:	236 students	246	282*	+60
NB:	233 students	233	233	+82
Or		Or	Or	Or
SS:	233 students	233	233	+ 2
WP:	<u>232</u> students	<u>261</u>	<u>297*</u>	+77
	701	752	812	

*Includes 36 Pre-K students.

From the current K-5 grade configuration, there is a significant change in student enrollment in three of the school buildings (depending on which building is closed) and there is a higher number of students in all of the school buildings, especially at DV with 282 students and at WP with 297 students. Also, as explained in Note 1, this assumes an equal distribution of students in each building. It is possible more students could be added to a building based on the number of children in those attendance zones.

- Note (2): Background Information (Past Student Enrollment Numbers by Building)

In 2017-2018, there were 252 students at DV, 257 students at NB, 200 students at NB and approximately 195-215 students at WP. There were 149 students in grade level classrooms at WP, 46 Pre-K students and possibly 20 special education students. In reviewing the data, it was difficult to determine the exact number of special education students.

Looking back several more years, in the 2012-2013 school year, there were 262 students at DV, 255 students at NB, 223 students at SS (244 students in the 2013-14 school year) and approximately 240 students at WP.

Given the increased student enrollment in three of the school buildings, the district will need to examine special area spaces with building principals and affected staff to determine if there is the capacity to provide the services. These areas include:

- Cafeteria/kitchen
- PE/gymnasium
- Special subject areas of art, music, and library
- Music (Band and Chorus)
- Support services

Space Utilization:

Similar to option #1 and #2, the total number of grade level sections in this option will be reduced from 38 sections to 36 sections. In this option, there will now be twelve grade level sections (two sections per grade level, six grade levels per building) in all three school buildings.

Pre-K classrooms are included in the buildings and would be housed at WP.

Special Education Classrooms: **Not all current special education classrooms are included in this option.**

The following classrooms are in option 3:

- One 15-1 special education classroom (grades 4-5) is located at Durhamville
- One ENL/RR classroom is located at NB or SS depending on which building is closed
- Three 12-1-1 special education classrooms (grades K-1, 2-3, 4-5) are housed at Willard Prior.

Current special education programs not included in the three school buildings:

- (2) 8-1-1 (grades K-2; 3-5)
- (2) 15-1 (grades K-1; 2-3)
- (1) 6-1-1 (grades K-1)

Program areas other than special education classrooms that may need to be addressed are as follows:

- DV does not have a space shown for OT/PT/Speech. Separate music and art classrooms are shown in each of the three school buildings for consistency across this grade configuration. However, these two classrooms could be combined to share a classroom. While not ideal, that is current arrangement at DV.
- DV resource room is currently located in the library and is also located in the library in this option.
- WP stage is used for a staff room and also used for resource room and if needed ENL.
- WP reading area is in a room off the OT/PT/Speech Room

Transportation – There would be three elementary attendance zones instead of the four attendance zones currently used for the four K-5 elementary schools. The impact of any grade configuration changes would need to be determined.

Note: The number of grade level students attending WP would double as a result of an increase from one grade level section to two grade level sections for each grade K-5. This may increase the number of buses transporting students to WP, It is already a tight area at the side of the building where the buses line up. Also, the number of parents transporting their children will increase as well. The district will need to examine the impact of any additional buses on the parking area as well as how best to manage any increase in the number of parents transporting their children.

Financial Savings: Estimated cost savings for option 3 would be \$750,000. Similar to option #1 and #2, the total number of grade level sections in this option will be reduced from 38 sections to 36 sections. However, the cost savings from this option would be significantly more than the cost savings in Option 1 or 2 and very similar to the cost savings in Option 4. The main difference in savings is the reduction of an additional 10-12 staff positions from Option 1 and Option 2 (total of 12-14 positions) as a result of a school building being closed. **Use of average salary for the teacher salaries may make these estimated cost savings lower or higher than actual savings depending on the salary of the person leaving the district (least senior person, resignation or retirement).**

Attrition/Reduction in Staff Positions

Over the past six years, the district has been able to reduce 10 elementary positions as a result of the decrease in the student enrollment. These staff reductions were realized through attrition (a staff member resigns or retires from the district and the position was not filled with a new hire).

In Option 3, there would be a reduction of several positions if an elementary school is closed. Attrition may not occur at a time when the district makes a decision to close a school building and, as a result, it may be necessary to invoke involuntary staff reductions.

- **Option #4 - Close an Elementary School - (3) Grade Center Schools**
 - Transition to a Grade Center Plan (Grades PreK-1; 2-3; 4-5)**
 - (1) School - Grades PreK-1**
 - (1) School - Grades 2-3**
 - (1) School - Grades 4-5**

Option 4 would close an elementary school and transition its three elementary schools to a grade center plan (known as the Princeton Plan). In this option, WP would house all PreK-1 classrooms, NB or SS would house grades 2-3 and DV would house grades 4-5. Similar to option 3, the following key question needs to be answered if a school building is closed. Is there enough space in each building to house elementary students in three schools rather than four schools based on the current number of students and current level of programming in each building?

The advisory committee was asked to develop advantages and disadvantages for the grade center configuration for grades PreK-1, grades 2-3 and grades 4-5. Common themes were developed from the list of advantages and disadvantages discussed in two sub-groups of the committee during an advisory meeting. The common themes are listed in the chart below:

**K-1, 2-3, 4-5 Grade Configuration
(Common Themes – Advantages and Disadvantages)**

Advantages	Disadvantages
-Equity in resources	-Transportation
-Single sense of community	-Multiple transitions
-Consistency with special education services	-Reduction in vertical collaboration
-Scheduling (staff and students)	-Students in multiple buildings may be challenging for families
-Flexibility (staff and students)	-Transportation for parents/students outside of each neighborhood
-Horizontal collaboration	
-Elimination of social stigmas	
-Diversity	

Student Enrollment:

As in Option 3, there are 701 students in grades K-5 across three school building. However, the number of students in each of the three bands (PreK-1; 2-3; 4-5) varies based on the size of each of the two grade levels in that particular building (217 at WP; 248 at NB or SS; 236 at DV). There are an additional 39 students in special education self-contained classrooms (11 at WP, 11 at NB or SS, and 17 at DV) and 72 students in full day Pre-K classrooms at WP.

Grade Center Configuration (K-1;2-3;4-5) Close One of the Elementary Schools

Based on 2023-2024 Student Enrollment Possible Grade Center Configuration with 3 Elementary Schools (K-1; 2-3; 4-5) Reducing 38 sections to 36 Sections (12 Sections Per School)					
Grade	Total # of Students by Grade	Willard Prior (Pre-K-1)	North Broad or Seneca Street (Grades 2-3)	Durhamville Grades (Grades 4-5)	# of Sections/ Avg. Section Size
Pre-K	72*	(4)Pre-K*	—	—	
K	114	114/6 Sections			6/19.0
1	103	103/6 Sections			6/17.2
2	117		117/6 Sections		6/19.5
3	131		131/6 Sections		6/21.8
4	127			127/6 Sections	6/21.2
5	109			109/6 Sections	6/18.2
K-5 Total	701	217/12 Sections	248/ 12 Sections	236/12 Sections	36/19.5
Average		Avg. = 18.1	Avg. = 20.7	Avg. = 19.7	
* Full Day Pre-K Program – Pre-K student enrollment and classroom sections are not included in the K-5 total student enrollment and grade level sections at WP and DV.					

In addition to the student enrollment in grade level sections, listed below is the total student enrollment by school building by grade level, by grade level with special education students and by grade level with special education and Pre-K students.

	Grade Level	With Special Education	With Special Education and Pre-K	Change from Option 1
DV:	236 students	253	253	+31
NB:	248 students	259	259	+108
Or		Or	Or	Or
SS:	248 students	259	259	+28
WP:	<u>217</u> students	<u>228</u>	<u>300*</u>	+80
	701	740	812	

*Includes 36 Pre-K students.

From the current K-5 grade configuration, there is a significant change in student enrollment in two of the school buildings (depending on which building is closed) and there is a higher number of students in all of the school buildings, especially at WP with 300 students.

- Note (1): Background Information (Past Student Enrollment Numbers by Building)

In 2017-2018, there were 252 students at DV, 257 students at NB, 200 students at SS and approximately 195-215 students at WP. There were 149 students in grade level classrooms at WP, 46 Pre-K students and possibly 20 special education students. In reviewing the data, it was difficult to determine the exact number of special education students.

Looking back several more years, in the 2012-2013 school year, there were 262 students at DV, 255 students at NB, 223 students at SS (244 students in the 2013-14 school year) and approximately 240 students at WP.

Given the increased student enrollment in two of the school buildings, the district will need to examine special area spaces with building principals and affected staff to determine if there is the capacity to provide the services. These areas include:

- Cafeteria/kitchen
- PE/gymnasium
- Special subject areas of art, music, and library
- Music (Band and Chorus)
- Support services

Space Utilization:

Overall, the total number of full size classrooms will be reduced from 69 classrooms to 54 classrooms if SS is closed or 52 classrooms if NB is closed. In order for a school to close, based on the current level of programs and services in each building, the district would need to:

- Further reduce the total number of grade level classroom sections (36) shown above.
- Change the program delivery or location of some of the special education programs (Inclusion, BOCES). As noted above, there are five special education classrooms not included in the three school buildings with other spaces noted that may need to be addressed.
- Move the Pre-K classrooms to another location.

Similar to option 1, 2 and 3, the total number of grade level sections in this option will be reduced from 38 sections to 36 sections. In this option, there will now be twelve grade level sections (six sections per grade level, two grade levels per building) in all three school buildings.

Pre-K classrooms are included in the buildings and would be housed at WP.

Special Education Classrooms: **Not all current special education classrooms are included in this option.**

The following classrooms are in option 4:

- Three special education classrooms are housed at Durhamville
 - One 15-1 classroom (grades 4-5)
 - One 12-1-1 classroom (grades 4-5)
 - One ENL/RR classroom
- One 12-1-1 classroom (grades 2-3) is housed at NB or SS depending on which building is closed
- One 12-1-1 classrooms (grades K-1) is housed at Willard Prior.

Current special education programs not included in the three school buildings:

- (2) 8-1-1 (grades K-2; 3-5)
- (2) 15-1 (grades K-1; 2-3)
- (1) 6-1-1 (grades K-1)

Program areas other than special education that the district will need to examine with building principals and affected staff to determine if there is the capacity to provide the services are as follows:

- Band and Chorus: In this option, because of the three grade bands, band and chorus is not needed in the PreK-1 grade building and in the 2-3 grade building. However, all band and chorus would be offered in the 4-5 grade building. Also, currently band lessons are given on the stage and if more room is needed, possibly the cafeteria could be used around the lunch time periods.
- OT/PT/Speech: In this option, DV does not have a space shown for OTPT/Speech. Separate music and art classrooms are shown in each of the three school buildings for consistency across this grade configuration. However, these two classrooms could be combined to share a classroom, although as noted above, all band and chorus would be offered in this building and may need separate classrooms. Another possibility would be to move the ENL/RR to the library. ENL/RR is shown as a full size classroom based on how the program is currently being delivered. However, depending on the numbers and how the program is delivered, ENL/RR could go in the library and the full size classroom room could be used for OT/PT/Speech. While not ideal, the resource room is currently located in the library

Transportation: In this configuration there are no elementary attendance zones. Transportation would be provided to an elementary schools based on the grade level of the student. The impact of any grade configuration change needs to be determined.

- **Note (1): In grade center models, there are different routing options to pick up students, especially for households that have more than one child. There are approximately 161 households with multiple children in grades Pre-K-5.** One bus routing option could be to stagger the start and end times for teachers and students at each of the three school buildings. Another possibility would be to use a similar bus routing method as currently used for the middle school and high school. In this case, all elementary buses would travel around the district with multiple buses stopping at a household at different times at the same house.
- **Note (2): A change in start and end times at the elementary buildings would need to be discussed with building administrators and staff.**

Financial Savings: Estimated cost savings for option 4 would be \$750,000. Similar to option 1, 2 and 3, the total number of grade level sections in this option will be reduced from 38 sections to 36 sections. The cost savings from this option would be significantly more than the cost savings in option 1 or 2 and very similar to the cost savings in option 3. The main difference in savings is the reduction of an additional 10-12 staff positions from option 1 and option 2 (total of 12-14 positions) as a result of a school building being closed. **Use of average salary for the teacher salaries may make these estimated cost savings lower or higher than actual savings depending on the salary of the person leaving the district (least senior person, resignation or retirement).**

Attrition/Reduction in Staff Positions

Over the past six years, the district has been able to reduce 10 elementary positions as a result of the decrease in the student enrollment. These staff reductions were realized through attrition (a staff member resigns or retires from the district and the position was not filled with a new hire).

In Option 4, there would be a reduction of several positions if an elementary school is closed. Attrition may not occur at a time when the district makes a decision to close a school building and, as a result, it may be necessary to invoke involuntary staff reductions.

Recommendations

The following conclusions or answers to the critical question and other key questions that was the focus of this study have been reached.

- Purpose of Study/Critical Question
In considering a number of options, is there a better way educationally and fiscally to reconfigure the grades and facilities to provide a sound instructional program now and in the future?
- Key Questions: From School Community Advisory Committee Meetings
 - Which Configuration? Three or Four Elementary Buildings?
 - Neighborhood Schools
 - Grade Center Schools
 - Is There Enough Classroom Space in Three Buildings to House Elementary Students?
 - Determine Location and Delivery of Programs (Pre-K, Special Education Services, Support Services, Band, Chorus, Other)
 - If Three Elementary Buildings, Which Building to Close?
 - What is the Timeline for the Recommendation(s)
 - What is the Target Date(s) for Implementation of any Change in Grade Configuration

The first two grade configuration options included all four of the elementary buildings with option 1 keeping K-5 neighborhood schools and Option 2 transitioning from the K-5 neighborhood schools to a grade center configuration with two PreK-2 schools and two grade 3-5 schools. The financial cost savings are similar in option #1 or option #2, yet considerably less than the cost savings from either Option 3 or Option 4.

Options 3 and 4 address two different grade configurations if an elementary building is closed. Option 3 would have three K-5 school buildings and Option 4 would have a grade center configuration with a PreK-1 school building; a grade 2-3 school building and a grade 4-5 school building. The financial cost savings are similar in either option 3 or option 4, but are considerably more than the cost savings in either Option 1 or Option 2.

- Option 1 would keep the status quo with four K-5 elementary schools and Pre-K housed at WP. Currently, WP has one classroom section for each grade level. NB has one classroom section for four grade levels (K, 1, 2, 5) and two sections in grades three and four. In the near future, it is projected that all sections at NB will have a single section at each grade level. As a result, two of the four school buildings would have a single grade level section in each grade K-5. As a consultant, this option, while feasible, is not desirable as a long-term solution to achieve the stated purpose/critical question of the study.

- Option 2 would keep four elementary buildings as well and change the grade configuration from K-5 neighborhood schools to a grade center configuration with two school buildings PreK-2 and two school buildings grades 3-5. This option is feasible, and if the district decided that it could not close an elementary building over the next few years, it could be a desirable direction in the with three classroom sections per grade level and space for the current level of special education services, other support services and the Pre-K program. Staffing for the various programs would still be a challenge in four school buildings with the current and projected student enrollment numbers. However, special education programs could be delivered in a grade band similar to the level of the special education program.

With a change to a grade center configuration, the impact of transportation would need to be determined. In this option, there would be two attendance zones instead of the four elementary zones currently used for the four K-5 elementary schools. Students in each of the two attendance zones would attend school together in one building for grades K-2 and that same group of students would continue to a second school for grades 3-5 (sister schools).

For parents, additional information/community meeting(s) would be needed to clearly articulate how the benefits of this grade configuration would outweigh any disadvantages of this configuration in comparison to the current K-5 grade configuration. In this option, while there would be a transition from a K-5 neighborhood school to a grade center configuration, their children would remain in their current school building (neighborhood) for three or four years in one of the grade bands (PreK-2 or 3-5).

- Option 3 would close an elementary school and keep the remaining three elementary schools as K-5 neighborhood schools. This option is dependent on the district changing the delivery or location of five to seven classrooms. This reduction of classrooms could be accomplished by:
 - A further reduction of the total number of grade level classroom sections (36).
 - A change in the program delivery or location of some of the special education programs (Inclusion, BOCES). There are five special education classrooms not included in the three school buildings as well as other spaces that need to be addressed.
 - A change in the location of the Pre-K classrooms.
 - A combination of one or more of these options
- Option 4 would close an elementary school and change the grade configuration for the three remaining schools from K-5 neighborhood schools to a PreK-1, 2-3, 4-5 grade center configuration. This option, similar to option 3, is also dependent on the district changing the delivery or location of five to seven classrooms. As noted in option 3, this reduction of classrooms could be accomplished by:

- A further reduction of the total number of grade level classroom sections (36).
- A change in the program delivery or location of some of the special education programs (Inclusion, BOCES). There are five special education classrooms not included in the three school buildings as well as other spaces that may need to be addressed.
- A change in the location of the Pre-K classrooms.
- A combination of one or more of these options

Summary of Financial Savings by Option

2024-2025 Summary of Estimated Savings by Option (Includes Fringe Benefits) 10-14 positions	
Option	2024-2025 Estimated Staffing Savings
1-Status Quo – (K-5) (Four K-5 Elementary Schools)	Continued reduction of two classroom sections based on declining enrollment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022-2023 school year (40 Classroom Sections) • 2023-2024 school year (38 Classroom Sections) • Projected 2024-2025 school year (36 Classroom Sections)
	Total 2024-2025 Estimated Savings (Average Salary)\$230,000**
2-Grade Center Plan - (K-2;3-5) (Four Elementary Schools) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Schools: Grades K-2 • Two Schools: Grades 3-5 	Transition from K-5 to grades K-2; 3-5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued reduction of two classroom sections based on declining enrollment • Projected 2024-2025 school year (36 Classroom Sections)
	Total 2024-2025 Estimated Savings (Average Salary)\$230,000**
3-Close an Elementary School – (K-5) (Three K-5 Elementary Schools) or 4-Close an Elementary School Grade Center Plan: (K-1;2-3;4-5) (Three Elementary Buildings) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One School: Grades K-1 • One School : Grades 2-3 • One School: Grades 4-5 	Option 3 &4: Reduction of 10-14 positions: (Average Salary Used in each Staff Area) Projected 2024-25 school year: 1 administrator, 2 classroom teachers, 1 physical education teacher, 1 nurse, 1 secretary, 3 teacher aides , 2 food service workers, 2 custodians
	Total 2024-2025 Estimated Savings (Average Salary)\$750,000 - \$850,000** **Use of average salary may make these est. savings higher than actual savings

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Recommendations

The collection of the data from the district was one of the first steps taken in the study process. This data included student enrollment history and projections, instructional programs, facilities, student transportation, staffing, and financial information. Once the data was received, it was summarized, analyzed, and shared with the school community advisory committee at nine committee meetings (refer to the tab on School Community Advisory Meetings for the meeting agendas, PowerPoint presentations and minutes of the meetings).

As part of the committee meetings, members shared their thoughts and opinions on the information and the possible grade configuration options presented. It is important to recognize the feelings or emotions associated with the possibility of realigning school buildings and that they are a part of the data collected in any study. The fabric of schools and communities is directly related to the emotional connection people have with them. This connection was evident from the list of advantages and disadvantages reviewed and discussed by the committee and at various other meetings throughout the study process.

The following recommendations are made with consideration of all the data associated with the study process. Recommendations are listed by the key questions discussed during the study.

Recommendation 1: Which Configuration? K-5 Neighborhood Schools or Grade Center Schools

It is recommended that the Board of Education continue with K-5 neighborhood schools in the immediate future. The neighborhood school concept has been embraced by Oneida for the location of its elementary schools. Approximately fifteen years ago, two neighborhood schools closed in the district. Moving forward, the number of neighborhood schools could continue to evolve as the district may be closing another elementary school building. The amount of change and planning associated with closing a school building and implementing a grade center configuration in a short timeline would be very difficult.

Recommendation 2: Three or Four Elementary Buildings? Is There Enough Classroom Space in Three Buildings to House Elementary Students?

It recommended that the Board of Education close an elementary school at the beginning of the 2025-26 school year. The recommendation is contingent upon addressing the following two areas:

Space Utilization: In order to have sufficient space in three school buildings, the district will need to be able to change the delivery or location of at least five special education programs (15-1; 8-1-1 and 6-1-1), or further reduce the number of grade level classrooms (36), or change the location of Pre-K program or some combination of these options.

Student Enrollment: As a result of a school building being closed, the district will need to examine the special area spaces listed below with building principals and affected staff to determine that they have the needed capacity to absorb the increase in student enrollment in order to adequately provide these services.

The special area spaces include:

- Cafeteria/kitchen
- PE/gymnasium
- Special subject areas of art, music, and library
- Music (Band and Chorus)
- Support services

Recommendation 3: Which Building to Close?

It is recommended that the Board of Education close the North Broad Elementary School at the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year.

- This recommendation and timeline is contingent on the district being able to solve both the space utilization needs and the impact of the additional student enrollment in the school buildings. (Recommendation #2).
- It is also contingent on any financial implications with the upcoming school budget and the loss of ARPA federal grant funds in September 2024. While the recommendation is for the 2025-2026 school year, the Board, as with all recommendations, could choose an earlier timeline to meet any potential financial shortfalls.

Throughout the study process, Durhamville and Willard Prior were not considered for a possible school closure. Durhamville's location, size of the building and the large amount land around the school were key factors in the decision. Willard Prior had the largest number of full size classrooms (20) of the four school buildings. Also, many of its classrooms have bathrooms and sinks that are beneficial, especially for PreK-1.

With respect to Seneca Street or North Broad, throughout the study process, they both were considered for possible school closure. Seneca Street is the newest school building. It has the smallest number of full size classrooms (15) of the four school building, but several of the classrooms have bathrooms and sinks. North Broad is the oldest building, would involve the most long-term costs of any of the buildings and the site is small and landlocked. It does have 17 full size classrooms (compared to 15 full size classrooms at Seneca), but only has one or two classrooms with a bathroom or sink.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that the district work with their architects, staff and community to develop a long -term design of the appropriate school facilities in an effort to provide classroom space in the most efficient and effective manner.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended, for parents and the community, if a future change to a grade center configuration is made, informational meeting(s) be held to clearly articulate the benefits of the grade center plan.

Other Study Key Questions

- What is the Timeline for the Recommendation(s) - December 2023/January 2024
- What is the Target Date(s) for Implementation of any Change in Grade Configuration

The target date is for 2025-2026 school year, contingent on space utilization, capacity of student enrollment in special area spaces and the financial condition of the district. This timeline will allow for sufficient planning time to finalize implementation details associated with closing a school so that the transition is as smooth as possible.

Other Study Considerations

- The following building options were discussed during the study and will be addressed when the district examines the space utilization and the building capacity of increased enrollment in the special space areas.

If an elementary school is closed, should the district

- Option 1: Keep the building for district use
(i.e. Full-day Pre-K program; district offices, other)
 - Move full-day Pre- K program into the building
 - Move the district offices into the building
 - ❖ Sell or lease district office building
- Option 2: Lease the elementary building (NB) to another organization
- Option 3: Sell the elementary building (NB)

Also, during the study, the upstairs area in the Costello Transportation Building was discussed as a possible location for the district office.

- Upstairs area - currently leased by BOCES