

DISTRICT PRIORITIES

Plan of Work

2016-17

IV. SCHOOL RECONFIGURATION

For the past 17 years, the district's Instructional Space Committee has been monitoring elementary enrollment trends and recommending actions that should be taken to preserve the district's small class size initiative. Many of these recommendations – including converting unused locker rooms into classrooms, adding classrooms at Leary, and making small attendance areas changes were implemented by the Board. Unfortunately, four years ago the Space Committee, which includes parent representatives from every school, informed the Board that by 2017 some elementary schools would not have enough classroom space for small class sizes, and that by 2019, even with redistricting, no elementary school would have sufficient classroom space unless class sizes are increased.

Knowing that additional classroom space was needed to continue small elementary class sizes, the Board agreed that classroom space should also be added for full-day kindergarten (FDK). Of the more than 700 school districts in NYS, fewer than 20 did not yet offer FDK, Rush-Henrietta being one of these. Given the increased rigor of Common Core Learning Standards, the Board of Education believes that our kindergarten should be expanded from a half-day to full-day program.

At the Board's request, the district's Instructional Space Committee identified eight approaches that could be used to provide the space required for FDK and enrollment management. The Board carefully considered each approach, and four others. Meetings were held with school administrators, school staff, and parents (DPAC) to discuss the pros and cons of these alternatives. After discussing stakeholder feedback, and reviewing enrollment and cost projections, the Board unanimously agreed that a K3-46-79 school configuration was the best approach.

During December 2014 and January 2015, community forums and staff meetings were held to explain the plan and respond to stakeholder questions and concerns. On February 10th, the community endorsed the Board's plan by a margin of 1,313 yes to 442 No (75% endorsement).

On February 17, 2015, a transition plan was presented to the Board and endorsed. This transition plan included: establishing stakeholder advisory teams to assist with planning and implementing the transition; validating attendance area changes and enrollment projections; completing construction plans and submitting these plans to SED for authorization; surveying staff to ascertain school placement preferences for fall 2017; assisting staff at-risk of losing their jobs because of school reconfiguration with obtaining certifications that will permit their continued employment at R-H; establishing a student transition plan; establishing a plan for wrap-around day care at elementary schools; and establishing program committees for the new K-3, 4-6, and 7-9 schools.

B. The Improvement Plan

1. **Transition Advisory Team:** In March 2015, a Transition Advisory Team was formed to help with reconfiguration. This team, consisting of the leaders of the district's employee associations, meets monthly with the Superintendent to discuss the progress of school reconfiguration and related issues and concerns. These issues and concerns are summarized in a document that is available on the district website at www.rhnet.org/reconfiguration.
2. **Facility Renovation:** In April 2015, facility renovation plans school reconfiguration were completed for Sherman, Vollmer, and Burger, and endorsed by the Board of Education. These renovation plans can be viewed on the district website. In April 2016, the facility renovation plans were approved by the State Education Department. Construction bids were awarded in May 2016. Construction began in June 2016. These projects will be completed by July 2017.

3. **School Attendance Areas:** In May 2015, the Board of Education established new school attendance areas for school reconfiguration. These school attendance areas will take effect in July 2017. These attendance areas can be viewed on the district website.
4. **Vollmer Learning Center Transition:** In June 2015, to support timely renovation of the Vollmer Learning Center, the district reached an agreement to lease the former Good Shepherd School on East Henrietta Road for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years. The Vollmer Learning Center was vacated at the end of June 2016. Programs located at Vollmer were relocated to other sites. Most programs were relocated to the Good Shepherd facility on East Henrietta Road (Alternative High School, Tutoring Center, Special Education Transition Program, R-H School Age Child Care, Family Center, Even Start, and Adult Literacy). The Universal Pre-K program was relocated to the NGA for summer 2016 as Sherman was undergoing renovation. The UPK program will be moved from the NGA to Sherman at the end of the summer. The District Registrar and Superintendent's Hearing Room were relocated to the Carlton Webster Building (NGA). The District's Nurse Practitioner was relocated to the Parker Administration Building.
5. **School Start and End Times:** In June 2015, the Board of Education adopted tentative start and end times for schools when school reconfiguration begins in September 2017. Unfortunately, the district's transportation services department could not accommodate these times. Instead, the start and end times for primary and intermediate schools had to be switched. Revised start and end times for schools were adopted by the Board of Education in June 2016. Primary schools will begin at 7:45 am and end at 2:00 pm. Intermediate schools will begin at 9:20 am and end at 3:35 pm. Junior High Schools will begin at 7:15 am and end at 2:30 pm. The SHS will begin at 7:35 am and end at 2:50 pm. In addition, an after school activity period will be offered at each Intermediate School, Junior High School and the Senior High School, and a before school activity period will be offered at each Intermediate School for music ensembles. Start and end times for primary and intermediate schools had to be switched from the original plan because of student transportation requirements. A later start time for the Senior High School was explored. Unfortunately, student transportation requirements made a later high school start time impractical.
6. **Student Transition** - In July 2015, the Board of Education adopted a three-year plan for transitioning students to their new schools. This three-year plan provided an "age-out" and "early transition" option to avoid having students attend three schools in three different years. This transition plan is posted on the district website. Planning for student transition included the possibility of keeping the NGA open for one additional year to help with transitioning to two Intermediate Schools (Grades 4-6) and two Junior High Schools (Grades 7-9). Unfortunately, the Board of Education reached the conclusion that our desire to keep the Ninth Grade Academy open for an additional year was not feasible because it required more than \$1 million in additional operating costs. This means that sixth grade will begin at Sherman and Vollmer Elementary Schools and ninth grade will begin at Burger and Roth Junior High Schools in September 2017. In August 2015, and again in January 2016, letters explaining student transition options were sent to the parents of children required to change schools in September 2017. Parents not responding to this letter were contacted by phone. Parents of new entrants were also informed about their student transition options when they registered. All permissible parent requests have been honored.
7. **Program Advisory Teams** – Primary, Intermediate, Junior High School, and Senior High School Program Advisory Teams, consisting of teachers, school administrators, and employee association representatives, began meeting in September 2015 to review the Board of Education's preliminary plans for school reconfiguration and to recommend modifications. Program Advisory Teams completed their work in May 2016. Program Advisory Team recommendations are being used to draft Administrative Guidelines for School Reconfiguration. These administrative guidelines will be completed by October 2016, and presented to the Board of Education for adoption in November 2016.

8. **Staff Transition** – In March 2016 and May 2016, all school staff were surveyed about their school placement preference for September 2017. School staff received their preliminary school assignments for September 2017 in June 2016. More than 85% of staff received their preference. This early notification provides school staff with a full year to plan for school transition and participate in planning for the opening of their new school. Staff meetings for the new schools have been scheduled for April 2017 and June 2017. Protocols for transitioning staff, materials, and equipment to the new schools will be established by March 2017.
9. **PTO Transition** - In January 2016, district administrators met with representatives from each of the district's parent teacher organizations to assist with their transition to the new school configuration. Three issues were discussed: (1) disbursement of funds, (2) playgrounds, and (3) PTO reorganization. With respect to disbursement of funds, a model for disbursing year-end fund balances from current to new parent teacher organizations based on weighted student transition was adopted. With respect to playgrounds, all prospective primary and intermediate school playgrounds were reviewed for age-appropriateness and equity. This review was completed in February 2016 by a team consisting of PE Teachers, Building and Grounds staff, a vendor consultant, and the Assistant Superintendent of School Finance and Operations. New playground equipment has been ordered and will be installed in spring 2017. With respect to PTO reorganization, the district will facilitate the establishment of new parent teacher organizations in January 2017.
10. **Child Care Services:** A plan for merging the district's School-Age Child Care Program and the Town of Henrietta's After-School Recreation Program into a single Wrap-Around Child Care Program was endorsed by the Rush-Henrietta Board of Education and Town of Henrietta Board in January 2016. This plan provides affordable school-age child care before and after school at each of the district's primary (K-3) and intermediate (4-6) schools. The plan will be posted on the district's website in October 2016.
11. **Transportation Services** –Four guidelines for student transportation were adopted by the Board of Education in June 2016. First, the walk-ride distance for primary school students will be reduced from 0.2 miles to 0.1 miles beginning in September 2017. All other walk-ride distances will remain the same (Intermediate Schools – 0.2 miles; Junior High Schools and the Senior High School – 0.7 miles). Second, transportation will continue to be provided to and from child-care providers, both within and outside of the student's attendance area. Third, a consistent five-day per week transportation schedule will be required, with no more than two pick-up and drop-off points during the week. Fourth, transportation services will be provided for all before and after school activities.

C. Impact of the Improvement Plan:

1. School renovation projects are on schedule and within budget. A \$500,000 State and Municipal Capital Grant was secured through State Assemblyman Harry Bronson to support this work.
2. Transportation services for out-of-attendance area child care will require additional buses and drivers. The expected cost of these services will be \$670,000 per year.