



Dear Sawyer Community, November 10, 2021

Tough, unpopular decisions are never easy to discuss, and even harder to make.

When I was hired, the Board of Education tasked me with finding innovative solutions to help the District maximize its scarce resources in a manner to best support student achievement. In the spring of 2021, the Board authorized the creation of a Governance Committee to explore various options to address a funding gap the District will face starting in the 2022-2023 school year. The committee, which consists of approximately 30 parents, teachers, and District leaders has been meeting since June to find answers to the difficult question, “How can we improve efficiency while increasing programming, aligning curriculum, and enhancing instruction ?”

Let me begin by saying, I believe that learning should be purposeful, exciting, exploratory, joyful, and with boundless possibilities. I am committed to fostering this type of growth by positioning our students and teachers in environments that enable children to develop strong learning skills that allow them to master curricula across all academic areas. Realizing this vision takes resources, which over the next several years will be more scarce than ever.

Our District is anticipating a budget shortfall for the next school year (2022-2023). These are recurring costs that will continue to extrapolate over the next few years. Costs continue to rise at levels that exceed State Aid funding and our ability to generate other revenue. Student needs and mandates are also increasing.

The Committee has explored various district operations and is in the process of trying to lay out a viable, sustainable plan that would provide the best learning opportunities for District students, while being fiscally responsible to the taxpayer.

In the past twenty years, our school population has declined by over 1,000 students. Even with new housing developments underway, our student population will be far less than it was in 2005. Rightsizing our footprint to align with the decreased population would reduce expenditures and allow us to redirect resources to teaching and learning, resulting in increased opportunities for students, balanced class sizes, a consistent curriculum, and expanded support for students' emotional and social wellbeing.

Although nothing has been decided, the Governance Committee recently researched the cost savings generated by three different school configuration scenarios that include repurposing a building, which could possibly be used to serve a community need such as an Early Intervention Center, a Pre-K building, or other services.

- Scenario A would maintain three buildings as K-6 schools.

- Scenario B is a combination of grade banding and maintaining our neighborhood schools. 2 K-3 buildings and 1 Grade 4 - 6 building.
- Scenario C creates one Grades K-2 building, one Grades 3-4 building, and one Grades 5-6 building.
- *The committee is not limited to these models and will continue to work to find the best solution to meet the needs of all our students and stakeholders.*

If we pursue one of these scenarios, we will also need to take into consideration the condition of the school facility, the capacity of a school to accommodate an excess of students, special programs, results of the transportation study, leasability and more.

The decision to repurpose a building is anguishing. It profoundly affects parents, neighborhoods, communities, district personnel, and, of course, students. It affects relationships, routines, and cherished events. In short, it alters not only district operations but also lives.

A decision not to repurpose a building and/or redistrict our schools, however, amidst circumstances of declining enrollment and economic necessity, can be imprudent. And while the immediate effects of redistricting may be painful, the long-term effects will be beneficial to everyone.

Information is still being collected and further discussions are needed. Prior to making any decision, we will seek community involvement, but we need more time to continue our research. A recommendation to the Board of Education is needed no later than January of 2022.

I understand that this is an emotional topic for our families. I wish this were not a necessary discussion but I truly believe with these collaborations and reconfiguring we can continue to move Saugerties CSD in a direction to increase student achievement and maintain student programming. I urge everyone to be patient and allow the work to continue until we have been able to complete the process. If you have questions please email [kreinhardt@saugerties.k12.ny.us](mailto:kreinhardt@saugerties.k12.ny.us) or call the District Office 845-247-6550. We are happy to discuss your concerns.

Sincerely,  
Kirk Reinhardt  
Superintendent