Cortland Enlarged City School District

Cortland, New York

A Study to Examine the Utilization of the District's Schools

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CHAPTER 1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cortland Enlarged City School District, like many upstate school districts, has recently experienced declining student enrollment and significant financial challenges. Realizing that business as usual is not an option for the future, the district chose to engage in a study to ascertain the best use of its facilities for the future. A consulting firm was engaged to work with a district advisory committee to answer the following questions:

What options exist to arrange the grades and school buildings to maintain, and perhaps enhance, the education of Cortland City School District students while ensuring fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer? How could the grades and schools be organized?

Six meetings were held with the consultants and the advisory committee to consider a variety of options for answering the study questions. In the end, the following findings, conclusion, and recommendations are made about the school facilities in Cortland.

Key Findings

Finding 1: The live birth rate in the Cortland City School district has declined somewhat from 2004 to 2016.
Finding 2: The district's K-12 enrollment has declined from 2,637 in 2012-13 to 2,362 this current year.
Finding 3: The projected enrollment for the school district is expected to continue to decline out to 2024-25 to approximately 2,007 students.
Finding 4: All of the elementary schools have experienced a decline in enrollment since 2013-14 with Parker and Virgil seeing the largest drops.
Finding 5: Home-schooled students in Cortland average about 45-50 per year while the number of non-resident students attending the district has dropped from 23 in 2013-14 to just six this year.
Finding 6: Approximately 40 students a year from Cortland attend schools elsewhere.
Finding 7: Cortland County's population has dropped since 2005 and the U.S. Census Bureau projects the county's population will continue to drop through 2040.
Finding 8: The median age of Cortland County residents is increasing and the typical childbearing age group (25-44) is declining.
Finding 9: Elementary class sizes in the district this year vary from 12 to 24 and the average class size compares favorably to other Cortland County school districts and New York State as a whole.
Finding 10: Virgil is the smallest elementary school with only one section of a grade while Barry is the largest with some grades (1, 4, 5, 6) this year having three sections.
Finding 11: The elementary special area subject offerings are quite similar in terms of the amount of time students receive per week, except there are some differences from one building to the next.
Finding 12: Elementary school student performance on the NYS tests in grades 3-8 for the past four years are quite similar across buildings.

Finding 13: Cortland Junior-Senior High School offers a very comprehensive program to its students.
Finding 14: Junior High students can accelerate in math and science and they have the opportunity to gain first year credit in a foreign language.
Finding 15: The High School curriculum offers two foreign languages, an array of business courses, a number of technology courses, and other curriculum opportunities many school districts have eliminated.
Finding 16: Cortland students have the opportunity to take career and technical education classes at the OCM BOCES and in fact 28% of seniors and juniors did so.
Finding 17: The district has 337 students currently in need of special education services up from 291 in 2012-13; this represents approximately 14% of the overall district enrollment.
Finding 18: Parker and Randall are the oldest school buildings in the district both having been built in 1928 while the Junior-Senior High is the newest built in 1964.
Finding 19: Of the elementary schools, Barry is the largest (65,840 sq. ft.) and Virgil is the smallest (34,654 sq. ft.).
Finding 20: There are more rooms in the elementary schools than are needed to house the district's elementary students.
Finding 21: The Junior-Senior High School is only used at approximately 54% capacity.
Finding 22: The 2015 building conditions survey (BCS) shows that all the schools need improvements.
Finding 23: The district total for capital work from the BCS to just complete priority 1 immediate needs is $27,720,525.
Finding 24: Utility costs for each of the elementary schools vary from $42,707 at Virgil to $61,215 at Barry. Closing any school usually results in about 40% savings on utility bills.
Finding 25: With respect to instructional staff, Cortland has 250 teachers, 31 teaching assistants, 47 teacher aides and nine building principals.
Finding 26: The percentage of salary, on average, for district employees is 47% for benefits.
Finding 26: Staff savings from closing Parker Elementary School would be approximately $801,685 in salary and benefits.
Finding 27: Staff savings from closing Virgil Elementary School would be approximately $592,888 in salary and benefits.
Finding 28: Cortland uses a double trip bussing system to get students to and from school each day.
Finding 29: Currently, the district has some students that walk to school-for grades 7-12 who live within 1.5 miles of the Jr-Sr High School and K-6 students living within .9 mile from their respective elementary school.
Finding 30: To some degree, the district's transportation routes are organized around the elementary attendance zones, however the district has a very complex transportation system that has regular bus routes stopping at multiple schools.
Finding 31: Cortland transports students out of the district for their education program to the McEvoy Center, Homer Central School District, CCA, and St. Mary's. In addition, the district transports students to special education program locations in Solvay UFSD, T-S-T BOCES, George Junior Republic, and a residential school in Rochester.

Finding 32: The district provides one bus each day at 3:15 for high school students that get extra academic assistance and a 4:30 bus for student athletes. Additionally, there is a 4:30 late bus run for elementary students in the Extended Day Program.
Finding 33: Cortland residents have passed school budget votes in nine of the past ten years.
Finding 34: Cortland residents have supported capital project votes on two recent occasions (2007 and 2014) in recent years as well as 11 of 12 bus propositions since 2005.
Finding 35: The district's restricted fund balance has been declining the last three years, which is not a positive sign.
Finding 36: The $291,137 Cortland had at the end of last year in its unassigned fund balance is only .6% of this year's general fund budget. This is an extremely low amount to maintain.
Finding 37: Cortland used $535,000 of its fund balance to hold down the tax rate this year, therefore it will need to come up with this same amount next year to do the same or it will experience a fiscal challenge.
Finding 38: In June 2017 the State Comptroller's office found the district is financing operating deficits with fund balance and reserves that is adversely impacting the district's finances.
Finding 39: The district has principal and interest payments on existing capital debt that extend through the 2031-32 school year.

Conclusion

With these findings in mind, the following conclusions—or answers to the key questions that focused this study—have been reached.

What options exist to arrange the grades and school buildings to maintain, and perhaps enhance, the education of Cortland City School District students while ensuring fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer? How could the grades and schools be organized?

As consultants we have concluded that there are several options for arranging the grades and schools to achieve the stated purposes outlined above. While several "feasible" options were explored in depth, only a few provide a "desirable" direction in our opinion for the district to pursue in light of the desire to maintain or improve the education of Cortland students while being fiscally responsible to the taxpayer.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the district convene a facilities planning committee whose role it will be to develop and monitor a long term facilities plan for the district. This will include the closure of one or more of the school buildings, the scope of work to be performed from the Building Condition Survey, the long term the design of appropriate school facilities and the financing of these initiatives. This committee should be comprised of both school staff and members of the community.

2. It is recommended that the Board of Education consider the following options as both "feasible" and "desirable" as it looks to the future.

- Option 6: Close Virgil and keep the remaining elementary schools open as K-6 buildings; maintain the current 7-8, 9-12 Junior-Senior High School configuration.
- Option 7: Close Parker and keep the remaining elementary schools open as K-6 buildings; maintain the current 7-8, 9-12 Junior-Senior High School configuration.
- Option 8: Close Parker and form grade centers as follows: K-2 at Smith and Virgil and grades 3-6 at Barry and Randall.
- Option 9: Close Virgil and form grade centers as follows: K-2 at Randall and Smith and grades 3-6 at Barry and Parker.

Given the district's current difficult financial situation, these options were deemed most desirable from a financial standpoint. Maintaining the status quo (keeping all buildings open and continuing with the same grade arrangement) is not fiscally responsible. Quite simply, the district does not need all of the space available in the current buildings. In addition, the current arrangement offers no financial savings at a time when the district is facing severe financial challenges in the near future.

The following table summarizes the financial impact to the taxpayer if either of these options had been adopted and implemented this year. The actual tax levy for the current year was $17,006,932 and the full-value tax rate is $17.99. Table 13.1 illustrates how each option's cost savings could have reduced the tax levy and therefore reduced the full-value tax rate thus benefiting the taxpayer. However, it should be kept in mind that the district could have chosen to apply some of the savings to maintain and perhaps improve program.

Table 13.1
Impact to the Taxpayer by Option if Implemented in 2017-18

Option	*Option Savings*	*Revised Levy*	*Revised FV Tax Rate*	*Savings to $100 K Homeowner*
3	$1,009,585	$15,997,347	$16.92	$107
7	$1,140,005	$15,886,927	$16.80	$119
8	$1,393,745	$15,633,187	$16.53	$146
9	$1,100,368	$15,906,564	$16.82	$117

Assumptions
1-All the projected staff savings were realized in the first year of implementation of each option.
2-All savings were used to reduce the tax levy.
3-Any closed building was not sold or leased which could yield additional revenue for the district.

Furthermore, given the additional cost to the taxpayers to add capital debt for major work at the Junior-Senior High School to convert it to a true middle school is not prudent at this time. This is not meant to pass judgment on the value of a middle school. On the contrary, there is abundant research that identifies many of the benefits of a true middle school. However, given the district's current financial challenges, we do not believe that this is the time to undertake the capital debt that would result from changing the junior high school to a middle school. Perhaps this could be revisited at a later date.

There are a number of educational benefits in addition to the financial savings to grade centers including better coordination and articulation of curriculum within and across elementary classrooms, with more sections of a grade level in a single building it is easier to

match students with teachers that can better address their needs, grouping of students so that those who work well together and those that do not becomes easier, and there is a greater likelihood achieving better balance in class sizes.

While the grade center options would increase the number of students that have to take school buses to and from their buildings, our investigation determined the cost would be negligible.

3. It is recommended that the district use the attrition method for reducing staff should any staff reductions be realized from this initiative.

4. It is recommended that the Board of Education conduct at least one public hearing/comment period on these options for the general public to express opinions.

5. It is recommended that the district implement these options in the 2019-20 school year. This will allow for adequate time to conduct one or more hearings to permit the public to make concerns and comments known about each of the options under consideration and for sufficient planning time to finalize implementation details so that the transition is as smooth as possible.

CHAPTER 2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A study with this purpose and magnitude would not be possible without the support, cooperation, and encouragement of many individuals. We would first like to express our appreciation to the members of the advisory committee appointed by the Cortland Board of Education. The members of the committee included:

Amy Sundheim	
Rick Gamel	Kevin Cafararo
Lisa Kaup	Roberto Maniaci
Mark Yacavone	Breck Aspinwall
Stephanie Madden	Nicole Dintino
Sister Harriett Hamilton	Karen Williams
Susan Byrnes	Anna Bennett

These committee members gave generously of their time to help ask the right questions and to provide direction in finding answers. Without their assistance this study would not be nearly as complete and responsive to the information needs of the Board of Education and residents of the Cortland Enlarged City School District.

Superintendent Michael Hoose, his most helpful secretary Alicia Zupancic, and his staff were also generous with their time as we often requested information. Without their willingness to accommodate our requests, the timeliness of this study would not have been achieved.

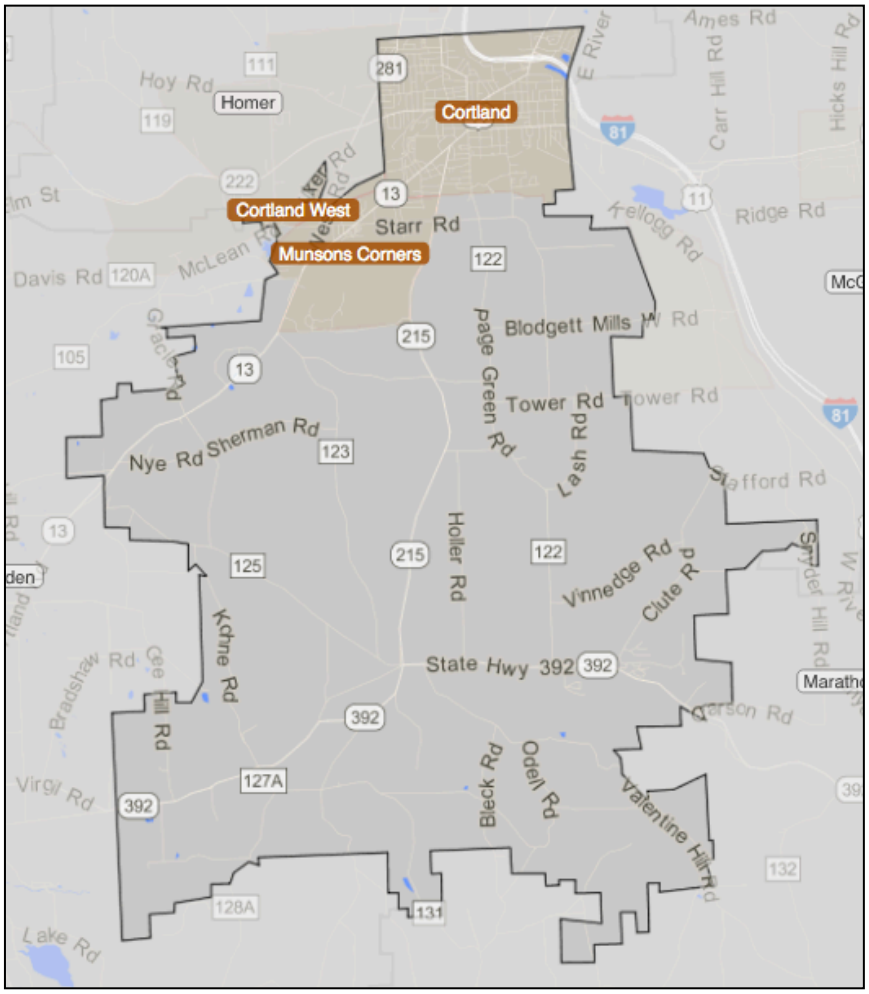
Finally, we wish to thank the members of the Cortland Board of Education. As all responsible school leadership teams, they took the risk of examining the use of their district facilities knowing full well that simply asking questions about how to better use district buildings might raise some very uncomfortable issues. Despite this, they supported the study and actively followed the progress of the study, while always ensuring that all members of the community would be heard on this most important issue. This was no easy task, but they accepted the challenge and allowed the study process to run its course!

CHAPTER 3
BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This first chapter provides background as to the need for the study. It offers a context within which to place the consideration of various grade/facility options and associated costs and benefits. This context offers perspective for the decisions the Cortland Enlarged City School District Board of Education has before it over the next few years.

Background

The Cortland Enlarged City School District is located in Cortland County and covers 49 square miles serving primarily the townships of Cortlandville, Harford, Lapeer, Virgil, Dryden and the City of Cortland. The district's facilities include five K-6 elementary schools (Barry, Parker, Randall, Smith and Virgil) and a secondary school housing a grade 7-8 Junior High School and a 9-12 High School. A map of the district follows.



The Cortland City school community has consistently shown its support for the education of resident students as noted in the historical budget voting pattern in the following table. Residents have passed school budgets in nine of the past ten years as shown in Table 3.1. In addition, district residents have also passed two capital projects since 2007 (2007 and 2014) as well as 11 of 12 bus propositions since 2005.

Table 3.1
District Budget Vote History

Year	Yes Votes	No Votes	Total Votes
2017	399	84	483
2016	456	95	551
2015	281	189	470
2014	328	177	505
2013	400	166	566
2012	685	319	1004
2011	*365*	*1137*	*1502*
2010	363	308	671
2009	549	218	767
2008	457	417	874

The Cortland school community has consistently supported district spending plans

Nevertheless, finding the balance between the provision of a good education and the ability of a local community to provide the financial resources is an on-going challenge for any board of education and administration. Given the current economic condition of our country and our state and the continuing pressures to educate all children to higher levels, this challenge has become even more daunting over the past few years. It is the Board's appreciation and understanding of the fundamental significance of this challenge that served as the stimulus for this study.

As with all good boards of education, the Cortland City School District Board of Education chose to examine possible ways to organize grades and buildings in the district in light of the challenges mentioned above.

The main focus of this study was framed by the following "critical questions" the Board of Education and administration asked that the consultants address:

What options exist to arrange the grades and school buildings to maintain, and perhaps enhance, the education of Cortland City School District students while ensuring fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer? How could the grades and schools be organized?

The timeline called for initiation of this study in mid-May 2017 with the final report due to the Board of Education in December 2017. This schedule was later modified to have the study completed in January 2018.

The Board of Education selected Castallo & Silky LLC, an educational consulting firm from Syracuse, New York to conduct this study. Mr. Alan Pole and Dr. William Silky led this study for the firm. Castallo & Silky LLC has extensive experience in working with school districts in New York State that have considered a variety of reorganizational options.

To answer the "critical study questions," a study design, which is presented in the next chapter, was developed with the express purpose of being transparent and complete. In order to emphasize the openness of this process, the consultants committed to the following guidelines for the study:

1. The study will be conducted in an open and fair manner;
2. All data will be presented to the Board of Education; and
3. Recommendations will:
    a. benefit student learning,
    b. be sensitive to the unique cultural context of Cortland,
    c. not be influenced by special interest groups,
    d. be educationally sound,
    e. be fiscally responsible and realistic, and
    f. provide a five to seven year perspective.

The study concludes with this final report to the Board of Education. While the advisory committee had significant input into the development of this study, the recommendations contained in this document represent those of the consultants and are presented as a vehicle for engaging the Board, the staff, and the community in discussion regarding the best organization of the district, its programs, and its facilities.

While the Advisory Committee had significant input into the development of this study, the recommendations represent those of the consultants.

CHAPTER 4
STUDY METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study was based upon what is commonly known as "responsive evaluation." In essence, this methodology requires the design of data collection methods *in response to* a critical study question. In this specific study, the Board of Education posed the following questions that drove this study.

What options exist to arrange the grades and school buildings to maintain, and perhaps enhance, the education of Cortland City School District students while ensuring fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer? How could the grades and schools be organized?

The following is a summary of the major activities undertaken as part of the study design. The consultants gathered considerable data from the district and other agencies. These data were summarized and analyzed as they were received. The data gathering was focused by the questions that drove the study. In addition, the consultants conducted interviews with key district staff to gather perspectives on the various issues under study and to understand completely the meaning of the data that was gathered. A Board appointed advisory committee met with the consultant team on six occasions to review data that had been gathered, share thoughts and opinions, and to critique tentative recommendations before the study was concluded. Finally, a draft of this report was shared with the advisory committee to seek final thoughts from the group.

The final report was presented to the Board of Education in a public session on January 23, 2018.

CHAPTER 5
STUDENT ENROLLMENTS AND POPULATION TRENDS IN THE AREA

This section of the report provides a picture of the current status of the Cortland Enlarged City School District's student enrollment as well as an overview of the population trends in the area.

Student Enrollment History and Projections

Accurate enrollment projections are essential data for district long-range planning. Virtually all aspects of a district's operation (educational program, staffing, facilities, transportation, finances, etc.) are dependent on the number of students enrolled. For this reason, updated enrollment projections are crucial for this study and serve as the launching pad for our analysis.

The procedure for projecting student enrollments is referred to as the Cohort Survival Methodology. This methodology is highly reliable and is the most frequently used projective technique for making short-term school district enrollment projections. To calculate enrollment projections, the following data and procedures are used:

--Six-year history of district enrollment by grade level
--Calculation of survival ratios by grade level
--Kindergarten enrollment projections based on resident live births

A survival ratio is obtained by dividing a given grade's enrollment into the enrollment of the following grade a year later. For example, the number of students in grade 3 in any year is divided by the number of students in grade 2 of the previous year. The ratios indicate the proportion of the cohort "surviving" to the following year. Cohort refers to the enrollment in a grade for a given year.

Using grade-to-grade survival ratios, an average of these ratios for each cohort progression is obtained. This average is referred to as an average projection survival ratio. This ratio is then multiplied by each current grade enrollment to obtain the projected enrollment for the next successive year. The multiplicative process is continued for each successive year.

Survival ratios usually have values close to one, but may be less than or greater than one. Where the survival ratio is less than one, fewer students "survived" to the next grade. Where the survival ratio is greater than one, more students "survived" to the next grade. Grade-to-grade survival ratios reflect the net effects of deaths, dropouts, the number of students who are home schooled, promotion/retention policies, transfers to and from nonpublic schools, and migration patterns in and out of the school district.

Since estimating births introduces a possible source of error into the model, it is advisable to limit enrollment projections to a period for which existing data on live residential births can be used. This means that enrollment projections are possible for five years into the future for the elementary grades, which is usually sufficient for most planning purposes. Beyond that point, the number of births must be estimated and the projective reliability is greatly reduced. Enrollment projections for grades 7 and 8 and for grades 9-12 can be projected for ten years into the future.

The methodology considered for this study was to extrapolate to kindergarten enrollment cohorts from live birth data. Live birth data for the Cortland City Schools from 2004 to 2016 is shown in the following table:

Table 5.1 Number of Live Births, 2004 -2015	
Calendar Year	Number
2004	261
2005	298
2006	234
2007	269
2008	304
2009	290
2010	231
2011	255
2012	228
2013	246
2014	215
2015	232
2016	247

Live births are then compared with the kindergarten enrollment five years into the future….babies born in 2012 will be in kindergarten in 2017-18, babies born in 2013 will be in kindergarten in 2018-19, and babies born in 2014 will be in kindergarten in 2019-20. An average ratio of live births to kindergarten enrollment five years later is then calculated. This ratio is then used to project future kindergarten enrollments from actual and estimated live births. Now that we can predict future kindergarten enrollments we are able to complete the full table of future school enrollment as shown in the following table. It should be noted that Pre-K enrollments are not factored into the enrollment projections because Pre-K, being a voluntary program, the relationship between Pre-K enrollments and enrollments at other grade levels is questionable at best.

Live Births Are Used to Project Kindergarten Enrollment Five Years Hence

Table 5.2
Cortland K-12 Enrollment History and Projections-2011-12 to 2023-24

Grade	2012 -13	2013 -14	2014 -15	2015 -16	2016 -17	2017 -18	2018 -19	2019 -20	2020 -21	*2021 -22*	*2022 -23*	*2023 -24*	*2024 -25*
Births	304	290	231	255	228	246	215	232	247	*234*	*234*	*234*	*234*
K	221	221	196	165	186	165	163	154	166	176	167	167	167
1	205	219	217	184	165	182	182	159	150	162	172	163	163
2	218	191	207	211	186	163	160	176	154	146	157	167	158
3	200	202	182	202	196	186	178	153	169	148	139	150	160
4	189	200	191	170	191	200	190	172	148	164	143	135	146
5	223	179	187	190	164	192	185	184	167	144	159	139	131
6	192	213	174	174	191	166	160	181	180	163	140	155	135
7	199	203	214	186	190	199	201	168	190	189	172	148	163
8	215	194	208	193	181	186	184	195	163	185	183	167	143
9	203	197	194	219	188	178	178	182	192	161	182	181	164
10	196	188	195	183	205	184	180	170	174	184	154	174	173
11	190	186	175	171	164	195	189	165	157	160	169	142	160
12	186	187	194	173	176	166	166	191	167	159	162	171	143
K-12 Total	2637	2580	2534	2421	2383	2362	2316	2251	2177	2139	2099	2058	2007
K-6 Total	1448	1425	1354	1296	1279	1254	1218	1179	1134	1102	1078	1076	1061
7-8 Total	414	397	422	379	371	385	386	364	354	374	355	314	306
9-12 Total	775	758	758	746	733	723	712	708	690	663	666	667	640

Note: 2021-22 to 2024-25 births are the average of the five previous years. Consequently, from 2022-23 to 2024-25 the early grade estimates are quite speculative.

As is apparent from the above table, K-12 enrollment has declined over the past six years (2,637 in 2012-13 to 2,362 in 2017-18; -275 students/-10.4%). This decline is projected to continue through 2024-25 (-355 students/-15.0%). This future decline will impact all three grade ranges-elementary, junior high, and senior high

Additionally, when we just consider the five elementary schools, we see that each has had a decline in student enrollment over the past five years. This decline is noted in the following table. As can be seen, the enrollment decline varies from 7.6% (Randall) to 27.6% (Parker) in this timeframe. This is a significant decrease in the number of K-6 students being served in each of these five buildings.

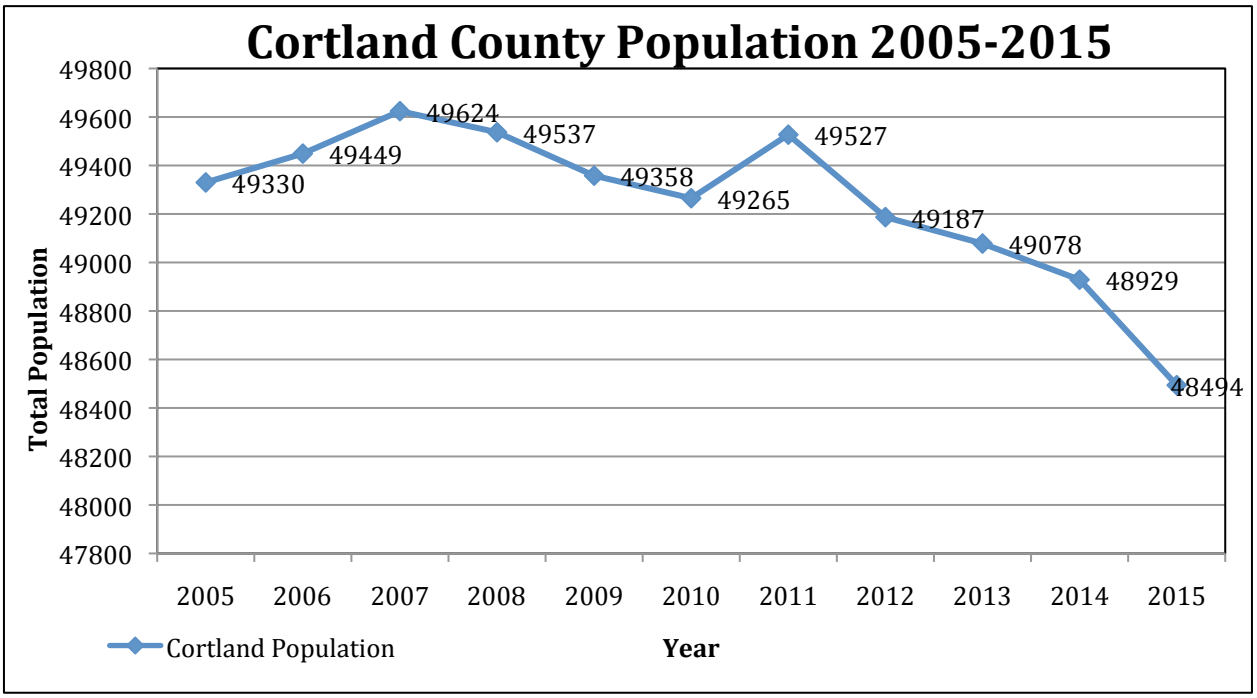
Table 5.3 Five Year History of Elementary School Enrollments-2012-13 to 2016-17						
School	*2013-14*	*2014-15*	*2015-16*	*2016-17*	*2017-18*	*5-Year % Change*
Barry	380	351	347	359	360	-9.5%
Parker	319	304	259	247	231	-27.6%
Randall	314	303	287	292	290	-7.6%
Smith	279	268	274	262	251	-10.0%
Virgil	145	135	133	122	116	-20.0%
Total	1437	1361	1300	1282	1,248	-13.2%
NOTE: These totals vary from the district-wide totals as special class students are counted in the numbers above and not in the district-wide table 5.2.						

The overall district enrollment decline cannot be attributed to other factors such as increase of students being taught at home or non-resident students no longer attending the district. Table 5.4 provides a recent history of both home-schooled students and students that have been non-resident students attending Cortland. The number of home-schooled students has remained fairly constant over the past five years while the number of non-resident students attending Cortland schools has dropped off the past three years yet is a very small number. Cortland resident students attending elsewhere have remained constant at about 40 students per year.

Table 5.4 Five-Year History of Resident Home-Schooled, Non-Resident Students Attending Cortland, and Resident Students Attending Elsewhere			
School Year	*Home-Schooled Students*	*Non-Resident Students Attending Cortland* Schools	*Resident Students Attending Elsewhere*
2012-13	52	20	41
2013-14	35	23	42
2014-15	44	9	37
2015-16	41	5	39
2016-17	51	6	45

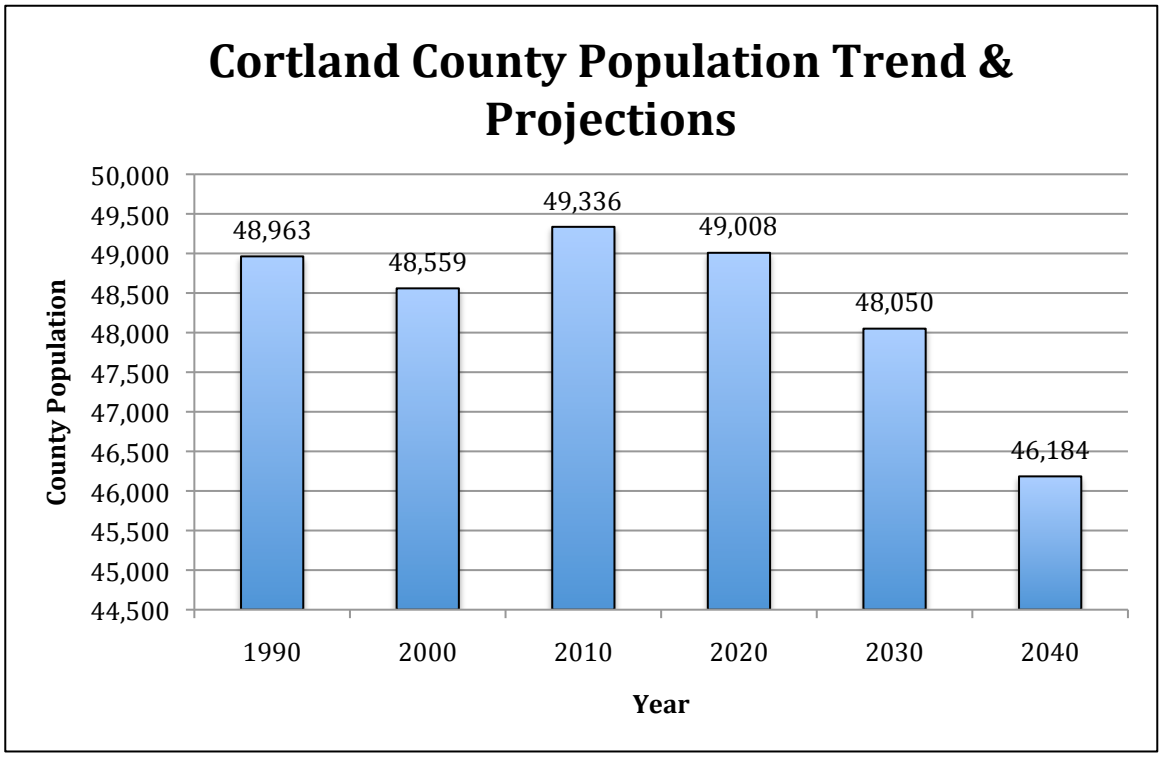
The recent decline in school district enrollment is not surprising given the overall Cortland County population trends. As the graph that follows shows, the total county population gradually decreased from 2005 to 2015.

Graph 1: Cortland County Population 2005-2015



Looking to the future, Cortland County total population is projected to continue to decline out to 2040. See Graph 2 that follows for these census projections.

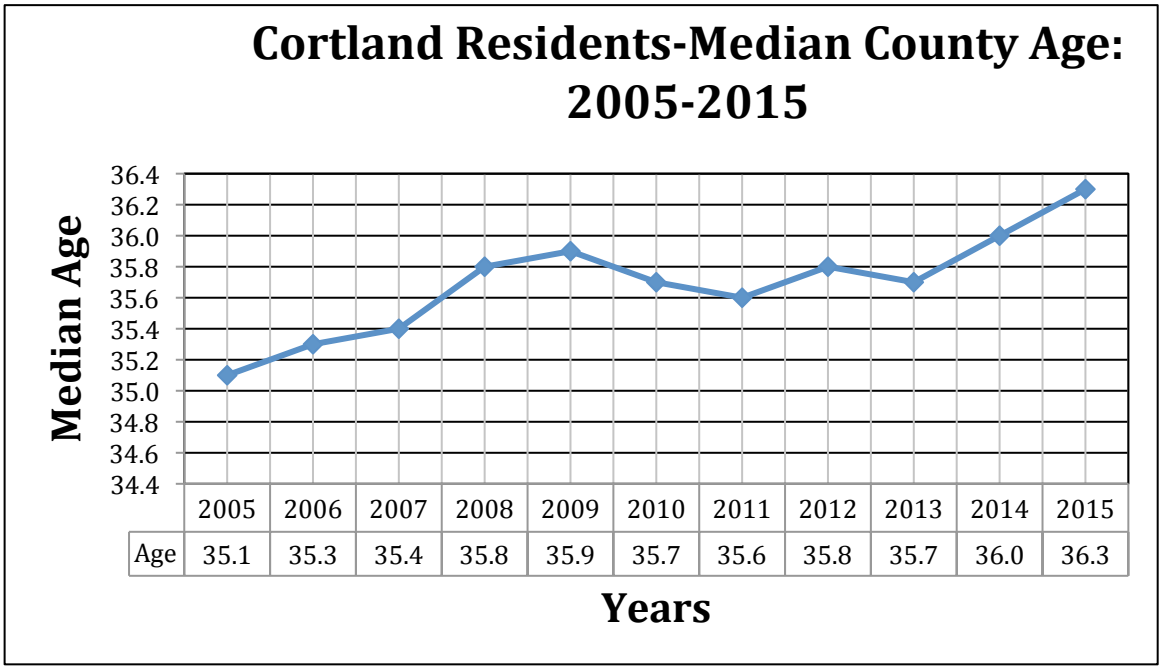
Graph 2: Cortland County Total Population Trend and Projection to 2040



It is important to also examine the median age of Cortland County residents since this provides some insight into future school enrollments. Populations that are aging generally mean that there is likely an out-migration of younger residents, hence fewer families that likely will have children entering the school system. In upstate New York, it is very common to find most communities that are experiencing this type of out migration and hence aging local populations.

Graph 3 that follows presents the trend in Cortland County's resident median age. Spanning 2005 to 2015 we can see that the median age of county residents rose from 35.1 to 36.3—just a year and two-month increase; this slight increase could be due to the impact of having SUNY Cortland located within the district. However, it is clear that the county population is aging like most Upstate New York communities.

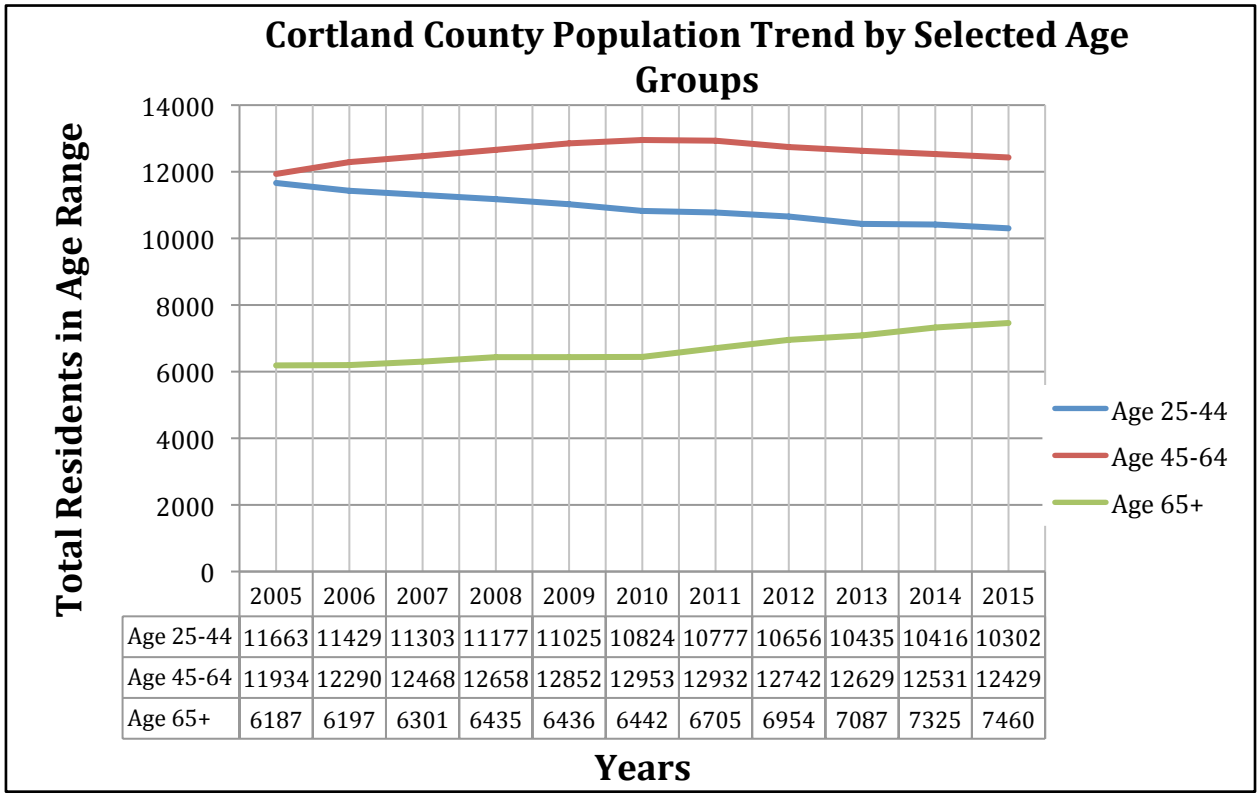
Graph 3: Median Age of Cortland County Residents 2005-2015



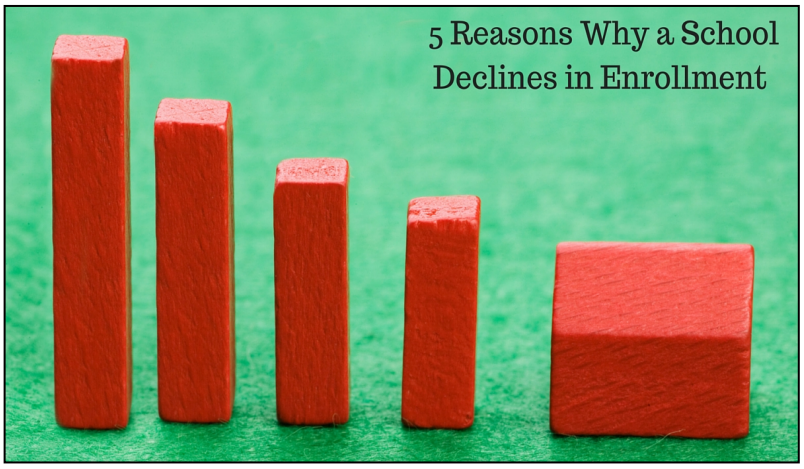
Lastly, it is also important to examine the cohort of adults in various age ranges. Adults in the childbearing age are typically 25-44 years of age. This is the cohort of adults who are most likely to have children, a factor that would influence the number of children being educated in the school district. As the graph below illustrates, the number of Cortland County residents in this critical age range has declined somewhat over the past 10 years while at the same time county residents in the 65+ age ranges have been increasing somewhat. This indicates a trend that may have some bearing on the Cortland City School District's future enrollment.

The number of Cortland County residents in the 25-44 age range has been declining somewhat for the past ten years. As members of this age group are typically of childbearing age, this trend may have some bearing on future school enrollments in Cortland City Schools

Graph 4: Cortland County Population by Age Cohort-2005-2015



	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Age 25-44	11663	11429	11303	11177	11025	10824	10777	10656	10435	10416	10302
Age 45-64	11934	12290	12468	12658	12852	12953	12932	12742	12629	12531	12429
Age 65+	6187	6197	6301	6435	6436	6442	6705	6954	7087	7325	7460



In summary, given the recent school district enrollment trends, and in light of the demographic variables studied, we do not believe adjustments in the future enrollment projections provided in table 5.2 are appropriate. However, we caution the district to engage in annual enrollment projecting with an eye to current demographic trends in the county and school district.

CHAPTER 6
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The most important function that any school district provides is to give its students a quality educational experience. In today's educational world, school districts are charged with providing an educational program that will ensure that its students are college and career ready. Being ready for college means that a high school graduate has the knowledge and skills necessary to qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses without the need for remedial coursework. Being ready for a career means that a high school graduate has the knowledge and skills needed to qualify for and succeed in the postsecondary job training and/or education necessary for their chosen career (i.e., community college, technical/vocational program, apprenticeship or other significant job training). The Cortland Enlarged City School District provides a comprehensive program for its students in pursuit of this goal.

Cortland has five elementary schools each housing grades K-6. The Junior-Senior High school houses grades 7-12. This is not an unusual grade level pattern for school districts in New York State, even though researchers agree that there is no "one best way" to organize grades.

The elementary schools have multiple self-contained classrooms at every grade level as evidenced by the following table.

Table 6.1
Elementary Class Sizes-2017-18

Grade	Barry	Parker	Randall	Smith	Virgil	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	22, 22	19, 16	21, 19	16, 15	15	165	9
1	18, 19, 19	19, 19	21, 21	16, 18	12	182	10
2	20, 17	14, 16	19, 18	20, 20	18	162	9
3	24, 24	19, 17	24, 22	21, 20	15	186	9
4	19, 17, 20	20, 19	20, 23	18, 17	24	197	10
5	20, 21, 21	24	23, 22	20, 21	20	192	9
6	18, 20, 19	15, 14	19, 18	15, 14	12	164	10
TOTAL	360	231	290	251	116	1,248	66

Average common branch class size in Cortland County=18.9 (2017-18)
Average common branch class size in NYS=22 (2015-16)

An examination of table 6.1 shows that the district has been able to maintain very reasonable class sizes in the elementary schools. However, it needs to be pointed out that at some grade levels (for example first and third grades) there is a considerable difference in the section sizes among the schools. In 2017-18, the average elementary class size of all school districts in Cortland County was 18.9 while the statewide average was 22 students per class.

An examination of class sizes in the elementary school is important in a facilities study. If class sizes are reasonable or small, it is generally accepted that reorganization of the elementary grades is at least a topic for consideration. On the other hand, if class sizes are very large in the elementary grades, it might be difficult to reorganize grades to achieve any efficiency. In

Cortland, we find very reasonable class sizes that would at least allow discussion on whether or not elementary school grades could be reorganized.

The district also provides a comprehensive program for its elementary school students as evidenced by the following table of special area subjects by school (all schedules are on a five day cycle-A, B, C, D, and E). Notice the considerable comparability across the five elementary schools.

Table 6.2
Elementary Schools Special Area Schedules 2016-17

Grade Level	School	Art	Music	PE	Library
K	Barry	1X30 min/week	1X30 min/week	2X30 min/week	1X30 min/week
	Parker	1X30 min/week	1X30 min/week	2X30 min/week	1X30 min/week
	Randall	1X30 min/week	2X30 min/week	2X30 min/week	1X30 min/week
	Smith	1X30 min/week	1X30 min/week	2X35 min/week	1X30 min/week
	Virgil	1X40 min/week	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
1	Barry	1X30 min/week	1X30 min/week	2X30 min/week	1X30 min/week
	Parker	1X30 min/week	1X30 min/week	2X30 min/week	1X30 min/week
	Randall	1X30 min/week	1X30 min/week	2X30 min/week	1X30 min/week
	Smith	1X30 min/week	1X30 min/week	2X35 min/week	1X30 min/week
	Virgil	1X40 min/week	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
2	Barry	1X30 min/week	2X30 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X30 min/week
	Parker	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Randall	1X30 min/week	2X30 min/week	2X30 min/week	1X30 min/week
	Smith	1X30 min/week	2X30 min/week	2X35 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Virgil	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
3	Barry	1X30 min/week	2X30 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Parker	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Randall	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Smith	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X45 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Virgil	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
4	Barry	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Parker	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Randall	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Smith	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X45 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Virgil	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
5	Barry	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Parker	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Randall	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Smith	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X45 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Virgil	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
6	Barry	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Parker	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Randall	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Smith	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X45 min/week	1X40 min/week
	Virgil	1X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	2X40 min/week	1X40 min/week

The next point of analysis examines the performance of Cortland's elementary students on New York State's English-Language Arts and Mathematics assessments that are offered in grades 3-8. Student performance on these state assessments is graded on a Level 1 to Level 4 continuum. The following are the performance descriptors for these assessments.

Level 1-Not Meeting Learning Standards-*Student performance does not demonstrate an understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level.*

Level 2-Partially Meeting Learning Standards-*Student performance demonstrates a partial understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level.*

Level 3-Meeting Learning Standards-*Student performance demonstrates an understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level.*

Level 4-Meeting Learning Standards with Distinction-*Student performance demonstrates a thorough understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level.*

Because students scoring at Levels 3 and 4 are most on target to successfully complete their educational program, the following tables show the percentages of students scoring at those levels by elementary school.

Table 6.3
% of Students Scoring at Levels 3 & 4
3-8 NYS Assessments in ELA

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Barry	36% (70)	37% (74)	35% (53)	33% (56)
Parker	17% (30)	18% (29)	10% (13)	14% (13)
Randall	15% (25)	17% (28)	24% (25)	17% (20)
Smith	25% (39)	18% (25)	22% (19)	27% (28)
Virgil	22% (20)	26% (21)	19% (9)	33% (18)
( ) Number of Students Scoring Proficient				

Table 6.4
% of Students Scoring at Levels 3 & 4
3-8 NYS Assessments in Math

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Barry	37% (73)	48% (94)	47% (70)	41% (64)
Parker	15% (26)	20% (33)	21% (24)	20% (19)
Randall	19% (28)	30% (47)	41% (38)	35% (35)
Smith	18% (29)	30% (40)	42% (31)	44% (41)
Virgil	21% (19)	21% (16)	35% (17)	40% (21)
( ) Number of Students Scoring Proficient				

In summary for the elementary grades, Cortland has a very comprehensive elementary program that is quite similar across the district's five elementary schools.

The next area for analysis involves the program that is available to the junior-senior high school students in Cortland. Junior high school students have a very busy schedule because one of the purposes of education at this level is to give students the opportunity to explore a variety

of courses. In addition, school districts in New York State are required to allow acceleration into high school level courses in math and at least one other academic area for their eighth grade students. Cortland does this in math and science.

The purpose of a high school course of studies is to provide students with the courses necessary to achieve a high school diploma and to provide a variety of electives in order to enrich the high school experience for these students. A complete overview of the junior-senior high school program in Cortland is provided in table 6.5 that follows.

Table 6.5
Grades 7-12 Course Offerings-2016-17

Course	# of Sections & Section Sizes
ENGLISH	
English 7	20, 21, 16, 18, 17, 15, 20, 18, 17, 18
English 8	11, 19, 18, 17, 22, 15, 23, 17, 18, 17
Applied English 7/8	11, 11
English 9 R	21, 21, 20, 11, 16, 18, 18, 14, 15,
English 9 Enriched	19, 12
English 10	15
English 10 R	22, 14, 18, 19, 18, 22, 4, 23, 17
English 10 Enriched	19, 14
English 11 R	18, 16, 20, 17, 17, 22, 13
English 12	20, 12, 18, 15
AP English Lit & Composition	10, 26, 13, 22
Research & Writing	11
Public Speaking	10
English Achievement Lab	2, 1
Reading Lab	12
ELA Lab/SH	5, 4, 4, 5, 8, 3
Creative Writing	24
Film Study	12
Journalism	13, 13
SOCIAL STUDIES	
Social Studies 7	18, 21, 21, 18, 18, 17, 18, 18, 19, 19
Social Studies 8	20, 18, 16, 17, 19, 17, 18, 18, 19, 19
Global History 1 R	20, 12, 19, 22, 18, 19, 20, 23, 20,
Global History 1 Enriched	22, 17
Global History 2 R	16, 19, 16, 16, 16, 23, 18, 25, 23
Global History 2 Honors	23
AIS Global History	4, 6, 15
American History R	20, 20, 20, 20, 25, 23
AP US History	24, 25
AIS US History	1
Participation in Government	25, 14, 19
Economics R	26

Micro-economics	18, 19
AP US Government & Politics	29
Business Law	13
Sociology	5
Holocaust	15
MATHEMATICS	
Math 7	16, 24, 18, 18, 16, 17, 20, 17, 15
Applied Math 7	5
Math 7 A	**21**
Math 8	18, 18, 16, 16, 19, 18, 21
Applied Math 8	4
JH Fund Math	6, 5, 4, 7, 4, 13, 8, 9
Applied Math	4, 5
Algebra 1 R	22, 21, 17, 17, 18, 20
Algebra 1A	18, 14, 14, 18, 15
Algebra 1 B R	22, 15, 22, 21, **14**
Algebra 2 & Trig R	24, 18, 22
Algebra 2 & Trig A	20, 21
Algebra 2 & Trig B R	16, 6
Geometry R	15, 15, 18, 13
Numerical Geometry	20, 21, 20, 17, **19**
Pre-Calculus	17, 15
Calculus 1	3
Calculus ½	14
AIS Math Lab	4, 8, 11
Math Independent Study	1
Math Essentials	11, **11**
SCIENCE (*-Courses with labs)	
Science 7	21, 16, 19, 20, 20, 18, 17, 19, 22, 16
Science 8	20, 13, 14, 17, 18, 16, 15, 14, 16, 14
Earth Science R	12, 17
Earth Science*	17, 19, 15, 16, 17
Earth Science Enriched*	17, 20
Biology R (Living Environment)*	16, 20, 18, 15, 14, 19, 16, 20, 20, 17, 17
Biology *	20
AP Biology *	9
Chemistry R*	18, 16
Chemistry Honors*	11, 15
Physics R*	14, 14, 16
Physics Honors*	12
Forensics	24, 23, 18
Science in our World	18, 11
Anatomy & Physiology	11
Astronomy	16

FOREIGN LANGUAGE	
JH Spanish	18
JH Spanish Enriched	10, 16
JH Spanish A	25, 22, 23, 19, 22
JH Spanish B	22, 25, 19, 23
Spanish 1	17, 15
Spanish 2	15, 22, 18
Spanish 3	22, 23, 22, 21
Spanish 4	18, 14, 12
Spanish 5	6
JH French A	20, 13
JH French B	19
JH French Enriched	14
JH French	17
French 2	19
French 3	18
French 4	6
French 5	3
BUSINESS	
Business Dynamics	14
IT Essentials	5
Career Prep	10, 11
College Accounting	6
Internship	3
Computer 2	9, 14, 16
Financial Management	21, **20**
Management & Marketing	21, 13
Sports Marketing/Management	2, 1
TECHNOLOGY	
Technology 8	16, 17, 20, 18, 17, 20, 17, 19, 17, 18
JH Computer Digital	19
Design & Drawing for Production 2	11, 14
Graphic Design 2	14
Renewable Energy	9
Architectural Drawing	14
Electricity	11
Mechanical Systems	9
Life Skills Tech	6
Residential Structure	10
Wood Process	15, 11, 11, 12
Carving/Wood Bending	9
Broadcast News Production	8
Video Production 1	10, 8
Yearbook	15

Photography 1	8, 14
MUSIC	
JH Music	20, 20, 22
JH Choir	42
String Orchestra	30
Chamber Orchestra	30
Concert Band	33, 50, 33, 50
Repertory Ensemble	21
Rock Guitar	14, 4
ART	
JH Art	20, 19, 22, 18, 13, 20
Studio in Art	20, 17, 24, 1
3-D Design	9
Portfolio	3
Drawing & Painting 1	22
Drawing & Painting 1 & 2	1
Drawing & Painting 3	15
Advanced Drawing & Painting	1
Computer Art	15
New Media Art	20, 14, 21, 18, 18, 21
Life Skills Art	6
PHYSICAL EDUCATION, FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCE, & HEALTH	
Physical Education 7-8	19, 26, 26, 16, 14, 19, 26, 21, 19, 16
Physical Education 9-12	18, 20, 23, 14, 16, 24, 16, 20, 27, 26, 26, 15, 24, 23, 17, 21, 22, 24, 17, 21, 28, 17, 26
Adaptive Physical Education	7, 6
Lifelong Fitness	6
Home & Career Skills	21, 15, 21, 21, 15
Family & Consumer Science	15, 22, 22
Culinary	14
Child Development	14
Link Crew	5
First Aid & Safety	17
Life Skills	6, 6
Health 7-8	14, 24, 18, 21, 16, 15
Health 9-12	17, 13, 24, 24
Personal Health	16
OTHER	
Study Hall	33, 23, 40, 42, 67, 62, 54, 3, 24, 31, 18, 66, 15, 83, 50, 26, 14, 82, 41, 54, 71, 21, 19, 11, 19, 71, 46, 38, 12
Resource Room	5, 5, 5, 1, 4, 5, 3, 3, 4, 5, 1, 4, 5, 3, 5, 4, 5, 2, 4, 5, 3, 2, 5, 5, 4, 3
ESL 7-8	1

ESL 9-12	2

The data source for this table was the 2016-17 master schedule. Courses with science labs have an equal number of students in labs and are denoted with an *. Not included in this table are the academic and career education courses offered at the OCM BOCES.
Special education classes listed in this table in italics push into general education classes. A special education teacher co-teaches with the regular education teacher to support special needs students in those classes. As such, the classes in italics represent teacher classes. However, they are not segregated classes in separate classrooms.

Table 6.5 above shows a very comprehensive program that is available to the junior-senior high school students in Cortland. All of the elective courses that are required of junior high school students are in place; acceleration in math and science is available to the students in order to gain high school credits; and the opportunity to gain the first year of credit in a foreign language is also available in the Cortland Junior High School.

At the high school level, the program offered to the students is equally impressive. In examining the table of high school courses above, we notice that the district has been able to maintain a very comprehensive list of offerings for its students. In the core academic subjects, honors and enriched courses along with advanced placement courses are all part of the course of study. The district offers two foreign languages, French and Spanish for its students. In addition, the district offers a comprehensive array of business courses, a curriculum area that has been eliminated in many of today's high schools. The district also has a number of technology courses for its students.

In addition to the program offered at the high school, Cortland students have the opportunity to take career and technical education classes at the Onondaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES. Twenty seven percent of the district's juniors and 28% of the seniors took advantage last year of the career and technical education courses as evidenced by the following table.

Table 6.6
Percentage of Students Attending Career & Technical Education Classes-2016-17

	Juniors	Seniors
Number of Students in Class	164	176
Number of Students Attending BOCES	45	49
% of Students Attending BOCES	27.4%	27.8%

In addition to the educational program that was provided for regular education students, in 2016-17, the district had 337 special education students. Table 6.7 shows the number of special education students the district has educated in each of the past five years and whether they were placed in district programs or elsewhere.

Table 6.7 Summary of Special Education Students 2012-13 to 2016-17					
Placement	Number of Students by School Year				
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
In-District	246	254	251	232	272
Out-of-District	45	48	54	53	65
	291	302	305	285	337
NOTE: The percentage of students identified in need of special education services of the overall student enrollment varies from 11-14% over the past five years. SOURCE: District records					

Cortland, like all school districts is committed to placing students in the "least restrictive environment". Consequently, a few special needs youngsters are placed out-of-district for their educational program. However, in a few instances out-of-district placement is determined by the Committee on Special Education to be the most appropriate educational setting. Out-of-district placements in 2016-17 included OCM BOCES programs, TST BOCES programs, George Junior, NYSSB, and the Kessler Center.

CHAPTER 7
BUILDING ORGANIZATION

Since this study focuses on a possible grade and/or building reconfiguration, the current utilization of district buildings is studied. It is first important to examine how the schools are being used this academic year, and to gauge how enrollments may impact them in the future. Table 7.1 provides an overview of the district's schools.

Table 7.1
Overview of Cortland School Buildings

Schools	Barry	Parker	Randall	Smith	Virgil	Jr-Sr High
Address	20 Raymond Avenue	89 Madison Street	31 Randall Street	33 Wheeler Avenue	1208 Church Street	8 Valley View Drive
Year of Original Building	1958	1928	1928	1957	1932	1964
Sq. Ft. in Current Building	65,840	50,573	55,480	56,358	34,654	270.878
Number of Floors	1	3	3	1	3	3
Grades Housed	K-6	K-6	K-6	K-6	K-6	7-12
Students Served	349	248	295	252	124	1,104
Architect	King & King					

NOTES: All information was taken from the NYS Building Conditions Survey completed in 2010 except the enrollments that were drawn from the 2016-17 academic year.

In addition to an overview of each of the district's buildings, it is also important to determine how each of the buildings is being utilized. Table 7.2 that follows shows the grade alignment by building.

Table 7.2
2016-17 Grade Configuration by Building

Building	Grade Levels
Barry Elementary School`	K-6
Parker Elementary School	K-6
Randall Elementary School	K-6
Smith Elementary School	K-6
Virgil Elementary School	K-6
Cortland Jr.-Sr. High School	7-8. 9-12

Given the capacity of the buildings involved in this study, the consultants then determined the current use of the regular classrooms with respect to class sizes and numbers of sections at each grade level. This analysis produced the following table 7.3 for the elementary school grades.

Table 7.3 Elementary Class Sizes-2017-18							
Grade	Barry	Parker	Randall	Smith	Virgil	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	22, 22	19, 16	21, 19	16, 15	15	165	9
1	18, 19, 19	19, 19	21, 21	16, 18	12	182	10
2	20, 17	14, 16	19, 18	20, 20	18	162	9
3	24, 24	19, 17	24, 22	21, 20	15	186	9
4	19, 17, 20	20, 19	20, 23	18, 17	24	197	10
5	20, 21, 21	24	23, 22	20, 21	20	192	9
6	18, 20, 19	15, 14	19, 18	15, 14	12	164	10
TOTAL	360	231	290	251	116	1,248	66
Average common branch class size in Cortland County=18.9 (2017-18) Average common branch class size in NYS=22 (2015-16)							

As different grade level configurations are considered, it is important to understand the thinking behind grade level organization. It is clear that most school districts consider reorganization due to changes in available space and that virtually any grade configuration can be found somewhere. The most common grade configuration pattern in New York State is K-5, 6-8, 9-12 while the second most common is K-4, 5-8 and 9-12. Over the past 30 years there has been a shift from the K-6, 7-9, 10-12 grade pattern to a K-5, 6-8, 9-12 arrangement due to the emergence of the middle school movement. However, given all the options that exist, researchers agree there is no "one best way" to arrange the grades. "What" a district does with the grade configuration, not "which" grade configuration is used, is what best determines student success.

In addition to the grade alignment by building, it is important to determine how each of the district's current buildings is currently being utilized. Tables 7.4-7.8 that follow show the current year utilization of the district's five elementary schools.

Table 7.4 Barry Elementary Schools Classroom Usage 2016-17 (Includes Gym, Auditeria, Library, Music Room, & Art Room)				
School Building	No. of Full-Size Rooms	Grade Level Classrooms (18)	Other Usage of Full-Size Rooms (9)	Usage of Small Rooms, Not Full-Size, Other Than Administration
Barry	27	K-3 1-2 2-2 3-3 4-3 5-2 6-3	Special Ed-2 Special Ed Teacher Room-1 UPK/Head Start-1 Book Room-1 Multi-Purpose-2 Reading-1 OT/PT-1	Reading Room-1 Prep Room-1 Speech-1 Resource-4 Math-1 Social Worker-1 CSE Office-1

Table 7.5 Parker Elementary Schools Classroom Usage 2016-17 (Includes Gym/Auditorium, Cafeteria, Library. Music Room, & Art Room)				
School Building	No. of Full-Size Rooms	Grade Level Classrooms (14)	Other Usage of Full-Size Rooms (6)	Usage of Small Rooms, Not Full-Size, Other Than Administration
Parker	20	K-2 1-2 2-2 3-2 4-2 5-2 6-2	Reading-2 UPK/Head Start-1 Tech Lab-1 Sp Ed Office/Resource-1 Multi-Purpose-1	Faculty Room-1 Speech-1 OT/PT-1 Resource/Book Room-2 Teacher Work Room-1 Band/Music-1 Family Counseling-1 Psych/Social Worker-1

Table 7.6 Randall Elementary School Classroom Usage for 2016-17 (Includes Gym/Auditorium, Cafeteria, Library, Music Room, & Art Room)				
School Building	No. of Full-Size Rooms	Grade Level Classrooms (14)	Other Usage of Full-Size Rooms (11)	Usage of Small Rooms, Not Full-Size, Other Than Administration
Randall	25	K-2 1-2 2-2 3-2 4-2 5-2 6-2	Special Ed-4 Teachers Room-1 Special Ed/Reading Room-2 UPK/Head Start-1 Psychologist-1 Reading/Math/ESL-1 Testing Room-1	Reading Room-1 Book Room-1 OT/PT-1 Family Counseling-1 Spare Room-1 Band/Music-1 Social Worker-1

Table 7.7 Smith Elementary School Classroom Usage for 2016-17 (Includes Gym, Auditeria, Library, Music Room, & Art Room)				
School Building	No. of Full-Size Rooms	Grade Level Classrooms (14)	Other Usage of Full-Size Rooms (9)	Usage of Small Rooms, Not Full-Size, Other Than Administration
Smith	23	K-2 1-2 2-2 3-2 4-2 5-2 6-2	Reading-2 UPK/Head Start-1 Special Ed Flex-3 Multi-Purpose-1 Life Skills-1 OT/PT-1	Special Ed-1 Psych/Social Worker-1 Prep Room-2 Speech-1 Reading/Math-1 Work Room-1

Table 7.8 Virgil Elementary School Classroom Usage for 2016-17 (Includes Gym, Auditorium/Cafeteria, Library, Music Room, & Art Room)				
School Building	No. of Full-Size Rooms	Grade Level Classrooms (7)	Other Usage of Full-Size Rooms (3)	Usage of Small Rooms, Not Full-Size, Other Than Administration
Virgil	10	K-1 1-1 2-1 3-1 4-1 5-1 6-1	Special Ed-2 Aides Work Room-1	Reading Room-1 Staff Room-1 OT-1 Math Room-1 Psychologist-1 Speech-1

In looking at tables 7.4 through 7.8, the following table 7.9 shows how many more full size classrooms each elementary school has in addition to those spaces devoted to K-6 education.

Table 7.9 Summary of Elementary Class Sections by Building			
School	# of Students	# of Common Branch Sections	# of Full Size Classrooms
Barry	349	18	27
Parker	248	14	20
Randall	295	14	25
Smith	252	14	23
Virgil	124	7	10

In addition to the common branch classrooms identified above, each of the elementary schools contains special education classrooms and each of the elementary schools except Virgil contains Universal Pre-K/Head Start programs. However, even given this utilization of rooms, it is abundantly clear that there are more rooms in the elementary schools than are needed to house the district's elementary students.

Table 7.10 that follows shows how the space in the Junior-Senior High School is currently being used.

Table 7.10
Cortland Junior-Senior School Classroom Usage 2016-17
(Includes Auditorium, Band Room, Chorus Room, Gym, Wrestling Room, Library, & Cafeteria)

School Building	No. of Full-Size Rooms	Grade Level Classrooms (56)	Other Usage of Full-Size Rooms (27)	Usage of Small Rooms, Not Full-Size, Other Than Administration
Jr-Sr High School	83	English-13 Social Studies-12 Math-13 Science-12 LOTE-6	Reading-8 Business-1 Health-2 FCS-2 Life Skills-1 Tech-5 Resource-1 CSE Office-1 BOCES Class-1 SSR-1 ESL-1 LLP-1 Academic Center-1 Study Hall-1	

As can be seen from table 7.10 above, there are 83 full size classrooms, 56 of which are being used for core academic classrooms. There are 27 other classrooms that are being used for related instructional services including eight reading classrooms, five technology classrooms, two health classrooms, two family and consumer science classrooms, offices, and a BOCES classroom.

In addition to the assigned use for each of the rooms in the junior-senior high school, it is also important to see how often each of these rooms is used each day. Table 7.11 that follows shows that period-by-period utilization for each room in the junior-senior high school.

Table 7.11 Junior-Senior High School Classroom Utilization					
Room	Function	Used	Open	% Used	Add 1 Period Used
102	Soc Stud	4	5	44	5
104	Soc Stud	4	5	44	5
105	Soc Stud	5	4	56	6
107	Soc Stud	6	3	67	7
109	Soc Stud	6	3	67	7
111	Soc Stud	6	3	67	7
113	Soc Stud	6	3	67	7
115	English	6	3	67	7
117	English	5	4	56	6
119	English	5	4	56	6
120	CSE Office	0	9	0	1
122	Reading	3	6	33	4
123	Reading	4	5	44	5
124	BOCES	0	9	0	1
125	Business	5	4	56	6
130	LOTE	7	2	78	8
132	LOTE	6	3	67	7
134	LOTE	6	3	67	7
136	Health	5	4	56	6
137	Science	6	3	67	7
138	Health	5	4	56	6
139	Science	6	3	67	7
155	FCS	4	5	44	5
160	Life Skills	9	0	100	9
161	(Resource)	0	9	0	1
165	Math	5	4	56	6
166	Soc Stud	6	3	67	7
167	Science	6	3	67	7
168	SSR	0	9	0	1
169	English	6	3	67	7
170	Reading	3	6	33	4
172	FCS	6	3	67	7
175	LOTE	6	3	67	7
176	Reading	3	6	33	4
184A	PE	5	4	56	6
184B	PE	5	4	56	6
184C	PE	5	4	56	6
186	Art	3	6	33	4
187	Art	2	7	22	3
190	Art	6	3	67	7
191	Music	4	5	44	5
192	Music	4	5	44	5
196	Music	4	5	44	5
198	Music	2	7	22	3
201	English	5	4	56	6
203	Math	7	2	78	8
204	Math	4	5	44	5
205	Soc Stud	5	4	56	6
207	Math	5	4	56	6

Table 7.11 Continued Junior-Senior High School Classroom Utilization					
Room	Function	Used	Open	% Used	Add 1 Period Used
209	Math	6	3	67	7
211	Math	6	3	67	7
213	Math	6	3	67	7
215	Math	5	4	56	6
217	Math	5	4	56	6
219	Math	5	4	56	6
221	English	5	4	56	6
222	English	7	2	78	8
223	English	6	3	67	7
227	English	6	3	67	7
229	English	5	4	56	6
231	Reading	1	8	11	2
236	ESL	3	6	33	4
240	Art	7	2	78	8
244	Art	3	6	33	4
247	Reading	3	6	33	4
249	Math	6	3	67	7
251	Reading	2	7	22	3
261	LOTE	6	3	67	7
262	LPP	0	9	0	1
263	Math	7	2	78	8
264	LOTE	5	4	56	6
265	Math	6	3	67	7
266	English	6	3	67	7
267	English	6	3	67	7
268	Soc Stud	5	4	56	6
269	Soc Stud	5	4	56	6
270	Reading	1	8	11	2
280	Science	8	1	89	9
281	Science	6	3	67	7
282	Science	7	2	78	8
283	Science	8	1	89	9
284	Science	8	1	89	9
285	Science	5	4	56	6
290	Science	6	3	67	7
291	Science	5	4	56	6
73	Math	6	3	67	7
76	English	6	3	67	7
77	Soc Stud	5	4	56	6
78	Science	5	4	56	6
81	PE	6	3	67	7
81-85	PE	1	8	11	2
82	PE	6	3	67	7
86	Tech	6	3	67	7
90	Tech	6	3	67	7
92	Tech	5	4	56	6
95	Tech	5	4	56	6
96	Tech	8	1	89	9
Ac. Ctr	Acad Ctr	2	7	22	3

Table 7.11 Continued Junior-Senior High School Classroom Utilization					
Room	Function	Used	Open	% Used	Add 1 Period Used
LMC	LMC	2	7	22	3
WCO	Study Hall	3	6	33	4
AVERAGE		4.85	4.15	54.10%	59.00%

Table 7.11 provides another method for measuring the effective utilization of the junior-senior high school that is to look at the use of the rooms on a period-by-period basis. This is a more detailed analysis than simply identifying the major use of the rooms in the building. For example, the previous tables show us that a room might be used for English but the tables do not tell us whether the room is used every period of the day or not. The previous table 7.11 shows that analysis for the junior-senior high school, based on the nine period schedule for that building.

The data from table 7.11 shows that the typical classroom in the junior-senior high school is used an average of 54.1% of the time. In looking closer at this table, it is evident that the typical classroom is used for classes for about five periods out of the nine period day. It is impossible to schedule any school building at 100% utilization. If school districts use their facilities to 80-85% capacity, they generally feel as if they are making good use of the buildings. However, a building that is scheduled at under 60% utilization is a building that has space that is not being utilized to its maximum. Having said that, this condition in Cortland is not unusual. As enrollments in public school districts in New York State have declined, there are numerous school districts that are very similar to Cortland. In the end, it is human nature to have people occupy the space that is available to them….and this is precisely what has happened in Cortland Junior-Senior High School.

The Building Condition Survey

In addition to space utilization, another important aspect for determining future facility use is the overall physical condition of the buildings themselves. The New York State Education Department requires all school districts to conduct a Building Condition Survey (BCS) every five years.

The surveys for all school districts were required to be updated in 2015. The table below summarizes the improvements and related estimated cost for each of Cortland's schools, the District Office, and the bus garage. This summary provides a priority ranking of needs as identified by the BCS.

The State Education Department requires all school districts to conduct a Building Condition Survey (BCS) every five years.

Table 7.12 Priorities from Building 2015 Condition Survey				
Building	Priority 1 (1-2 Years)	Priority 2 (3-5 Years)	Priority 3 (6-10 Years)	Other
Barry	$4,770,081	$996,438	$1,033,200	$1,800,645
Parker	$4,278,395	$851,875	$365,250	$16,380
Randall	$1,118,799	$895,500	$799,725	$50,820
Smith	$4,160,393	$1,800,075	$228,908	$18,900
Virgil	$638,935	$587,813	$329,805	$71,400
Jr-Sr High	$11,697,895	$3,644,938	$3,614,850	$213,885
DO/Bus Garage	$1,056,028	$332,313	$60,750	$1,575
District Total	$27,720,525	$9,108,950	$6,432,488	$2,173,605

NOTE: Appendix C contains a graphic from the BCS that shows the various specific aspects of each building that need attention.

Not all of the items listed on the building condition survey are critical. The priorities identified in table 7.12 above can be categorized as follows:

Priority 1. Work that has been determined should be done within the next 1-2 years (Immediate/Necessary)

Priority 2. Work that has been determined should be done within the next 3-5 years (Important/Necessary)

Priority 3. Work that has been determined should be done within the next 6-10 years (Improvements/Renovations)

Other- Work that has been determined to be done with funding other than a capital project (operations/ maintenance, capital reserve etc.)

These priority definitions make it very clear that not all of the items in the Building Condition Survey are urgent. On the other hand, there are numerous items associated with each of the buildings that require attention in the very near future and other items that are nearing the end of their useful life. It is just a matter of time before some of these matters become major worries and major sources of significant expense. Central to the question of facilities planning is the determination of the amount of money that is going to continue to be spent to maintain school buildings that are close to ninety years old.

In any study of a district's facilities, it is important to identify the issues identified in the Building Condition Survey. Having said that, however, the items identified in the BCS are not an integral matter for this study. Whether or not this study was undertaken, the district would have had to plan for addressing the needs identified in the BCS. The capital work associated with items in the BCS as well as the financing that is necessary to accomplish this work are items that the district must consider and plan for, whether or not it decides to make any changes to its grade structure and building organization.

As the district considers options for organizing its schools, understanding the current utility costs for each building is important. Table 7.13 that follows shows the 2016-17 utility costs for each of the district's six school buildings.

Table 7.13 2016-17 Utility Costs						
Utility	Elem Schools					Jr.-Sr. High School
	Barry	Parker	Randall	Smith	Virgil	
Electric	$34,172	$29,458	$37,707	$26,736	$26,159	$248,233
Gas/Oil	$27,043	$24,392	$22,271	$30,755	$16,448	$63,630
TOTAL	$61,215	$53,850	$59,978	$57,491	$42,707	$311,863
Savings @ 40%	$24,486	$21,540	$23,991	$22,995	$17,043	n/a

In considering the possible closure of one of the elementary schools, it is important to calculate the utility cost savings that might accrue to the district. It is assumed that the district will maintain ownership of the closed school, will not be renting the facility, and will be responsible for the cost of the utilities for the closed building. Assuming that the district maintains ownership of the closed building, it will be necessary to continue the utility costs so that the building remains in good repair. As a rule, it is estimated that savings of 40% will accrue to the district when comparing an open building versus a closed building. Given the total financial scope of these facilities decisions, the savings that accrue to the district are fairly insignificant.

CHAPTER 8
STAFFING

Education is a people intensive business. School districts routinely spend 70-75% of their operating budgets on salaries and fringe benefits for the people who work in their schools. As school districts examine how to "educationally and fiscally" reconfigure their grades and/or facilities, consideration of the staffing needs of the school district is important. This chapter of the report examines staffing patterns in Cortland as well as the staffing implications should changes in grade levels and/or facilities be considered.

With respect to instructional staff, Cortland currently has 250 teachers, 31 teaching assistants, and 47 teacher aides. From a building administrative perspective, Cortland has nine building principals. The data associated with these instructional staff members can be seen in table 8.1 that follows.

Table 8.1
Staffing Overview-2017-18

Title	Number of Staff	Total Salaries	Average Salary
Administrators	12	1,222,640	101,867
Aide	47	776,423	16,520
Bus driver	19	372,507	19,606
Bus mechanic	2	79,001	39,501
10 mo. clerical	1	34,065	34,065
11 mo. clerical	18	644,880	35,827
12 mo. Clerical	4	175,083	43,771
Custodian/ Cleaner	21	605,764	28,846
Food Service	9	367,376	40,820
Operations & Maintenance	24	336,285	14,012
Nurse	7	222,891	31,842
10.5 mo. Principals	1	113,408	113,408
12 mo. Principals	8	857,759	107,220
Teacher	250	14,384,312	57,537
Teaching Assistant	31	779,687	25,151
TOTAL		21,262,924	

In addition to salaries paid to employees, there are obligations that accrue to the school district for the cost of fringe benefits. In addition to health insurance costs, the district has costs for employee retirement plans, workers compensation, and social security. The percentage cost of fringe benefits varies greatly for each employee group. In general, employees with lower

salaries will have fringe benefit costs that are a large percentage while higher paid employees may have fringe benefit costs that are higher but represent a lower percentage of costs for the district. For purposes of this study, it will be estimated that fringe benefit costs for the district represent 47% of all salary costs. Table 8.2 that follows shows staffing costs with fringe benefits included.

Table 8.2
Staffing Overview with Fringe Benefits @ 47%-2017-18

Title	Number of Staff	Total Salaries	Average Salary	Cost/FTE with 47% Fringe*
Administrators	12	1,222,640	101,867	149,773
Aide	47	776,423	16,520	24,284
Bus Driver	19	372,507	19,606	28,820
Bus Mechanic	2	79,001	39,501	58,066
10 mo. Clerical	12	290,843	24,237	35,628
11 mo. Clerical	1	34,065	34,065	50,076
12 mo. Clerical	18	644,880	35,827	52,665
IT	4	175,083	43,771	64,343
Custodian/Cleaner	21	605,764	28,846	42,403
Operations & Maintenance	9	367,376	40,820	60,005
Food Service	24	336,285	14,012	20,597
Nurse	7	222,891	31,842	46,807
10.5 mo. Principals	1	113,408	113,408	166,710
12 mo. Principals	8	857,759	107,220	157,613
Teacher	250	14,384,312	57,537	84,580
Teaching Assistant	31	779,687	25,151	36,972
	TOTAL	21,262,924		

NOTE: Fringe benefits include costs for health insurance, retirement, social security, workers compensation, unemployment insurance, etc.

One of the options that is being considered in this facilities study is the possible closure of one of the district's elementary schools. Should the district decide to close one of the elementary schools, significant cost savings in the area of staffing could be realized. In order to calculate this staff savings, table 8.3 is presented to show the current staffing levels in each of the district's five elementary schools.

Table 8.3 Elementary Staffing Overview by Building-2017-18					
Title	Barry	Parker	Randall	Smith	Virgil
Aide	6	6.5	5.5	5.5	6.5
10 mo. clerical	1	1	2	2	
12 mo. Clerical	1	1			1
Custodian/Cleaner	3	3	2	3	2
Food Service	3	2	2	3	2
Nurse	1	1	1	1	.7
10.5 mo. Principals				1	
12 mo. Principals	1	1	1		1
Teacher	37.2	27.4	31	28	14.9
Teaching Assistant	8	5	5	4	4

Staff savings raise a number of complicated issues. Generally speaking, there are two different options for reducing staff:

- ✓ Involuntary Reductions-Staff reductions are more predictable, cause more anxiety, and maximize savings.
- ✓ Attrition-Reductions are driven by decisions staff make, reductions are generally well accepted, and the savings accrue when appropriate vacancies occur.

Usually districts are reluctant to involuntarily reduce staff. Rather, districts often prefer to realize staff reductions as a result of attrition. Attrition occurs when teachers voluntarily leave their positions and, as a result, vacancies occur. The advisory committee asked for information about the number of teachers that are hired annually in Cortland to ensure that the attrition methodology would be effective in realizing the staff savings that would be identified. Table 8.4 that follows shows the most recent five-year history of hires that have been made in Cortland.

Table 8.4 History of Staff Hires						
School Year	Teachers	Teacher Aides & Teaching Assistants	Support Staff	Administrators		Total
2013-14	31	5	11	2		49
2014-15	29	8	12	0		49
2015-16	30	4	17	3		54
2016-17	34	11	7	3		55
2017-18	30	?	?	1		31 +

Based on an analysis of table 8.4, it is clear that the attrition approach to reducing staff positions in Cortland is a very viable option. As the table shows, approximately 50 instructional staff have been hired annually in Cortland over the past five years. There is no reason to believe that this general trend will not continue in the future. As a result, it is recommended that Cortland use attrition as the method for reducing staff. This means that no staff member's job would be lost involuntarily as a result of the decisions that the board will make related to this study.

In addition to assuming that the Cortland Board of Education will use attrition to reduce staff, more specific information is needed to further identify savings that might be realized should one of the elementary schools be closed. In discussions with the advisory committee throughout the course of this study, two of the elementary schools were most often identified as schools that might potentially be closed. These are Parker Elementary and Virgil Elementary. Tables 8.5 and 8.6 that follow show the approximate staff cost savings that are projected to occur should either of these schools be closed.

Table 8.5
Approximate Staff Savings from Closing Parker*

# of FTE	Position	Salary/FTE	Salary Savings
1	12 Month Clerical	$52,344	$52,344
1	10 Month Clerical	33,904	33,904
3	Custodian/Cleaner	44,158	132,474
2	Food Service Workers	20,580	41,160
1	Nurse	45,335	45,335
1	Principal	157,613	157,613
4.05	Teacher (.5 Art, 1.0 Library, 1.0 Vocal Music, .35 Instrumental Music, .2 String Music, 1.0 Physical Education)	83,668	338,855
		Total Savings	$801,685

* Assumes that the following positions will remain: all teacher aides, all teaching assistants, all special education teachers, all AIS reading and math teachers, all psychologists, all speech therapists, and all social workers

Table 8.6 Approximate Staff Savings from Closing Virgil*			
# of FTE	Position	Salary/FTE	Salary Savings
1	12 Month Clerical	$52,344	$52,344
2	Custodian/Cleaner	44,158	88,316
2	Food Service Workers	20,580	41,160
0.7	Nurse	45,335	31,735
1	Principal	157,613	157,613
2.65	Teacher (.3 Art, 1.0 Library, .4 Vocal Music, .25 Instrumental Music, .2 String Music, .5 Physical Education)	83,668	221,720
		Total Savings	$592,888
* Assumes that the following positions will remain: all teacher aides, all teaching assistants, all special education teachers, all AIS reading and math teachers, all psychologists, all speech therapists, and all social workers			

In computing the approximate staff savings in the preceding two tables, a very conservative estimate has been made. Average salaries have been used for all of the identified positions. In addition, it is assumed that all of the teachers, with the exception of the part time special area teachers, will be maintained. Given these parameters, it is estimated that there would be staff savings of approximately $800,000 if Parker were to close and approximately $600,000 if Virgil were to close.

A final observation…as stated earlier, it is being recommended that attrition be the methodology used to reduce staff. The history of turnover identified in table 8.4 shows that there is a high probability that attrition will work as a strategy since there are so many vacancies and new staff hired each year in Cortland. Having said that, as noted earlier, savings from attrition occur when vacancies occur. It is therefore possible that the savings identified in tables 8.5 and 8.6 above will not all occur in the first year but might rather occur over two or more years as appropriate vacancies occur.

It is possible that savings will not occur in the first year but might rather occur over two or more years as appropriate vacancies occur.

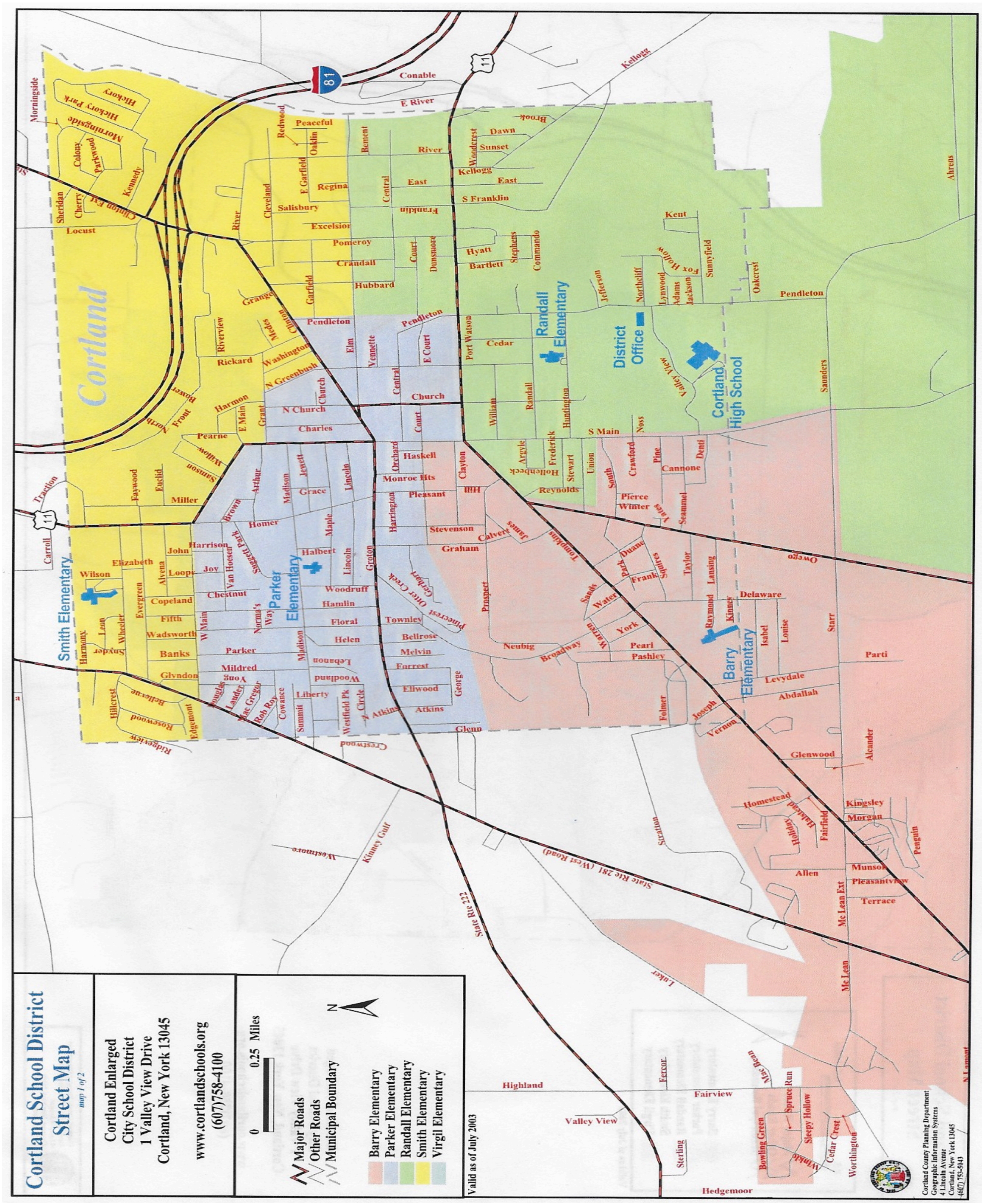
CHAPTER 9
TRANSPORTATION

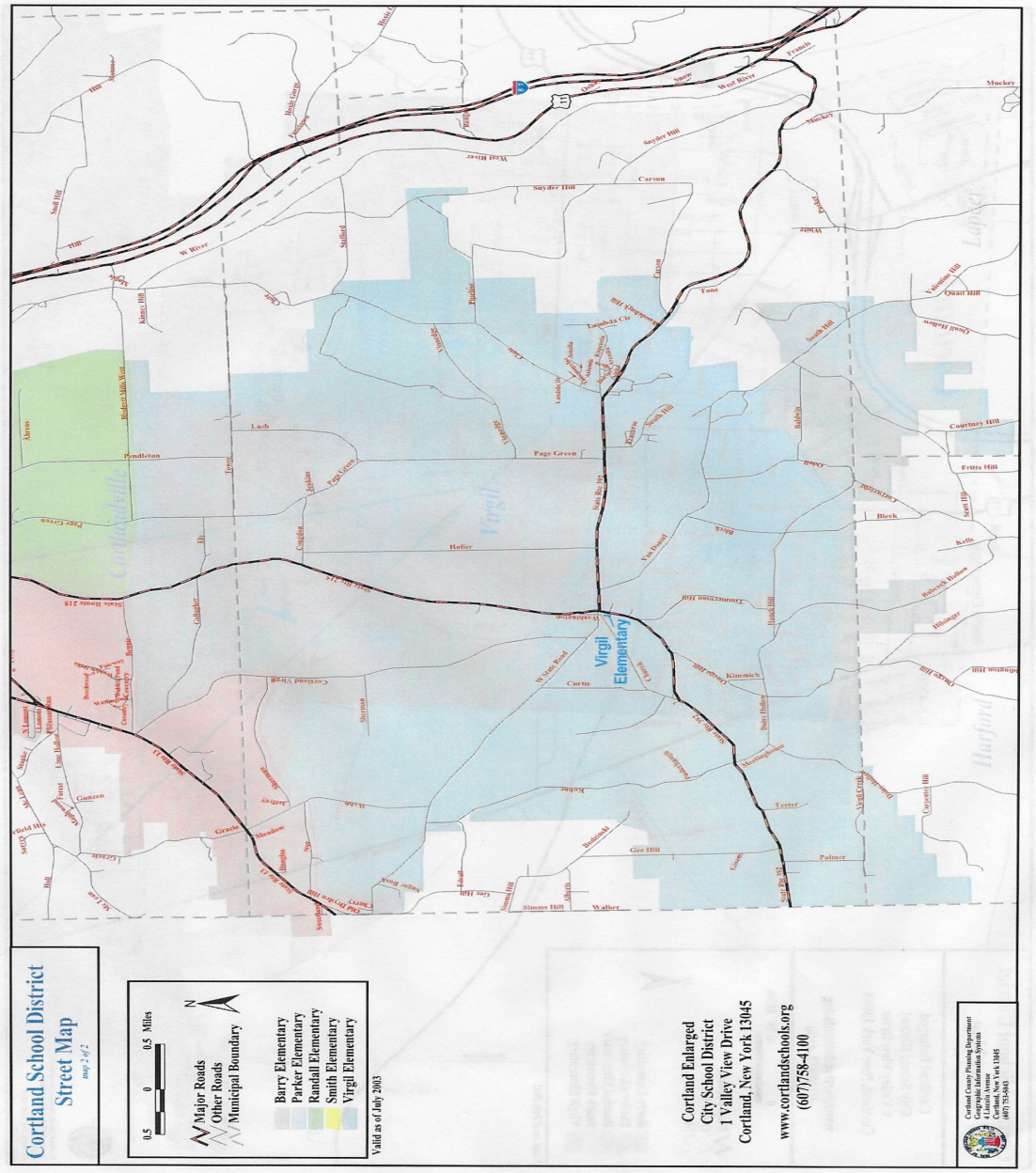
Like most upstate school districts, Cortland City transports many children to school on a daily basis. Cortland's transportation fleet consists of 19, 66-passenger buses; 2, 24-passenger buses; 1, 22-passenger bus; 1, 30-passenger bus; 9, passenger vans; and several miscellaneous vehicles (cars, a truck, etc). The district is on a relatively new five-year bus replacement schedule and purchases 4-5 buses per year.

The district employs a double trip daily routing plan to get in-district students to and from school. This means that the elementary students ride to and from school on one bus run while the junior high and senior high school students ride a separate second run. The early bus run picks up the secondary students then a second bus run transports the elementary children. There are 24 in-district runs daily that transport students to and from the five elementary schools and the Junior-Senior High School. The longest time any student would be on an in-district regular bus run is 30-40 minutes which is well within the State Education Department's general guideline that no student should be on a bus longer than one hour when feasible. Junior and senior high students are dropped off in the morning at the school at 7:00 a.m. (however, parents drop some off earlier) and the homeroom bell rings at 7:45. Elementary students are dropped off at their respective school at 8:00 a.m. (8:05 a.m. at Virgil) and homeroom begins according to this time schedule: Barry, 8:15; Parker and Randall, 8:20; and Smith and Virgil at 8:30 a.m. These bus runs are done in reverse order in the afternoon with Junior and Senior High students dismissed at 2:28 p.m. and the elementary schools letting out at 3:10 (except Virgil which dismisses at 3:12). The district currently uses Transfinder as its routing software program.

Cortland has some students that walk to school. The current policy is that students in grades 7-12 living within 1.5 miles of the Junior-Senior High School are expected to walk while K-6 students living within .9 of a mile from school are to walk as well. There are exceptions made to this mileage requirement on an individual basis to address student safety issues. Nearly all students at Virgil Elementary School are transported.

To some degree, the elementary and secondary bus routes are organized around the elementary school attendance zones. The elementary school attendance zones are illustrated on the next two pages. However, it is important to note that both the elementary and secondary routes are not quite as linear as it may seem. For example, specific secondary bus runs will overlap elementary attendance areas while elementary bus runs will stop at several of the elementary schools. In addition, an elementary bus run that covers Virgil also will deliver students to several private schools in the city (i.e., CCA).


Cortland School District
Street Map
map 1 of 2
Cortland Enlarged
City School District
1 Valley View Drive
Cortland, New York 13045
www.cortlandschools.org
(607)758-4100
0
0.25 Miles
N
Major Roads
Other Roads
Municipal Boundary
Barry Elementary
Parker Elementary
Randall Elementary
Smith Elementary
Virgil Elementary
Valid as of July 2003
Cortland
Smith Elementary
Parker Elementary
Randall Elementary
District Office
Cortland High School
Barry Elementary



Cortland conducts mid-school day bus runs to several locations including the BOCES McEvoy Center, Homer Central School District, School-to-Work locations, CCA, and St. Mary's. While it varies from year-to-year, the Cortland district transports to a number of locations outside the school district to take students to their respective education program including Solvay Union Free School District, T-S-T BOCES, George Junior Republic, and a residential school located in Rochester.

Cortland also provides one bus at 3:15 p.m. each day for high school students that seek academic assistance and another at 4:30 p.m. for students in sports. Additionally, there is a 4:30 p.m. late bus run for elementary students in the Extended Day Learning Program.

The district continues to recruit for bus drivers and does hire some substitute drivers to assist with sports runs. Also, the district is currently aware of congestion at Parker School during drop-off and pick-up. This is under review by the district's architect firm.

The district had a very comprehensive transportation study done by Transportation Advisory Services in 2016 that can provide more detailed information than contained in this report.

The daily transportation system that the district provides is a very complex operation with a number of buses stopping and picking up at multiple school locations

CHAPTER 10
FINANCE

Effective management of finances is an important requirement for any school district. It is particularly important in a challenging national and state economy like we have seen over the past seven or eight years.

As noted previously, one important measure of a Board of Education's ability to find the balance between the quality of education that the community wants for its children with the community's ability to support this education is the annual school district budget vote. The following table summarizes the results from school district budget votes from 2007 to 2017. As can be seen, the budget has passed every year with 2011 being the lone exception.

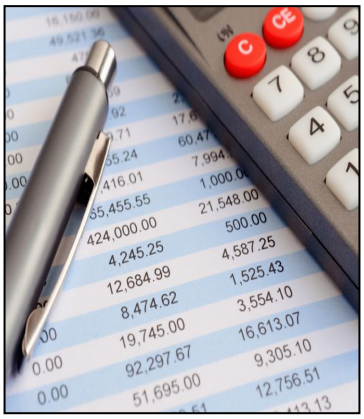
Table 10.1
District Budget Vote History

Year	Yes Votes	No Votes	Total Votes
2017	399	84	483
2016	456	95	551
2015	281	189	470
2014	328	177	505
2013	400	166	566
2012	685	319	1004
2011	*365*	*1137*	*1502*
2010	363	308	671
2009	549	218	767
2008	457	417	874
2007	346	136	482

In addition, the Cortland school community has supported capital project votes on two recent occasions (2007 and 2014) as well as 11 of 12 bus propositions since 2005.

A second window into the district's current fiscal situation is through examining the current general fund balance sheet. At the end of each fiscal year (June 30th), all school districts have to file a year-end financial report. The following table 10.2 shows Cortland's general fund balance sheet from this report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017.

Table 10.2 District Balance Sheets as of June 30, 2017	
ASSETS	
Cash – Unrestricted	
Cash-Restricted	$6,851,450
Taxes receivable	$568,673
Accounts receivable	$75,095
Due from other funds	$714,019
Due from State and Federal	$1,732,534
Due from other governments	$72,438
Prepaid expenditures	$1,980
Total Assets	**$12,092,213**
LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable	$538,060
Accrued Liabilities	$29,141
Due to other funds	$726,801
Due to employees' retirement system	$2,238,262
Due to teachers' retirement system	$214,833
Compensated Absences	$186,922
Deferred inflows of resources	$508,948
Total Liabilities/Deferred Revenues	**$4,442,967**
FUND BALANCE	
Restricted Fund Balance	
Workers' Compensation Reserve	$356,209
Unemployment Reserve	$347,489
Reserve for Retirement Contributions	$1,336,819
Reserve for Liability Claims	$30,163
Insurance Reserve	$243,078
Tax Certiorari Reserve	$853,791
Employee Benefit & Accrued Liability Res.	$714,362
Capital Reserve	$2,284,332
Repair Reserve	$685,207
Total Restricted Fund Balance	**$6,851,450**
Assigned Fund Balance	
Assigned Appropriated Fund Balance	$500,000
Assigned Unappropriated Fund Balance*	$6,659
Total Assigned Fund Balance	**$506,659**
Unassigned Fund Balance	
Unassigned Fund Balance	$291,137
Total Unassigned Fund Balance	**$291,137**
Total Fund Balance	**$7,649,246**
Total Liabilities	**$12,092,213**



To assess the district's overall fiscal position, it is important to focus on several items in the above general fund balance sheet. Specifically, the number and amount of reserve accounts in the restricted fund balance is an indicator of long-range fiscal planning. As can be seen, on June 30, 2017, the district had $356,209 in reserve for workers' compensation, $347,489 in an

unemployment reserve, $1,336,819 in a reserve for retirement, $853,791 in a tax certiorari reserve (property assessment challenges), $30,163 in reserve for liability claims, $714,362 set aside for employee benefits and accrued liabilities, a $2,284,332 capital reserve, $243,078 in an insurance reserve, and $685,207 for repairs. The following table summarizes the most recent five-year history of the district's restricted fund balance for each reserve category. (It should also be noted however that the district had $1,117,193 in its debt service fund) The restricted fund balance has been declining the last three years which is not a positive sign.

Table 10.3
Restricted Fund Balance: A Five Year Summary

Category	6/30/13	6/30/14	6/30/15	6/30/16	6/30/17
Unemployment	$368,012	$368,496	$360,542	$347,224	$347,489
Retirement	$3,031,976	$3,036,918	$2,248,554	$1,483,450	$1,336,819
Tax Cert	$809,222	$810,352	$811,123	$811,895	$853,791
Liability	$877,668	$879,000	$379,835	$30,126	$30,163
Emp Benefits	$1,823,774	$1,540,505	$1,289,413	$965,696	$714,362
Capital	$1,503,910	$1,506,368	$1,508,252	$1,510,141	$2,284,332
Workers Comp	$0	$1,570,000	$786,896	$576,892	$356,209
Insurance	$2,004,191	$2,007,458	$2,009,969	$2,012,487	$243,078
Repair	$0	$0	$466,364	$466,545	$685,207
Total	$10,932,618	$12,232,962	$11,473,813	$9,318,373	$6,851,450

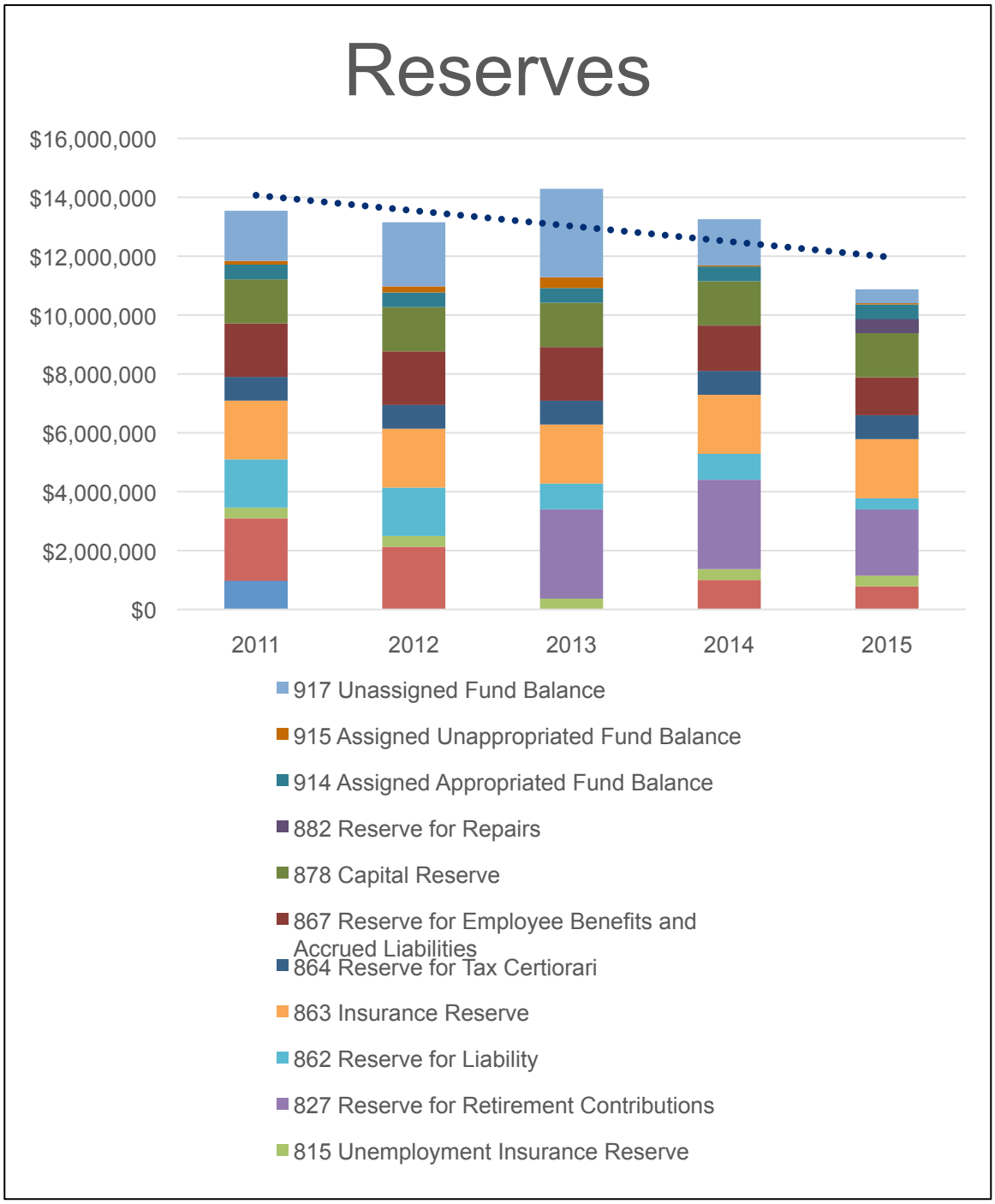
A second indicator of fiscal health is the amount of unassigned fund balance a district maintains. State law restricts a school district to carrying no more than 4% of the subsequent year's budget in its unassigned fund balance. At the end of the last fiscal year, Cortland had $291,137 set aside or 0.6% of this year's general fund budget ($49,576,887). This is an extremely low amount to maintain.

Third, we examine the amount of money a school district uses to hold down the tax rate each year; that is, money the district has on hand at the end of the previous year that it applies to the revenue side of the ledger for the coming year. From the 2016-17 general fund budget, Cortland applied $535,000 to hold the tax rate down. If it had not done so, the district would have had to raise this additional revenue from the local taxpayers to support the 2017-18 school year operation. The end result however is that the district will again have to have at least $535,000 excess revenue this year (which it is estimating) to do the same procedure or the local residents will have to make up any difference that is short of this amount. It is important to note that this assigned fund balance has gone up from the previous year.

Furthermore, a five-year history as illustrated in Table 10.4 that follows shows stabilization in the appropriated fund balance but a significant decline in the unassigned fund balance which is a major concern for long-range financial planning.

Table 10.4 Five Year History of Appropriated and Unassigned Fund Balance		
Fiscal Year Ending 6/30	Appropriated Fund Balance*	Unassigned Fund Balance
2018	$535,000 (est.)	$159,000 (est.)
2017	$535,000	$291,137
2016	$500,000	$30,480
2015	$500,000	$720,230
2014	$500,000	$1,520,715
2013	$500,000	$1,731,901
*Appropriated Fund Balance is the amount of fund balance the district used to hold down the tax rate the following year by lowering the needed levy.		

In an audit of the district's fund balance by the State Comptroller's office dated June 2017, the Comptroller found the district has been using fund balance to sustain the district's general operating budget. The report stated, "Continuing to finance operating deficits with fund balance and reserves has negatively impacted the District's financial condition. As the availability of fund balance and reserves to finance operations diminishes, real property tax increases or reductions in expenditures will be necessary. District officials will not be able to provide the same level of operations without exceeding the real property tax cap. For example, if 2016-17 operations were funded without the use of fund balance and reserves, the real property tax levy would have exceeded the real property tax cap by $4.5 million (26 percent)." Furthermore, in a letter to the district in December 2017, the State Comptroller's office informed the district that preliminarily it will again be designated as a district in "Moderate Fiscal Stress" for the third consecutive year and the annual score keeps getting higher indicating more stress. The general trend of reserves is illustrated in the following graph. **This is a significant problem for Cortland!**



Another important financial variable, particularly in light of this study, is the current amount of principal and interest the district carries on former capital borrowing. Regardless of any future options the district endorses concerning grade arrangement and facilities, Cortland will have to engage in future borrowing to accomplish capital work. Therefore, the following table summarizes the current capital debt the district has on its books. In addition, the table also

estimates the amount of state aid the district will receive on these payments as well as the net local share taxpayers must contribute. The district will not be debt free until 2032-33 assuming no additional borrowing. That said, it is important to note when future obligations will be paid off so the impact of any additional borrowing will be lessened by retiring debt. Specifically, the net local share after aid drops off considerably in the 2026-27 fiscal year.

Table 10.5
Capital Debt After Aid Received 2016-17 to 2031-32

Year	*Principal & Interest*	*Estimated Aid*	*Estimated Local Share*
2016-17	$3,430,575	$2,704,214	$726,361
2017-18	$3,671,250	$3,218,110	$453,140
2018-19	$3,667,650	$3,218,110	$449,540
2019-20	$3,660,125	$3,218,110	$442,015
2020-21	$3,657,150	$3,218,110	$439,040
2021-22	$3,658,250	$3,218,110	$440,140
2022-23	$3,662,925	$3,218,110	$444,815
2023-24	$3,660,675	$3,218,110	$442,565
2024-25	$3,661,500	$3,218,110	$443,390
2025-26	$3,664,925	$3,218,110	$446,815
2026-27	$870,425	$916,096	-$45,671
2027-28	$867,525	$916,096	-$48,571
2028-29	$863,225	$916,096	-$52,871
2029-30	$547,500	$779,907	-$232,407
2030-31	$545,900	$643,718	-$97,818
2031-32	$543,400	$513,896	$29,504
Total	$40,633,000	$36,353,013	$4,279,987

A discussion point of the committee was whether closing the any of the district's schools would adversely impact local property values. To explore this issue, the consultants reviewed the professional literature regarding the closing of a school and its impact on home values and the research on any link between a school district reputation and home values. After reviewing the literature, the consultants concluded that local property values *could* be negatively impacted because the elementary school children would be attending school further from their home. On the other hand, the research indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between a school district reputation and home values—the better the district's reputation, the higher the home values. Consequently, if closing an elementary school building results in an improved perception of the quality of the school district, home values *could* be positively impacted. In

summary, the consultants have concluded that if one of the elementary schools were to close, it is unclear if local property values would be adversely impacted.

A second window into the possible impact of school closure on local property values was through examining at least one rural school district that has fairly recently dealt with the issue of school closures in its community. Altmar-Parish-Williamstown in Oswego County closed three elementary schools. The following table illustrates either the assessed or full value of property in the townships surrounding the closed elementary school in A-P-W.

Table 10.6
A-P-W Closed Elementary School Townships and Total Assessed Property Value in the Townships Before and After Closing the Elementary Schools

	Schools			
Year	Altmar	Parish	Williamstown	Total Assessed Value
2007-08	$71,003,677	$93,663,049	$55,530,142	$220,196,868
2008-09	$76,149,128	$93,609,716	$58,193,389	$227,952,233
2009-10	$89,177,362	$94,497,871	$65,829,816	$249,505,049
2010-11	$89,868,246	$93,596,737	$65,879,683	$249,344,666
2011-12	$77,210,580	$117,707,782	$58,874,237	$253,792,599
2012-13	$92,084,907	$140,318,700	$66,303,225	$298,706,832
2013-14	$89,952,721	$138,048,935	$66,526,050	$294,527,706
2014-15	$92,978,097	$141,411,076	$66,574,411	$300,963,584
2015-16	$92,208,868	$141,727,312	$67,458,888	$301,395,068
NOTES: (1) Shaded cells indicate the years prior to school closure				
(2) The Village of Altmar dissolved in 2012				

In examining this table, one can see that local assessed or full property values do not appear to have declined following the closing of the elementary schools in the district. Of course, this picture is related to the next issue to be discussed.

Although it is not included in the table above as a possible disadvantage of implementing this option, the committee considered the issue of what to do with any building if it was closed. Specifically, could the school be sold and put into productive use and perhaps placed on the tax rolls? If not, would it simply decay and become a community eyesore? And, if the vacated school is not put to productive use but rather sits idle, would this negatively impact local property values. These are serious concerns and so the consultants identified other districts that had closed elementary schools in their communities.

Again we revisit the Altmar-Parish-Williamstown Central School District in Oswego County. Working with a consulting group from the lower Hudson Valley, the district was fortunate to find buyers for its three shuttered elementary schools. Specifically, the Parish Elementary School sold June 30, 2012 for $245,000 to become a high tech manufacturing facility. The Altmar School sold on the same date for $400,000 and has been repurposed as a luxury salmon fishing resort. The Williamstown Elementary School sold in May 2013 for $55,000. The concern about what will happen to school buildings that have been closed is a significant issue for local communities. This example at least shows that the outcome can be very positive…or not so positive!

After sharing the above information with the committee as it pertained to sale price of the elementary schools in the case study districts, the current appraised value of Cortland's school buildings was provided to the committee. The following table summarizes the current appraised values.

Table 10.7
Replacement Cost of School Buildings*

School Building	*Replacement Cost*
Parker Elementary	$12,033,500
Randall Elementary	$12,460,000
Smith Elementary	$13,123,000
Barry Elementary	$15,332,100
Virgil Elementary	$8,351,500

NOTES: Appraised values determined as of 2017.

As can be seen, each school is appraised for between $8.3 and $15.3 million dollars. It is important to note that this appraised value is what is commonly referred to as "replacement value." That is, if the school were to be completely destroyed, this is the cost to build the structure again. Importantly, however, despite the figures quoted in the table, if any elementary school is closed, and if the district is fortunate enough to find a buyer for the school, the sale price would not nearly approach the appraised value of the building. See the Altmar-Parish-Williamstown school district example and what the district realized from sale of its buildings.

Finally, the table below summarizes the utility costs for all district elementary schools during the 2016-17 school year. After conferring with a number of architects, it is estimated that a closed building would likely yield approximately 40% savings in utility costs, or approximately $20,000 if any of the elementary schools were to be closed.

Table 10.8
Utility Costs for Five Elementary Schools-2013 School Year

Utility	*Barry*	*Parker*	*Randall*	*Smith*	*Virgil*
Electric	$34,172	$29,458	$37,707	$26,736	$26,159
Natural Gas	$27,043	$24,392	$22,271	$30,755	$16,448
TOTAL	$61,215	$53,850	$59,978	$57,491	$42,707
Savings @ 40%	$24,486	$21,540	$23,991	$22,996	$17,083

In summary, we have concluded that the district is facing a very serious financial challenge in the years ahead if it is not able to alter the trends noted above. Cortland must either hope to secure additional revenue or reduce expenditures or both in the next few years.

CHAPTER 11
RESEARCH AND LITERATURE ON GRADE REORGANIZATION

Before the feasible options are presented, a brief overview of the relevant research and literature that were fundamental to the study is presented. Grade configuration study is common for school districts around the country; thus substantial research and literature exist. Key research findings were presented to the advisory committee. The Appendix contains a more in-depth summary of the research.

First, it is important to note that most school districts that embark on grade configuration study do so because of too much or too little capacity in their schools. In other words, space rather than educational considerations drives the decision. Cortland is the exception. It approached the study of grade configurations with one primary purpose in mind—how the district can arrange the K-12 schools to achieve more positive educational outcomes for students while balancing the community's ability to financially support any new grade/facility arrangement. Cortland's Board of Education and Superintendent are to be commended for addressing grade configuration for the right reasons.

Examination of school districts around the country finds virtually any possible grade configuration. For example, a K-4, 5-8, 9-12 pattern is common in suburban school districts. Some districts have adopted a grade center plan, with all K-2 students in one building and all 3-5 students in another. The K-8, 9-12 grade arrangement is still found in many small rural districts and is a recent trend in the urban areas. The oldest grade configuration is K-12, and is still seen in many small rural districts, even in New York State. The most common pattern of organizing grades in New York State today is K-5, 6-8, 9-12.

Over the past thirty years there has been a trend by districts to change from the K-6, 7-9, 10-12 configuration to K-5, 6-8, 9-12. The impetus for this large scale and pervasive shift has been due to what is commonly known as "the middle school movement." The middle school movement is an effort to provide a transition phase of schooling—taking children from the cloistered setting of an elementary school to the less structured environment of a high school. Middle school age children have unique needs during this rapidly changing phase of life that may not be adequately addressed in either the typical elementary school or high school.

Unfortunately, school district planners cannot look to the research for the "one best way" to configure the grades. While there is evidence that one can locate to support any grade configuration, there is no conclusive research that indicates that one alignment is necessarily any better than another. A general conclusion that most researchers have reached is that it is "what" a district does with the grade configuration that ultimately determines success or failure, rather than "which" grade arrangement is endorsed. For example, many districts that changed their grade configuration to either a 5-8 or 6-8 middle school never adopted the philosophy and necessary practices to have a true middle school (for example, team teaching, advisor-advisee programs). Consequently, these districts have been unsuccessful in achieving the positive outcomes advanced by middle school advocates.

Finally, the research indicates that school districts studying grade configuration typically must confront a set of common issues. Indeed, some of these surfaced as this study progressed. Specifically, the cost and length of travel for children to get to and from school; how long will students be on the school bus is always a concern that must be addressed if a reconfiguration is to

occur. The favorable or unfavorable impact of parent involvement in a child's schooling is an element that arises in every instance. The manner in which students will be grouped for instruction (i.e., teaming at the middle school level) is a frequent issue.

Research has found that the number of transitions during a student's K-12 experience should be considered. Each time a student moves from one school to another the educational process is disrupted. Although the student recovers, it is important to minimize the number of transitions in a student's education.

Interaction between various age groups and the influence of older students on younger is usually a significant consideration for districts considering reconfiguration. How will fifth or sixth graders be impacted by proximity to eighth graders?

And finally, the relationship of a building's design for accommodating the instructional program of different grade configurations must be examined. This, too, was a focus of advisory committee consideration.

CHAPTER 12
OPTIONS FOR MAINTAINING AND/OR RECONFIGURING THE BUILDING/GRADE ORGANIZATION OF THE DISTRICT

When evaluating the current status of Cortland's grade and facility organization, the consultants first attempted to identify "feasible" options—in other words, how *could* the grades/facilities be arranged. Following this, the next step was to identify the "desirable" options—among the feasible ways, what is/are the option(s) that make the most educational and fiscal sense. Following is a discussion of the "feasible" options with advantages and disadvantages of each followed by the consultants' selection of the "desirable" options.

Feasible Grade/Facility Options

The consultants initially identified three feasible options along with advantages (pros) and disadvantages (cons) of each when compared to the other possible choices. These options were then the focus of discussion with members of the advisory committee. The advisory committee was asked to critique the options, either agree or disagree with the options, and critique the pros and cons. The advisory committee was also asked to add additional advantages and disadvantages to each option. Finally, the advisory committee was also asked to add any additional options that they thought would be appropriate. The following tables show the result of these discussions. In addition, supplemental data to support many of the pros and cons has been included.

Criteria for School Building Closure

Discussion about closing any school building will generate significant emotion from many people. In considering which school building might be closed in Cortland, the consultants considered each of the elementary buildings. In formulating recommendations, the following criteria were considered with respect to closing elementary schools:

1. Smallest enrollment-impacts the fewest students, staff, and families;
   --Virgil has the smallest enrollment; Parker has the second smallest enrollment
2. Age of building;
   -- Parker and Randall are the oldest buildings; Virgil is the 3rd oldest; Barry and Smith are 25-30 years newer
3. Square footage of building to accommodate new students;
   --Virgil is the smallest school; Parker is the second smallest
4. Geographic proximity to other schools to facilitate transportation and sharing of students and staff;
   --Virgil is the most isolated school building
5. Site considerations for parking and a bus loop;
   --Parker has the most challenging site
6. Cost of Priority 1 items from the Building Condition Survey;
   --Barry, Parker and Smith are approximately $4,000,000, Randall is approximately $1,000,000, and Virgil is approximately $650,000. Building aid is available for these costs
7. Number of floors, single story is better;
   --Virgil, Parker, and Randall have 3 floors; Barry and Smith have one

Based on the criteria listed above, it is clear that the elementary schools that are most appropriate to consider closing are Parker and Virgil.

Option 1

Remaining as is, that is, keeping the schools and grades organized as at present, is always an option. Therefore, this was the first possible future option shared with the committee. As can be seen in the accompanying table 12.1, some of the major advantages the consultants and the committee noted included not creating controversy in the community, allowing for growth of enrollment should it occur, and maintains a sense of community with "your school building". On the other hand, the committee identified several disadvantages to maintaining the existing arrangement. These included requiring putting money into renovations of schools that may eventually close, not maximizing staffing efficiencies, and continuing to make it difficult to keep the curriculum the same at all the elementary schools. The following table 12.1 shows a complete list of advantages and disadvantages associated with option 1.

Table 12.1
Pros and Cons for Option 1: Remaining As is

Pros	Cons
▪ Does not create any controversy that other options may cause ▪ Allows for growth of enrollment should it occur ▪ Fewer transitions from building-to-building than some other options ▪ Maintains a sense of community with "your school building" ▪ Allows smaller class sizes than Option 3 ▪ Protects 6th graders from exposure to older students ▪ Would likely be less cost if other options mean putting on an addition to a school	▪ Requires putting money into renovations of schools that may eventually have to close ▪ Does not maximize staffing efficiencies ▪ Maintains the complexity of the transportation system ▪ Continues to make it difficult to keep the curriculum the same at all elementary schools as compared to Option 3 ▪ Creates more transitional change, not only from small school to big school, but also the introduction of all the new kids ▪ Does not make it possible to assess all students as thoroughly as possible if all are in different schools ▪ Does not address the mobility of students within the city schools ▪ 6th graders are not developmentally appropriate for the elementary ▪ Likely will result in an increase in taxes; does not save money ▪ There are accountability in educational curriculum between buildings

It is important to note however, if Option 1 is selected as the best course of action by the Board of Education, there will still be significant financial cost for the upkeep and improvement of the current school buildings as noted by the 2015 Building Condition Survey. Although a complete breakdown of these costs has been presented earlier in this report, the following table

summarizes these according to a priority ranking established by the District's architects. Again, it is important to remember that whatever work from the BCS the Board of Education decides to undertake, this work and the related costs must be built into the district's long range facilities and financial planning, regardless of what the board decides to do about the recommendations contained in this study.

Table 12.2
Priorities from Building 2015 Condition Survey

Building	Priority 1 (1-2 Years)	Priority 2 (3-5 Years)	Priority 3 (6-10 Years)	Other
Barry	4,770,081	996,438	1,033,200	1,800,645
Parker	4,278,395	851,875	365,250	16,380
Randall	1,118,799	895,500	799,725	50,820
Smith	4,160,393	1,800,075	228,908	18,900
Virgil	638,935	587,813	329,805	71,400
Jr-Sr High	11,697,895	3,644,938	3,614,850	213,885
DO/Bus Garage	1,056,028	332,313	60,750	1,575
District Total	27,720,525	9,108,950	6,432,488	2,173,605

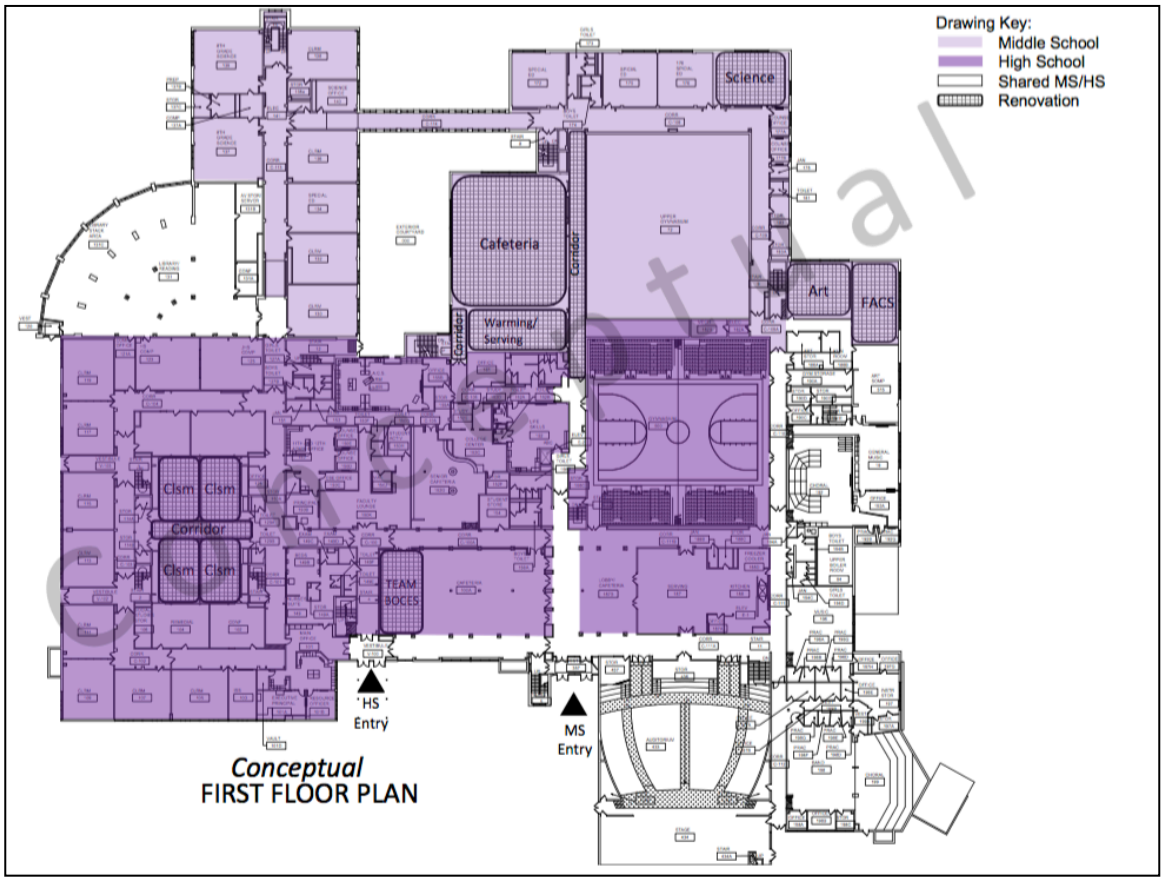
Option 2

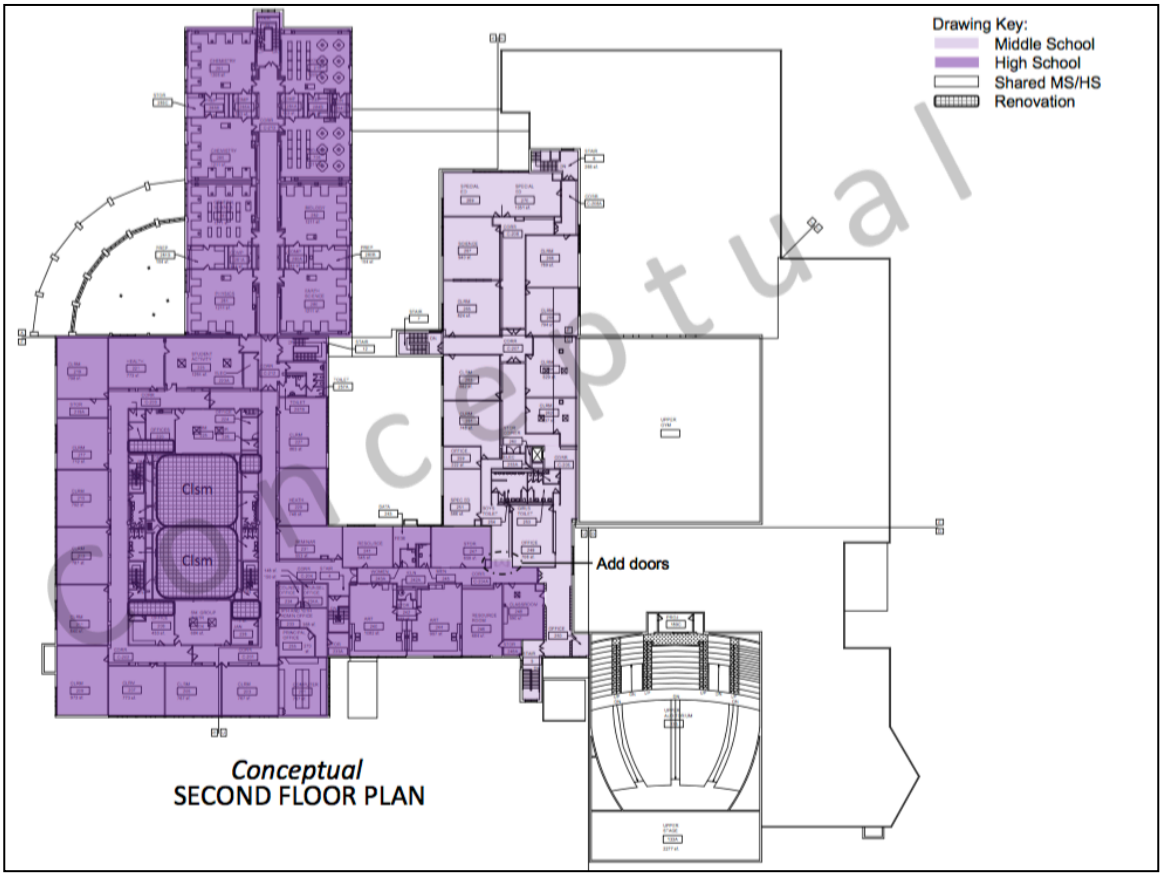
A second option initially presented by the consultants and discussed by the advisory committee members was to **develop a true middle school program in the Junior High by moving all of the sixth grades out of the elementary schools and sending these youngsters to the Junior High making it a 6-8 Middle School.** Educational advantages noted by the consultants and the committee included allowing for a true middle school philosophy (teamed instruction as a transition from essentially a self-contained elementary program to a complete departmentalized high school, access to middle school facilities such as technology rooms and advanced courses—mathematics and second languages—for sixth graders, and consistency with the NYS Regents Policy Statement on Middle Level Education [http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/mle/mlepolicy.html] that outlines a rationale for middle level). This option may also allow for closing of one school. Some of the major disadvantages noted were further reducing enrollments in the elementary schools, separating middle school students from high school students, and possible cost of modifying the facility to accommodate a middle school program. There was disagreement among the committee members about the developmental appropriateness of having sixth grade students housed in the current Junior-Senior High School, hence this was listed as both a pro as well as a con.

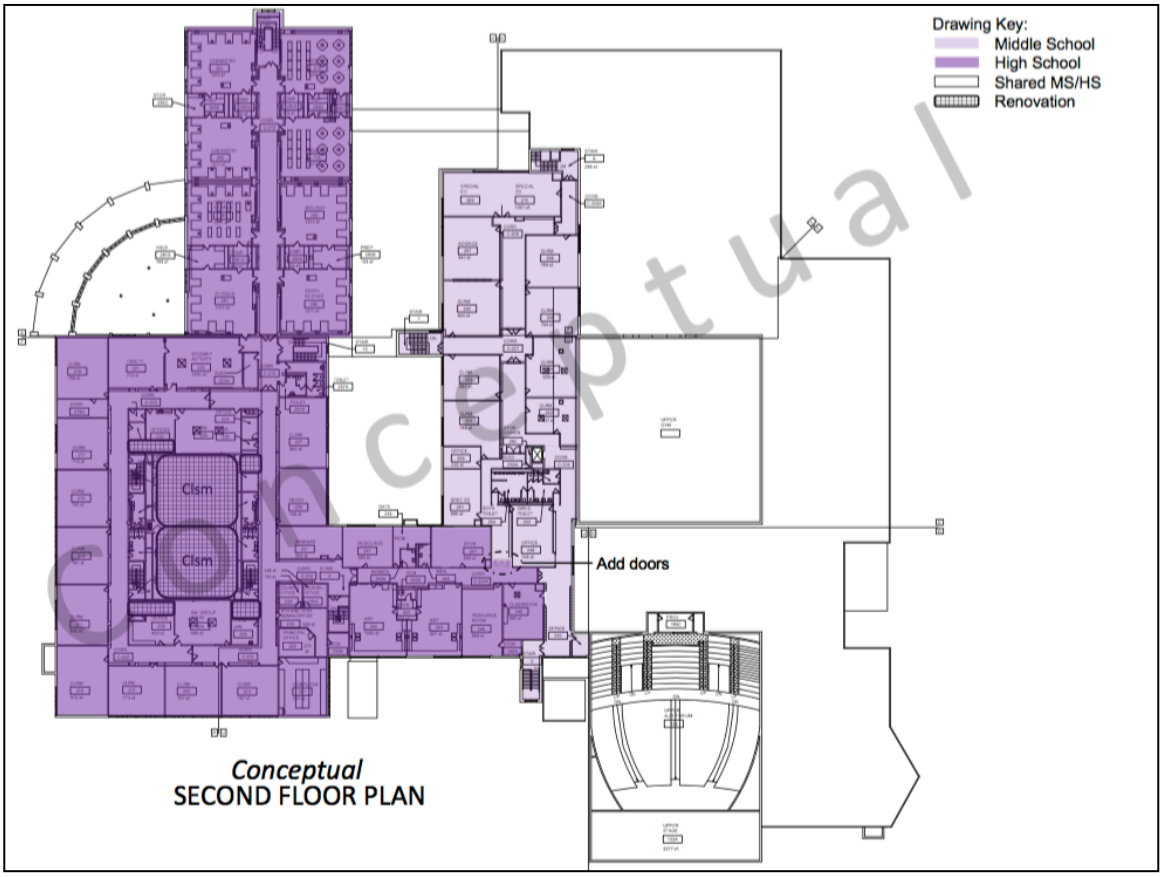
Table 12.3 Option 2: Realign the grades to house 6th grade at the Jr-Sr High (converting the Junior High to a 6-8 Middle School	
Pros	Cons
▪ Allows for a true (modified?) middle school philosophy ▪ Frees up space in the elementary schools should enrollment increase ▪ May allow for the closing of one school ▪ More developmentally appropriate for 6th Graders ▪ Permits access to more curriculum options/course offerings/state standards ▪ Curriculum goes 6-8th grade	▪ May (will?) make a tight space fit at the Junior-Senior High ▪ There may be some concerns about developmental appropriateness of sixth graders with 7-12th graders ▪ Will have to work to segregate middle schoolers from high school students ▪ Further decreases enrollment in the elementary schools ▪ Would require facility renovations to address 6th graders crossing paths with senior high students ▪ Keeping lunches separate would have to be figured out ▪ There would be no financial advantage to the district ▪ Would be some staffing issues to make a "true" middle school model ▪ May result in a lack of community buy-in if it is not a "true" middle school ▪ Likely additional cost for expansion of cafeteria, entrance, gym, auditorium ▪ May not change the current arrangement enough financially (same transportation, more lack of space at elementary) ▪ 9-12 behaviors shared down to 6-8 !No educational advantage

The district's architects from King & King in Syracuse provided some concept drawings of how the Junior-Senior High School may need to be modified to create a true middle school. The following concept sketches are provided to show the areas of the building that would be affected.

These sketch drawings were produced in consultation with district administrators with the purpose of providing adequate space to house the 6th grades in the building and a clear intent to ensure separation of the Middle School students from the High School students.




Drawing Key:
Middle School
High School
Shared MS/HS
Renovation
Add doors
Conceptual
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



To accomplish the necessary modifications to the current Junior-Senior High School as presented above, the district's financial advisory firm (Fiscal Advisors from Cicero) was asked to estimate the approximate cost and project what the borrowing plan might be to financially accomplish this project. The estimated cost range for the creation of the middle school is $8,000,000-$10,000,000. The estimated annual cost to local taxpayers is projected to be $171,198-$213,970. A set of estimated amortization schedules is contained in the appendix to this report which show the annual principal and interest the district would assume, the length of payback period, estimated state aid on these payments, the local share of payback for each year, and the assumptions on which the schedules were based.

Option 3

A third feasible option was initially discussed at length with the advisory committee. This third possibility proposed **closing Virgil Elementary School and forming grade centers (sister schools) as follows: PK-2 at Smith Elementary partnering with grades 3-5 at Parker; PK-2 at Barry Elementary with grades 3-5 at Randall. The sixth grades in all the elementary schools would be relocated to the Junior-Senior High making it a grade 6-8 Middle School.** Table 12.4 that follows shows the pros and cons of Option 3.

Table 12.4 Option 3: Create Two Grade Centers at the Elementary Level (PK-2 Smith; 3-5 Parker/PK-2 Barry; 3-5 Randall) and Close Virgil Elementary School. Move the 6th grades to the Junior-Senior High to Make a Middle School	
Pros	Cons
▪ Allows for a true (modified?) middle school philosophy ▪ Improves coordination & articulation of curriculum ▪ Provides more options to match students to teachers ▪ Increases staff efficiencies Allows for better/easier balancing of class ▪ sizes Permits more coordinated services (speech, ▪ OT/PT, counseling, etc.) Offers exposure to a greater diversity of ▪ students Provides the ability to use multiple (4 or ▪ more) teachers to meet students academic needs within a grade level	▪ Concerns about closing Virgil More students would have to ride the bus and ▪ some bus rides would be longer May make a tight space fit at the Junior- ▪ Senior High There may be some concerns about ▪ developmental appropriateness of sixth ▪ graders with 7-12th graders Will have to work to segregate middle ▪ schoolers from high school students ▪ Would overload the two largest elementary ▪ buildings Means more (too many?) transitions for ▪ students Parent involvement may decline if children ▪ are in different buildings A question of what happens to the closed ▪ building and how much savings would ▪ actually occur? Every building would lose its community ▪ feeling The sacrifice would not be good for the Virgil ▪ community; it is the fastest growing area ▪ Closes the school with the highest ▪ performance Would not grow the economic base ▪ Displaces kids will sour parents

Reviewing the advantages and disadvantages in the previous table, some advantages noted were allowing for a middle school philosophy, improving articulation and coordination of curriculum, increasing staffing efficiencies, and more options to match students to teachers. A few of the disadvantages of this option include concerns about closing Virgil, increase in length of bus rides for some students, making a tight fit at the Junior-Senior High, and more (too

many?) transitions for students. As noted earlier in this report, closing Virgil Elementary would result in approximately $600,000 in staff savings. This is shown in details in table 12.5 that follows.

Table 12.5
Staff Savings from Closing Virgil*

# of FTE	Position	Salary/FTE	Salary Savings
1	12 Month Clerical	$52,344	$52,344
2	Custodian/Cleaner	44,158	88,316
2	Food Service Workers	20,580	41,160
0.7	Nurse	45,335	31,735
1	Principal	157,613	157,613
2.65	Teacher (.3 Art, 1.0 Library, .4 Vocal Music, .25 Instrumental Music, .2 String Music, .5 Physical Education)	83,668	221,720
		Total Savings	$592,888

* Assumes that the following positions will remain: all teacher aides, all teaching assistants, all special education teachers, all AIS reading and math teachers, all psychologists, all speech therapists, and all social workers

As school districts all over New York State look to optimize student programming with limited resources, consolidation of services and staff reductions are options that are often chosen. Since seventy to seventy-five percent of most school district budgets are devoted to paying staff salaries and fringe benefits, significant savings can only be realized by reducing staff. If staff reductions are inevitable, districts generally want to make changes by reducing their instructional program only as a last resort. In consideration of Option 3, staff savings could be realized by reducing the number of elementary classroom sections at the four remaining elementary schools while still maintaining reasonable class sizes. The following table 12.6 illustrates the current number of sections and class sizes in the elementary schools.

Table 12.6
Elementary Class Sizes-2017-18

Grade	Barry	Parker	Randall	Smith	Virgil	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	22, 22	19, 16	21, 19	16, 15	15	165	9
1	18, 19, 19	19, 19	21, 21	16, 18	12	182	10
2	20, 17	14, 16	19, 18	20, 20	18	162	9
3	24, 24	19, 17	24, 22	21, 20	15	186	9
4	19, 17, 20	20, 19	20, 23	18, 17	24	197	10
5	20, 21, 21	24	23, 22	20, 21	20	192	9
6	18, 20, 19	15, 14	19, 18	15, 14	12	164	10
TOTAL	360	231	290	251	116	1,248	66

NOTE: Average common branch size in NYS in 2015-16=22

From a cost standpoint, the most important observation that can be made about table 12.6 is that the current configuration of elementary classrooms in Cortland has 66 classrooms or sections of children in grades Kindergarten through 6. If the sixth grade were part of the middle school, there would be 56 elementary sections of grades K-5. Because of the significant cost associated with staff, savings occur when the number of sections are reduced. Implementing Option 3 by closing Virgil, moving grade 6 to the junior high to create a middle school, and creating four K-5 sister schools would yield the following elementary classroom structure as shown in table 12.7.

Table 12.7
GRADE CENTER PLAN—2017-18 Elementary Class Sizes for K-5 (VIRGIL CLOSED)
Maximum Class Size of 24---6th Grade to Junior High

Grade	Barry 3-5	Parker 3-5	Randall K-2	Smith K-2	Virgil	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	-		22, 23, 23, 23	24, 24, 24	-	163	7
1	-		23, 23, 23, 23	21, 21, 22, 22	-	178	8
2	-		19, 20, 20, 20	21, 21, 22, 22	-	165	8
3	20, 20, 20, 21, 21	21, 22, 22, 22	-	-	-	189	9
4	22, 22, 22, 22, 22	23, 23, 24, 24	-	-	-	204	9
5	23, 23, 23, 24, 24	19, 19, 20, 20	-	-	-	195	9
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	329	259	262	244	-	1,094	50

NOTE: Average common branch size in NYS=22 in 2015-16

There are clear financial savings from this model. Not only is there the savings of approximately $600,000 from closing Virgil, additionally this grade center model reduces the number of elementary sections for grades K-5 from 56 to 50. Assuming that only the classroom teacher's salary would be saved, six teacher salaries with benefits would total another $507,480 ($84,580/teacher X 6 teachers) in savings. This means that this option would save approximately $1,100,000 per year.

The Advisory Committee was asked to propose additional possible options for the consultants to consider. The following were proposed:

- Create a 6-8 middle school using one of the existing elementary buildings (put the District Office into the Junior-Senior High or a new Tech School).
- Add a second floor to Virgil and re-draw the elementary attendance lines to add students and even out the numbers at all the elementary buildings

- Make the elementary grade configuration K-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8
- Take one building and make it a Pre-K center for all Pre-K students
- Build one elementary school near the Junior-Senior High for all elementary students
- Make the elementary schools specialty (magnet) schools like science/tech or fine arts
- Close another elementary school and re-draw the attendance boundary lines
- Build one new Pre-K-5 elementary school near the Junior-Senior High, make the Junior-Senior High 6-12 (one pro is reduced transportation cost; one con is getting rid of five schools)
- Close a building without a mortgage
- Consider a K-8 configuration

Following this first discussion of possible options for Board consideration, the consultants considered the initial three proposals as well as the additional ones the Advisory Committee suggested. In the final analysis, the list was reconfigured and renumbered as follows:

- 1. Maintain the current grade and facility arrangement and simply fix up the buildings based on the findings in the 2015 Building Conditions Survey.
- 2. Close the Virgil Elementary School and create two grade centers: K-2 at Randall and Smith and grades 3-5 at Barry and Parker; create a grade 6-8 Middle School
- 3. Close the Parker Elementary School and create two grade centers: K-2 at Barry and Virgil and grades 3-5 at Randall and Smith; create a grade 6-8 Middle School.
- 4. Close Virgil Elementary School and keep all four remaining elementary schools as K-5 buildings; create a 6-8 Middle School.
- 5. Close Parker Elementary School and keep all four remaining elementary schools as K-5 buildings; create a 6-8 Middle School.
- 6. Close Virgil; keep the remaining four elementary schools as K-6 buildings.
- 7. Close Parker and keep the four remaining elementary schools as K-6 buildings.
- 8. Close Parker Elementary School; create two grade centers with Smith and Virgil housing grades K-2 while Barry and Randall would have grades 3-6.
- 9. Close Virgil Elementary School; create two grade centers with Randall and Smith having grades K-2 while Barry and Parker would house grades 3-6.

The following is a discussion of each of the nine options under consideration.

- **OPTION 1: Maintain the current grade and facility arrangement and simply fix up the buildings based on the findings in the 2015 Building Conditions Survey.**

This option would result in the following grade configuration.

Table 12.8
2017-18 Elementary Class Sizes

Grade	Barry	Parker	Randall	Smith	Virgil	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	22, 22	19, 16	21, 19	16, 15	15	165	9
1	18, 19, 19	19, 19	21, 21	16, 18	12	182	10
2	20, 17	14, 16	19, 18	20, 20	18	162	9
3	24, 24	19, 17	24, 22	21, 20	15	186	9
4	19, 17, 20	20, 19	20, 23	18, 17	24	197	10
5	20, 21, 21	24	23, 22	20, 21	20	192	9
6	18, 20, 19	15, 14	19, 18	15, 14	12	164	10
TOTAL	360	231	290	251	116	1,248	66

NOTE: Average common branch class size in Cortland County=18.9 (2017-18) and average common branch class size in NYS=22 (2015-16)

Under this option, there would be no school closures and no financial savings.

- **OPTION 2: Close the Virgil Elementary School and create two grade centers: K-2 at Randall and Smith and grades 3-5 at Barry and Parker; create a grade 6-8 Middle School**

This option would result in the following grade configuration.

Table 12.9
GRADE CENTER PLAN--2017-18 Elementary Class Sizes for K-5 (VIRGIL CLOSED)
Maximum Class Size of 24---6th Grade to Junior High

Grade	Barry 3-5	Parker 3-5	Randall K-2	Smith K-2	Virgil	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	-		22, 23, 23, 23	24, 24, 24	-	163	7
1	-		23, 23, 23, 23	21, 21, 22, 22	-	178	8
2	-		19, 20, 20, 20	21, 21, 22, 22	-	165	8
3	20, 20, 20, 21, 21	21, 22, 22, 22	-	-	-	189	9
4	22, 22, 22, 22, 22	23, 23, 24, 24	-	-	-	204	9
5	23, 23, 23, 24, 24	19, 19, 20, 20	-	-	-	195	9
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	329	259	262	244	-	1,094	50

This option would result in the following staff savings from closing Virgil.

Table 12.10
Staff Savings from Closing Virgil*

# of FTE	Position	Salary/FTE	Salary Savings
1	12 Month Clerical	$52,344	$52,344
2	Custodian/Cleaner	44,158	88,316
2	Food Service Workers	20,580	41,160
0.7	Nurse	45,335	31,735
1	Principal	157,613	157,613
2.65	Teacher (.3 Art, 1.0 Library, .4 Vocal Music, .25 Instrumental Music, .2 String Music, .5 Physical Education)	83,668	221,720
		Total Savings	$592,888

* Assumes that the following positions will remain: all teacher aides, all teaching assistants, all special education teachers, all AIS reading and math teachers, all psychologists, all speech therapists, and all social workers

Reducing the number of sections in grades K-5 from 56 to 50 would save six classroom teaching positions at $84,580 per teacher or $507,480.

- **OPTION 3: Close the Parker Elementary School and create two grade centers: K-2 at Barry and Virgil and grades 3-5 at Randall and Smith; create a grade 6-8 Middle School.**

This option would result in the following grade configuration.

Table 12.11 GRADE CENTER PLAN--2017-18 Elementary Class Sizes for K-5 (PARKER CLOSED) Maximum Class Size of 24---6th Grade to Junior High							
Grade	Barry K-2	Parker	Randall 3-5	Smith 3-5	Virgil K-2	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 21	-	-	-	21, 21	163	8
1	21, 22, 22, 22, 22, 22	-	-	-	23, 24	178	8
2	20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 21	-	-	-	22, 22	165	8
3	-	-	20, 20, 20, 21, 21	22, 22, 22, 21	-	189	9
4	-	-	22, 22, 22, 22, 22	23, 23, 24, 24	-	204	9
5	-	-	23, 23, 23, 24, 24	19, 19, 20, 20	-	195	9
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	373	-	329	259	133	1,094	51

This option would result in the following staff savings from closing Parker.

Table 12.12 Staff Savings from Closing Parker*			
# of FTE	Position	Salary/FTE	Salary Savings
1	12 Month Clerical	$52,344	$52,344
1	10 Month Clerical	33,904	33,904
3	Custodian/Cleaner	44,158	132,474
2	Food Service Workers	20,580	41,160
1	Nurse	45,335	45,335
1	Principal	157,613	157,613
4.05	Teacher (.5 Art, 1.0 Library, 1.0 Vocal Music, .35 Instrumental Music, .2 String Music, 1.0 Physical Education)	83,668	338,855
		Total Savings	$801,685
* Assumes that the following positions will remain: all teacher aides, all teaching assistants, all special education teachers, all AIS reading and math teachers, all psychologists, all speech therapists, and all social workers			

Reducing the number of sections in grades K-5 from 56 to 51 would save five classroom teaching positions at $84,580 per teacher or $422,900.

- **OPTION 4: Close Virgil Elementary School and keep all four remaining elementary schools as K-5 buildings; create a 6-8 Middle School.**

This option would result in the following grade configuration.

Table 12.13
2017-18 Elementary Class Sizes for K-5 (VIRGIL CLOSED)
Maximum Class Size of 24---6th Grade to Junior High

Grade	Barry	Parker	Randall	Smith	Virgil	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	17, 17, 18	23	19, 19	16, 17, 17	-	163	9
1	18, 18, 19	16, 16	18, 19	18, 18, 18	-	178	10
2	23, 24	13, 14	16, 16	19, 20, 20	-	165	9
3	17, 17, 18	15, 16	16, 17, 17	18, 19, 19	-	189	11
4	24, 24, 24	16, 16	19, 19	20, 21, 21	-	204	10
5	20, 20, 20	22	19, 19, 19	18, 19, 19	-	195	10
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	338	167	252	337	-	1,094	59

This option would result in the following staff savings from closing Virgil.

Table 12.14
Staff Savings from Closing Virgil*

# of FTE	Position	Salary/FTE	Salary Savings
1	12 Month Clerical	$52,344	$52,344
2	Custodian/Cleaner	44,158	88,316
2	Food Service Workers	20,580	41,160
0.7	Nurse	45,335	31,735
1	Principal	157,613	157,613
2.65	Teacher (.3 Art, 1.0 Library, .4 Vocal Music, .25 Instrumental Music, .2 String Music, .5 Physical Education)	83,668	221,720
		Total Savings	$592,888

* Assumes that the following positions will remain: all teacher aides, all teaching assistants, all special education teachers, all AIS reading and math teachers, all psychologists, all speech therapists, and all social workers

This option would increase the number of sections in grades K-5 from 56 to 59 requiring the addition of three classroom teachers at $84,580 per teacher or an additional cost of $253,740.

OPTION 5: Close Parker Elementary School and keep all four remaining elementary schools as K-5 buildings; create a 6-8 Middle School.

This option would result in the following grade configuration.

Table 12.15
2017-18 Elementary Class Sizes for K-5 (PARKER CLOSED)
Maximum Class Size of 24---6th Grade to Junior High

Grade	Barry	Parker	Randall	Smith	Virgil	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	21, 21, 22	-	18, 18	23, 23	17	163	8
1	21, 21, 22	-	18, 18	18, 19, 19	22	178	9
2	24, 24	-	18, 19	19, 19, 19	23	165	8
3	22, 22, 22		20, 21	19, 19, 20	24	189	9
4	20, 21, 21	-	21, 21	21, 21, 22	18, 18	204	10
5	23, 23, 23	-	23, 24	17, 17, 18	13, 14	195	10
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	373	-	239	333	149	1,094	54

This option would result in the following staff savings from closing Parker.

Table 12.16
Staff Savings from Closing Parker*

# of FTE	Position	Salary/FTE	Salary Savings
1	12 Month Clerical	$52,344	$52,344
1	10 Month Clerical	33,904	33,904
3	Custodian/Cleaner	44,158	132,474
2	Food Service Workers	20,580	41,160
1	Nurse	45,335	45,335
1	Principal	157,613	157,613
4.05	Teacher (.5 Art, 1.0 Library, 1.0 Vocal Music, .35 Instrumental Music, .2 String Music, 1.0 Physical Education)	83,668	338,855
		Total Savings	$801,685

* Assumes that the following positions will remain: all teacher aides, all teaching assistants, all special education teachers, all AIS reading and math teachers, all psychologists, all speech therapists, and all social workers

Reducing the number of sections in grades K-5 from 56 to 54 would save two classroom teaching positions at $84,580 per teacher or $169,160.

OPTION 6: Close Virgil; keep the remaining four elementary schools as K-6 buildings.

This option would result in the following grade configuration.

Table 12.17
2017-18 Elementary Class Sizes for K-6 (VIRGIL CLOSED)
Maximum Class Size of 24

Grade	Barry	Parker	Randall	Smith	Virgil	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	17, 17, 18	23	19, 19	16, 17, 17	-	163	9
1	18, 18, 19	16, 16	18, 19	18, 18, 18	-	178	10
2	23, 24	13, 14	16, 16	19, 20, 20	-	165	9
3	17, 17, 18	15, 16	16, 17, 17	18, 19, 19	-	189	11
4	24, 24, 24	16, 16	19, 19	20, 21, 21	-	204	10
5	20, 20, 20	22	19, 19, 19	18, 19, 19	-	195	10
6	17, 17, 18	14, 14	21, 22	22, 23	-	168	9
TOTAL	390	195	295	382	-	1,262	68

This option would result in the following staff savings from closing Virgil.

Table 12.18
Staff Savings from Closing Virgil*

# of FTE	Position	Salary/FTE	Salary Savings
1	12 Month Clerical	$52,344	$52,344
2	Custodian/Cleaner	44,158	88,316
2	Food Service Workers	20,580	41,160
0.7	Nurse	45,335	31,735
1	Principal	157,613	157,613
2.65	Teacher (.3 Art, 1.0 Library, .4 Vocal Music, .25 Instrumental Music, .2 String Music, .5 Physical Education)	83,668	221,720
		Total Savings	$592,888

* Assumes that the following positions will remain: all teacher aides, all teaching assistants, all special education teachers, all AIS reading and math teachers, all psychologists, all speech therapists, and all social workers

This option would increase the number of sections in grades K-6 from 66 to 68 requiring the addition of two classroom teachers at $84,580 per teacher or an additional cost of $169,160.

OPTION 7: Close Parker and keep the four remaining elementary schools as K-6 buildings.

This option would result in the following grade configuration.

Table 12.19 2017-18 Elementary Class Sizes for K-6 (PARKER CLOSED) Maximum Class Size of 24							
Grade	Barry	Parker	Randall	Smith	Virgil	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	21, 21, 22	-	18, 18	23, 23	17	163	8
1	21, 21, 22	-	18, 18	18, 19, 19	22	178	9
2	24, 24	-	18, 19	19, 19, 19	23	165	8
3	22, 22, 22		20, 21	19, 19, 20	24	189	9
4	20, 21, 21	-	21, 21	21, 21, 22	18, 18	204	10
5	23, 23, 23	-	23, 24	17, 17, 18	13, 14	195	10
6	22, 23, 23	-	18, 18	22, 22	20	1681	8
TOTAL	441	-	275	377	169	1,262	62

This option would result in the following staff savings from closing Parker.

Table 12.20 Staff Savings from Closing Parker*			
# of FTE	Position	Salary/FTE	Salary Savings
1	12 Month Clerical	$52,344	$52,344
1	10 Month Clerical	33,904	33,904
3	Custodian/Cleaner	44,158	132,474
2	Food Service Workers	20,580	41,160
1	Nurse	45,335	45,335
1	Principal	157,613	157,613
4.05	Teacher (.5 Art, 1.0 Library, 1.0 Vocal Music, .35 Instrumental Music, .2 String Music, 1.0 Physical Education)	83,668	338,855
		Total Savings	$801,685
* Assumes that the following positions will remain: all teacher aides, all teaching assistants, all special education teachers, all AIS reading and math teachers, all psychologists, all speech therapists, and all social workers			

Reducing the number of sections in grades K-6 from 66 to 62 would save four classroom teaching positions at $84,580 per teacher or $338,320.

OPTION 8: Close Parker Elementary School; create two grade centers with Smith and Virgil housing grades K-2 while Barry and Randall would have grades 3-6.

This option would result in the following grade configuration.

Table 12.21 GRADE CENTER PLAN--2017-18 Elementary Class Sizes for K-6 (PARKER CLOSED) Maximum Class Size of 24							
Grade	Barry 3-6	Parker	Randall 3-6	Smith K-2	Virgil K-2	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	-	-	-	20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 21	21, 21	163	8
1	-	-	-	21, 22, 22, 22, 22, 22	23, 24	178	8
2	-	-	-	20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 21	22, 22	165	8
3	24, 24, 24, 24, 24	-	23, 23, 23	-	-	189	8
4	21, 21, 21, 21, 22, 22	-	19, 19, 19, 19	-	-	204	10
5	22, 22, 22, 22, 22, 23	-	20, 21, 21	-	-	195	9
6	21, 21, 21, 21, 22	-	20, 21, 21	-	-	168	8
TOTAL	487	-	269	373	133	1,262	59

This option would result in the following staff savings from closing Parker.

Table 12.22 Staff Savings from Closing Parker*			
# of FTE	Position	Salary/FTE	Salary Savings
1	12 Month Clerical	$52,344	$52,344
1	10 Month Clerical	33,904	33,904
3	Custodian/Cleaner	44,158	132,474
2	Food Service Workers	20,580	41,160
1	Nurse	45,335	45,335
1	Principal	157,613	157,613
4.05	Teacher (.5 Art, 1.0 Library, 1.0 Vocal Music, .35 Instrumental Music, .2 String Music, 1.0 Physical Education)	83,668	338,855
		Total Savings	$801,685
*Assumes that the following positions will remain: all teacher aides, all teaching assistants, all special education teachers, all AIS reading and math teachers, all psychologists, all speech therapists, and all social workers			

Reducing the number of sections in grades K-6 from 66 to 59 would save seven classroom teaching positions at $84,580 per teacher or $592,060.

OPTION 9: Close Virgil Elementary School; create two grade centers with Randall and Smith having grades K-2 while Barry and Parker would house grades 3-6.

This option would result in the following grade configuration.

Table 12.23
GRADE CENTER PLAN--2017-18 Elementary Class Sizes for K-6 (VIRGIL CLOSED)
Maximum Class Size of 24

Grade	Barry 3-6	Parker	Randall K-2	Smith K-2	Virgil K-2	TOTAL	# of Sections
K	-	-	20, 20, 21	20, 20, 20, 21, 21	-	163	8
1	-	-	19, 20, 20	24, 24, 24, 24, 23	-	178	8
2	-	-	21, 21, 21	20, 20, 20, 21, 21	-	165	8
3	22, 23, 23, 23, 23	18, 19, 19, 19	-	-	-	189	9
4	20, 20, 21, 21, 21, 21	20, 20, 20, 20	-	-	-	204	10
5	21, 21, 21, 22, 22, 22	22, 22, 22	-	-	-	195	9
6	20, 21, 21, 21, 21	21, 21, 22	-	-	-	168	8
TOTAL	471	285	183	323	-	1,262	60

This option would result in the following staff savings from closing Virgil.

Table 12.24
Staff Savings from Closing Virgil*

# of FTE	Position	Salary/FTE	Salary Savings
1	12 Month Clerical	$52,344	$52,344
2	Custodian/Cleaner	44,158	88,316
2	Food Service Workers	20,580	41,160
0.7	Nurse	45,335	31,735
1	Principal	157,613	157,613
2.65	Teacher (.3 Art, 1.0 Library, .4 Vocal Music, .25 Instrumental Music, .2 String Music, .5 Physical Education)	83,668	221,720
		Total Savings	$592,888

* Assumes that the following positions will remain: all teacher aides, all teaching assistants, all special education teachers, all AIS reading and math teachers, all psychologists, all speech therapists, and all social workers

Reducing the number of sections in grades K-6 from 66 to 60 would save six classroom teaching positions at $84,580 per teacher or $507,480.

It should be noted that in the financial summaries provided for the nine options, there has been no allowance made for the cost of modifying the junior high school and making it a grades 6-8 middle school. Architects have estimated the cost of this modification to be $8-10,000,000. For purposes of this study, the conservative estimate of $10,000,000 will be used. However, this $10,000,000 cost estimate is the cost of the project before state building aid is provided. The district's fiscal advisors have estimated that the local share of this project will average out to be approximately $215,000 per year. This estimated cost will be factored into the summary financial table for options 2, 3, 4, and 5, which involve the creation of a 6-8 middle school.

As it relates to a bus routing plan, and from conversations with the District Business Administrator and Transportation Supervisor, it is estimated that there would be little financial impact on the current cost of daily routing regardless of which option the Board adopts. This is primarily due to the fact the district currently conducts a very complex system of routing with elementary buses stopping at multiple school buildings.

Based on the estimates provided for the nine options under consideration, the following table 12.25 summarizes the financial implications for these options.

Table 12.25
Financial Summary of Options

Option #	Description	# of buildings	Number of sections K-5	Number of sections K-6	Local share cost of Middle School	Annual savings from building closure	Annual classroom teacher impact from change in section #'s	Total Savings or Cost
1	Current arrangement	6	(56)	(66)	0	0	0	0
2	Close Virgil; 2 grade centers- K-2 Randall & Smith; 3-5 Barry & Parker; 6-8 middle school	5	50	-	+$215,000	-$592,888	-$507,480	-$885,368
3	Close Parker; 2 grade centers- K-2 Barry & Virgil; 3-5 Randall and Smith; 6-8 middle school	5	51	-	+$215,000	-$801,685	-$422,900	-$1,009,585
4	Close Virgil; Keep 4 K-5 elementary schools; 6-8 middle school	5	59	-	+$215,000	-$592,888	+$253,740	-$124,148
5	Close Parker; Keep 4 K-5 elementary schools; 6-8 middle school	5	54	-	+$215,000	-$801,685	-$169,160	-$755,845
6	Close Virgil; Keep 4 K-6 elementary schools	5	-	68		-$592,888	+$169,160	-$423,728
7	Close Parker; Keep 4 K-6 elementary schools	5	-	62		-$801,685	-$338,320	-$1,140,005
8	Close Parker; 2 grade centers- K-2 Smith & Virgil; 3-6 Barry & Randall	5	-	59		-$801,685	-$592,060	-$1,393,745
9	Close Virgil; 2 grade centers- K-2 Randall & Smith; 3-6 Barry & Parker	5		60		-$592,888	-$507,480	-$1,100,368

Finally, it must be remembered that there are two other factors that will influence the final financial impact of whichever decision the board makes. First, closing any of the elementary schools will save the district the cost of utilities of approximately $20,000 per year. In the magnitude of this decision, this savings is fairly insignificant. Finally, the board must remember that, regardless of which option it pursues, it must consider the cost of whatever work it chooses to do from the Building Condition Survey as part of the long term financial picture.

One question asked by the committee was how much of this total district capital debt service remains on each of the district's school buildings (the total district capital debt summary is in the finance chapter of this report). The following is the summary as of the current year: Barry, $3,275,289; Parker, $3,726,247; Randall, $5,210,920; Smith, $ 3,739,352; Virgil, $2,661,075; and the Junior-Senior High School, $12,764,208. Regardless of which option the Board ultimately chooses, any capital debt will still have to be repaid by the district.

CHAPTER 13
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In a study such as this, consideration must be given to several school related factors. These include student enrollment history and projections, instructional programs, staffing, student transportation, facilities, finances, and the emotions associated with the possibility of realigning school buildings. While hard data, such as numbers, facilities, and grade configurations contribute significant facts to study findings, it is important to recognize that emotions contribute as well. The fabric of schools and communities is directly related to the emotional connection people have with them. These emotions are as much "fact" as are hard data. Accordingly, our recommendations are made with mindful consideration of all the facts associated with the study process.

Key Findings

The following are key study findings.

Finding 1: The live birth rate in the Cortland City School district has declined somewhat from 2004 to 2016.
Finding 2: The district's K-12 enrollment has declined from 2,637 in 2012-13 to 2,362 this current year.
Finding 3: The projected enrollment for the school district is expected to continue to decline out to 2024-25 to approximately 2,007 students.
Finding 4: All of the elementary schools have experienced a decline in enrollment since 2013-14 with Parker and Virgil seeing the largest drops.
Finding 5: Home-schooled students in Cortland average about 45-50 per year while the number of non-resident students attending the district has dropped from 23 in 2013-14 to just six this year.
Finding 6: Approximately 40 students a year from Cortland attend schools elsewhere.
Finding 7: Cortland County's population has dropped since 2005 and the U.S. Census Bureau projects the county's population will continue to drop through 2040.
Finding 8: The median age of Cortland County residents is increasing and the typical childbearing age group (25-44) is declining.
Finding 9: Elementary class sizes in the district this year vary from 12 to 24 and the average class size compares favorably to other Cortland County school districts and New York State as a whole.
Finding 10: Virgil is the smallest elementary school with only one section of a grade while Barry is the largest with some grades (1, 4, 5, 6) this year having three sections.
Finding 11: The elementary special area subject offerings are quite similar in terms of the amount of time students receive per week, except there are some differences from one building to the next.
Finding 12: Elementary school student performance on the NYS tests in grades 3-8 for the past four years are quite similar across buildings.
Finding 13: Cortland Junior-Senior High School offers a very comprehensive program to its students.

Finding 14: Junior High students can accelerate in math and science and they have the opportunity to gain first year credit in a foreign language.
Finding 15: The High School curriculum offers two foreign languages, an array of business courses, a number of technology courses, and other curriculum opportunities many school districts have eliminated.
Finding 16: Cortland students have the opportunity to take career and technical education classes at the OCM BOCES and in fact 28% of seniors and juniors did so.
Finding 17: The district has 337 students currently in need of special education services up from 291 in 2012-13; this represents approximately 14% of the overall district enrollment.
Finding 18: Parker and Randall are the oldest school buildings in the district both having been built in 1928 while the Junior-Senior High is the newest built in 1964.
Finding 19: Of the elementary schools, Barry is the largest (65,840 sq. ft.) and Virgil is the smallest (34,654 sq. ft.).
Finding 20: There are more rooms in the elementary schools than are needed to house the district's elementary students.
Finding 21: The Junior-Senior High School is only used at approximately 54% capacity.
Finding 22: The 2015 building conditions survey (BCS) shows that all the schools need improvements.
Finding 23: The district total for capital work from the BCS to just complete priority 1 immediate needs is $27,720,525.
Finding 24: Utility costs for each of the elementary schools vary from $42,707 at Virgil to $61,215 at Barry. Closing any school usually results in about 40% savings on utility bills.
Finding 25: With respect to instructional staff, Cortland has 250 teachers, 31 teaching assistants, 47 teacher aides and nine building principals.
Finding 26: The percentage of salary, on average, for district employees is 47% for benefits.
Finding 26: Staff savings from closing Parker Elementary School would be approximately $801,685 in salary and benefits.
Finding 27: Staff savings from closing Virgil Elementary School would be approximately $592,888 in salary and benefits.
Finding 28: Cortland uses a double trip bussing system to get students to and from school each day.
Finding 29: Currently, the district has some students that walk to school-for grades 7-12 who live within 1.5 miles of the Jr-Sr High School and K-6 students living within .9 mile from their respective elementary school.
Finding 30: To some degree, the district's transportation routes are organized around the elementary attendance zones, however the district has a very complex transportation system that has regular bus routes stopping at multiple schools.
Finding 31: Cortland transports students out of the district for their education program to the McEvoy Center, Homer Central School District, CCA, and St. Mary's. In addition, the district transports students to special education program locations in Solvay UFSD, T-S-T BOCES, George Junior Republic, and a residential school in Rochester.
Finding 32: The district provides one bus each day at 3:15 for high school students that get extra academic assistance and a 4:30 bus for student athletes. Additionally, there is a 4:30 late bus run for elementary students in the Extended Day Program.
Finding 33: Cortland residents have passed school budget votes in nine of the past ten years.

Finding 34: Cortland residents have supported capital project votes on two recent occasions (2007 and 2014) in recent years as well as 11 of 12 bus propositions since 2005.
Finding 35: The district's restricted fund balance has been declining the last three years which is not a positive sign.
Finding 36: The $291,137 Cortland had at the end of last year in its unassigned fund balance is only .6% of this year's general fund budget. This is an extremely low amount to maintain.
Finding 37: Cortland used $535,000 of its fund balance to hold down the tax rate this year, therefore it will need to come up with this same amount next year to do the same or it will experience a fiscal challenge.
Finding 38: In June 2017 the State Comptroller's office found the district is financing operating deficits with fund balance and reserves that is adversely impacting the district's finances.
Finding 39: The district has principal and interest payments on existing capital debt that extend through the 2031-32 school year.

Conclusions

With these findings in mind, the following conclusions—or answers to the key questions that focused this study—have been reached.

What options exist to arrange the grades and school buildings to maintain, and perhaps enhance, the education of Cortland City School District students while ensuring fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer? How could the grades and schools be organized?

As consultants we have concluded that there are several options for arranging the grades and schools to achieve the stated purposes outlined above. While several "feasible" options were explored in depth, only a few provide a "desirable" direction in our opinion for the district to pursue in light of the desire to maintain or improve the education of Cortland students while being fiscally responsible to the taxpayer.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the district convene a facilities planning committee whose role it will be to develop and monitor a long term facilities plan for the district. This will include the closure of one or more of the school buildings, the scope of work to be performed from the Building Condition Survey, the long term the design of appropriate school facilities and the financing of these initiatives. This committee should be comprised of both school staff and members of the community.

2. It is recommended that the Board of Education consider the following options as both "feasible" and "desirable" as it looks to the future.

- Option 6: Close Virgil and keep the remaining elementary schools open as K-6 buildings; maintain the current 7-8, 9-12 Junior-Senior High School configuration.
- Option 7: Close Parker and keep the remaining elementary schools open as K-6 buildings; maintain the current 7-8, 9-12 Junior-Senior High School configuration.

- Option 8: Close Parker and form grade centers as follows: K-2 at Smith and Virgil and grades 3-6 at Barry and Randall.
- Option 9: Close Virgil and form grade centers as follows: K-2 at Randall and Smith and grades 3-6 at Barry and Parker.

Given the district's current difficult financial situation, these options were deemed most desirable from a financial standpoint. Maintaining the status quo (keeping all buildings open and continuing with the same grade arrangement) is not fiscally responsible. Quite simply, the district does not need all of the space available in the current buildings. In addition, the current arrangement offers no financial savings at a time when the district is facing severe financial challenges in the near future.

The following table summarizes the financial impact to the taxpayer if either of these options had been adopted and implemented this year. The actual tax levy for the current year was $17,006,932 and the full-value tax rate is $17.99. Table 13.1 illustrates how each option's cost savings could have reduced the tax levy and therefore reduced the full-value tax rate thus benefiting the taxpayer. However, it should be kept in mind that the district could have chosen to apply some of the savings to maintain and perhaps improve program.

Table 13.1
Impact to the Taxpayer by Option if Implemented in 2017-18

Option	*Option Savings*	*Revised Levy*	*Revised FV Tax Rate*	*Savings to $100 K Homeowner*
3	$1,009,585	$15,997,347	$16.92	$107
7	$1,140,005	$15,886,927	$16.80	$119
8	$1,393,745	$15,633,187	$16.53	$146
9	$1,100,368	$15,906,564	$16.82	$117

Assumptions
1-All the projected staff savings were realized in the first year of implementation of each option.
2-All savings were used to reduce the tax levy.
3-Any closed building was not sold or leased which could yield additional revenue for the district.

Furthermore, given the additional cost to the taxpayers to add capital debt for major work at the Junior-Senior High School to convert it to a true middle school is not prudent at this time. This is not meant to pass judgment on the value of a middle school. On the contrary, there is abundant research that identifies many of the benefits of a true middle school. However, given the district's current financial challenges, we do not believe that this is the time to undertake the capital debt that would result from changing the junior high school to a middle school. Perhaps this could be revisited at a later date.

There are a number of educational benefits in addition to the financial savings to grade centers including better coordination and articulation of curriculum within and across elementary classrooms, with more sections of a grade level in a single building it is easier to match students with teachers that can better address their needs, grouping of students so that those who work well together and those that do not becomes easier, and there is a greater likelihood achieving better balance in class sizes.

While the grade center options would increase the number of students that have to take school buses to and from their buildings, our investigation determined the cost would be negligible.

3. It is recommended that the district use the attrition method for reducing staff should any staff reductions be realized from this initiative.

4. It is recommended that the Board of Education conduct at least one public hearing/comment period on these options for the general public to express opinions.

5. It is recommended that the district implement these options in the 2019-20 school year. This will allow for adequate time to conduct one or more hearings to permit the public to make concerns and comments known about each of the options under consideration and for sufficient planning time to finalize implementation details so that the transition is as smooth as possible.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Minutes from Advisory Committee Meetings

MEMORANDUM

TO: Cortland Facilities Study Advisory Committee

FROM: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of May 17, 2017

DATE: May 18, 2017

Attendance:

Committee Members: Anna Bennett, Kevin Cafararo, Nicole Dintino, Rick Gamel, Sister Harriett Hamilton, Lisa Kaup, Roberto Maniaci, Amy Sundheim, Karen Williams, and Mark Yacavone

Consultants: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

Observers: Michael Hoose, Jeff Craig, Judi Riley, Kimberly Vile, Tom Dovi, Christine Gregory, Bob Martin, Betty Bentley, and Douglas Pasquerella

Location: Barry Elementary School

1. Superintendent Michael Hoose welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the study consultants. After the consultants provided their backgrounds, committee members were asked to introduce themselves and discuss their connection with the school district.

2. Alan Pole reviewed the purpose of the study that is to answer the following question:
"Now and in the future, is there a better way to arrange the grades and school buildings to maintain, and perhaps enhance, the education of Cortland City School District students while ensuring fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer? If so, how should the grades and schools be organized?"?

3. Meetings of the Advisory Committee will be held from 6:30-8:30 pm as follows:

Date	Topic	Location
May 17	General overview of the study process including the committee's role; student enrollment projections	Barry School Library
June 14	The instructional program; facilities review	High School Room 133A
August 2	Begin exploring possible future facility options; transportation implications of options	Parker School Library
September 13	Staffing implications of options; Continued implications of options	Randall School Library

October 4	Financial implications of options; Continued implications of options	Smith School Cafeteria
November 8	Review of draft report and tentative recommendations	Virgil School Gym
December 13	Presentation of final report to the Board of Education	Board Room

While the meetings of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 pm, optional tours of the schools will be held before each of the meetings beginning at 5:45 pm. These tours are for committee members and for anyone that will be observing the business meeting that will follow.

The tours will begin at each building's main office.

4. A contact list of the members of the advisory committee was shared with email addresses. Members of the group were asked to verify the accuracy of the information since email will serve as the primary means of communication between the consultants and the committee members. Meeting materials will be emailed to all committee members prior to the meeting. Paper copies of the materials will also be made available at each meeting.

5. Meeting notes will be provided after each meeting. The notes will be emailed to all committee members and copied to the superintendent. It will be the responsibility of the superintendent to distribute the notes within the district, as he deems appropriate. It is anticipated that, at a minimum, notes will be provided to board members and posted on the district's website. The Power Point that is used at each meeting will also be posted on the district's website after the meeting occurs. Facilities study materials that are posted on the district's website will be under the "Quick Links" tab.

6. All meetings of the advisory committee will be open. Members of the public will be welcome at these meetings. At the conclusion of each meeting, the observers will have the opportunity to offer comments or ask questions.

7. Alan Pole presented a Power Point overview of the study process and the role of the advisory committee. He indicated that the function of the committee is to advise the Board of Education and the consultants and to communicate with the public about the process. In addition, the committee will add a cultural context for Cortland as the various aspects of the study emerge. The superintendent is not a member of the committee but serves as a resource to the committee. Committee members are expected to attend all committee meetings, freely express their points of view, be key communicators with stakeholder groups, and be a respectful, contributing member of the committee.
He emphasized that the consultants bring an outside, unbiased perspective and will ensure that the process is open. They will produce meetings notes after each committee meeting and will be responsible for the final report. The recommendations in the report will benefit student learning and will be educationally sound and fiscally responsible. They will also be independent of special interest groups.

8. Bill Silky presented an overview of past enrollments for Cortland as well as projected future enrollments for the district. The study begins by reviewing enrollment trends since enrollments influence all decisions regarding staffing, class and curricular offerings, facilities, transportation, and finances.
Enrollment has been declining since at least 2011-12 when the analysis began. Since 2011-2012, the enrollment in Cortland has declined from 2,627 students to 2,383 students in the 2016-17 school year, a decline of 9.3%.

To predict future enrollment, the consultants employ the Cohort Survival Projection method that uses information on the number of births in the school district over a period of years and calculates patterns of enrollment. A cohort survival ratio is developed that tracks how each cohort of students changes as it moves through the grade levels. This ratio, used with the live birth information, predicts what the enrollment will be for a period of years given consistent and predictable conditions. It does not take into account significant economic development changes such as a major employer leaving or entering the area and other similar changes. However, it is not anticipated that either of these conditions will be taking place in Cortland.
Using this method, the enrollment in Cortland is predicted to decrease from 2,383 in 2016-17 to 2,026 students in the 2023-2024 school year, an additional decline of 15%. The number of home schooled students, non-resident students, and resident students enrolled in non-public schools are all factors that are considered in projecting enrollment. It does not appear that any of these factors will significantly influence the enrollment projections that were made for Cortland. Bill also reviewed demographic information for Cortland County as well as the major towns and villages within the school district. This review clearly demonstrated that the population trend in Cortland County has decreased, the county is aging, and a slight decrease in the population is anticipated for the future.

9. Bill Silky reviewed the “take-aways from the meeting which included the following:

- The purpose of the study is to answer the question, "Now and in the future, is there a better way to arrange the grades and school buildings to maintain, and perhaps enhance, the education of Cortland City School District students while ensuring fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer? If so, how should the grades and schools be organized?"

- The study process will be open to ensure there is not a perception it is being conducted behind closed doors.

- The Advisory Committee was formed to assist the consultants throughout the process, but the final recommendations will be the consultants’.

- The district has seen declining enrollments and will likely continue to see enrollments drop slightly.

10. The meeting was opened up to the observers for questions and comments. One observer asked if age ranges of the population could be shown by town….Bill will check into this. Another observer emphasized the importance of having significant communication with the community about this study.

11. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 14, 2017 at the junior-senior high school. An optional tour of the school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The business meeting of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.
We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on May 17. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on 6.14.17. The tour will begin at 5:45 and the meeting will start at 6:30!!

C: Michael Hoose

Cortland Facilities Study Advisory Committee June 14, 2017

Committee Members: Breck Aspinwall, Anna Bennett, Susan Byrnes, Kevin Cafararo, Rick Gamel, Sister Harriett Hamilton, Lisa Kaup, Stephanie Mitchell-Madden, Roberto Maniaci, Amy Sundheim, Karen Williams, and Mark Yacavone

Consultants: Bill Silky and Maureen Patterson

Observers: Jenny Robinson, Abbey Albright, Alyssa Milligan, Joseph Mack, Christine Gregory, Jaime Francey-Henry, Judi Riley, and Kimberly Vile

Location: High School Library
5:45 Building Tour

Agenda:

1. Welcome and review of meeting protocols
    a. Meeting Protocols
        i. Observers to watch Committee, but can be involved with end of meeting questions and/or comments
        ii. Public meeting with open, honest information
2. Review advisory committee listing - Confirm names and emails and Observer sign-in
3. Review meeting schedule and starting times for meetings – 6:30-8:30 p.m., tour at 5:45
    a. Agenda/Focus of each meeting
    b. Feasible and possible options
4. Review of notes from last meeting – minutes emailed, posted on District website, no comments
5. **Updates** from last meeting - PPT
    a. Purpose of the Study
    b. Declining enrollment
    c. Age groups breakdown by municipalities, 2010 data, focus on 25-44 age group
        i. Census
        ii. American Community Survey, Cornell
    d. Current grade organization in Cortland
        i. Head Start/UPK-6, 7-12
        ii. Varied across NYS and Country – Bill provided examples
        iii. Most common grade configuration is K-5, 6-8, 9-12
        iv. History of grade configuration and rationale
        v. Urban schools transitioning to K-8, 9-12
        vi. Researchers – not one best way, it is what you do with the grade levels

vii. Issues with grade reconfiguration – busing times and length, impact on parent involvement, grouping of students by developmental levels, interactions of students, and number of transitions (from building to building)

e. Student and teacher hours on a daily basis (see chart)
f. Question about space for housing students

6. The **instructional program** – Elementary
   a. Comparability of programming
      i. Elementary Class Sizes vary by schools – is it fair? What are the distinctions beyond numbers?
      ii. # of sections by grade level
      iii. Average class size is 19 for Cortland County
      iv. Cost effectiveness of the varied classroom sizes?
   b. Elementary academic performance – ELA and Math according to SED assessments, scored at levels 3 & 4,
      i. *2016 assessment different from the previous years*
   c. Special area schedules by building – Art, Music, PE, Library, Instrumental Music
   d. Co-curricular offerings by building – check chart
   e. Special Education - #s of SWDs K-12, 5-year charting, 12-13% of the population
      i. In district – 80-95%
      ii. Out of district – 15-20%
7. The **instructional program** – Secondary
   a. Comparability of programming
      i. # of sections and # of students/section by grade level – core courses (English, Math, History, Science, Foreign Language/LOTE (French, Spanish)
      ii. # of sections and # of students/section by grade level – electives, AP, lab, Business, Tech, Art, FCS, Music, PE, Health
      iii. # of sections and # of students/section by grade level – ENL, Special Education, Study Hall
   b. Special Education #s should be included in the course #s
   c. Numerous offerings 7-12, structured array of courses
   d. Enrollment – healthy for the most part
   e. BOCES - %age of students attending – Juniors 27.4 and Seniors 27.8
   f. Athletic Participation – numerous offerings by season, #s of students, good %age of students participate
   g. Community fields and facilities used for a number of activities/sports – collaborative relationship
8. Current **space utilization** and facility review

a. Information from the *Building Condition Survey* – every 5 years completed by architect
b. Overview of School Buildings – space and structure
    i. Full size classroom should be 770 sq feet, K classrooms 900 sq feet (according to NYSED)
    ii. Review charts by elementary building
        1. # of students/ # of homerooms (common branch)/ # of full size rooms
        2. Can the classroom space be used for more effectively and efficiently?
    iii. Review charts by secondary building
        1. # of students/ # of core academic classrooms/ # other classrooms
        2. Created table of high school classroom school usage (over 9 period day)
            a. Used for course (core and elective) instruction
            b. Empty – *perhaps not correct word* – tutoring, conferences, meetings
            c. Maximum efficiency is 80% of full size classrooms utilized each day – at CHS, 54% of all classrooms used for course instruction
c. *Building Condition Survey* by architects
    i. BCS survey chart of Priorities
        1. Financial impact - $37 million if all work was done
        2. Information on the thumb drive given to Committee

9. Take-Aways - refer to chart
    a. District grade configuration is somewhat common
    b. Comparability among elementary schools
    c. Comprehensive Junior/Senior High School – highly structured
        i. Room utilization is approximately 54%
    d. District in need of capital work according to 2015 BCS - $37 million plus
10. Public questions/comments
11. Next meeting – August 2, 6:30 p.m., Parker Elementary Library (tour at 5:45)

MEMORANDUM

TO: Cortland Facilities Study Advisory Committee

FROM: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of August 2, 2017

DATE: August 4, 2017

Attendance:

Committee Members: Breck Aspinwall, Anna Bennett, Susan Byrnes, Kevin Cafararo, Nicole Dintino, Rick Gamel, Sister Harriett Hamilton, Lisa Kaup, Stephanie Mitchell-Madden, Amy Sundheim, and Karen Williams
Consultants: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

Observers: Michael Hoose, Jeff Craig, Kimberly Vile, Bob Martin, Angela Wilde, Betty Bentley, Rebekah Stull, Peter Rogoff, Lauren Mossotti-Kline, Christopher Larkin, Heidi Turner, William Turner, Christine Gregory, Jennifer Larkin, Christopher Larkin, Angie Gilbert, Corena Morse, Jackie Carr, Arielle Brown, Jake DeRochie, Amber Thayer, Charles Kasten, Steve Bocciolatt, Tom Cranfield, Abbey Albright, Amanda Peck, Amy Swartz, Jenny Robinson, Alane Van Donsel, Craig Miller, Janice Miller, Gemma Rinefierd, Ryan Mullally, and Janet Griffin

Location: Parker Elementary School

1. Alan Pole welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Parker principal Josh Bacigalupi for the tour of the school prior to the meeting. He reviewed the meeting protocol as well as the schedule of meetings that had taken place and will take place over the next few months. He asked if there were any changes to the notes from the last meeting and there were none.

2. Bill Silky reviewed the purpose of the study that is to answer the following question:
"Now and in the future, is there a better way to arrange the grades and school buildings to maintain, and perhaps enhance, the education of Cortland City School District students while ensuring fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer? If so, how should the grades and schools be organized?"

3. Bill then reviewed the major study conclusions that had been identified during the first two meetings of the committee. He also addressed a follow up issue from the last meeting about the time and frequency for elementary specials.

4. Bill Silky then provided a presentation of the district's transportation program. He noted that the district has a new 5-year bus replacement schedule and that the district operates on a double trip system. He then reviewed some sample bus runs in the district.
Bill noted that high school students are dropped off at 7 am and elementary students are dropped off at 8 am as a result of the 24 in-district runs that occur each day. The longest time any student would be on the bus going to or from school is approximately 30-40 minutes, well within state guidance. High school students living more than 1.5 miles from school are expected to walk; elementary students living more than 0.9 miles from school are expected to walk. There are some exceptions made for students in dangerous traffic areas.

5. The meeting then turned to a discussion of possible facilities options for the district to consider. Bill defined a feasible option as an option that can be implemented and a desirable option as one that is feasible and desirable. He then reviewed three possible options for the committee's consideration:

Option 1: Remain as is and fix up the buildings;
Option 2: Create a middle school by moving the 6th grade to the junior high:
Option 3: Develop sister elementary schools (PK-2 Smith; 3-5 at Parker/PK-2 Barry; 3-5 at Randall) and a middle school and close Virgil Elementary.

6. Alan Pole then facilitated the division of the committee into 3 groups for a 45-minute discussion. Each group was asked to identify additional options and to develop a list of pro's and con's for the three options that Bill had identified. The attachment following the notes provides this summary.

7. The meeting was opened up to the observers for questions and comments. The following is a summary of the comments made by the audience members.

- *Virgil attendance lines were redrawn and Virgil lost kids*
- *The curriculum should be the same in all elementary schools*
- *Will people (including teachers) lose jobs?*
- *Where in the building would the 6th and 8th graders be located?*
- *It is inappropriate to have 6th graders and seniors in the same building*
- *BOCES is always considering places to rent. Perhaps BOCES might be interested in a building*
- *The most proactive people in the district are in Virgil.*
- *Will the 6-8 grade arrangement change our athletic programs? Band program? Art program?*
- *Will 6th graders lose leadership opportunities if not in the elementary schools?*
- *Would the 6-7-8 grade arrangement limit science opportunities for students?*
- *The district is not communicating what this study is really all about; notices on the website are not enough*
- *Space utilization analysis at the High School is incorrect—how many rooms are not used at the High School? 54% room utilization of room usage at the High School is a disservice*
- *Transportation…will kids be on too long? How many students use the late bus runs?*
- *I don't hear people in Homer complain about the transitions.*
- *Are other elementary schools better to close—may be more opportunity to rent/sell with a school in the city.*
- *What does it look like with 6th graders at the Jr-Sr High?*
- *What do school free and reduced lunch counts look like?*
- *The tax assessments of homes will change.*

- *There is not a 6th grade person as a member of the Committee.*
- *Pockets of poverty in the district is a community issue, not a school issue.*

8. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 13, 2017 at Randall Elementary School. An optional tour of the school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The business meeting of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on August 2. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as an agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on 9.13.17. The tour will begin at 5:45 and the meeting will start at 6:30!!

C: Michael Hoose

Option 1: Remain As Is: PK-6, 7-8, 9-12 and renovate current buildings

Pros

- Does not create any controversy that other options may cause
- Allows for growth of enrollment should it occur
- Fewer transitions from building-to-building than Option 3
- Maintains a sense of community with "your school building"
- Allows smaller class sizes than Option 3
- Protects 6th graders from exposure to older students
- Would likely be less cost if other options mean putting on an addition to a school

Cons

- Requires putting money into renovations of schools that may eventually have to close
- Does not maximize staffing efficiencies
- Maintains the complexity of the transportation system
- Continues to make it difficult to keep the curriculum the same at all elementary schools as compared to Option 3
- Creates more transitional change, not only from small school to big school, but also the introduction of all the new kids
- Does not make it possible to assess all students as thoroughly as possible if all are in different schools
- Does not address the mobility of students within the city schools
- 6th graders are not developmentally appropriate for the elementary
- Likely will result in an increase in taxes; does not save money
- There are accountability in educational curriculum between buildings

Option 2: Realign the grades to house 6th grade at the Jr-Sr High (converting the Junior High to a 6-8 Middle School).

Pros

- Allows for a true (modified?) middle school philosophy
- Frees up space in the elementary schools should enrollment increase
- May allow for the closing of one school
- More developmentally appropriate for 6th graders
- Permits access to more curriculum options/course offerings/state standards
- Curriculum goes 6-8th grade

Cons

- May (will?) make a tight space fit at the Junior-Senior High
- There may be some concerns about developmental appropriateness of sixth graders with 7-12th graders
- Will have to work to segregate middle schoolers from high school students
- Further decreases enrollment in the elementary schools
- Would require facility renovations to address 6th graders crossing paths with senior high students
- Keeping lunches separate would have to be figured out
- There would be no financial advantage to the district
- Would be some staffing issues to make a "true" middle school model
- May result in a lack of community buy-in if it is not a "true" middle school
- Likely additional cost for expansion of cafeteria, entrance, gym, auditorium
- May not change the current arrangement enough financially (same transportation, more lack of space at elementary)
- 9-12 behaviors shared down to 6-8
- No educational advantage

Option 3: Create two grade centers at the elementary level (PK-2 Smith; 3-5 at Parker/PK-2 Barry; 3-5 at Randall) and close Virgil Elementary School. Move 6th grades to the Junior High and make it a middle school.

Pros

- Allows for a true (modified?) middle school philosophy
- Improves coordination & articulation of curriculum
- Provides more options to match students to teachers
- Increases staff efficiencies
- Allows for better/easier balancing of class sizes
- Permits more coordinated services (speech, OT/PT, counseling, etc.)
- Offers exposure to a greater diversity of students
- Provides the ability to use multiple (4 or more) teachers to meet students academic needs within a grade level

Cons

- Concerns about closing Virgil
- More students would have to ride the bus and some bus rides would be longer
- May make a tight space fit at the Junior-Senior High
- There may be some concerns about developmental appropriateness of sixth graders with 7-12th graders
- Will have to work to segregate middle schoolers from high school students
- Would overload the two largest elementary buildings
- Means more (too many?) transitions for students
- Parent involvement may decline if children are in different buildings
- A question of what happens to the closed building and how much savings would actually occur?
- Every building would lose its community feeling
- The sacrifice would not be good for the Virgil community; it is the fastest growing area
- Closes the school with the highest performance
- Would not grow the economic base
- Displaces kids will sour parents

Proposed Additional Options for Consideration

- Create a 6-8 middle school using one of the existing elementary buildings (put the District Office into the Jr-Sr High or a new Tech School).
- Add a second floor to Virgil and re-draw the elementary attendance lines to add students and even out the numbers at all the elementary buildings
- Make the elementary grade configuration K-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8
- Take one building and make it a Pre-K center for all PK students
- Building one elementary school near the Jr-Sr High for all elementary students
- Make the elementary schools specialty (magnet) schools like science/tech or fine arts
- Close another elementary school and re-draw the attendance boundary lines
- Build one new PK-5 elementary school near the Jr-Sr High, make the Jr-Sr High 6-12 (one pro is reduced transportation cost; one con is getting rid of five schools)
- Close a building without a mortgage
- Consider a K-8 configuration

MEMORANDUM

TO: Cortland Facilities Study Advisory Committee

FROM: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of September 13, 2017

DATE: September 15, 2017

Attendance:

Committee Members: Breck Aspinwall, Susan Byrnes, Kevin Cafararo, Rick Gamel, Sister Harriett Hamilton, Lisa Kaup, Roberto Maniaci, Stephanie Mitchell-Madden, Amy Sundheim, Karen Williams, and Mark Yacavone

Consultants: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

Observers: Michael Hoose, Jeff Craig, Kimberly Vile, Bob Martin, Betty Bentley, Rebekah Stull, Christine Gregory, Abbey Albright, Jenny Robinson, Craig Miller, Janice Miller, Corinne Bennett, Heidi Shelley, Lisa Smith, Jaclyn Couchman, Cheri Williams-Areis, Mary Kostuk, Bob Gregory, Tom Dovi, Emily Stevens, Jonathan Robinson, Kathleen Elliott-Birdsall, and Cliff Kostuk

Location: Randall Elementary School

1. Alan Pole welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Randall principal Cliff Kostuk for the tour of the school prior to the meeting. He reviewed the meeting protocol as well as the schedule of meetings that had taken place and will take place over the next few months. He asked if there were any changes to the notes from the last meeting and there were none.

2. Alan also reviewed the purpose of the study which has been modified slightly and now reads as follows:

"What options exist to arrange the grades and school buildings to maintain, and perhaps enhance, the education of Cortland City School District students while ensuring fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer? How could the grades and schools be organized?"

This modification in the purpose of the study reflects the desire of the board of education for the consultants to provide a study with options for their consideration rather than a single recommendation.

The major study conclusions that had been identified during the first three meetings of the committee were also reviewed.

3. Alan then provided an overview of the district's staffing. He noted that the vast majority of employees work directly with students: the district has 48 teacher aides, 255 teachers, and 33 teaching assistants. Fringe benefit costs for the district's employees are approximately 47%.

Alan also reviewed two options for reducing staff if that should be an outcome of the facilities reorganization, involuntary reductions and attrition. The consultants will be recommending that the district use the attrition method which has great potential as a strategy since the district has annually hired 50-55 people for the past five years.

4. Bill Silky presented an overview of the school district's financial situation. Budgets have passed in nine of the past ten years and, for at least the past five years, the full value tax rate for the district has been essentially level. At the same time, both the district's restricted fund balance and the unassigned fund balance have been declining. The district's expenses have also exceeded its revenues in recent years; this is a major reason why the district's reserves are being depleted. It is quite obvious, and it has been confirmed by the district's auditors, that the district is "moderately stressed" financially and faces some significant financial challenges in the future. This conclusion is consistent with the budget presentation the district made this past May to the public.

Bill indicated that a common strategy districts use when assuming new capital debt is to do so when existing debt is being retired. He noted, however, that there will not be a significant reduction in the district's debt service until after the 2025-26 fiscal year. This situation has implications for any facility option the Board ultimately adopts.

5. Following a review of the criteria for selecting options for Board consideration (feasibility and desirability), Bill then summarized the ten options for reorganization that were developed at the August 2 advisory committee meeting. They are as follows:

#1-Keep the current grade arrangement and fix up the buildings according to a priority list determined by the Board of Education based on the recent building condition survey.
#2-Move the 6th grade to the Junior-Senior High School and create a 6-8 Middle School.
#3-Create a 6-8 middle school using one of the existing elementary schools.
#4-Make the elementary grade configuration Pre-K-1, 2-3, 4-5, and 6-8.
#5-Make one building a Pre-K center for all Pre-K students.
#6-Consider a Pre-K-8 configuration.
#7-Make the elementary schools specialty (magnet) schools like science/tech or fine arts.
#8-Create two grade centers at the elementary level (PK-2 Smith; 3-5 at Parker/PK-2 Barry; 3-5 at Randall), close Virgil Elementary School. Make the Junior High a 6-8 Middle School.
#9-Close all elementary schools and build a new single elementary school to house all the students in grades Pre-K-5.
#10-Add a second floor to Virgil and add students from other schools.

He then discussed some pro's and con's of each of the options and noted that the consultants currently are focusing on options #1, #2, and #8 as feasible and desirable options.

6. Bill then reviewed the "take-aways" from the meeting as follows:

1. *The purpose of the study has been refined to provide options for grade and school organization.*

2. *The cost for staff salaries and fringe benefits is approximately 2/3 – 3/4 of the district's budget.*

3. *Should staff reductions be part of the future facilities plan, it is very reasonable to assume that those reductions could be accomplished through attrition.*

4. *For at least the past 5 years, the full value tax rate for the district has remained approximately the same.*

5. *The district has financed operating deficits with fund balance and reserves which has negatively impacted the district's financial condition.*

6. *The district has some significant financial challenges for the future.*

7. The advisory committee members were then asked to break into groups, review the options and the consultants' views on feasibility and desirability of each, add any pro's and con's to the options that were appropriate, and offer any new options that they believed were worthy of consideration. Comments from the advisory committee members included the following:

1. *It is important to consider the cost savings of each option in order to be fiscally responsible.*
2. *If the 6th grade is going to be moved to the junior high school, it is very important to separate the middle school children from the high school children, perhaps by creating a physical barrier between the two groups.*
3. *It is clear that some building has to be closed.*
4. *Revise option #8 to; (a) close an elementary school other than Virgil; and/or (b) create a UPK building.*
5. *What is the payback period for option #9, building one large elementary school?*
6. *The option of creating a middle school in one of the current elementary schools should be considered further.*
7. *How much could the district expect to generate financially if it were to sell the five elementary schools?*

8. The meeting was then opened up to the audience for questions and/or comments. One audience member suggested that the committee and the consultants consider making K-5 elementary schools in four of the district's elementary schools instead of implementing the sister school concept identified in option #8. The committee agreed with this as an option that should be explored.
Another audience member suggested closing Barry instead of Virgil because Barry would be a more saleable school and Virgil is the least expensive building to update as identified in the Building Condition Survey.
Another audience member recommended that Virgil be left as a K-5 building and the other four elementary schools be structured as sister schools.

9. The next advisory committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 4, 2017 at Smith Elementary School. An optional tour of the school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The business meeting of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Since the meeting, the October 4 meeting is being canceled because the consultants have too much analysis to complete and be ready by that date. Therefore, the next meeting will be held on November 8, the date that was originally scheduled for the next meeting after the October meeting. Since the presentation of the final report to the board of education has been postponed from December 13 until January, the committee will hold its final meeting to replace the October meeting on Wednesday, January 3rd.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on September 13. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as an agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on 11.8.17. The tour will begin at 5:45 and the meeting will start at 6:30!!

C: Michael Hoose

MEMORANDUM

TO: Cortland Facilities Study Advisory Committee

FROM: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of November 8, 2017

DATE: November 9, 2017

Attendance:

Committee Members: Breck Aspinwall, Anna Bennett, Susan Byrnes, Kevin Cafararo, Rick Gamel, Sister Harriett Hamilton, Lisa Kaup, Roberto Maniaci, Stephanie Mitchell-Madden, Amy Sundheim, Karen Williams, and Mark Yacavone

Consultants: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

Observers: Robert Creenan, Jeff Craig, Joshua Bacigalupi, Judi Riley, Alane VanDonsel, Eileen Fitzgerald-Spiehs, Doug Pasquerella, Christine Pasquerella, Kelly Comtois, Eric Comtois, Ilona Ryan, David Phetteplace, Sharon Phetteplace, Diane Timmons-Shaffer, Craig Miller, Janice Miller, Jennifer Geibel, Bethann Wieder, Christine Gregory, Kelsey Barron, Clay Benediat, Zacharie Boutoille, Sara Boutoille, Stephen Pearsall, Angela Wanish, Garrett Ciotoli, Julie Ciotoli, Kim Hay, John Howard, Scott Sharpsteen, Carol Clarke, Bill Stark, Crista Stark, Sarah Woodard, Tess LeBlanc, Nicole Krivicich, Ryan Kolas, Kati Coon, Shannon Stout, Cindy Peck, Pat Wood, Christopher Wood, Arnold Talentino, Mary Kuddie, Ricardo Nelson, Esther Dadio, Amber Thayer, Janet Griffin, Tom Dovi, Jodie Bush, Diane Chu, Donald Chu, Beau A.C. Harbin, Abigail Cleary, Andrea Kuretich, Christopher Kuretich, Sr., Jennifer Drake, Karen Diescher, Chassidy Coon, Eamon O'Shea, Carrie L.Q. Finn, Joshua Finn, Bob Martin, Erin E. Moore, Nichole Zarcone, John Zarcone, Charles Bennett, Eileen Allen, Jen Fischer, Anne Doyle, Jenny Robinson, Johnathan Robinson, Catalina Charles, Abbey Albright, Amy Riotto, Michael Hoose, Kim Vile, and Scott Steug

Location: Smith Elementary School

1. Bill Silky welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Smith principal Andrea Wanish for the tour of the school prior to the meeting. He reviewed the meeting protocol as well as the schedule of meetings that had taken place and will take place over the next three months. He asked if there were any changes to the notes from the last meeting and there were none.

2. Bill also reviewed the purpose of the study which reads as follows:

"What options exist to arrange the grades and school buildings to maintain, and perhaps enhance, the education of Cortland City School District students while ensuring fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer? How could the grades and schools be organized?"

The major study conclusions that had been identified during the first four meetings of the committee were also reviewed.

3. Bill then provided updates from the last meeting including updated enrollment projections, recent history of fund balance data, and the impact of school closings on property values.

4. Alan Pole then presented a summary of the fiscal implications of the options currently under consideration. In addition to the possibility of closing the Virgil school, closing Parker school is also an option under consideration. He explained that Parker is being studied because it is the oldest school in the district (1928-same year as Randall), it is the smallest of the elementary schools, and it has the fewest students of the four "city" elementary schools. In addition, there are parking challenges at Parker and, considering safety issues, it is the only school without a bus loop for picking up and dropping off students.
Alan also reviewed the staffing patterns associated with each of the school buildings as well as a summary of the Building Condition Survey that was recently completed for the district. He also estimated that the district would see an annual staff savings of $600,000 by closing Virgil and $800,000 by closing Parker. Annual utility savings were estimated at $100,000 by closing Parker and $110,000 by closing Virgil. Finally, Alan noted that the architects have estimated a cost of $10,000,000 for moving the sixth grade to the current junior-senior high school.
Alan also reviewed the estimated financial implications for each of the following options:

Option #	Description
1	Current arrangement
8 (1)	Close Virgil; 2 grade centers-K-2 Randall & Smith; 3-5 Barry & Parker; 6-8 middle school
8 (2)	Close Parker; 2 grade centers-K-2 Barry & Virgil; 3-5 Randall and Smith; 6-8 middle school
8a	Close Virgil; Keep 4 K-5 elementary schools; 6-8 middle school
8b	Close Parker; Keep 4 K-5 elementary schools; 6-8 middle school
8c-1	Close **Virgil** OR Parker; Keep 4 K-6 elementary schools
8c-2	Close Virgil OR **Parker**; Keep 4 K-6 elementary schools
A	Close Parker; 2 grade centers-K-2 Smith & Virgil; 3-6 Barry & Randall
B	Close Virgil; 2 grade centers-K-2 Randall & Smith; 3-6 Barry & Parker

5. Following the presentations, the committee members were asked to meet in groups and develop pro's and con's for each of the options and to add any new options that they thought would be appropriate. The following are the responses from the committee members:

- ✓ It is important to have the least amount of disruption from transportation.
- ✓ The district can't do nothing; we have to do something.
- ✓ Is there really enough savings from closing an elementary school to justify the cost of creating a middle school?
- ✓ How about looking at savings at the District Office?

- ✓ The Building Condition Survey is a huge wild card; what do we really need?
- ✓ What is the feasibility of merging school districts?
- ✓ Why are we only looking at Virgil and Parker?
- ✓ It is important to isolate the 6th graders in the middle school.
- ✓ Keep the 6th graders in the elementary schools.
- ✓ Will the bus rides for some kids be too long if we close an elementary school?
- ✓ Need to account for Pre-K programs.
- ✓ The current arrangement is not a good option; the two best options are
- ✓ 8 (2) and 8-b.

6. Following the feedback from the committee members, the audience was given the opportunity to make comments or ask questions. The following are the comments from the audience:

- ✓ Get the market values of each of the school buildings.
- ✓ Transportation is a huge concern.
- ✓ Will a financial analysis be conducted on the feasibility of closing each of the elementary schools?
- ✓ Can a 6-8 middle school be located in one of the elementary schools?
- ✓ We need to include 80 Pre-K students.
- ✓ Is the 5th grade enrollment for Parker correct?
- ✓ How long would it be before the savings is realized from closing an elementary school?
- ✓ If we close a school, what would stop a charter school from moving in?
- ✓ What research has been done on the effect of school closings and the impact on property values?
- ✓ Barry could be more saleable because it is right next to SUNY-Cortland.

7. The next advisory committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 3, 2018 at Virgil Elementary School. An optional tour of the school will begin at 5:45 for anyone who is interested. The business meeting of the advisory committee will begin at 6:30 p.m.
We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on November 8. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as an agenda item at our next meeting.
Looking forward to seeing you again on 1.3.18 at Virgil. The tour will begin at 5:45 and the meeting will start at 6:30!!
Enjoy the holidays!
C: Michael Hoose

MEMORANDUM

TO: Cortland Facilities Study Advisory Committee

FROM: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of January 3, 2018

DATE: January 5, 2018

Attendance:

Committee Members: Breck Aspinwall, Anna Bennett, Susan Byrnes, Kevin Cafararo, Rick Gamel, Sister Harriett Hamilton, Lisa Kaup, Stephanie Mitchell-Madden, Amy Sundheim, Karen Williams, and Mark Yacavone

Consultants: Alan Pole and Bill Silky

Observers: Jeff Craig, Justin Olson, Ubyl Delaire, Abbey Albright, Jennifer Larkin, Christopher Larkin, Jenny Robinson, Jonathan Robinson, Eric Fitchette, Ellen Fitchette, Robert Workman, Gabby Szumen, Christine Gregory, Robert Gregory, Teresa Pelton, Tina Brown, Adam Brown, Tim Dovi, Darlene Stevens, Michelle McGrath, Ralph Keeney, Travis MacDowell, Nick Mossert, John Burns, Stacy Burns, Linda Hall, Amy Riotto, Gary Pelton, John Kaminski, Jereme Stiles, Eric Snow, Kelley Peri, Jordan Loope, Cheryl Loope, Catalina Charles, Kristen Ailport, Eileen Fitzgerald-Spiehs, Bernie Wade. Ronnie Wade, Gwen Barbato, Eileen Allen, Dan Congdon, Beth Cavanagh, Emily Allen, Dan Congdon, Beth Cavanagh, Emily Morse, Cassondra Morse, Corena Morse, Peggy Ivie, Janice Miller, Craig Miller, Eric Comtois, Viola Storie, John Storie, Catherine Parsons, Carole Rehkugler, Chris Applegate, Donna Timmerman, Alan Stevens, Sue Stevens, Bill Turner, Heidi Turner, Jennifer Stiles, Stacy Bradley, Nick Graziano, Arielle Brown, Jaclyn Carr, Michele Barno-Lenon, David Lenon, Bob Applegate, Anne Doyle, Lori Megwein, Peter Peroulakis, Erin Moore, Bob Martin, Joshua Bacigalupi, Linda Churnl, Josh Finn, Sandy Price, Judi Riley, Shane Adams, Karen Drescher, Nicholas Kaminski

Location: Virgil Elementary School

1. Bill Silky welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Virgil principal Lisa Kaup for the tour of the school prior to the meeting. He reviewed the meeting protocol for everyone.

2. Bill also reviewed the purpose of the study that reads as follows:

What options exist to arrange the grades and school buildings to maintain, and perhaps enhance, the education of Cortland City School District students while ensuring fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer? How could the grades and schools be organized?

Bill indicated that the primary purpose of the meeting was two fold: (1) to review all of the key ideas that had been reviewed from previous meetings of the committee and (2) to receive feedback from the committee members on the draft report before it becomes final and forwarded

to the Board of Education.

3. Bill and Alan then walked the committee and observers through all of the following study findings:

Finding 1: The live birth rate in the Cortland City School district has declined somewhat from 2004 to 2016.
Finding 2: The district's K-12 enrollment has declined from 2,637 in 2012-13 to 2,362 this current year.
Finding 3: The projected enrollment for the school district is expected to continue to decline out to 2024-25 to approximately 2,007 students.
Finding 4: All of the elementary schools have experienced a decline in enrollment since 2013-14 with Parker and Virgil seeing the largest drops.
Finding 5: Home-schooled students in Cortland average about 45-50 per year while the number of non-resident students attending the district has dropped from 23 in 2013-14 to just six this year.
Finding 6: Approximately 40 students a year from Cortland attend schools elsewhere.
Finding 7: Cortland County's population has dropped since 2005 and the U.S. Census Bureau projects the county's population will continue to drop through 2040.
Finding 8: The median age of Cortland County residents is increasing and the typical childbearing age group (25-44) is declining.
Finding 9: Elementary class sizes in the district this year vary from 12 to 24 and the average class size compares favorably to other Cortland County school districts and New York State as a whole.
Finding 10: Virgil is the smallest elementary school with only one section of a grade while Barry is the largest with some grades (1, 4, 5, 6) this year having three sections.
Finding 11: The elementary special area subject offerings are quite similar in terms of the amount of time students receive per week, except there are some differences from one building to the next.
Finding 12: Elementary school student performance on the NYS tests in grades 3-8 for the past four years are quite similar across buildings.
Finding 13: Cortland Junior-Senior High School offers a very comprehensive program to its students.
Finding 14: Junior High students can accelerate in math and science and they have the opportunity to gain first year credit in a foreign language.
Finding 15: The High School curriculum offers two foreign languages, an array of business courses, a number of technology courses, and other curriculum opportunities many school districts have eliminated.
Finding 16: Cortland students have the opportunity to take career and technical education classes at the OCM BOCES and in fact 28% of seniors and juniors did so.
Finding 17: The district has 337 students current in need of special education services up from 291 in 2012-13; this represents approximately 14% of the overall district enrollment.
Finding 18: Parker and Randall are the oldest school buildings in the district both having been built in 1928 while the Junior-Senior High is the newest built in 1964.

Finding 19: Of the elementary schools, Barry is the largest (65,840 sq. ft.) and Virgil is the smallest (34,654 sq. ft.).
Finding 20: There are more rooms in the elementary schools than are needed to house the district's elementary students.
Finding 21: The Junior-Senior High School is only used at approximately 54% capacity.
Finding 22: The 2015 building conditions survey (BCS) shows that all the schools need improvements.
Finding 23: The district total for capital work from the BCS to just complete priority 1 immediate needs is $27,720,525.
Finding 24: Utility costs for each of the elementary schools vary from $42,707 at Virgil to $61,215 at Barry. Closing any school usually results in about 40% savings on utility bills.
Finding 25: With respect to instructional staff, Cortland has 250 teachers, 31 teaching assistants, 47 teacher aides and nine building principals.
Finding 26: The percentage of salary, on average, for district employees is 47% for benefits.
Finding 26: Staff savings from closing Parker Elementary School would be approximately $801,685 in salary and benefits.
Finding 27: Staff savings from closing Virgil Elementary School would be approximately $592,888 in salary and benefits.
Finding 28: Cortland uses a double trip bussing system to get students to and from school each day.
Finding 29: Currently, the district has some students that walk to school-for grades 7-12 who live within 1.5 miles of the Jr-Sr High School and K-6 students living within .9 mile from their respective elementary school.
Finding 30: To some degree, the district's transportation routes are organized around the elementary attendance zones, however the district has a very complex transportation system that has regular bus routes stopping at multiple schools.
Finding 31: Cortland transports students out of the district for their education program to the McEvoy Center, Homer Central School District, CCA, and St. Mary's. In addition, the district transports students to special education program locations in Solvay UFSD, T-S-T BOCES, George Junior Republic, and a residential school in Rochester.
Finding 32: The district provides one bus each day at 3:15 for high school students that get extra academic assistance and a 4:30 bus for student athletes. Additionally, there is a 4:30 late bus run for elementary students in the Extended Day Program.
Finding 33: Cortland residents have passed school budget votes in nine of the past ten years.
Finding 34: Cortland residents have supported capital project votes on two recent occasions (2007 and 2014) in recent years as well as 11 of 12 bus propositions since 2005.
Finding 35: The district's restricted fund balance has been declining the last three years which is not a positive sign.
Finding 36: The $291,137 Cortland had at the end of last year in its unassigned fund balance is only .6% of this year's general fund budget. This is an extremely low amount to maintain.
Finding 37: Cortland used $535,000 of its fund balance to hold down the tax rate this year, therefore it will need to come up with this same amount next year to do the same or it will experience a fiscal challenge.
Finding 38: In June 2017 the State Comptroller's office found the district is financing operating deficits with fund balance and reserves which is adversely impacting the district's finances.

Finding 39: The district has principal and interest payments on existing capital debt that extend through the 2031-32 school year.

4. Following this, Bill shared the conclusion (answers to the critical study questions) with the committee as follows:
As consultants we have concluded that there are several options for arranging the grades and schools to achieve the stated purposes outlined above. While several "feasible" options were explored in depth, only a few provide a "desirable" direction in our opinion for the district to pursue in light of the desire to maintain or improve the education of Cortland students while being fiscally responsible to the taxpayer.

5. Alan then offered the following tentative recommendations the consultants have proposed for Board consideration:

A. It is recommended that the district convene a facilities planning committee whose role it will be to develop and monitor a long term facilities plan for the district. This will include the closure of one or more of the school buildings, the scope of work to be performed from the Building Condition Survey, the long term the design of appropriate school facilities and the financing of these initiatives. This committee should be comprised of both school staff and members of the community.

B. It is recommended that the Board of Education consider the following options as both "feasible" and "desirable" as it looks to the future.

- Option 6: Close Virgil and keep the remaining elementary schools open as K-6 buildings; maintain the current 7-8, 9-12 Junior-Senior High School configuration.
- Option 7: Close Parker and keep the remaining elementary schools open as K-6 buildings; maintain the current 7-8, 9-12 Junior-Senior High School configuration.
- Option 8: Close Parker and from grade centers as follows: K-2 at Smith and Virgil and grades 3-6 at Barry and Randall.
- Option 9: Close Virgil and form grade centers as follows: K-2 at Randall and Smith and grades 3-6 at Barry and Parker.

C. It is recommended that the Board of Education conduct at least one public hearing/comment period on these options for the general public to express opinions.
D. It is recommended that the district implement these options in the 2019-20 school year. This will allow for adequate time to conduct one or more hearings to allow the public to make concerns and comments known about each of the options under consideration and for sufficient planning time to finalize implementation details so that the transition is as smooth as possible

6. The Advisory Committee members were then asked to break up into three small groups and react to the report and, more specifically, to the tentative recommendations the consultants have put forward. The following feedback was received from the committee members:

- What are the implications for transportation? Kids will be on the bus longer if we close Virgil.

- Will there come a time when the state will come in and take over and then tell us which school we have to close?
- Transportation implications are not clear...will we have to add buses and drivers if we go to sister schools?
- Which buildings are the most energy efficient?
- The age of the school building is not an appropriate criterion for deciding which school to close.
- What are the costs of closing a school?
- What would it look like if each of the elementary buildings were considered for closure?
- Can we lease space to BOCES to generate revenue?
- We don't want to lose the neighborhood school approach.
- Virgil home values would decline if the school were to close.
- We need to look at community schools.

7. After this, the meeting was opened to the observers to ask questions and make statements. Below is what was presented:

- If the district was to try to sell the school that was closed, would it be easier to sell Parker in the city rather than Virgil which is outside of the city?
- Virgil is near and dear to my heart.
- The district should cut expenses and increase revenues rather than close a school.
- There has been $8.5 million of development in Virgil in the past five years.
- If we need to raise taxes then do it….don't close schools.
- What are the educational benefits of these options?
- Class sizes will increase with all of these options.
- Don't lose the neighborhood schools.

8. The meeting concluded with a reminder to everyone present of upcoming dates including:

- January 23rd at 6:30 p.m. when the final report will be presented to the Board of Education by the consultants. This will take place at the Jr-Sr High School
- February 6th at 6:30 at the Jr-Sr High School there will be a public hearing on the study conducted by the Board of Education

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on January 3rd. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me.

Bill encouraged all committee members to attend the presentation of the final report to the Board of Education.

C: Michael Hoose

Appendix B: Amortization Schedules for the Jr-Sr High Project

CORTLAND ENLARGED CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

CORTLAND COUNTY, NEW YORK

$8,000,000 PROPOSED CAPITAL PROJECT

Schedule A

ESTIMATED DEBT SERVICE

Assumptions:

- *Voter approval TBD.*
- *SED approval TBD and construction to take place following approval.*
- *Financing:*
  1. *Bond Anticipation Notes issued issued first;*
  2. *Bond Anticipation Notes converted to Serial Bonds to match State building aid receipt;*

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
					Bond			Less:		
Fiscal Year Ending June 30th	Balance Outstanding	Capital Reserve	Estimated BAN Principal	Estimated BAN Interest	June 15th Principal Payment	Interest Estimated	Total Debt Service	Est. State Aid Amortization Payments	Less: Interest Earnings	Net Estimated Local Share For Project
0	$ 8,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-
1	8,000,000		220,000	480,000	-	-	700,000	529,314	-	170,686
2	7,780,000				450,000	252,850	702,850	529,314	-	173,536
3	7,330,000				460,000	238,225	698,225	529,314	-	168,911
4	6,870,000				475,000	223,275	698,275	529,314	-	168,961
5	6,395,000				495,000	207,838	702,838	529,314	-	173,524
6	5,900,000				510,000	191,750	701,750	529,314	-	172,436
7	5,390,000				525,000	175,175	700,175	529,314	-	170,861
8	4,865,000				540,000	158,113	698,113	529,314	-	168,799
9	4,325,000				560,000	140,563	700,563	529,314	-	171,249
10	3,765,000				580,000	122,363	702,363	529,314	-	173,049
11	3,185,000				595,000	103,513	698,513	529,314	-	169,199
12	2,590,000				615,000	84,175	699,175	529,314	-	169,861
13	1,975,000				635,000	64,188	699,188	529,314	-	169,874
14	1,340,000				660,000	43,550	703,550	529,314	-	174,236
15	680,000				680,000	22,100	702,100	529,314	-	172,786
TOTALS		-	220,000	480,000	7,780,000	2,027,675	10,507,675	7,939,704	-	2,567,971

Average:	$171,198
Estimated Impact per $1,000 Full Value:	$0.182

Notes:
- State Aid based on building aid ratio of 88.1% and estimated bond percentage of 95%.
- SED approval in early 2019, therefore building aid will begin 18 months after approval date as long as final cost reports are complete and aid based on assumed rate of 2.00%.
- **Aid begins only if final cost reports are submitted, otherwise aid may be delayed.**

Prepared by:
Fiscal Advisors & Marketing, Inc.
11/6/2017

Above financing schedule is preliminary

CORTLAND ENLARGED CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

CORTLAND COUNTY, NEW YORK

$10,000,000 PROPOSED CAPITAL PROJECT

Schedule B

ESTIMATED DEBT SERVICE

Assumptions:

- *Voter approval TBD.*
- *SED approval TBD and construction to take place following approval.*
- *Financing:*
  1. *Bond Anticipation Notes issued issued first;*
  2. *Bond Anticipation Notes converted to Serial Bonds to match State building aid receipt;*

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
Fiscal Year Ending June 30th	*Balance Outstanding*	*Capital Reserve*	*Estimated BAN Principal*	*Estimated BAN Interest*	*Bond June 15th Principal Payment*	*Interest Estimated*	*Total Debt Service*	*Less: Est. State Aid Amortization Payments*	*Less: Interest Earnings*	*Net Estimated Local Share For Project*
0	$ 10,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-
1	10,000,000		275,000	600,000	-	-	875,000	661,642	-	213,358
2	9,725,000				560,000	316,063	876,063	661,642	-	214,420
3	9,165,000				580,000	297,863	877,863	661,642	-	216,220
4	8,585,000				595,000	279,013	874,013	661,642	-	212,370
5	7,990,000				615,000	259,675	874,675	661,642	-	213,033
6	7,375,000				635,000	239,688	874,688	661,642	-	213,045
7	6,740,000				655,000	219,050	874,050	661,642	-	212,408
8	6,085,000				680,000	197,763	877,763	661,642	-	216,120
9	5,405,000				700,000	175,663	875,663	661,642	-	214,020
10	4,705,000				725,000	152,913	877,913	661,642	-	216,270
11	3,980,000				745,000	129,350	874,350	661,642	-	212,708
12	3,235,000				770,000	105,138	875,138	661,642	-	213,495
13	2,465,000				795,000	80,113	875,113	661,642	-	213,470
14	1,670,000				820,000	54,275	874,275	661,642	-	212,633
15	850,000				850,000	27,625	877,625	661,642	-	215,983
TOTALS		-	275,000	600,000	9,725,000	2,534,188	13,134,188	9,924,637	-	3,209,551

Average:	$213,970
Estimated Impact per $1,000 Full Value:	$0.228

Notes:
- State Aid based on building aid ratio of 88.1% and estimated bond percentage of 95%.
- SED approval in early 2019, therefore building aid will begin 18 months after approval date as long as final cost reports are complete and aid based on assumed rate of 2.00%.
- **Aid begins only if final cost reports are submitted, otherwise aid may be delayed.**

Prepared by:
Fiscal Advisors & Marketing, Inc.
11/6/2017

Above financing schedule is preliminary

CORTLAND ENLARGED CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
CORTLAND COUNTY, NEW YORK
PROPOSED CAPITAL PROJECT

Schedule	Project Cost	Amount of Reserves	Building Aid Ratio	Bond Percent	Term of Building Aid Payback	Estimated Local Share for Proposed Project Per Year	Estimated Impact per $1,000 Full Value
A	$8,000,000	-	88.10%	95.00%	15	$171,198	$0.182
B	$10,000,000	-	88.10%	95.00%	15	$213,970	$0.228

Notes:

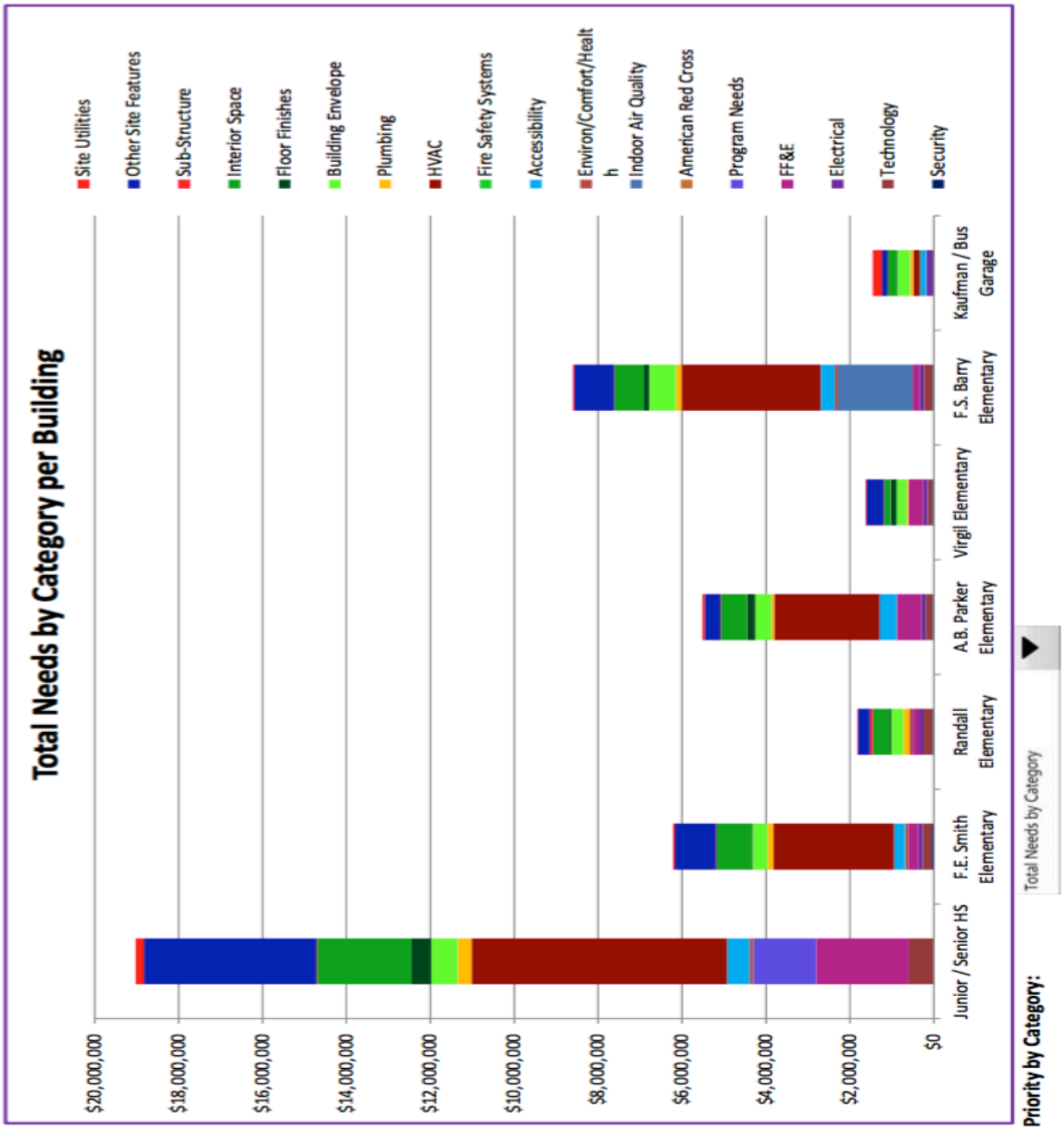
- Project is a reconstruction project and aided over 15 years.
- Interest rates are conservative and estimated high when compared to current rates.

Prepared by:

Fiscal Advisors & Marketing, Inc.
11/6/2017

Appendix C

Specific Capital Needs in Each School from the 2015 Building Conditions Survey


Total Needs by Category per Building
Site Utilities
Other Site Features
Sub-Structure
Interior Space
Floor Finishes
Building Envelope
Plumbing
HVAC
Fire Safety Systems
Accessibility
Environ/Comfort/Health
Indoor Air Quality
American Red Cross
Program Needs
FF&E
Electrical
Technology
Security
$20,000,000
$18,000,000
$16,000,000
$14,000,000
$12,000,000
$10,000,000
$8,000,000
$6,000,000
$4,000,000
$2,000,000
$0
Junior / Senior HS
F.E. Smith Elementary
Randall Elementary
A.B. Parker Elementary
Virgil Elementary
F.S. Barry Elementary
Kaufman / Bus Garage
Priority by Category:
Total Needs by Category