



Skaneateles Central School District

Excellence in Education

Will the Skaneateles Central School District close a building in the near future, as a result of declining enrollment?

District continues to research best building usage

As students and staff continue through the busy day-to-day of another school year, Superintendent Ken Slentz and others continue to look into the future of the district and its facilities.

A key question involves whether or not to close a building due to declining enrollment.

A recommendation about facility use is targeted to be made in the 2017-18 school year, Slentz recently said in a report to the Board of Education. That is when he expects to present a plan by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, an advisory group that has met regularly for the past two years.

“We have the good fortune of being able to take time to investigate so that we make the best decision based on clear evidence,” Slentz said.

“When the district last considered the closure of a building, we were experiencing significant fiscal challenges and needed to look quickly at possible revenue options. We are no longer in this position,” he said, citing (among other things) an improved economy; a one-time restoration of funds under the Gap Elimination Adjustment legislation; the further establishment of financial reserves; a multi-year budget building approach; and the establishment of specific budget practices.

“As a result, we now have the benefit of time and research as well as staff and community resources on our committees. This combination allows us to make truly thoughtful decisions based on current and future needs of our students and teachers.”

Slentz is working closely with the Strategic Planning Steering committee and the Board of Education. He has created a summary of this issue by giving updates under three basic questions:

- Could a building be closed at this time based on enrollment and facility space use?
- Should a building be closed?
- Will a building be closed?

COULD a building be closed at this time based on enrollment and facility space use?

“Yes. But **only if** we were to move a grade level to another building (such as 5th grade to the Middle School) **and** the remaining grades – K through 4 –have only four sections/classrooms each. Three of our grades are currently in five sections. Therefore, it will be *at least* two years before enrollment is at a level that this could be considered.

SHOULD a building be closed?

This is the crux of what Slentz, the committee and the BOE are working to determine. In order to come to the right answer, they will:

- a. Determine the amount of debt on each building (based on work done in previous projects) to see what the true gain is in revenue and savings as compared to the loss of space;
- b. Continue research on types of instruction and programs which yield the greatest returns for student growth, like project-based learning, academy structures, online and blended learning, and individualized learning plans. These approaches as well as the changing nature of learners may require a different use of space;
- c. Continue to monitor enrollment numbers to determine needed space;
- d. Review policy options to determine alternatives such as allowing non-resident students to enroll at SCS; and
- e. Continue using the Board's Standing, Advisory, and Steering committees as well as our Strategic Planning consultants to research, discuss, and plan for our next steps which will be captured in our strategic plan.

WILL a building be closed?

“This will depend on the answers we get as we research and explore,” Slentz said. “We will continue to follow the timeline schedule (also referred to as the Roadmap) for the strategic plan, which is targeted to be completed and then implemented in the 2017-18 school year.”

Once again, we are fortunate in that there is no immediate urgency. We have the time to research and consider carefully so that we make the best decision in terms of both efficiency and future needs of students and staff.