



Clinton Township School District

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Dear Clinton Township Community Members,

During the 2015-2016 school year, the Clinton Township Board of Education formed an ad hoc committee to research and evaluate the feasibility of closing a school. In March 2016, the ad hoc committee members presented information that reviewed the results of the research in order to determine if the district personnel could immediately close one of its four school buildings taking into consideration the projected enrollment for the 2016-2017 school year.

The components of the initial research included:

- The results of a demographic study conducted by Statistical Forecasting, Inc. lead by Dr. Richard Grip.
- A capacity analysis of each building.
- A review of the options for utilizing existing building space in the district's current structure identifying the positive aspects and areas of concern for use within each building.
- A review of the options for consolidating the space from four to three buildings identifying the positive aspects and areas of concern for closing each individual building.

Based upon the data and information collected, the ad hoc committee members recommended that the Board of Education prepare to keep all four buildings open for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. Three major concerns lead to this decision including:

Concern 1 – Utilizing three buildings would force all to be at capacity.

The areas of concern for Concern 1 include:

- a. The inability to expand classroom space if there were in an influx of students to our district
- b. The potential inability of the district to meet requirements of students with special needs. As it is impossible to predict with 100% certainty the type and number of students with special needs who may enroll in our district, district staff must maintain flexibility to add required resource rooms, self-contained classrooms, and support rooms as needed.
- c. The possibility of not being able to adhere to new special education laws if operating at capacity which could lead to legal and financial ramifications to the district.

Concern 2 – Financial implications of consolidating to three buildings.

The areas of concern for Concern 2 include:

- a. The district would need to create additional classroom space at the Clinton Township Middle School in order to bring the entire grade six class to the building. The estimated cost to convert break-out rooms to classrooms was \$850,000.
- b. The district would need to install additional bathrooms at PMG to accommodate the student population; if a waiver from the state could not be obtained.
- c. The district would incur legal fees associated with the evaluation of staff certification, seniority, and the Reduction in Force process.

Concern 3 – Successful completion of the approval process.

The areas of concern for Concern 3 include:

- a. The district would have to prove to the county and state offices of the Department of Education that consolidation would not have a negative impact on students.
- b. District staff would have to successfully navigate the extensive approval process at an additional cost to the district.

After the ad hoc committee members determined that the district could not immediately close a school, in order to continue to be fiscally responsible to the tax payers, the committee members identified needed triggers in order for the district to avoid the risks noted above.

The triggers include:

- a. Enrollment in grades 6, 7, and 8 must be at six sections of students each with class sizes within the district's policy.
- b. The New Jersey Department of Education and Executive County Superintendent approved the consolidation.
- c. All operational and structural requirements and building upgrades are finalized.
- d. A sustainable revenue generating program has been identified, developed, and implemented in the fourth building.

At the conclusion of the committee's presentation last spring, they committed to taking steps during the 2016-2017 school year to further evaluate and possibly plan for the district's consolidation. The ad hoc committee members stated that, during the 2016-2017 school year they would:

- Monitor district enrollment numbers.
- Conduct a cost analysis of consolidation savings.
- Conduct a more formal feasibility study of full consolidation of our district including, but not limited to transportation, staffing, timeframe, and building modifications.
- Work with the Division of School Finance of the New Jersey Department of Education and the Executive County Superintendent offices to formally identify the steps involved in the required approval process.
- Begin to seek approval to consolidate the district facilities.
- Work with the architect to plan for the repurposing of space in Clinton Township Middle School and make recommendations for space utilization in the remaining buildings.
- Identify a revenue-generating business to establish in the fourth building.

In February 2017, the ad hoc committee reconvened to continue discussions on the feasibility of closing a school. At that meeting, committee members discussed a number of steps to take to continue the evaluation of closing a school. The following activities were identified by the conclusion of that meeting:

- Identify and hire an expert to conduct a cost analysis for consolidating the district into three buildings.
- Plan for and complete an extensive feasibility analysis regarding the consolidation process.
- Identify the in-district processes required to consolidate facilities in order to close a school.
- Ask our Board attorney to work with the state and county to properly identify the steps necessary to close a school as well as the timeline for approvals.
- Contact school districts who have closed a building within the last four to five years to learn about their analysis process to evaluate the potential for consolidating in order to inform our consolidation process.
- Gather published articles related to closing a school.

The ad hoc committee will continue to meet throughout the spring. At each Board meeting, an update will be provided to the public as to the information gathered and progress made by the committee members.

Thank you,

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