

MEMORANDUM

TO: North Syracuse Community Advisory Committee

FROM: Deb Ayers, Jen Heckathorn, John Wisniewski

RE: Meeting Notes - Meeting of October 21, 2025

DATE: October 22, 2025

Attendance:

Committee Members: Dave Babikian, Brian Berlin, Sophia Burden, Katie Burke, Liz Cannella, Nancy Congdon, Kate DeBottis, Andrew Dolson, Rosemary Farfaglia, Molly Gaeta, Sara Garvey, Kelly Glashauser, Sarah Jones, Jillian Knapp, Cheryl McDonald, Sara Morrice, Donna Marie Norton, Phil Smith, Heather Stauffer, Jamie Sullivan, Sean Sullivan, Naomi Trivison, Shannan Vaillant, Emma Watson

Consultants: Deb Ayers, Jen Heckathorn, John Wisniewski

District Administrators: Matthew Erwin, Dr. Terry Ward, Olivia Cambs

Location: K.W. Saile Bear Road Elementary School

1. A building tour of Bear Road Elementary School was led by Olivia Cambs, principal. Upon return, the committee noted their “notices” and “wonderings” about the building, which can be found at the end of the notes. The agenda for the meeting was presented and reviewed as well.
2. Deb Ayers reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule as follows:

Date	Topic	Location
Tuesday, October 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Revisiting our ‘Why?’- Review of student data- Completion of activity from 9/15/25 meeting- District staffing patterns- Continued exploration of future facilities scenarios	KWS Bear Road Elementary School
Monday, November 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Overview of district transportation operation- Continued exploration of future	Cicero Elementary School

	facilities scenarios	
Monday, December 8	Review of draft final report	District Office

3. Deb reviewed the meeting takeaways from the September 15, 2025, meeting on the district's fiscal condition.
4. Deb spent time revisiting the purpose of the committee's work by reviewing the critical question and sharing what the district hopes to get from the committee and how the district hopes to use the committee's recommendations in the future.
5. Jen Heckathorn shared the results of the district's study on disproportionality that was conducted in partnership with NYU. The connection between the study and this committee's work was revisited and the study's recommendations were shared. Jen also shared data from North Syracuse that shows how disproportionality exists in the district.
6. Jen then led the committee in returning to the Group Activity from the August 25th and September 15th meetings. The committee reorganized into their groups of 4-5 people. They were asked to review their notes, make any final changes, and then prepare to present to the whole group.

Each group was given time to present on these 3 areas:

- Highlights: What did you spend the most time talking about in your group? What are the most important things you want the group to know about your conversation?
- Hidden Gem: What is something you talked about in your group that you don't want to lose sight of?
- Advise: Where did your group land in its thinking? Did you have a consensus? If not, why?

An open discussion period followed. Summary of each group's report can be found below.

Group #	Summary of Idea	Highlights	Hidden Gem	Advise	Other Notes
1	PreK in one building or distributed in multiple buildings	<p>Biggest benefit to moving to multiple buildings would be moving kids to their "home" elementary school but this isn't a perfect scenario due to programs/needs; another benefit would be PK/K teacher collaboration</p> <p>We know the school has to move. This will require another reaccreditation with the state which would mean major staffing changes that would have fiscal impact</p>	Staff has never been stronger in collaborative work; if the classrooms are broken up, they will lose that collaboration	<p>There will be a cost no matter what option is selected.</p> <p>Programmatic impact is less if we keep them together</p> <p>DO is likely too small; Allen Rd. is a great idea</p>	<p>Remember this is only about the 4410 classrooms that comprise the NSEEP program, not the UPK classrooms at CBOs</p> <p>The playground has to move, too.</p>
2	K-2 vs K-3 vs K-4 vs K-5	<p>Very strong opinions. Would prefer K-5, so more elementary buildings with more grade levels.</p> <p>Less transitions, less bus trips</p> <p>Agree with closing Main St.</p> <p>Two 6-8 buildings: one in the current NSJHS.</p> <p>Consensus on 9-12.</p>	<p>Need to be sure we honor the teacher contract. Lots of options in that middle grade band.</p> <p>Increasing continuity of educational program and certification needs.</p>	Need to be sure that we have enough buildings that are well-suited to the model. This might require some renovations.	This is very similar to what Group #4 talked about.
3	Grades K-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-12 (in this model, all grades 5-6 are in one building and all grades 7-8 are in another building)	<p>Getting 9th graders to CNS HS to avoid getting stuck</p> <p>Clear delineation between elementary/secondary with contract issues, fiscal needs, and developmentally appropriate services</p> <p>Efficiencies with staffing, busing, etc.</p>	<p>Desire to keep NSEEP program because of its value to the community (turning Allen Rd. into a "new Main St.")</p> <p>Could K-3 then fit in the other 5 elementary buildings</p> <p>NSJHS could be either 7-9 or 7-8, but the</p>	Being sure that we are thinking about the differences between elementary and secondary programming	<p>Other ideas (they like these more!) Going to other configurations of elementary</p> <p>K-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-12</p>

			desire is to get 9th grade up to CNS HS.		
4	7 buildings of K-6, 1 building of 7-8, 1 building of 9-12	<p>Would reduce overlap of teachers teaching same content in different buildings</p> <p>Transportation between buildings would be reduced</p> <p>Reduction of barriers (e.g., honors, electives)</p>	<p>Don't lose sight of the fact that this is for the benefit of students, not the teachers</p> <p>East/West feeling would be impacted (which is a good thing)</p>	<p>Converting Rox or Gillette to an elementary building</p> <p>Putting Pk at Allen or DO</p> <p>Goes to 1 middle school for less transitions and bringing the kids together earlier</p> <p>9-12 in high school</p>	How would the teachers contract be aligned--certification is different and there are nuances to the contract
5	Grades 9 - 12 vs. Grades 10 - 12	<p>9-12 seems to be theoretically an option but seems like it would be very tight. Is it really a real option?</p> <p>Does this address the academic issues?</p> <p>What about traffic/parking?</p>	<p>Can we address some of the other problems--like the duplicated courses and locking students into a path in another way?</p>	<p>This might depend on the other configurations. What they do at earlier grade levels might have a bigger influence on this configuration.</p>	This group would prefer it stay 10-12
Open Discussion					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deb explained our process/next steps • Community building: more transitions means less time to build communities within buildings. More transitions would not be as beneficial to community building. • What buildings are well-positioned for future additions? Does that impact any decisions? • Which configurations/moves require what levels of renovation? There's a cost/timeline impact here, too • Don't forget about transportation times. This is a large district with a lot of traffic. At what age are "longer" bus rides more appropriate. • Don't forget about increasing needs about special education classrooms and how those are integrated into the schools. Need to plan for the future, not just what we have now. (maybe a role for the new special education study's results here) 					

7. Jen led a Staffing Overview presentation. She covered topics on numbers and costs of instructional and non-instructional positions, certification areas, and staff diversity.

8. Jen reviewed the meeting's takeaways.

- Achievement patterns are not consistent across groups. Data show persistent gaps by race, disability status, language, and economic need, even when overall outcomes appear strong.
- Disproportionality in discipline and achievement indicates that some student groups experience less equitable opportunities and outcomes.

- Support and related service positions (e.g., psychologists, social workers, therapists) represent a significant investment in student well-being.
- Preliminary analysis suggests potential overstaffing in some instructional areas, indicating the need to align teacher allocation more closely with enrollment trends and student needs.
- Administrative and non-instructional staffing levels are consistent with district size but should be reviewed for operational efficiency.
- Staff diversity remains an area for growth and should align with the district's equity and inclusion goals identified through the NYU Metropolitan Center study.
- Partnerships with agencies such as Liberty Resources, YMCA, and Contact Community Services strengthen school-based supports but vary by building and require dedicated space.

9. The next community advisory committee meeting will be held Monday, November 10, 2025, at Cicero Elementary School. The building tour will begin at 5:30 p.m., and the meeting of the advisory committee will start at 6:00 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on October 21st. If you have questions about these notes, please feel free to contact us. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on Monday, November 10.

Bear Road Elementary School Building Tour Debrief

Noticings	Wonderings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feels like a lot of wasted space--flex spaces; hallways are very large when the kids are so small; this is very different from how it used to be and especially in the kindergarten rooms (with the HVAC interference). It seems like it can't work well for students and teachers--even with the older kids. ● The cubbies are narrow and can't hold much. Spots that teachers can't see in the kindergarten classrooms are also a concern--both from a teacher and parent perspective. ● It didn't seem like the architects listened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What has the process been like for listening to/incorporating feedback at Lakeshore Rd.? ● We wonder what the kids think about the building--they haven't experienced education/school the way we have. They might have a different perspective. ● How do we also plan for big spaces? Like for performances? Stages have gone away but is

<p>to the teachers when the planning for the space was done--for example, teachers didn't want the lockers in the rooms; no window was put in the library; no bathroom in the library; the only thing that teachers got was no clear walls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are still some drinking fountains that are new but are not functioning • The white space feels industrial; the outside looks like a prison; it doesn't resemble the warm building that it was before • The bus circle is an improvement over the prior parking lot • It doesn't look like the rest of our district--people might not recognize it as an elementary school in our district • A lot of the technology in the flex instructional space seemed "not permanent"--they weren't wired/mounted in. • Student support specialists (counselor, psychologist) are in a side hallway so it might be hard for them to connect with all students (principal said the same for her role with current office location) • Student services have been a high need for a while now and continues to grow, but there did not seem to be a high degree of planning for those areas in this renovation. Providing services to students in hallways is not ideal--for their efficacy or for the privacy/integrity of the students • King and King (the architect) seems to focus more on the futuristic design of the building than on the practical nature but they may be doing better with that since they have finished this project. • The building is in great shape and the security features are noteworthy. However, there aren't doors on the flex space, so teachers must rely on their situational awareness. 	<p>there a need for a second large multi-purpose space (besides the gym) in buildings?</p>
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