

MEMORANDUM

TO: North Syracuse Community Advisory Committee

FROM: Deb Ayers, Jen Heckathorn, John Wisniewski

RE: Meeting Notes - Meeting of November 10, 2025

DATE: November 11, 2025

Attendance:

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

Consultants: Deb Ayers, Jen Heckathorn, John Wisniewski

District Administrators: Matthew Erwin, Melissa O'Donnell

Location: Cicero Elementary School

1. A building tour of Cicero Elementary School was led by Melissa O'Donnell, 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. Jen Heckathorn reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule as follows:

Date	Topic	Location
Monday, November 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Overview of district transportation operation- Continued exploration of future facilities scenarios	Cicero Elementary School
Monday, December 8	Review of draft final report	District Office

A reminder was made that there will be no building tour for the December meeting, which will be the committee's last meeting.

3. Jen reviewed the meeting takeaways from the October 21, 2025, meeting on disproportionality and staffing.

4. Jen reviewed the committee's critical question, which is:

How can the North Syracuse Central School District strategically restructure its staffing, facilities, and grade-level configurations to optimize educational outcomes and emotional well-being for all students, while addressing declining enrollment, reduced state aid, and future growth opportunities like the Micron project?

5. Deb Ayers led a Transportation Overview presentation. Highlights of the presentation and discussion:

- The district has 110 Department of Transportation-approved vehicles.
- The average replacement cycle for a bus is 10 years.
- Mandates for electric busing are a factor in the district's planning for transportation needs. A new electric bus costs approximately 2.6 times more than a diesel bus.
- The district employs a 13-member bus garage team and 118 bus drivers.
- The district has an excellent first-time pass rate for DOT inspections (97%).
- The district uses a triple-trip daily route (each bus makes a high school/junior high school run, a middle school run, and an elementary run in both the a.m. and the p.m.).
- Approximately 95% of the district's students are eligible to ride the bus.
- The district uses the bus routing software Traversa™.
- Transportation to non-public schools is mandatory for students who live within 15 miles of their non-public school and submit a transportation request by April 1st of the preceding school year.
- The district transports to 25+ out-of-district locations each day. This includes non-public schools, BOCES locations, special education settings, and locations for McKinley Vento students (students in temporary housing).

6. Deb then reviewed building configuration options with the committee. A list of guiding principles was shared:

- Bring students together in one building at an earlier grade level
- Reduce (or maintain) the number of transitions between buildings for students
- Address disparity in student outcomes between buildings and the

- disproportionality of student outcomes across subgroups
- Address concerns about school climate in some buildings
- Close the Main Street building, where the repair costs exceed the value of the building

Each building configuration option was reviewed, and the committee compiled a list of pros and cons, as well as general observations about each option. These were captured in the slide deck.

7. All committee members were asked to complete a short survey about their preferences for the building configuration options.
8. Deb reviewed the next steps for the committee's work:
 - The next and final Committee Meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 8th. There will be no building tour; the meeting will take place at the District Office and start at 6:00 p.m.
 - We will have the *draft* of the full report ready for the committee by Monday, December 1st, so that members can review it before the meeting.
 - i. The consultants will also meet with the district's senior leadership on December 1st to review a draft of the report.
 - At the next meeting, we will go over the Executive Summary of the Findings and Recommendations in depth. The committee will have an opportunity to give feedback on the draft. We will wrap up discussions and capture any final thoughts.
 - Consultants will finalize the report and present it to the Board of Education on January 26th. Committee members are welcome, but not required, to attend.
9. Although there was no time to review the meeting takeaways, they are included in the slide deck.
10. The next (and final) community advisory committee meeting will be held on Monday, December 8, 2025, at the District Office. There will be no building tour; the meeting will start at 6:00 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on November 10th. 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, December 8.

**Cicero Elementary School
Building Tour Debrief**

Noticings	Wonderings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fabulous job is done maintaining the building. It's in great shape--structurally sound and clean. ● Office is more central so easy access to all parts of the building. ● Bathrooms in every classroom. Some rooms have 2! ● The hallways had names which supports culture (e.g., "Kindness Place"). Hallways are used for street names when students practice addressing letters. ● Student work is throughout the halls and there are sensory paths on the floor. ● Library is centralized. ● Connecting doors make it nice for special area teachers to work with multiple groups. ● Playground here is beautiful and is accessible for students with disabilities/additional mobility needs. ● It's rare (and nice!) that this building still has a stage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allen Rd. also still has a stage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With Lakeshore kindergarten students here, were the kindergarten classrooms collaborating more? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ YES! ● Classrooms on the back wing feel larger. Are they? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No. But there is less clutter. ○ Also, coming from the tour at Bear Rd. last month, the cubbies on the outside of the classrooms help with the space issues, too. ● Seemed like a lot of entry/exit points and wondering about the safety of that, especially with the busy roads right here. ● Why isn't the Lakeshore Rd. side of the building a school zone? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There also isn't a school zone on the back side of Gillette Rd. Middle School ○ Wondering if it's about entry/exit points of the school.