

MEMORANDUM

TO: North Syracuse Community Advisory Committee

FROM: Deb Ayers, Jen Heckathorn, John Wisniewski

RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of June 30, 2025

DATE: July 1, 2025

Attendance:

Committee Members: Dave Babikian, Brian Berlin, Liz Cannella, Nancy Congdon, Kate DeBottis, Andrew Dolson, Rosemary Farfaglia, Molly Gaeta, Sara Garvey, Kelly Glashauser, Jill Knapp, Sara Morrice, Donna Marie Norton, Nicole Parah, Phil Smith, Heather Stauffer, Jamie Sullivan, Sean Sullivan, Naomi Trivison, Emma Watson

Consultants: Deb Ayers, Jen Heckathorn, John Wisniewski

District Administrators: Terry Ward, Matthew Erwin

Location: Cicero North Syracuse High School

1. Superintendent Terry Ward started the meeting by thanking the committee members for their service. He then introduced consultant Deb Ayers.
2. Deb introduced herself and gave a brief overview of the study work the district is commencing. The district should be commended for its systematic and proactive approach through the utilization study. The other members of the consulting team, Jen Heckathorn and John Wisniewski, introduced themselves. Jen Heckathorn led committee member and administrative team introductions.
3. A building tour of Cicero North Syracuse High School was led by Kristen Hill, Executive Principal of the building. Upon return, the committee noted their “notices” and “wonderings” about the building, which can be found at the end of the notes.
4. Deb then reviewed the purpose of the study, which is to answer the following question:

“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 reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule as follows:

Date	Topic	Location
Monday, July 28	Instructional Program	NSEEP (Main St. School)/District Office
Monday, August 25	Facilities/Brainstorming	NS Junior High School
Monday, September 15	Transportation & Staffing (Part I)	Gillette Road Middle School
Tuesday, October 21	Staffing (Part II) & Exploration of Future Facilities Options	KWS Bear Road Elementary School
Monday, November 10	Finances & Exploration of Future Facilities Options	Cicero Elementary School
Monday, December 8	Review Draft Report	District Office

All of the above meetings are scheduled for Mondays (except for the October meeting) and will be held from 6-8 p.m. with building tours at 5:30 p.m. preceding each meeting (except the December meeting, which will not have a tour). On July 28th, a building tour will be held at NSEEP (Main St. School) at 5:30 p.m. and the committee meeting will begin at 6:00 p.m. at the District Office.

6. Deb Ayers noted that email will be the primary means by which the consultants will communicate with committee members. Meeting materials will be emailed to all committee members prior to the meeting. Paper copies of the materials will be available for committee members at the meeting.

7. Meeting notes will be provided after each meeting. The notes will be emailed to all committee members and copied to the superintendent and administrative cabinet. It will be the responsibility of the superintendent to distribute the notes within the district, as he deems appropriate. It is anticipated that notes will be provided to various school officials and posted on the district's website. The slide deck that is used at each meeting will also be posted on the district's website after the meeting occurs.

8. All meetings of the advisory committee will be open. Members of the public are welcome to attend these meetings to observe.

9. Deb Ayers presented an overview of the study process and the role of the advisory committee. She indicated that the function of the committee is to advise the consultants and to communicate with the public about the process. Committee members are expected to attend as many committee meetings as possible, freely express their points of view, be key communicators with stakeholder groups, and be respectful, contributing members of the committee.

Deb emphasized that the consultants bring an outside, unbiased perspective and will ensure that the process is open. They will produce meeting notes after each committee meeting and will be responsible for the final report. The non-binding 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. The consultants are committed to ensuring that committee members have time to process the information shared and discuss as a group.

10. To predict future enrollment, the consultants employ the Cohort Survival method that uses information on the number of births in each 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, is a predictor of 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.

The enrollment history for the school district was reviewed. Comparing enrollment changes from 2019-2020 until 2024-2025, Deb noted that the district's enrollment has decreased from 8,124 to 7,360, a decrease of 764 students or 9.4%.

Using the cohort survival method, the enrollment in North Syracuse is predicted to decrease from 7,360 students in 2024-2025 to 6,545 students in the 2034-2035 school year, a decrease of 193 students or 11.1% over the 10 year period. The number of homeschooled 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 North Syracuse. Deb also reviewed demographic information for Onondaga County. This review demonstrated that the county population has decreased slightly, the county is aging, and the county is expected to see a minimal decrease in the population of the county in the future. However, there may be a potential for population growth in the North Syracuse area if the Micron project comes to full fruition. Therefore, Micron should be considered as an "x factor" in its potential influence on enrollment in North Syracuse schools.

During the presentation of the enrollment data, there was a brief discussion about the perception in the community of the culture/climate at North Syracuse Junior High School (NSJHS) and how the perception is not aligned with reality. There may be more discussions to occur on this topic in the future.

11. At the conclusion of the meeting, Deb highlighted the meeting takeaways:

- ❖ The purpose of the study is to answer the question

“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?”

- ❖ The study process will be open to ensure transparency for everyone
- ❖ The Community Advisory Committee will assist the consultants throughout the process, but the final recommendations for the district’s consideration will be the consultants’.
- ❖ Consultants’ recommendations are not binding
- ❖ K-12 enrollment declined by 9.4% and is projected to continue to decline.
- ❖ Live births have been relatively stable over the past 10 years; however, there is a wide variation in the last 4 years of actual data that should be closely monitored.
- ❖ Enrollment in each elementary building declined except for KWS Bear Road
- ❖ Enrollment in all middle and secondary buildings declined.
- ❖ Micron development is an ‘X’ factor
- ❖ District enrollment projections should be updated routinely

12. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Monday, July 28, and will begin with a building tour of NSEEP (Main St. School) at 5:30 p.m. The group will then transition to the District Office for the meeting, which will begin at 6 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on June 30. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact Deb, Jen, or John. We will also review these notes as an agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on July 28 at 5:30 p.m. at NSEEP (Main St. School) followed by the meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the District Office. The focus of the meeting will be on the Instructional Program.

**CNS High School
Building Tour Debrief**

Noticings	Wonderings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The structure of groupings is the opposite of that of the Middle Schools. For example, students have the same Associate Principal every year at CNS HS. ● The furniture appears dated and doesn't seem to be conducive to collaboration spaces. ● All spaces appear to be in use. Is moving 9th grade to the high school even an option? ● Everything felt "closed off" --hallways felt tight. How does flow work when the hallways are full? Is there a way to connect hallways so teachers can better collaborate? ● Locker units have been reduced or no longer exist because students aren't using them the way they did when we were in school. ● The hallways were very loud with just us, so we can only imagine what it's like when they're full. ● There is not a lot of signage, and the "You are Here" signs are not particularly valuable. But students might get more lost at NSJHS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is the courtyard used for lunches? Not for lunch and rarely at other times. ● Is the building at full capacity? ● How do teachers utilize the teachers' rooms? There's one on every floor. (Answer: Some teachers have their desks in those spaces.) ● How will the pool be used during the school day? Will the pool be open to the public? (Answer: It is designed to be able to be used securely during the school day, but a decision hasn't been made yet.) ● How do students feel about there not being teams? Do they feel connected to their teachers? Do they miss them from their previous experiences? ● The location of the SKATE Program and other classrooms for students with special needs is on the ground floor, which is separate from the rest of the school. Additionally, some of the spaces are not as ADA-friendly as we might expect or prefer.