Future Planning: Focus Team Recommendations & Financial Forecast

April 29, 2026

Agenda

1. Opening - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Introductions
3. Financial Forecast - A study by Dr. Rick Timbs
4. Focus Team Recommendations
5. Public Comment
6. Discussion of the Boards of Education
7. Closing

CFP Development Panel Members

- Carol Ann Hammons, Special Education, Canajoharie CSD
- Lindsey Hodge, Social Worker, Canajoharie CSD
- Keith Baker, Board Trustee, Canajoharie CSD
- Heidi Meka, Board Vice-President, Canajoharie CSD
- Dr. Nick Fitzgerald, Superintendent, Canajoharie CSD
- Meagan Heiser, Harry Hoag Elementary School, FP CSD
- Heather Hubbard, FP JSHS, FP CSD
- Katie Webb, Board Trustee, FP CSD
- Neal VanSlyke, Board 2nd, FP CSD Vice-President, FP CSD
- Dr. Karen Geelan, Interim Superintendent, FP CSD

In June, 2025 the panel was formed and given the charge: Develop recommendations to the Boards of Education regarding merger, regionalization efforts and/or shared services.

FORT PLAIN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Purpose of Focus Teams

Why Focus Teams?

- Study complex topics impacting students and the school community
- Gather diverse perspectives and stakeholder input
- Develop thoughtful, well-supported recommendations
- Identify instructional, operational, financial, and policy implications

Who were on the Focus Teams?

Parents, Students, Employees, Board Trustees, Community Members

Cultural Integration

Facilitators:
Carol Hammons
David Bertram

Purpose

Explore traditions, celebrations, activities, athletics, and mascots; identify opportunities to honor and integrate identities across both districts.

Guiding Questions

- What aspects of each district's culture are most valued by students and community members? (Beginning of the year and transitions through grade levels, i.e. STAR program, Friday morning program, Hall of Fame, Top Ten, etc.) List some of the valued activities, rituals and traditions.
- How might traditions and identities be honored and/or incorporated in a merged district?
- What new practices or traditions should be considered?
- What concerns or challenges need to be addressed?

Recommendation #1 Make prior combined integration of the two elementary schools periodically to help support transition to middle school.

Recommendation #2 Each school should have a list of committees/members to support the planning and organization of events.

Recommendation #3 Start to hold professional development and faculty meetings together

Recommendation #4 Preserve the alma mater at each elementary school

Educational Programming

Facilitators:
Jennifer Schwabrow
Katrina Canallatos

Purpose

Analyze curriculum, academic offerings, school configuration, program alignment, and long-term planning.

Guiding Questions

- What aspects of each district's programs should be included? (Departmentalization in elementary, badging, curriculum resources, formative assessments, HS electives, etc.)
- How might we structure learning to optimize opportunity and achievement in a merged district? (What can be leveraged when considering NYS Portrait of a Graduate?)

Recommendation #1 Elementary Level: Aligned Curriculum and Assessments and embed PBL at all levels.

Recommendation #2 Middle Level: Maintain a dedicated Middle School Building with robust elective opportunities to explore various career pathways.

Recommendation #3 High School Level: Combine and grow current proposed academies and pathways currently offered at Fort Plain and Canajoharie, and increase the number of AP and college in the high school course offerings.

Recommendation #4 Provide more opportunities for in-district placement for students with disabilities at the CPSE and CSE levels.

Recommendation #5 Provide a parent information and training center.

Operational Planning

Facilitators:
Heather Hubbard
Christopher DePaolo

Purpose
Review transportation, facility usage, scheduling, and operational logistics.

Guiding Questions
How can we best utilize our facilities to address school and community needs? (School start and end times and transportation - single run or double run, pool, etc.)

What opportunities can be realized in a merged district?

Recommendation #1 School-Based Childcare to support working families and increase access to early childhood education.

Recommendation #2 Community-Based Health Clinic at one or more buildings.

Recommendation #3 Operational Systems
Comprehensive Transition Plan to include technology/infrastructure systems prioritizing data security, compatibility, operations continuity, created with input from all stakeholders.

Recommendation #4 Athletic and Extracurricular Facilities
Prioritize scheduling events and activities at the building where students attend school.
In preparation, conduct a comprehensive condition study of athletic fields and facilities.

Recommendation #5 Transportation: Bus routing should minimize in-vehicle travel time for students, provide for consistent daily schedules and optimize routes for fuel and maintenance efficiency.

Recommendation #6 Transportation: A “Late Bus” every day to ensure equity and provide access to programs and activities.

Student-Centered Transitions

Facilitators:
Brenna Kirkpatrick
Nicholas Bottino

Purpose
Plan student orientation, mentoring opportunities, and transition supports.

Guiding Questions
What events or experiences can help build a cohesive student culture? (STAR, student mentoring, character education, restorative practices, conscious discipline, kindergarten boot camp, senior breakfasts, etc.)

How can we plan for a smooth transition for students at various grade levels? (Grade 6, grade 9, seniors, etc.)

Recommendation #1 Bring students together as soon as possible next year at all levels – use pen pal programs and combine youth sports for younger students, join everyone on STAR day, provide building tours for grades 5 and 8, combine filed trips, dances, holiday celebrations and more.

Recommendation #2 Provide transition counseling.

Recommendation #3 Open all clubs to all students.

Recommendation # 4 Ensure equitable access to athletic practice.

Recommendation #5 Preserve our traditions and combine when we can.

Recommendation #6 Keep electives and expand course and college offerings.

Staff-Centered Transitions

Facilitators:
Alicia D'Ambrosio
Amy Bartholomew

Purpose

Address professional development, staff onboarding, culture building, and support structures.

Guiding Questions

What aspects of each district's professional culture or traditions should be carried over to a merged district? (Staff development days, mentoring, department chair/coordinators, staff recognitions, hiring practices, etc.)

Recommendation #1 Implement a whole district collaborative model of shared decision making when creating the new school district.

Recommendation #2 Maintain the current teaching structures in each elementary school in the early stages of transition.

Recommendation #3 Cultivate a data-driven school culture prioritizing professional learning opportunities, and new teacher orientation, horizontal and vertical team meetings to be designed to align instructyional practices and improve student outcomes through collaborative data analysis.

Recommendation #4 Allocate collaborative time for teachers and staff in the summer preceding launch to integrate within the new district framework. Emphasis on finalizing procedures and embed SEL and Restorative Practices into core operations.

Recommendation #5 Utilize a balanced staffing model that maintains a baseline of support in every school and strategically deploying additional personnel where student population data indicates a higher need for intervention or supervision.

Recommendation #6 Establish a District-sponsored Early Childhood Center to serve as a cornerstone for staff recruitment and community engagement.

We need to be the architects of our own future and provide our students at least the same opportunities others have thorughout the state and country.

- Fort Plain and Canajoharie CSD