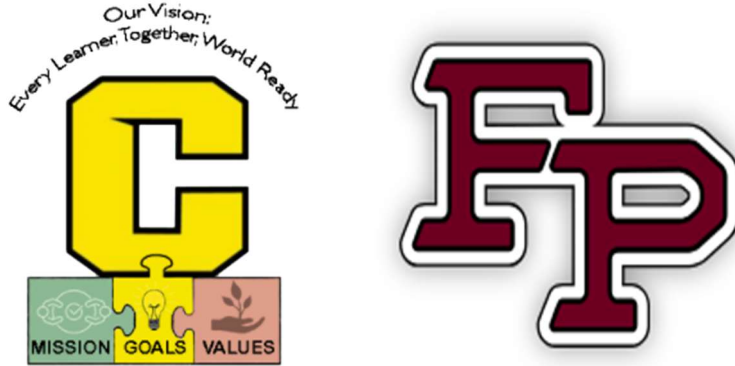


Canajoharie CSD & Fort Plain CSD

Feasibility Study for the Purpose of Centralization



Presented to the
Joint Boards of Education
on January 16, 2025





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Feasibility Study for the Purpose of Centralization

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Final Report – January 2025

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Executive Summary

The feasibility study for the potential merger of the Canajoharie and Fort Plain Central School Districts presents a transformative opportunity to enhance educational experiences, optimize organizational capacity, and ensure long-term financial sustainability. Grounded in a thorough analysis of key areas, the study outlines both the challenges and the significant benefits of uniting these two districts into one cohesive educational community.

Educational Experiences

Both districts share a commitment to academic excellence, demonstrated by their strong foundations in core curricula, course offerings, and student support services. A merged district would expand access to advanced courses, career and technical education (CTE), dual-enrollment opportunities, and enriched extracurricular activities. Collaborative resources could improve special education services, reduce out-of-district placements, and foster equitable access to programs that meet the diverse needs of all students. Additionally, maintaining small class sizes while broadening elective and enrichment offerings would create a more comprehensive and inclusive educational environment.

Organizational Capacity

The merger offers opportunities for economies of scale, particularly in facilities management, transportation, and food service operations. Unifying instructional staffing could create specialized roles to better support curriculum development, technology integration, and student services. Both districts' strong commitments to staff professional development would be enhanced by shared expertise and resources. Facilities across both districts could be leveraged to maximize efficiency and expand community engagement.

Financial Sustainability

Both districts maintain strong fiscal positions, supported by balanced budgets and reserves. However, rising expenditures highlight the need for strategic financial planning. The merger would unlock significant financial incentives, including state reorganization aid, which could fund program enhancements, tax stabilization, and capital improvements. By streamlining operations and reducing redundancies, the merged district would create a sustainable framework to support long-term growth.

Insights

The Canajoharie and Fort Plain Central School Districts share strong similarities in enrollment, class sizes, academic performance, and special education profiles, providing a stable foundation for collaboration. Existing joint efforts, such as athletics and performing arts programs, demonstrate the potential for expanded partnerships. A merger could enhance special education services, expand advanced coursework, and broaden electives without increasing class sizes. Operational efficiencies, including streamlined transportation and shared facilities, could further support organizational effectiveness. Financially, both districts maintain healthy reserves, and reorganization aid presents an opportunity to invest in programs, stabilize tax rates, and ensure long-term fiscal sustainability.

Opportunities

Centralization offers opportunities to enhance academic programs, including advanced placement, career pathways, and dual-enrollment options, while also improving operational efficiency through streamlined transportation, facilities, and shared services. Professional development could be expanded to foster greater collaboration among staff, and unified facilities could strengthen community engagement. Financially, state reorganization aid provides a critical window for funding new initiatives and stabilizing taxes.

Challenges

Centralization also presents challenges, including the need to integrate distinct school cultures, align curricula and grade structures, and address staff concerns about roles and contracts. Transparent communication will be critical to addressing community perceptions, while strategic financial planning will be essential to ensure sustainability once state aid concludes.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The study emphasizes the importance of honoring the unique identities of both districts while fostering a unified culture. Through stakeholder engagement, the merger process would prioritize transparency, inclusivity, and the celebration of each district's traditions. A combined district represents an opportunity to reimagine rural education, fostering innovation and resilience for future generations.

In conclusion, the proposed merger of Canajoharie and Fort Plain Central School Districts is a forward-thinking solution that addresses challenges such as declining enrollment and limited resources while unlocking new opportunities for students, staff, and the community. By combining their strengths, the districts can build a unified educational system that exemplifies excellence, equity, and sustainability.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why are the two boards of education discussing the possibility of merging?

A. The two boards felt that it was a good time to review the possibility of a merger because of the following factors:

- More educational programs are possible
- More support services could be available
- More opportunities for both students and the communities
- Competition for teachers and staff has made it challenging to hire and retain good personnel
- More resources available due to incentive aid from NYS distributed over 14 years

Q. Who will decide whether there is a merger?

A. If the boards of education from each district decide to move the process forward in January 2024, there will then be a Straw Vote/Assessment of the Public Support Process in each district to indicate that the Commissioner of Education considers calling for a subsequent binding public vote to make the final determination. The vote needs to pass in both districts to be binding.

Q. Have any decisions been made already?

A. The only decision that the boards have made has been to move forward with the process, which includes having a feasibility study done to provide data, information, and insights regarding the two districts. With this information, the boards will then be able to make an informed decision on whether to put this question to the voters of each district.

Q. What is the role of Leadership Solutions Advisers?

A. Leadership Solutions Advisers is a group of former and current school administrators conducting a feasibility study regarding the potential merger of the districts. They will produce a report that goes to both the NYS Education Department and the school boards of both districts. The report will be available for all Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD residents before the boards of education decide on any vote.

Q. What is involved in the feasibility study?

A. Leadership Solutions Advisers engaged an advisory committee of ten (10) members from Fort Plain CSD and ten (10) from Canajoharie CSD. Each district will provide data and information to this committee, along with details from comparable districts. The Advisory Committee will create insights and provide direction for the boards of education when the process is complete.

Q. How long is the feasibility study process?

A. The Advisory Committee met on August 21, 2024, to begin the process. There were then three meetings to review data and information specifically for Educational Experiences (Sept 12), Organizational Capacity (Oct 17), and Financial Sustainability (Nov 14). The final committee meeting occurred on December 12, 2024 to gather feedback on the Draft Report. After NYSED review, a final report will be presented to both boards of education in a joint meeting on January 16, 2025.

Q. What is the role of each of the superintendents and other administrators?

A. The superintendents and administrators from each district are providing Leadership Solutions Advisers with data and information so they can present it so that the Advisory Committee and both communities can easily understand.

Q. What will the public vote on if each school board decides to proceed?

A. There will be three pieces to a merger vote:

- Whether or not to merge
- If there is a merger, whether you would prefer to have a board with 5, 7, or 9 board members
- How long the term of 3, 4, or 5 years of those board members should be

Q. How will the merger improve educational offerings for students?

A. A merger can help add more academic programs, extracurricular activities, and specialized services by using the combined resources to provide a broader range of courses, more advanced placement options, and more extracurricular activities that might not be possible in smaller, separate districts.

Q. Will elementary school students stay in their current community schools?

A. If a merger occurs, the newly elected Board of Education will make the final decisions about building configurations and programs, following the recommendation of the newly appointed Superintendent of Schools during a transition process. Historically, in similar district mergers, elementary school students would remain in their current “neighborhood” community schools. Nothing in the current study suggests any initial benefit to consolidating elementary schools at this time. As populations and programs change over time, there may be a benefit to reconfiguring school attendance patterns.

Q. How will a merger affect student transportation?

A. It’s an understandable and fair concern that no one desires longer bus rides if the districts were to merge. With the unique opportunity of each school's campus operations being just 5.4 miles apart, it is feasible to redesign bus routes that will be equal to or, in some cases, shorter than current distances and durations. During the transition process, bus routes and transportation logistics will need to be carefully planned to minimize distances and durations of bus routes.

Q. What will happen to staff if a merger takes place?

A. If a merger occurs, the newly elected Board of Education will make the initial and first hiring decision for the new Superintendent of Schools. Other staffing decisions will then follow the typical process of any district, with the new Superintendent of Schools working within a process to make staffing recommendations to the Board of Education during a transition process. Generally, staff from both districts will merge into a single seniority list based on their certifications and appointments in current districts. In most cases, the additional incentive aid for the merger will allow the new district to manage reductions through natural attrition rather than immediate layoffs.

Q. How will contracts for teachers and staff be handled?

A. The existing contracts of each district remain in effect for those employees identified within the recognition clause of each current contract until the newly formed merged district negotiates new collective bargaining agreements. Therefore, the employees maintain their current salary and benefits until the new district's Board of Education and Superintendent mutually negotiate new terms in good faith.

Q. What happens to retiree benefits in a merger?

A. Each district's current contracts are still in force, and the current retiree benefits are still in place. As a result, retirees will keep their current benefits under new agreements negotiated, and they will only be affected if there are changes to active employee benefits during the mutually agreed contracts with the new district's superintendent and board of education. This would be the same for any school district

Q. How does a district qualify for hold harmless, and what does that mean?

A. "Hold harmless" applies when a district's calculated Foundation Aid (based on state formulas) is lower than the previous year's allocation. To qualify, a district must demonstrate that its aid calculation based on the state formula would decrease compared to the prior year's aid amount due to changes in enrollment, district wealth, or other formula metrics. The "hold harmless" provision ensures the district receives at least the previous year's aid amount, stabilizing funding and enabling the district to maintain operations without immediate cuts. It provides essential financial predictability for districts navigating fluctuating variables that impact state aid.

Q. Why does the state want to merge small, rural schools, and why is incentive money being offered?

A. The state encourages the merger of small, rural districts to address challenges like declining enrollment, limited resources, and inefficiencies due to duplication of services. By consolidating, districts can reduce administrative costs, pool resources, and offer enhanced educational opportunities. The state provides Reorganization Incentive Aid as a financial bridge to cover initial expenses and adjustments during the merger process. This incentive reduces strain due to finances, allowing the districts to transition smoothly while making long-term improvements. From the state's perspective, merged districts operate more efficiently and maximize taxpayer dollars, benefiting students and the broader community.

Q. In your knowledge of merged schools, could you describe how schools function after the extra money runs out? Have they encountered problems?

A. After the incentive aid expires, districts that plan well often transition successfully. These schools typically use the incentive period to invest in lasting programs, restructure operations for efficiency and build financial reserves. However, districts that do not adequately prepare may encounter challenges such as budget deficits, program cuts, or increased reliance on reserves. Much like any organization, if there is effective leadership, there is a much better chance for long-term success.

Q. Is there a possibility that the incentive aid may change from the presented amounts if the aid formula or state leadership changes?

A. While it is true that incentive aid is subject to the stability of state policies and leadership priorities, since the inception of school district reorganization in NYS, the incentive aid promise has never been broken—two World Wars, a Great Depression, 911, the Great Recession, etc. The presented aid amounts are based on current laws. Funding formulas and allocations can only change with changes in the statutes.

Q. Are both districts' budgets sustainable under current trends and predictions?

A. Both Canajoharie and Fort Plain districts are fiscally stable at present. However, projections indicate that expenditures are growing at a faster rate than revenues, leading to the likelihood of budget deficits as early as the next fiscal year. Without adjustments—such as reducing costs, increasing revenues, or leveraging efficiencies from a merger—both districts may face challenges in maintaining balanced budgets in the future. The feasibility study suggests that merging the districts offers a viable path to enhance sustainability through resource sharing and operational efficiencies, reducing the financial risks each district currently faces.

Q. Will property taxes increase after the merger?

A. Financial projections indicate that a merger would result in stable property taxes in the short term due to state Reorganization Incentive Aid. The design of this aid is to offset costs for a period of 14 years. Long-term impacts depend on the merged district's financial planning. It is fair to conclude that overtime, merger or no merger, state fiscal policies, and historical trends clearly indicate that taxes will likely increase on an annual basis to ensure continuity of services.

It is also important to note that the annual district vote authorizes a tax levy amount. The district does not assign individual homeowner property tax—just the total levy amount. Individual property tax amounts are based on local assessments.



Insights

The following insights are curated from synthesizing current data and information from both districts, as well as integrating feedback and perspectives from three (3) focus groups, two (2) ThoughtExchanges, and five (5) monthly engagements with the Advisory Committee. They are intended to be brief, straightforward statements that provide a greater and more accurate understanding of the ideas and observations considered throughout the feasibility study process.

Educational Experiences

- **Similar Profiles:** both districts are **similar in enrollments, class sizes, academic performance, graduation rates, free and reduced lunch metrics, special education profiles, and extracurricular activities**, providing a strong foundation for potential collaboration.
- **Curricular and Instructional Alignment:** despite differing **grade level configurations**, both districts offer **comparable courses** to meet middle school requirements, ensuring consistency in academic preparation. A consolidated Middle School approach would provide greater capacity for a more robust and diverse program that better meets students' needs and fosters learning exploration.
- **Opportunities for Expansion:** merging the districts could enable **expanded offerings in advanced courses, music, technology, electives, and extracurricular activities**, without increasing class sizes or requiring additional staff.
- **Enrollment Declines:** both districts have experienced **declining enrollment over the past decade**, emphasizing the importance of strategic planning to maintain robust educational opportunities. Combining current district enrollments would not create enrollment numbers at any grade level larger than historical enrollments for either district.
- **Building Configurations:** there doesn't seem to be an urgent need to consolidate educational programming at the elementary level – **a new district would likely maintain a “neighborhood” school model for elementary students**, meaning elementary students would likely remain in their current school buildings. There is an **educational need to consolidate programming at the middle and high school levels** – a transition team, convened post-merger, should determine the most effective building configurations for these levels.
- **Special Education:** with careful planning, the districts could **reduce reliance on out-of-district services** by creating in-district programs using existing staff, enhancing equity and efficiency. In addition, the consolidation of programs at the Middle School and High School levels would free up instructional space that could be used for special education BOCES programs to meet district and regional needs.
- **Successful Collaborations:** existing partnerships in **sports and musicals** demonstrate the feasibility of shared programming that benefits both communities.

Insights: Educational Experiences (continued)

- **Reorganization Aid:** state incentive aid offers funding to support the transition to a unified district while also creating opportunities to develop programs aligned with the districts' **Portrait of a Graduate** vision. These efforts would be immensely more efficient and effective being pursued collaboratively through unified Middle School and High School instructional programs.
- **Continued Collaboration:** it's apparent that the **districts will continue to build on successful merger experiences** in extracurricular **to better meet the learning needs of students** moving forward, with or without a formal merger decision, especially at the high school level.

Organizational Capacity

- **Economies of Scale:** consolidation offers opportunities for **greater efficiency in facilities management and maintenance**, leveraging Canajoharie CSD's **Energy Manager grant-funded role** to optimize resource deployment and achieve cost savings. Maintaining a neighborhood schools concept for the Elementary School would remain the preferred configuration.
- **Transportation Optimization:** improved routing can **minimize travel times** and ensure adequate service to all areas, addressing concerns about longer bus rides for students from the Advisory Committee, focus groups, and community Thoughtexchanges.
- **Shared Services:** reorganization could create **efficiencies by sharing resources**, enabling the district to provide equal or enhanced opportunities for students with fewer personnel, thereby reducing costs. Pursuing a consolidation would pool existing human and financial resources to unify and streamline essential operations, professional learning, and other support services.
- **Reduction of Redundancies:** a merged district could streamline operations by **eliminating duplicative practices**, allowing funding to be reallocated toward improving student opportunities and programmatic efficiency. Specifically, consolidated districts could more efficiently organize administrative and non-instructional staffing to eliminate duplicative services and expand capacity to sustain high quality preventative approaches to preserving assets and supporting ongoing operations.
- **Addressing Staffing Shortages:** increased collaboration could **resolve staffing gaps** in high-demand certification areas and build capacity in special education, with the potential to bring students back from out-of-district placements.
- **Specialized Roles:** a district could support **specialized positions**, such as therapists, counselors, and subject-area experts, enhancing services for students and staff.
- **Collaboration Among Educators:** more staff in specific content areas or grade levels could foster **greater sharing of best practices** and allow for specialization, such as a teacher with a strong physics background serving both districts.
- **Facility Improvements:** the increased **building aid percentage** for a reorganized district could support facility enhancements to meet emerging needs, aligning with long-term strategic goals.

Insights: Organizational Capacity (continued)

- **Collaboration from Necessity:** with current and projected staffing shortages in many areas, it will become **increasingly necessary** that the districts explore creative and targeted **shared staffing arrangements** to create organizational capacity to better meet the learning needs of students and operational responsibilities.
- **Repurposing Space:** by unifying the Middle School and High School programs, **space reconfigurations will result in new, open physical space** that may be repurposed for community partnerships, regional collaborations, and emerging initiatives and innovations in the consolidation transition.

Financial Sustainability

- **Strong Financial Positions:** both districts maintain **strategic fund balances and reserves**, providing stability to support future budget planning, though reserves may need to be utilized, and adjustments in programming or staffing may be required in upcoming budget cycles.
- **Comparable Revenue Sources:** **state aid** is a critical revenue stream for both districts, influenced by similar factors, including **enrollment, wealth and poverty levels, and spending patterns**.
- **Aligned Tax Rates:** the districts have **closely aligned tax rates** across their respective towns. A merger is unlikely to result in significant tax increases and could allow for **tax rate equalization** using a small portion of the reorganization incentive aid.
- **Reorganization Incentive Aid:** this state-provided aid presents opportunities to **enhance educational programs** and support a smooth transition to a unified district, ensuring resources are allocated to benefit students and the community.
- **Continued Collaboration With or Without Additional State Aid:** with **the high probability that the districts will continue to seek shared staffing arrangements** to meet student learning needs better and address shortages in organizational capacity, the financial question becomes, **will this extremely likely sharing take place with additional state aid for the merger or without additional funds?**



Opportunities

The following opportunities are identified from synthesizing current data and information from both districts, as well as integrating feedback and perspectives from three (3) focus groups, two (2) ThoughtExchanges, and five (5) monthly engagements with the Advisory Committee. They are intended to be brief, straightforward statements that share the favorable conditions identified in the feasibility study for doing something better or different through a consolidated district moving forward.

Educational Experiences

- **Special Education Programs:** collaboration allows efficient use of staff and programming. Both districts contract with similar entities and share the goal of **keeping students in-district** through co-teaching, self-contained, consult, push-in, and resource room models. A consolidated district approach would expedite the needs assessment, staffing allocation, and program development process.
- **School Culture:** both districts emphasize **Restorative Practices** and **Social/Emotional Learning** to support behavior modification and foster strong relationships with students and families. Unified Middle School and High School programs would allow additional administrative and support personnel capacity to further this important work.
- **Clubs and Activities:** merging the districts expands **extracurricular offerings**, providing students access to activities and clubs currently unique to each district.
- **Expanded Academic Offerings:** consolidation could enable **interest-based courses** in Business, Arts, Technology, Computer Science, Foreign Language, and other fields by leveraging staff resources.
- **Enriched Programming:** by consolidating under-enrolled classrooms, the unified district can **expand academic and enrichment opportunities**, aligning with a shared academic vision.
- **Aligned School Start Times:** reorganizing into unified Middle School and High School programs provides the potential for school start times to align with **research on optimal learning times** for secondary students, supporting better academic outcomes.
- **Advanced Coursework:** unifying the High School instructional programs would provide increased access to **upper-level science, math, and other advanced courses** would benefit high-achieving students. These opportunities will allow the students of the newly merged district to gain access to New York State’s growing semiconductor sector and provide a skilled workforce, as well as create employment and career pathways.
- **Professional Development:** collaboration across schools provides **focused staff development** opportunities, addressing instructional weaknesses and promoting idea-sharing.
- **Program Stability:** larger enrollment pools support the **growth and retention of specialized programs**, including The Arts and Music which have recently experienced enrollment and staffing instability.

Opportunities: Educational Experiences (continued)

- **New Offerings:** unifying the Middle School and High School programs would create opportunities to introduce new learning experiences such as **Career Exploration, Personal Learning Plans, and Financial Literacy**, expanding elective options for students while serving to meet new graduation requirements.
- **Efficient Use of Staff:** consolidation improves **staff-to-student ratios**, enabling expanded course offerings and reducing gaps in curricular availability.
- **Expanded Opportunities:** students gain more options across grade levels, including for **advanced-level courses** and career-oriented programs.

Organizational Capacity

- **Optimized Transportation:** increased capacity from unifying the transportation department could improve routing which can **reduce travel times** and increase efficiency, enhancing the overall experience for students and families.
- **Streamlined Leadership:** a unified leadership team in a newly formed district could focus on key areas, including **curriculum and instruction, business affairs, human resources, transportation, operations, special education, and student services**, enabling more effective district management.
- **Efficient Staff Utilization:** consolidation improves **staff-to-student ratios**, allowing the expansion of programs not currently available but listed in both districts' curriculum guides.
- **Instructional Support:** consolidation could increase capacity for existing staff and could be leveraged to create roles such as **instructional coaches** and **technology integration specialists**, offering in-classroom professional learning opportunities for teachers.
- **Enhanced Communications:** with additional financial resources from consolidation, the new district could establish a **communications team**, including a specialist and digital content expert, to celebrate district achievements and honor the histories of both communities.
- **Expanded Leadership Roles:** a merged district would have the capacity to create leadership positions tailored to **optimal organizational performance**, supporting a wide range of student and staff needs.
- **Faculty Recruitment and Retention:** engaging in **collective bargaining from a stronger and more sustainable financial position** could result in negotiations that strengthen the district's ability to attract and retain high-quality faculty and staff.
- **Professional Development:** a unified district could implement **continuous, meaningful learning opportunities** for all employees, fostering professional growth and improved instructional practices.

Opportunities: Organizational Capacity (continued)

- **Community Engagement:** centralization provides an opportunity to **reinvigorate the community** by celebrating academic, artistic, and athletic successes, strengthening the district’s role as a community cornerstone.

Financial Sustainability

- **Tax Rate Management:** the new district will have the ability to **control tax increases** over time while building reserves and planning for future financial stability.
- **Reorganization Aid:** leveraging state reorganization aid could support the creation of **competitive salary schedules**, aiding in the recruitment and retention of a high-quality workforce.
- **Strategic Financial Planning:** centralization offers the opportunity to implement a **long-term financial plan**, ensuring prudent stewardship of taxpayer dollars through robust capital planning and sustainable workforce management.
- **New Space, New Opportunities, New Shared Costs, New Revenue Sources:** by unifying the Middle School and High School programs, **space reconfigurations will result in new, open physical space** that can be strategically positioned to explore new opportunities with external partners that can lead to **new cost-sharing arrangements** (community health clinics, etc.) and **new revenue sources** (hosting BOCES programs, etc.).



Challenges

The following challenges are discovered from synthesizing current data and information from both districts, as well as integrating feedback and perspectives from three (3) focus groups, two (2) ThoughtExchanges, and five (5) monthly engagements with the Advisory Committee. They are intended to be brief, straightforward statements that illustrate potential hurdles or roadblocks uncovered during the feasibility study that may impede success if a consolidation were pursued.

Educational Experiences

- **Grade Level Configurations:** differences in **grade distribution** (e.g., PreK-5, 6-8, 9-12 vs. PreK-6, 7-12) may require adjustments to align student transitions and building usage.
- **Core Curricular Resources:** aligning **elementary curricula** in key areas such as Reading and Mathematics will necessitate careful planning to ensure consistency across the district.
- **Alignment Issues:** disparities in **bell schedules, school day duration, and district-wide curriculum** require harmonization to create equitable student experiences.
- **Educational Culture:** each school brings distinct strengths in **climate, culture, and programming**, and it will be essential to **elevate and integrate these assets** into a cohesive culture that serves the entire community.
- **Academic Support:** current approaches to **academic assistance** vary between districts, and the need for a **coordinated Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)** poses challenges for ensuring consistent intervention frameworks.
- **Curricular Integration:** merging instructional practices, grade configurations, and special education frameworks will require intentional planning to ensure a **seamless student experience**.
- **Philosophical Differences:** variations between **middle school and junior high models** may complicate decisions about grade-level structures and instructional approaches.
- **Staffing Adjustments:** teachers may face assignments in **certified but unfamiliar subjects**, and seniority rules may affect decisions about teaching assignments.
- **Class Size Considerations:** **preserving small class sizes** that promote positive relationships and individualized support **remains a priority** within the community. The additional incentive aid will allow for reasoned decisions to realign class sizes to meet low enrollment while meeting desires for purposeful class sizes.
- **Extracurricular Policies:** developing a **common code of conduct** for extracurricular participation, including athletics, and determining shared symbols like a district name and mascot, will require careful negotiation to honor traditions.
- **Consistent Instructional Time:** equalizing the **time students spend in school** across grade levels will require adjustments to current schedules.

Organizational Capacity

- **Staff and School Cultures:** blending **existing staff and school cultures** into a unified, collaborative environment will require intentional efforts and significant time to foster trust and cohesion.
- **Community Identity:** balancing the histories of Fort Plain and Canajoharie while creating a shared identity for the new district will demand continuous **efforts to ensure equity** in how each district's traditions are honored.
- **Communications Balance:** the new communications team will need to **navigate the complexities of celebrating the new district** while respectfully honoring the past, requiring thoughtful and consistent messaging.
- **Leadership Advocacy:** the new Board of Education will face challenges in **defending added leadership roles** as critical to district operations, even in the face of public skepticism.
- **Collective Bargaining Agreements:** negotiating new agreements will require significant time and effort to assure faculty and staff that **no one will be worse off**, building confidence in equitable outcomes for all employees.

Financial Sustainability

- **Finite Reorganization Aid:** the 14 years of **state incentive aid** must be strategically managed to ensure long-term financial stability as the funding diminishes over time. Identifying and implementing efficiencies will be critical to maintaining sustainability.
- **Impactful but Temporary Aid:** the significant **additional, non-recurring funding** provided by reorganization aid presents both opportunities and risks. The new Board of Education must resist the temptation to introduce **unsustainable programs or initiatives** that cannot be supported once the aid ends.
- **Contract Integration:** harmonizing **collective bargaining agreements** to align salaries and benefits across districts will likely be a **complex and time-intensive process**, requiring thoughtful negotiation to maintain equity and goodwill.
- **Tax Rate Discipline:** the new board will need to maintain **consistent tax rate control**, avoiding the temptation to lower taxes during periods of reorganization aid windfalls, and ensuring stable financial planning for the long term.



Elevating Student Voices

important considerations identified by current students during Oct 30 Focus Group

Driving Purpose for Considering a Potential Consolidation

“I think we should look for the greater good. I’m not just thinking about my classes and my peers, but my kids.”

Student Speaker 3

Potential Better Opportunities for Students

“I feel like if we did merge, there would be also an opportunity for, like, more classes that don’t get offered now, because, like, maybe more students would show interest in one class, and then, like that one school doesn’t offer it now, while the other does.”

Student Speaker 2

Need to Honor History & Tradition

“I would just hate to see anything like Phillip’s Field go away. Anything that has a lot of value for our community.”

Student Speaker 1

Possibility of Addressing Staffing Needs

"I know teachers talk about all the time that there's not a lot of teachers who come to these small towns. So it's like, if the teacher leaves, it's really hard to find a teacher for that subject. Like, I know you guys know what Spanish like with us, yeah? Like, that's just like crazy for me to think like they're missing out on learning languages because small towns are so small, like people aren't coming."

Student Speaker 5

Desire to Maintain Small School Student-Teacher Relationships

“I feel like some classes that are smaller a little nicer you get, like, that one-on-one support in classes is important, if classes are so big, you might not get the opportunity. And like, if you need, like, you need extra help – you might not get it with big classes like we do now.”

Student Speaker 4

Blue Sky Thinking

The potential merger of Canajoharie Central School District and Fort Plain Central School District has a tremendous opportunity for blue-sky thinking—reimagining what is possible for a 21st-century Pre-K through 12 educational programs. By combining resources, talent, and community commitment, a new Board of Education can empower a transition team to design a transformative learning environment that aligns seamlessly with the emerging *Inspire New York Educational Agenda* from the NYS Board of Regents, as well as activate innovative, research-based approaches and strategies. Through this opportunity, a newly merged school will have the type of investment resources to pioneer innovative approaches to curriculum, embrace cutting-edge instructional practices, and create equitable opportunities that ensure all students are prepared for the challenges and opportunities of an ever-evolving world. The geographic position of a newly reorganized district provides a unique opportunity to access the newly established One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnership (ON-RAMP) Centers, which will offer credentials and training related to advanced manufacturing. This merger offers the chance to dream big, break down barriers, and craft a unified vision that exceeds current expectations while setting a new standard for educational excellence in New York State.



Vision and Planning

A newly formed district will have the unique opportunity to plan extensively during a transition period for a new school experience, that brings forward the best each current district has to offer while searching for new, enhanced opportunities that can only be attained together. Once a decision has been made to merge and a new Board of Education is in place, we recommend that a transition team be established to guide the transparent, inclusive work of moving forward. The transition team should begin by focusing on the educational program and engaging in a visioning blue-sky thinking protocol that considers the new district’s goals and aspirations. This process should encompass everything the district wants to achieve for its students.

Transforming Rural K-12 Public Schools in New York State

Rural schools in New York State have the potential to become transformative hubs of opportunity, innovation, and resilience, leveraging their close community ties and embracing forward-thinking educational strategies. Despite challenges such as geographic isolation, limited resources, and workforce shortages, rural schools are uniquely positioned to deliver meaningful, personalized, and future-ready education.

This vision integrates decades of public education experience, innovative research, and the New York State Education Department’s (NYSED) Portrait of a Graduate, which emphasizes seven competencies: critical thinker, innovative problem solver, literate across the content areas, cultural competence, social-emotional competence, effective communicator, and global citizen. Grounded in these principles, the following framework combines overarching systemic strategies with targeted, developmentally appropriate moves for elementary, middle, and high school levels to ensure rural students thrive academically, socially, and professionally in a dynamic global society.

Overarching Moves to Realize the Full Potential of Rural Schools

1. **Competency-Based and Mastery Learning: Pathways to Personalized Success**

Competency-based education (CBE) ensures that students advance based on their mastery of skills and concepts, fostering personalized learning environments tailored to individual needs. This approach emphasizes standards-based grading, interdisciplinary capstone projects, and flexible pathways, enabling students to develop as critical thinkers and innovative problem solvers.

Portrait of a Graduate Connection: CBE directly supports critical thinking and innovative problem-solving by allowing students to demonstrate mastery through real-world applications and interdisciplinary projects.

Grounded Practice Insight: Rural schools benefit from flexible credit systems and capstone projects that connect students' learning to their communities, fostering both academic and personal growth.

Key Strategies

- **Proficiency-Based Grading:** Transition to detailed, actionable feedback systems that focus on mastery of skills and competencies.
- **Integrated Capstone Projects:** Empower students to tackle interdisciplinary, real-world challenges that connect academic knowledge with practical applications.
- **Teacher Development:** Provide professional learning opportunities to train educators in designing and implementing CBE frameworks.

Innovative Examples

- **Career Academies:** Establish learning communities that integrate academic and vocational pathways, aligning education with workforce demands.
- **Flexible Credit Attainment:** Provide diverse avenues for students to earn credits, including independent projects, internships, and online learning platforms.

Consolidation Considerations

While there will be a desire to engage in this improvement initiative within each individual district, there is no current capacity in either district alone to pursue the robust pedagogical changes needed to implement these changes effectively. A consolidation could:

- address current staff being stretched across multiple preps at the secondary level.
- expand opportunities for collective collaboration at the elementary level.
- establish specialized administrative support for leadership and feedback.
- provide funding for engaging with professional learning resources and opportunities.

2. Positive Education: A Foundation for Well-Being

Positive education integrates academic achievement with emotional and social well-being. Rooted in the PERMAH framework (Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, and Health), it emphasizes social-emotional learning (SEL), wellness initiatives, and a supportive school culture to nurture students' social-emotional competence and cultural competence.

Portrait of a Graduate Connection: Positive education fosters social-emotional competence, cultural competence, and effective communication by helping students build resilience, empathy, and meaningful relationships.

Grounded Practice Insight: Rural schools can leverage community-based wellness programs and SEL practices to address mental health challenges, creating environments where students and educators feel valued and supported.

Key Strategies

- **The PERMAH Framework:** Embed positive psychology into school culture to address emotional health, engagement, and a sense of accomplishment.
- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** Develop programs that teach resilience, emotional regulation, and relationship-building skills.
- **Wellness Initiatives:** Implement systems to support the mental health of both students and educators, fostering a sustainable and nurturing environment.

Innovative Examples

- **Recognition Programs:** Celebrate small and large achievements to cultivate a culture of positivity and belonging.
- **Place-Based Wellness Activities:** Leverage local resources, such as nature trails and community centers, to promote physical and mental well-being.

Consolidation Considerations

While there will be a desire to engage in this improvement initiative within each individual district, there is no current capacity in either district alone to pursue the diversity and amount of staffing needed to meet the growing needs of students at all levels. A consolidation could:

- provide needed funding to expand existing and introduce new staffing roles in counseling, school psychology, social work, behavioral specialists, etc..
- provide needed funding to integrate professional learning resources and experiences.

3. Strengthening School-Community Relationships

Strong partnerships between schools, families, and communities enhance student success by creating shared accountability and addressing barriers to learning. A community schools model, which integrates wraparound services like mental health support and food security programs, is particularly effective in rural settings.

Portrait of a Graduate Connection: Strengthening school-community relationships cultivates cultural competence and effective communication, fostering inclusivity and collaboration in support of student outcomes.

Grounded Practice Insight: Rural schools, as central institutions in their communities, are uniquely positioned to engage families and local organizations in co-creating educational opportunities and support systems.

Key Strategies

- **Community Schools Framework:** Provide holistic support services that address academic, social, and health needs within the school setting.
- **Culturally Responsive Curricula:** Reflect the histories, values, and traditions of local communities in the classroom.
- **Family Engagement Practices:** Create opportunities for families to participate in school decisions and student learning actively.

Innovative Examples

- **Advisory Boards:** Involve community leaders, parents, and students in shaping school priorities and aligning programs with local needs.
- **Extended Learning Opportunities:** Use community resources to expand after-school and summer programs that enhance academic and personal growth.

Consolidation Considerations

While there will be a desire to engage in this improvement initiative within each individual district, there is limited current capacity in either district alone to pursue the focused leadership and organizational development needed to build community partnerships and foster more family engagement. A consolidation could:

- address needed capacity and specialized administrative support for leading outreach and high-leverage engagement practices.
- provide needed funding to integrate professional learning resources and experiences.

4. Building Future-Ready Skills and Career Pathways

Aligning education with workforce needs ensures students are prepared for diverse post-secondary opportunities. Career-Technical Education (CTE), dual-enrollment programs, and work-based learning initiatives provide students with pathways to success in high-demand fields such as renewable energy, healthcare, and technology.

Portrait of a Graduate Connection: These programs develop critical thinking, innovative problem solving, and global citizenship by providing real-world experiences that connect classroom learning to future careers.

Grounded Practice Insight: By partnering with local businesses and colleges, rural schools can create career pathways that prepare students for meaningful contributions to their communities and beyond.

Key Strategies

- **Career-Technical Education (CTE):** Design pathways that align with local industries and provide students with valuable certifications.
- **Early College Programs:** Partner with higher education institutions to offer dual-enrollment opportunities.
- **Work-Based Learning:** Expand internships, apprenticeships, and mentorships through collaborations with regional businesses.

Innovative Examples

- **Regional Workforce Development:** Tailor educational programs to meet labor market demands while fostering local economic growth.
- **Career Academies:** Provide focused, career-oriented education that integrates academic rigor with vocational training.

Consolidation Considerations

While there will be a desire to engage in this improvement initiative within each individual district, there is limited current capacity in either district alone to pursue the program development, staffing assignments, and focused leadership needed to create, grow, and sustain pathways for diverse post-secondary opportunities. A consolidation could:

- address declining and variable enrollment trends that limit the need for and ability to build and sustain viable programs.
- provide needed capacity for concentrated staffing to grow and deliver robust pathway programs and vibrant community partnerships.
- establish new capacity and specialized administrative support for students, staff, and external partners.

5. Leveraging Technology for Equity

Technology bridges access gaps and creates equitable learning opportunities for rural students. Expanding broadband access, implementing adaptive learning platforms, and using virtual collaboration tools enable schools to support personalized instruction and foster global citizenship.

Portrait of a Graduate Connection: Technology supports literacy across content areas, critical thinking, and effective communication by enabling personalized learning and fostering collaboration.

Grounded Practice Insight: Rural schools can leverage virtual learning tools to overcome geographic barriers and provide students with the resources they need to succeed.

Key Strategies

- **Broadband Access Expansion:** Advocate for universal broadband access to ensure all students can engage in digital learning.
- **Adaptive Learning Platforms:** Implement tools that provide personalized instruction based on individual progress.
- **Virtual Collaboration:** Use online platforms to connect students, educators, and families across districts.

Innovative Examples

- **Blended Learning Models:** Combine in-person and online instruction to create flexible, engaging learning environments.
- **Accessing Expertise & Collaborations:** Integrating digital platforms and applications to access expertise and engage in collaborations beyond the constraints of the immediate local geography and economy.

Consolidation Considerations

While there will be a desire to engage in this improvement initiative within each individual district, there is limited current capacity in either district alone to pursue the technical infrastructure, support the growing device deployment, and oversee the productive integration of expanding instructional platforms and applications. A consolidation could:

- address needed capacity for concentrated staffing to support, develop, and deliver new and emerging virtual learning opportunities both as stand-alone courses and as strategies, platforms, and applications integrated into traditional learning experiences.
- establish new capacity and specialized administrative support.
- provide funding to sustain the exponentially increasing pace of innovative technology.

6. Financial Sustainability and Operational Efficiency

Sustainable funding and efficient resource management are essential for rural schools. Strategies such as pooling resources across districts, pursuing grants, and creating tuition-based programs ensure financial stability while expanding student opportunities.

Portrait of a Graduate Connection: Financial sustainability ensures equitable access to programs that build competencies such as critical thinking, literacy, and global citizenship.

Grounded Practice Insight: Shared services and targeted funding initiatives allow rural schools to maximize limited resources while addressing systemic inequities.

Key Strategies

- **Regional Resource Sharing:** Pool specialized staff and services across districts to reduce costs.
- **Grant Pursuit:** Secure state and federal funding for technology, workforce readiness, and teacher development programs.
- **Revenue-Generating Programs:** Develop tuition-based magnet schools or specialized programs.

Innovative Examples

- **Shared Services Models:** Partner with neighboring districts to optimize transportation, staffing, and facilities.
- **Rural Innovation Funds:** Create funding streams to pilot innovative programs addressing unique rural challenges.

Consolidation Considerations

Each district is individually currently pursuing sound financial stewardship. Current education fiscal policies of a proverbial 2% tax cap and the likelihood of flat (0%) hold harmless foundation aid, combined with the realities of inflationary cost increases, health care cost increases, and labor market demand-price pressures, all lead to the long-term forecast where anticipated expenditures will outpace projected revenues, causing budget shortfalls in the out years. A consolidation could:

- generate additional reorganization incentive aid to create strategic opportunities for enhanced educational experiences, expanded organizational capacity, and long-term financial sustainability.
- strategically leverage reorganization incentive aid to invest in BOCES expense-based aid-supported services that will initiate a self-perpetuating revenue source.

7. Addressing Mental Health and Equity in Rural Education

Equity and mental health are foundational to creating inclusive and thriving rural schools. By providing targeted mental health services, advocating for equitable funding, and using data-driven approaches, schools can meet the diverse needs of their students.

Portrait of a Graduate Connection: Addressing equity and mental health supports social-emotional competence, cultural competence, and global citizenship by fostering inclusive and supportive environments.

Grounded Practice Insight: Rural schools often serve as the primary source of mental health support for students, making integrated support systems essential to addressing barriers to learning and well-being.

Key Strategies

- **Mental Health Services:** Provide access to school counselors and psychologists to support student well-being.
- **Equitable Resource Distribution:** Advocate for funding models that prioritize rural education needs.
- **Data-Driven Interventions:** Use analytics to identify and address disparities in access and outcomes.

Innovative Examples

- **Integrated Support Models:** Combine academic, social-emotional, and mental health resources in a cohesive framework.
- **Mobile Outreach Programs:** Deliver essential services to remote areas, ensuring no student is left behind.

Consolidation Considerations

While there will be a desire to engage in this improvement initiative within each individual district, there is limited current capacity in either district alone to pursue the program development, staffing assignments, and focused leadership needed to create, grow, and sustain pathways for diverse post-secondary opportunities. A consolidation could:

- address declining and variable enrollment trends that limit the need for and ability to build and sustain viable programs.
- provide needed funding to expand existing and introduce new staffing roles in counseling, school psychology, social work, behavioral specialists, etc..
- provide needed funding to integrate professional learning resources and experiences.

Leveraged Moves at Each Level

The following are potential considerations that could be considered during and beyond the transition to a merged school. These should not be considered specific recommendations; rather, they are a menu of research-based, highly effective practices and approaches that any school may consider to move forward on the important work of rendering school experiences relevant for our students.

Elementary School

Educational Experiences

- **Building Foundations for Success:** Establish a strong focus on literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills to create a robust foundation for lifelong learning. Develop clear benchmarks for reading proficiency by third grade, ensuring students are prepared to access more complex texts and concepts across content areas.
- **Interdisciplinary Learning:** Reconfigure school spaces to facilitate collaborative, hands-on, problem-based instruction. For example, flexible classrooms with movable furniture and dedicated Maker Spaces encourage teamwork and integration of multiple subjects, such as STEAM and environmental studies.
- **Inquiry-Based Learning:** Foster curiosity and critical thinking by engaging students in project-based and hands-on activities. Examples include nature exploration projects, creating classroom gardens, or designing engineering solutions to everyday problems.
- **Early STEAM Integration:** Introduce foundational skills in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. Programs like robotics clubs or simple coding activities using platforms such as Scratch can help students build problem-solving skills and digital literacy early on.
- **SEL Foundations:** Incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) into daily routines through practices such as morning meetings, mindfulness activities, and storytelling exercises that promote empathy and self-awareness.
- **Dual Language Programs:** Launch dual-language immersion programs to promote biliteracy, cultural competence, and cognitive benefits. By the end of elementary school, students could be on track to earn a Seal of Biliteracy by graduation.
- **Expanded Before and After School Programs:** Collaborate with local and national organizations to offer enriched programming that supports students academically, socially, and emotionally. Activities might include homework help, arts, and recreation tailored to community needs.
- **Opportunities for Technology and Agriculture Programs:** Introduce programs such as Maker Spaces, Lego First, and school gardens to connect younger students with technology and agriculture. These experiences nurture problem-solving and innovation while exposing students to potential career fields.
- **Career Awareness and Family Engagement:** Begin career exploration early by employing school counselors to integrate career awareness activities and connect learning to real-world opportunities. Work with families to initiate student exploration of aligning interests, passions, and talents within the potential opportunities for long-term career and college planning.

Educational Experiences (continued)

- **Special Education Programs:** Create in-house programming for students with disabilities that allow the district to offer top-notch experiences that may allow the districts to “bring kids home” from out-of-district placements, and potentially attract students from neighboring districts with similar learning needs.

Organizational Capacity

- **Professional Development for Educators:** Equip teachers with training in SEL, differentiated instruction, and inquiry-based methods. Provide coaching and access to instructional resources that integrate technology into foundational learning.
- **Professional Learning for MTSS Implementation:** Train teachers in evidence-based Tier 1 instructional strategies that deliver differentiated instruction and effective interventions in the classroom. Provide professional learning communities (PLCs) where educators collaborate to refine practices and use data to monitor student progress.
- **Community-Based Learning Opportunities:** Partner with local farms, libraries, and cultural organizations to create place-based learning experiences, such as field trips and classroom projects that highlight local traditions and resources.
- **Integrated Support Systems:** Establish early intervention teams to address academic, social-emotional, and developmental challenges. Provide access to school counselors, special education services, and family support programs.
- **Career Counseling and Family Engagement:** Employ school counselors to introduce career awareness activities, linking classroom learning to real-world professions. These counselors could also provide early family engagement workshops to help parents navigate post-secondary planning frameworks.
- **Early Learning Partnerships:** Partner with Head Start, Pre-K, and nursery school programs to align curriculum goals and ensure continuity of learning, creating smoother transitions for children entering kindergarten.

Financial Sustainability

- **Shared Resource Models:** Collaborate with neighboring districts to share specialists like STEAM coaches or art teachers, reducing costs while broadening access.
- **Early Learning Grants:** Apply for grants to support early childhood education, particularly for technology-enhanced learning tools and outdoor education initiatives.
- **Preschool Expansion:** Develop tuition-based preschool programs for non-residents, expanding early education opportunities while generating additional revenue.

Middle School

Educational Experiences

- **Personalized Learning Plans:** Develop personalized learning plans for each student, incorporating their academic goals, interests, and potential career aspirations. Assign learning mentors to provide ongoing guidance, track progress, and support struggling learners. Include tailored interventions and enrichment opportunities to ensure that all students, including those who are disengaged, feel supported and valued.
- **Preparing for Advanced Courses:** Provide opportunities for enrichment programs, summer bridge courses, and after-school tutoring to prepare students for the rigor of high school-level courses. Introduce acceleration pathways starting in 7th grade for students to begin moving forward toward earning high school credits within the Middle School program.
- **Exploratory Pathways:** Provide students with opportunities to explore various fields, such as coding, arts, agriculture, and engineering, through elective courses and after-school clubs. This exploration builds literacy across the content areas and fosters innovative problem-solving.
- **Integrating Career and Technical Education (CTE):** Embed introductory CTE opportunities, such as exploratory electives or “mini-tracks,” into the middle school scheduled to expose students to high-demand fields like healthcare, technology, and trades while meeting state instructional requirements. Partner with high school CTE programs to offer early exposure through guest speakers, field trips, and hands-on activities. Develop foundational skills in areas such as coding, robotics, culinary arts, environmental science, etc. by connecting learning experiences to future CTE pathways.
- **Global Citizenship Initiatives:** Engage students in projects that connect them to broader global issues, such as climate change or cultural exchange programs. Virtual classroom exchanges with students from other regions or countries can enhance cultural competence.
- **Integrated Capstone Projects:** Introduce interdisciplinary projects where students collaborate to solve real-world problems, such as designing a sustainable community garden or creating public awareness campaigns on local environmental issues.
- **Extracurricular Opportunities:** Expand clubs and activities to reflect the diverse interests of middle school students, such as e-sports, debate, creative writing, environmental clubs, drama, entrepreneurship, etc.
- **Additional Supports for Struggling Learners:** Create alternative programming for students who are disengaged, such as small-group instruction, project-based learning, or flexible schedules that allow for individualized support. Implement school-wide Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS) to provide timely and effective interventions, ensuring every student has access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.

Organizational Capacity

- **Interdisciplinary Teaching Teams:** Organize teachers into small, collaborative teams that integrate core subjects and foster cross-disciplinary connections. Integrate job-embedded professional development for implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and personalized learning plans for students.
- **Advisory Programs:** Establish advisory groups that allow students to build meaningful relationships with mentors, creating a sense of belonging and providing consistent guidance on academic and social issues.
- **Expanded Counseling Services:** Enhance access to academic and career counseling, integrating SEL into discussions about goal setting, problem solving, and decision making.
- **Extracurricular Programs:** Leverage community partnerships to offer unique opportunities like 4-H programs, Junior Achievement, or STEM competitions, engaging students in meaningful and fun activities with community connections.

Financial Sustainability

- **Community Co-Sponsorships:** Collaborate with local businesses and organizations to co-sponsor extracurricular programs, such as arts workshops or career exploration events.
- **Facility Optimization:** Use school spaces for community events or adult education classes to generate revenue and strengthen ties with local residents.
- **Industry Partnerships:** Establish relationships with local industries to fund specialized programs, such as STEM competitions or vocational skill-building workshops.

High School

Educational Experiences

- **Personalized Learning Plans:** Develop personalized learning plans for each student, incorporating their academic goals, interests, and potential career aspirations. Assign learning mentors to provide ongoing guidance, track progress, and support struggling learners. Include tailored interventions and enrichment opportunities to ensure that all students, including those who are disengaged, feel supported and valued.
- **Expanding Course Offerings:** Introduce specialized courses to broaden opportunities for students, such as advanced art, entrepreneurship & innovation, music, robotics, drones, and other high-interest content areas.
- **Career Academies:** Develop specialized academies that align with local and regional workforce needs, such as renewable energy, healthcare, or advanced manufacturing. These academies can integrate academic coursework with hands-on training and internships. Enhance school-to-work programs with hands-on, practical experiences that prepare students for immediate entry into the workforce or advanced career training.
- **Dual-Enrollment Programs:** Partner with local colleges and universities to offer students opportunities to earn college credits or industry certifications while still in high school. This not only reduces the cost of post-secondary education but also gives students a competitive edge.
- **Capstone Projects:** Require students to complete a senior project demonstrating mastery of key competencies. Examples might include designing a prototype for a community challenge, conducting original research, or organizing a public service initiative.

Organizational Capacity

- **Work-Based Learning Programs:** Collaborate with local employers to offer internships, apprenticeships, and job-shadowing opportunities that align with students' interests and career goals.
- **Personalized Pathways:** Use flexible scheduling and online platforms to create individualized learning experiences for students, including accelerated coursework and credit recovery programs.
- **Comprehensive Counseling Services:** Expand college and career readiness counseling, providing students with resources for financial literacy, application processes, and workforce entry.
- **Building Partnerships:** Develop stronger relationships with local businesses, industries, and trade unions to align educational programs with workforce needs. Examples include internships with local employers, apprenticeships through trade unions, and mentorship opportunities with professionals.

Financial Sustainability

- **Tuition-Based Magnet Programs:** Develop specialized high school programs, such as CTE tracks, Cybersecurity or Advanced Arts Academies, etc. that attract students from neighboring districts and generate revenue.
- **CTE Equipment and Program Grants:** Secure funding from state and federal grants to support the purchase of industry-standard equipment and resources for career-focused programs.
- **Regional Shared Services:** Share costs for specialized staff, such as dual-enrollment coordinators and career coaches, across multiple districts.

Strategic Intent

Will the merger of Canajoharie Central School District and Fort Plain Central School District into one single, consolidated school district result in enhanced educational experiences, optimal organizational capacity, and viable long-term financial sustainability?

The driving purpose of the feasibility study is to provide analysis, insights, and recommendations needed for the thoughtful deliberation of the Boards of Education for both school districts in making the determination to move forward with a merger and share sensible, pragmatic, and valued information with their stakeholders throughout the process.

Process Overview

The following documents the feasibility study process pursued in collaboration with district leaders, informed by the Advisory Committee, and transparently communicated with the public throughout the process.

Road Map of Major Activities and Milestones

Activation	June 2024	Initial Document Review Advisory Committee Recruitment Community Engagement Exchange 1
Preliminary Work	July 2024	Initial Document Review Advisory Committee Recruitment
Launch	August 2024	Initial Site Visit – 2 Days Joint BOE Meeting Presentation Advisory Committee In-Person Meeting
Educational Experiences	September 2024	Advisory Committee Virtual Meeting
Organizational Capacity	October 2024	Advisory Committee Virtual Meeting Stakeholder Focus Groups Community Engagement Exchange 2
Financial Sustainability	November 2024	Advisory Committee Virtual Meeting
Draft Report	December 2024	Advisory Committee In-Person Meeting Draft Report for NYSED Review
Final Report	January 2025	Joint BOE Meeting Presentation Community Engagement Exchange 3

Advisory Committee Charter Mission

Why do we serve?

- passionate commitment to support a transparent process
- unwavering dedication to students and community
- desire to explore all options in discovering path(s) forward

Who do we serve directly?

- the Boards of Education

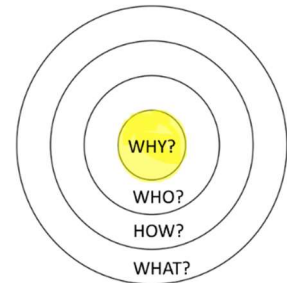
How do we serve?

- fully committing to and actively supporting the committee and study process
- remaining open and learning throughout the process
- sharing relevant perspectives and experiences
- clarifying and probing data, information, and insights shared by consultants
- communicating openly, factually, and continuously with the public
- consistently attending ALL meetings of the Advisory Committee

What do we provide in serving?

- representative voice of communities
- valuable feedback to consultants regarding factual findings, pertinent information, and emerging insights during the study process at committee meetings
- identifying key take-aways and clarifying questions to be shared with Boards of Education and transparently communicated with the public

aligning **ASPIRATIONS** with **PERSPIRATIONS**



calibrating **INTENT** with **BEHAVIORS**
modified from Simon Sinek's Golden Circle and Dick Palermo's Doing the Right Things, Right

Advisory Committee Membership

Donald Bramer
Canajoharie CSD Community Member
Lauri Broady
Canajoharie CSD Board of Education
Jed Brown
Fort Plain CSD Community Member
Jamie Bunker
Fort Plain CSD Community Member
Tracey Conover
Fort Plain CSD Faculty
Jessica Hecht
Fort Plain CSD Staff
Lindsey Hodge
Canajoharie CSD Staff Member

Todd Jones
Canajoharie CSD Community Member
Sara McDuffee
Fort Plain CSD Board of Education
Michele Nare
Canajoharie CSD Faculty
Laura Pamkowski
Canajoharie CSD Staff
Nadine Paul
Fort Plain CSD Community Member
Karlene Peck
Canajoharie CSD Community Member
Kyra Powylan
Fort Plain CSD Community Member

Patricia Prime
Canajoharie CSD Board of Education
Samantha Sherwood
Fort Plain CSD Community Member
Lori Shults
Canajoharie CSD Community Member
Dale Smith
Fort Plain CSD Faculty
Neal VanSlyke
Fort Plain CSD Board of Education
Edward Watt
Canajoharie CSD Faculty

Report Context

The focus of our study is to identify, curate, and cultivate insights, opportunities, and challenges for consideration. We will work with the Advisory Committee to help our team better understand the data we identify, make sense of the information we curate, and co-create insights, opportunities, and challenges



for consideration. If, the Boards of Education determine to move forward, then we suggest establishing a transition team to develop specific recommendations and action steps.

Approach & Methodology

The project team is comprised of veteran rural school leaders with an unwavering commitment to affording all students, no matter the zip code, the best possible educational experiences. Building on our passion and experience, we've designed an inclusive process that will thoughtfully, intentionally, and pragmatically engage stakeholders and the community. Our approach and methodology facilitate ongoing and evolving conversations as we examine key areas for consideration - educational experiences, organizational capacity, and financial sustainability.

Educational Experiences

The core mission of all public schools is to provide all students with free, educationally sound learning opportunities. We will examine the educational experiences currently provided within each district and determine possible enhancements, enrichment, and expansion opportunities if schools consolidate. This will include curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular offerings. Documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations will look at enrollment, master schedules, student participation rates, curriculum, student services, instructional staffing/personnel, instructional technology, and other sources of existing program and learning data.

Organizational Capacity

The ability to deliver on the educational mission is the focus of determining the organizational viability to meet the needs of students, staff, and community. We will examine each school's current capacity and determine possible efficiencies that consolidation might allow. This will include facilities, transportation, food service, business office operations, non-instructional staffing/personnel, instructional information services (student data management), human resources, and other sources of existing organizational structures and professional data.

Financial Sustainability

The ability to fund both educational experiences and organizational capacity is the actual bottom line. We will examine each school's current and future financial health and determine possible financial benefits for long-term sustainability if consolidation were to occur. This will include financial/tax information, Foundation Aid, debt service, fiscal planning, potential incentive aid for consolidation, collective bargaining agreements, and other sources of financial data.

Educational Experiences

The core mission of all public schools is to provide all students with free, educationally sound learning opportunities. We will examine the educational experiences currently provided within each district and determine possible enhancements, enrichment, and expansion opportunities if schools consolidate.

The potential merger of Canajoharie and Fort Plain Central School Districts offers significant opportunities to enhance educational experiences for all students while addressing challenges posed by declining enrollments. A consolidated district would serve approximately 1,519 students, stabilizing enrollment levels comparable to successful rural districts. This merger would preserve favorable class sizes (averaging 16-18 students), maintain a personalized learning environment, and expand access to advanced academic, special education, and extracurricular programs. Both districts demonstrate strong academic foundations with core curricula, differentiation practices, and enrichment opportunities. However, a unified district could broaden elective offerings, particularly in arts, technology, and dual-enrollment courses, addressing gaps and creating equitable access.

Academic performance highlights strengths across both districts, with notable achievements in Regents Algebra 2, Chemistry, and ELA proficiency rates in middle and high school. Elementary students benefit from robust foundational programs, while middle and high school learners would gain from a combined effort to enhance pathways for college and career readiness, including Advanced Placement (AP), STEM initiatives, and vocational education. Special education services, currently similar in structure, could be optimized to reduce out-of-district placements through shared resources and staffing. Both districts employ effective Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) frameworks, which could be unified to provide more streamlined interventions.

Beyond academics, a merged district would provide enhanced extracurricular and athletic opportunities. Current collaborative sports teams and club offerings highlight the potential for a cohesive student life experience that celebrates traditions from both communities. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of maintaining equitable access, preserving district identities, and fostering a shared sense of pride. This merger represents a forward-thinking solution to sustaining educational excellence, enriching opportunities, and fostering long-term community growth.

General School Statistics

Both Canajoharie and Fort Plain Central School Districts demonstrate their commitment to providing educationally sound opportunities for all students. Despite challenges from declining enrollments and economic pressures, the districts maintain favorable attendance rates, manage suspension rates effectively, and provide significant support through free and reduced lunch programs.

Quick Summary Information

Board of Education	Mark Brody, President Heidi Meka, Vice President Patricia Prime Lauri Broady Keith Baker	Brenna Kirkpatrick, President Kaitlyn Webb, 1 st Vice-President Anthony Crouse, 2 nd Vice-President David Przestrzelski Sara McDuffee Joshua Parkinson Neal VanSlyke
Superintendent	Nick Fitzgerald	Lauren Crisman
2023-24 Enrollment*	849	661
Area of District	100 square miles	57 square miles
BOCES	Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery	Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery
Transportation Aid Ratio**	0.900	0.900
BOCES Aid Ratio**	0.782	0.780
Combined Wealth Ratio**	0.460	0.406
True Value Tax Rate 2023-24	\$15.27	\$15.46
Grade Level Configurations	East Hill Elementary School Pre-K to 5 Canajoharie Middle School 6-8 Canajoharie High School 9-12	Harry Hoag Elementary School Pre-K to 6 Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School 7-12
Economically Disadvantaged***	427 (54%)	421 (66%)
White***	743 (93%)	549 (86%)
Hispanic or Latino***	18 (2%)	39 (6%)
Black or African American***	5 (1%)	13 (2%)
Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander***	8 (1%)	4 (1%)
Multi-Racial***	22 (3%)	33 (5%)
English Language Learners***	8 (1%)	5 (1%)
Students with Disabilities***	90 (11%)	97 (15%)
Homeless ***	5 (1%)	15 (2%)
Migrant***	0 (0%)	5 (1%)
Student Attendance Rates****	95%	92%
Student Suspension Rates****	8%	8%
Free & Reduced-Price Lunch****	44%	59%

Notes: *Enrollment data from BEDS 2023-24.

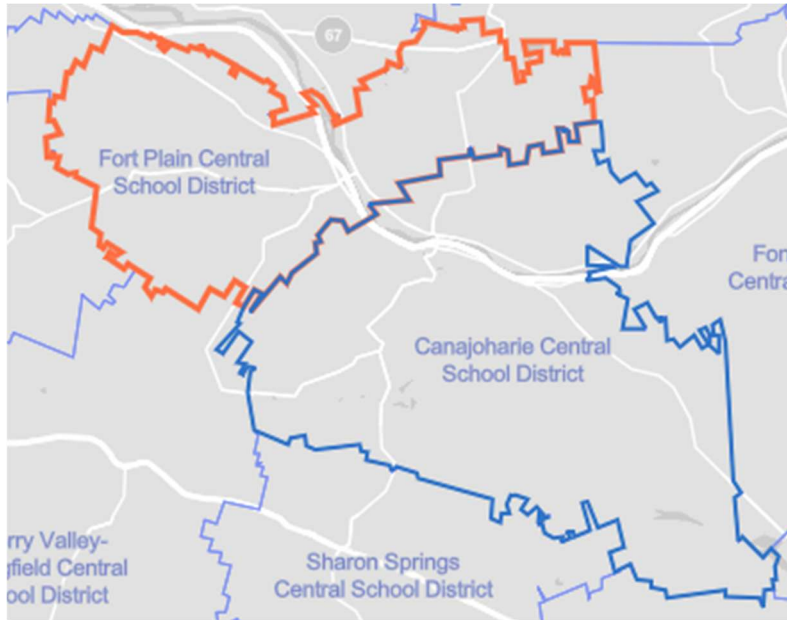
** State Aid data from 2024-25 NYSED State Aid Output Reports.

*** Student demographic data from NYS School Report Card 2023-24.

****Student data from NYS School Report Card 2022-23.

General Background Information

Located in the Mohawk Valley between Albany and Utica, with Interstate 90 running through both districts, Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD have a long and proud history of community support for its schools.








Canajoharie CSD covers approximately 100 square miles and serves families in the towns of Canajoharie, Carlisle, Charleston, Minden, Mohawk, Palatine, Root, and Sharon in Montgomery and Schoharie Counties.

Fort Plain CSD covers approximately 57 square miles and serves families in the towns of Canajoharie, Danube, Ephratah, Monden, and Palatine in Montgomery, Herkimer, and Fulton Counties.

General Building Configurations

Grade-level configurations in the two districts are different, with Canajoharie CSD operating three (3) instructional program sites and Fort Plain CSD operating two (2).

Canajoharie CSD			Fort Plain CSD	
				
Elementary (PK-5)	Middle School (6-8)	High School (9-12)	Elementary (PK-6)	Jr./Sr. High School (7-12)
2023-24 BEDS	405 students	182 students	2023-24 BEDS	305 students
		262 students	356 students	

Enrollment

Both Canajoharie and Fort Plain Central School Districts have experienced a gradual enrollment decline over the past decade, reflecting broader demographic trends in rural areas. Current enrollments are approximately 791 students for Canajoharie CSD and 621 for Fort Plain CSD, with a merged district projected to stabilize around 1,400 students. This trend reflects a consistent kindergarten-to-birth rate ratio, which enables accurate future enrollment planning.

Key data from live birth rates shows a consistent pattern of enrollment stability, which supports accurate long-term planning. Grade-level configurations vary slightly between the districts, but both offer a full spectrum of PreK-12 education.

Smaller enrollments make elective and advanced-level programs more expensive and threaten the economic ability of school districts to offer the wider range of programs that are expected. Budget cuts due to funding losses can lead to teacher layoffs, elimination of advanced courses, additional programs for literacy and math, and college access and affordability support in higher grades, among other work in schools that contribute to greater educational equity.

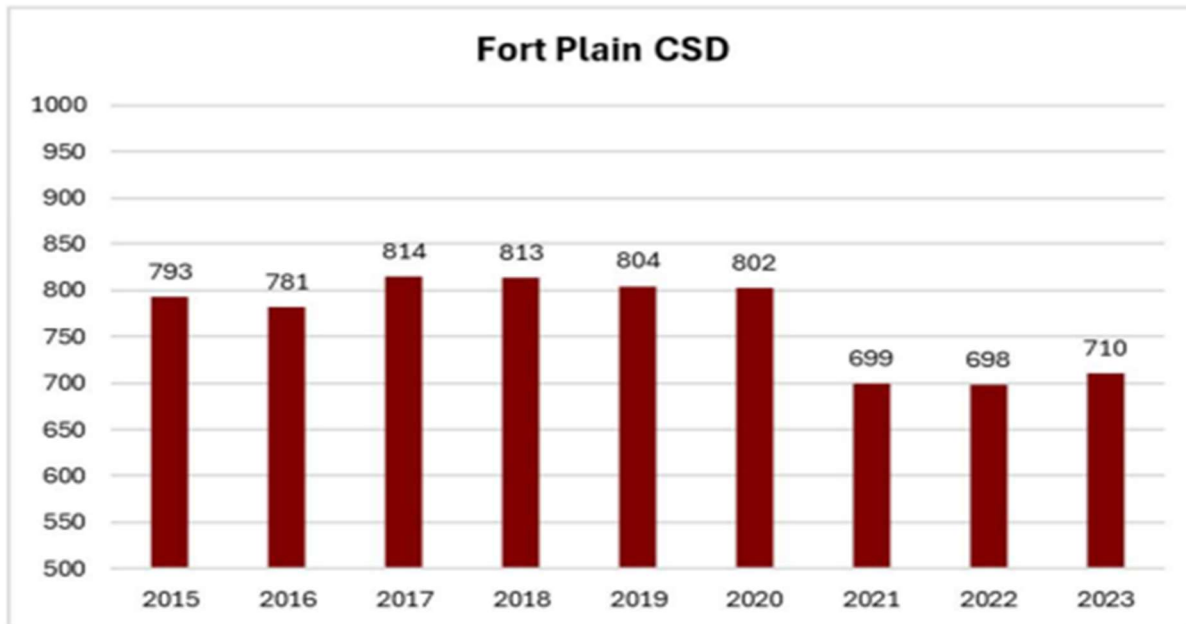
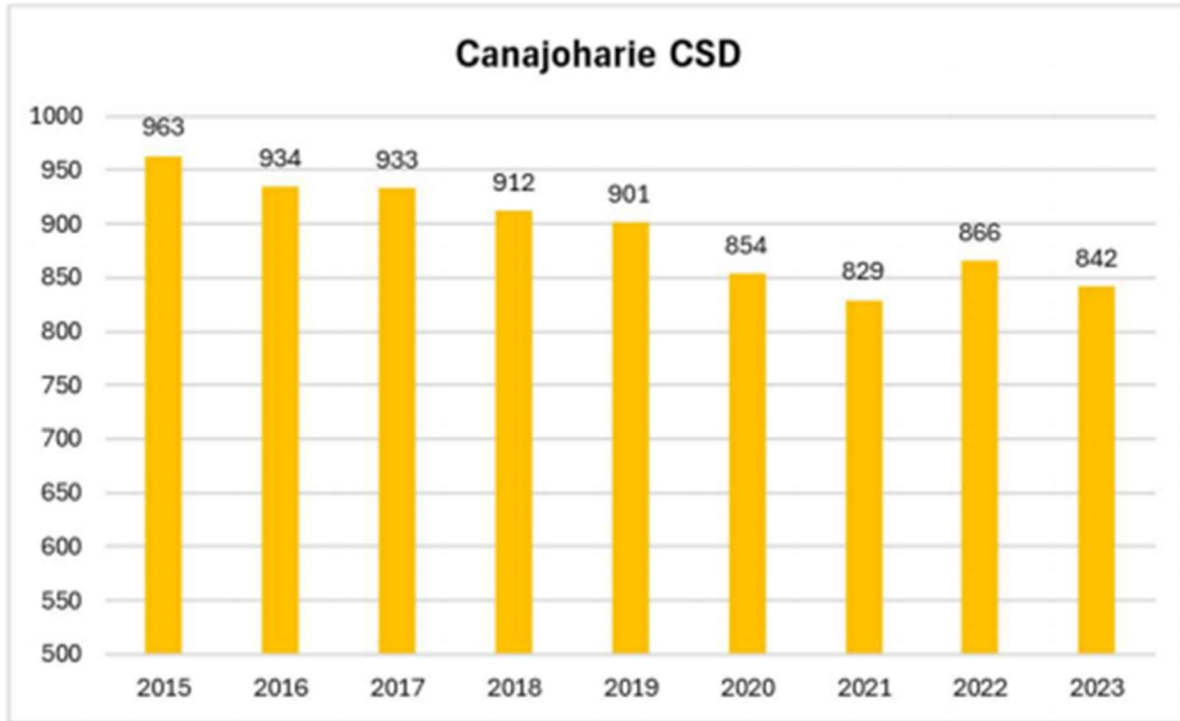
The goal of each district is to keep a graduate’s transcript rich and to continue to provide programs so the graduates are able to compete with graduates from larger schools no matter what the graduate decides to do: college, workforce, tech school, or really anything.

Current Enrollment by Grade Levels

The following enrollment numbers represent a snapshot of district reporting from December 2024.

	Canajoharie CSD	Fort Plain CSD	<i>IF Merged</i>
Grade K	53	50	103
Grade 1	54	40	94
Grade 2	47	43	90
Grade 3	70	41	111
Grade 4	67	49	116
Grade 5	58	49	107
Grade 6	62	43	105
Grade 7	60	53	113
Grade 8	71	48	119
Grade 9	59	45	104
Grade 10	67	53	120
Grade 11	57	56	113
Grade 12	66	51	117
	791	621	1412

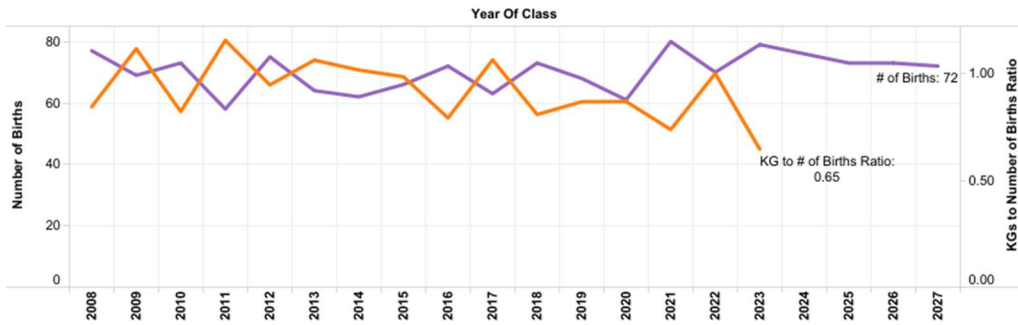
Historical Enrollment Trends



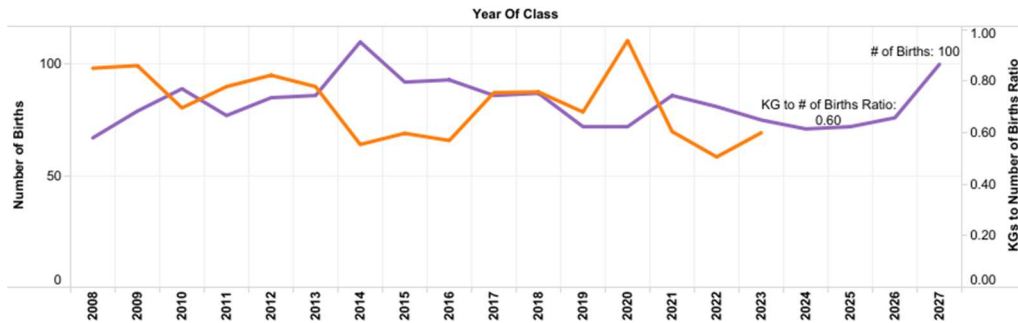
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Live Birth to Kindergarten Enrollment Projections

Canajoharie CSD



Fort Plain CSD



Potential Kindergarten Enrollment

	2025	2026	2027
Canajoharie CSD	53	53	53
Fort Plain CSD	49	52	52
<i>IF merged</i>	102	105	105

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Enrollment History and Projections

Canajoharie CSD	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Grade K	51	49	53	53*	53*	53*
Grade 1	62	51	54	53	53*	53*
Grade 2	64	68	47	54	53	53*
Grade 3	56	66	70	47	54	53
Grade 4	58	56	67	70	47	54
Grade 5	58	60	58	67	70	47
Grade 6	71	57	62	58	67	70
Grade 7	56	70	60	62	58	67
Grade 8	67	55	71	60	62	58
Grade 9	59	69	59	71	60	62
Grade 10	68	61	67	59	71	60
Grade 11	68	63	57	67	59	71
Grade 12	66	69	66	57	67	59
Grades K-12	804	794	791	778	774	760
Elementary K-6	420	407	411	402	397	383
Secondary 7-12	384	387	380	376	377	377

Fort Plain CSD	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Grade K	45	39	50			
Grade 1	42	44	40			
Grade 2	50	38	43			
Grade 3	59	45	41			
Grade 4	46	59	49			
Grade 5	52	45	49			
Grade 6	55	53	43			
Grade 7	44	53	53			
Grade 8	62	41	48			
Grade 9	50	57	45			
Grade 10	55	51	53			
Grade 11	55	51	56			
Grade 12	40	53	51			
Grades K-12	655	629	621			
Elementary K-6	349	323	315			
Secondary 7-12	306	306	306			

Grades K-12		
Elementary K-6		
Secondary 7-12		

*Indicates Live Birth Projection
Shaded Areas Indicate Projections

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Student Attendance and Engagement

Attendance Rate for ALL Students	95%	92%	91%
Elementary/Middle Chronic Absenteeism Rate	12.7%	25.7%	26.4%
Secondary Chronic Absenteeism Rate	15.8%	28.3%	34.1%

Source: NYS RIC Regionalization Planning Strengths & Needs Tool and Guidance for Districts Document

Suspension Rate for ALL Students	8%	8%	4%

Source: NYS RIC Regionalization Planning Strengths & Needs Tool and Guidance for Districts Document

Student Support Services & Family Resources

English Language Learners	2023 – 6 2019 – 5	2023 – 1 2019 – 2
Students in Foster Care	2023 – 0 2019 – 0	2023 – 0 2019 – 5
Homeless Students	2023 – 9 2019 – 0	2023 – 13 2019 – 8
Migrant Students	2023 – 2 2019 – 1	2023 – 1 2019 – 1

Source: NYS RIC Regionalization Planning Strengths & Needs Tool and Guidance for Districts Document

Academic Program

The academic programs in Canajoharie and Fort Plain Central School Districts are rooted in strong foundational curricula and enriched by opportunities for differentiation and innovation. Both districts provide robust elementary education programs focusing on literacy, numeracy, science, and social studies, complemented by offerings in arts, music, library, and physical education. Canajoharie’s K-5 model and Fort Plain’s K-6 structure ensure comprehensive coverage, with manageable class sizes averaging 16-18 students. Performance data highlights strengths in elementary math and ELA proficiency, with both districts demonstrating a commitment to instructional technology integration and enrichment opportunities, including early STEM and gifted programs.

At the secondary level, both districts align in delivering rigorous core academic subjects, Regents-level courses, and electives. Canajoharie leads in dual-enrollment opportunities, offering 21 college-credit courses, while Fort Plain enhances its program with unique electives like welding. Small class sizes in secondary education enable personalized instruction, with strong Regents exam results in Algebra 2, Chemistry, and ELA underscoring academic achievement. Opportunities exist to expand AP courses, STEM initiatives, and career and technical education (CTE), fostering enhanced pathways for college and career readiness in a merged district. Together, these programs represent a solid foundation for future growth and innovation.

Canajoharie CSD



Elementary (PK-5) Middle School (6-8) High School (9-12)

start time	7:50 AM	7:50 AM	7:50 AM
end time	2:35 PM	2:50 PM	2:56 PM

Fort Plain CSD



Elementary (PK-6) Jr./Sr. High School (7-12)

start time	7:50 AM	8:00 AM
end time	3:05 PM	2:37 PM

Elementary Education

Curriculum & Programs Overview

Both districts provide robust elementary programs, emphasizing foundational skills in literacy, numeracy, science, and social studies. Curricular alignment between districts offers an opportunity to enhance consistency and introduce shared best practices. Canajoharie East Hill Elementary School organizes departmentally in grades 1-5 for language arts, math, science, and social studies instruction. Fort Plain Elementary School does not organize departmentally for instruction.

Language Arts	Leap Frog & Letter People (Pre-K) Wonders Program (Grades 1-4) District Pacing Guides aligned to Next Generation Learning Standards in (Grade 5)	District Core Instructional Knowledge Curriculum aligned to Next Generation Learning Standards Supplemental: Heggerty Phonemic Awareness & CKLA Skills Strand Phonics
Mathematics	Leap Frog (Pre-K) Ready Math Program (Grades K-5)	Frog Street Curriculum (Pre-K) District Core Instructional Knowledge Curriculum aligned to Next Generation Learning Standards (Grade K) Eureka Squared Math (Grades 1-6) Supplemental: Reflex Math & IXL
Science	District Embedded Curriculum (Pre-K) Mystery Science (Grades K-5) Supplemental: Essential Ed	Next Generation Science Standards Aligned District Curriculum Supplemental: Mystery Science & Generation Genius
Social Studies	District Embedded Curriculum (Pre-K) Aligned District Curriculum to NYS Social Studies Framework (Grades K-5) Supplemental: Essential Ed	Aligned District Curriculum to NYS Social Studies Framework

Class Sizes

Class sizes average under 20 students per classroom across both districts, ensuring personalized attention and differentiated instruction. This favorable ratio could be preserved in a merged district, sustaining the quality of instruction.

Pre-K	2	2
Grade K	3	3
Grade 1	3	4
Grade 2	3	2
Grade 3	3	4
Grade 4	3	3
Grade 5	3	3
Grade 6		3
<i>Total # of Sections w/o Pre-K</i>	18 sections	22 sections
<i>Total # of Students w/o Pre-K</i>	349 students	315 students
<i>Average Section Size w/o Pre-K</i>	19.3 students	14.3 students

Academic Performance

State assessment results show comparable achievement levels in grades 3-8, with opportunities to address specific areas for growth, such as mathematics proficiency in middle school grades.

NYS Grades 3-8 Assessments

Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD have similar data points regarding testing data for grades 3 - 8. When compared to the statewide averages for the 2023-2024 results; Canajoharie CSD is below the average in ELA 3, 6, 7, 8; Math 5, 6, 7, 8/Combined 8; and Science 8/Combined 8. Fort Plain CSD is below average in ELA 3, 4, 7; Math 3, 6, 7; and Science 5.

Percentage of Students Scoring Levels 3 or 4

	54%	38%	43%	24%	19%
	57%	56%	47%	38%	39%
	41%	43%	44%	42%	43%
	40%	30%	44%	44%	47%
	38%	29%	50%	41%	30%
	52%	23%	52%	52%	56%
	74%	65%	54%	32%	21%
	63%	68%	58%	44%	57%
	48%	55%	49%	40%	47%
	23%	23%	51%	28%	40%
	26%	29%	57%	46%	26%
	10%	4%	41%	36%	45%
	100%	95%	83%	100%	100%
	36%	42%	57%	52%	67%
		50%	35%		24%
	24%	12%	34%	85%	56%
	100%	95%	79%		
	44%	42%	53%		

*Combined 8 represents: The combined scores are determined by taking the percentage of students scoring at the proficiency level on the regular test and those that scored at the proficiency level on a Regents test in Math and Science.

Grades 3-8 ELA Proficiency Rate	47%	40%
Grades 3-8 Math Proficiency Rate	45%	40%

Source: NYS RIC Regionalization Planning Strengths & Needs Tool and Guidance for Districts Document

Instructional Technology Integration

Both districts integrate technology effectively, leveraging interactive tools and devices to enrich learning experiences. A merged district could enhance these efforts by pooling resources for advanced tools and professional development.

Enriching Learning

Opportunities exist to expand enrichment programs, including gifted education, STEM initiatives, and early intervention services. Collaborative planning could optimize resources, fostering innovation in elementary education.

Secondary Education

Curriculum & Programs Overview

Secondary offerings in both districts include core academic subjects, Regents-level courses, and electives. A merged district would expand advanced placement (AP) and college-credit options, benefiting from increased staffing and student enrollment to support a broader course catalog.

Middle Level Program

In Canajoharie Middle School (grades 6 to 8) and the Fort Plain Junior / High School (grades 7 and 8), students take a similar core curriculum as they do at the elementary level: ELA, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Both districts use workshops or labs in ELA and Mathematics subject areas at the middle school level to meet the needs of students. Electives available to students are similar across both districts. In Canajoharie Middle School, all students take electives, and students in grades 7 and 8 are able to choose electives which span Computer Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), Art, Home Skills, Music, Language, PE, and more. In Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School, students have similar options – 7th grade students take PE, Technology, Library, Computer Science, Art and Music courses, while 8th grade students take PE, Health, Spanish, Computer Science, Library, Music and Technology courses. Canajoharie Middle School also offers optional Orchestra, Band and Chorus opportunities, comparable to the Band, and Chorus courses in Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School. Both districts offer acceleration options in Math and Canajoharie CSD also offers acceleration in Science.

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Canajoharie Middle School

Implementing a Middle School model allows Canajoharie CSD to allocate dedicated staffing to core subjects, engage in an advisory experience, and limit some sharing of special area teachers.

ELA, ELA AIS	MATH, MATH AIS, MATH LAB, MATH ACC	SCI, STEM	SS	Advisory, Computer Applications, Family Consumer Science, Library, Health, Band, Alt. Band, Chorus, Choir/Orchestra Alt., Orchestra, Phys Ed. Academic Success Lab, Reading Notes: Advisory (Homeroom) 4 Core Teachers ELA, Math, Science, SS
ELA, ELA LAB, ELA AIS	MATH, MATH AIS, MATH ACC	SCI, SCI ACC	SS	Advisory, Intro to Computer Programming, Art, Library, Health, Band, Alt. Band, Choir, Choir/Orchestra, Orchestra, Phys Ed., Spanish, and French Notes: Advisory (Homeroom) 3 Core Teachers ELA, Math, Sci
ELA, ELA AIS	MATH, ALG, ALG. LAB	SCI, ES, ES LAB	SS	Advisory, French, Spanish, Art, Lifetime Wellness, Computer Programming, Library, Band, Alt. Band, Choir, Choir/Orchestra, Orchestra, Phys Ed. Introduction to Music Video Notes: Advisory (Homeroom) 5 Core Teachers ELA, Math, Sci, SS, 1 FL
3 Music Teachers, 2 Art Teachers, 2 PE Teachers, 1 Computer Teacher, 1 Family & Consumer Science Teacher, 1 Librarian, 1 Health Teacher				

Fort Plain Junior High School

Implementing a Junior/Senior High School model allows Fort Plain CSD to share teaching staff across grades 7-12 in both core curricular subjects and special areas.

ELA, 3 sect 16,18,18 ELA Workshop	MATH, ADV. MATH	SCI	SS	Computer Science, Technology, Art, Library, Band, Chorus, Music, Phys Ed.
ELA, ELA WORKSHOP	MATH, ALG.	SCI	SS	Spanish, Computer Science, Foundations of Technology, Health, Library, Band, Chorus, Music, Phys Ed. Math Workshop C
*shared across grades 7-12: 2 Art Teachers, 1.5 Physical Education Teachers, 0.5 Health Teacher, 1 Computer Teacher, 2 Technology Teachers, 1 Librarian, 1 Family & Consumer Science Teacher				

High School Program

At the high school level, both Canajoharie High School and Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School offers the same core curriculum: English, Social Studies, Science, and Mathematics. Below is a table which provides the number of courses offered within each major academic subject area. This table also identifies the current number of sections for each course and the student enrollment for those sections.

In general both have small class sizes, offer advanced and elective opportunities to the best they can (some with very low enrollments), and programming is similar in both districts. Both have opportunities that the other does not offer to students, such as French, welding and other different electives in most content areas. These differences demonstrate how each school's present curriculum offerings can expand, which ultimately leads to more academic choices for students that are interest-based without impacting the student-to-teacher ratio.

As enrollment continues to be on a decline, although seemingly slowing. Smaller enrollments make elective and advanced-level programs more expensive and threaten the economic ability of school districts to offer the wider range of programs that are expected.

The goal of each district is to keep a graduate's transcript rich and to continue to provide programs so the graduates are able to compete with graduates from larger schools no matter what the graduate decides to do: college, workforce, tech school, or really anything.

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High School Course Offerings

Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
Studio	X	3	23	3, 9, 11	X	1	12	12
Studio in Drawing and Painting I	X	1 (2 half credit class)	22	19 3	X	1	7	7
Adaptive Studio	X	1						
Studio in Drawing and Painting II	X	1 (2 half credit class)	21	18 3				
Digital Photography	X				X	1 (2 half credit class)	13	8, 5
Digital Photography II					X	1 (2 half credit class)	15	10, 5
Advance Digital Photography					X			
Studio in Graphic Design	X				X			
Studio in Sculpture	X				X	.5	11	11
Life Skills Art	X	1	3	3				
Studio in Ceramics I	X	.5	7	7	X	.5	14	14
Studio in Ceramics II	X	.5	7	7				
Art History Made Fun!	X							
CHS Painting I	X							
CHS Painting II	X							
Crafts I					X	1 (2 half credit class)	26	11, 15
Crafts II					X	1 (2 half credit class)	22	10, 12
Art in Our Lives					X	1	12	12
Printmaking					X			
Experiences in Art					X	1	14	14

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

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High School Course Offerings

Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
Freshman Seminar					X			
Sports Marketing					X			
Computer Applications					X			
Business Law					X			
Business Economics					X			
Business Math					X			
Accounting I	X	2	22	7, 15				
CHS Financial Accounting	X	.5	2	2				
CHS Managerial Accounting	X	.5	3	3				
Business Law & Government/ Business Law (DL)	X							
Principles of Business (DL)	X							
Mobile App Entrepreneur	X	.5	4	4				
Integrated Office Technology I	X							
Integrated Office Technology II	X							
Business and Office Administration	X							
Desktop Publishing I	X							
Desktop Publishing II	X							

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

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High School Course Offerings

Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
English 9	X	3	39	13, 14, 12	X	2	32	16, 16
English 9A	X	1	17	17				
English 9 H					X	1	10	10
English 10	X	3	32	13, 15, 14	X	2	37	22, 15
English 10 A	X	1	21	21				
English 10 H					X	1	21	21
English 11	X	3	47	20, 20, 7	X	2	43	24, 19
English 11 AP	X	1	9	9				
English 11 H								
English 12	X	3	42	11, 18, 13	X	1	16	16
AP English	X	1	16	16				
Senior English					X	1	15	15
UHS English 121L					X			
Sports Writing and Lit	X	.5	4	4				
Improvisation	X	.5	4	4				
Communication and Media	X	1	7	7				
Creative Writing	X	.5	4	4	X	.5	4	4
Speech & Debate	X	.5	1	1				
Film Studies					X	.5	17	17
Young Adult Literature					X			
FMCC Eng 103					X	1	8	8
FMCC Eng 104					X	.5	12	12
FMCC Eng 235					X	.5	12	12
Public Speaking					X			

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

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High School Course Offerings

Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
Food Science	X	1	14	14	X	1	17	17
Food & Nutrition I	X	3	46	20, 11, 15	X	.5	7	7
Food & Nutrition II	X							
Global and Gourmet Foods	X				X	.5	10	10
Parenting	X				X			
Gourmet/Int'l Foods II					X	.5	12	12
Fashion & Design	X							
Housing & Interior Design	X				X			
Life on Your Own					X			
CHS Psych	X	1	7	7				
Cheap Eats					X	.5	7	7
Bake Shop I					X	1 (2 half credit class)	31	17, 14
Bake Shop II					X	.5	17	17

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

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High School Course Offerings

Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
Spanish 1	X	1	1	1				
Spanish 2	X	2	26	11, 15	X	1	16	16
French 2	X	1	11	11				
Spanish 3	X	2	25	24, 1	X	1	18	18
French 3	X	1	10	10				
Spanish 4	X	1	13	13	X	1	13	13
Spanish 4/ CHS	X							
French 4	X	1	5	5				
CHS Spanish	X	1	10	10				
CHS French	X	2	5	3, 2				
ASL (DL)	X	1	??					
SUNY SPN 200 Spanish 4					X			
SUNY SPN 201 Spanish 5					X			
International Studies	X							
Practical Conversation	X							

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
Health/ Wellness	X	2 (4 half credit classes)	59	20, 17, 9, 13	X	1.5 (3 half credit classes)	52	21, 19, 22
PE 9/10	X	<i>multiple</i>	<i>all students</i>		X	<i>multiple</i>	<i>all students</i>	
PE 11/12	X	<i>multiple</i>	<i>all students</i>		X	<i>multiple</i>	<i>all students</i>	

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

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High School Course Offerings

Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
Algebra	X	3	34	6,13,15	X	2	31	14, 17
Algebra Lab	X	2 (4 half unit class)	35	11, 9, 7, 6				
Geometry	X	4	68	13, 18, 18, 19	X	2	37	14, 23
Geometry Lab	X							
Honors Geometry	X							
Intermediate Algebra	X							
Algebra 1					X	1	23	23
Algebra 2					X	2	29	16, 13
Algebra II Trig	X	2	37	17, 20	X	1	19	19
Calculus					X	1		
CHS Pre-Calc/ FMCC Pre-Calc	X	1	11	11	X	1	10	10
CHS Algebra	X	1	5	5				
FMCC MAT 170					X	1	2	2
UHS/AP Calc	X	1	11	11				
Financial Math					X			
Exploring Compt Sci	X	2	15	4, 11	X	1	31	31
Senior Math 12	X							
CHS Intro Stats					X			
Foundations of Math	X	1	9	9				
Applied Geometry	X							
Sports Stats	X							
Selected Topics	X							
SAT Math Prep	X							

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

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High School Course Offerings

Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
Bell Choir	X	.5	6	6	X			
Computer Music Tech	X				X			
Chorus 9-12	X	.5	23	23	X	.5	13	13
Band 9-12	X	.5	45	45	X	.5	17	17
Company of Song	X	.5	18	18				
Jazz Ensemble	X	.5	18	18				
Orchestra	X	.5	17	17				
Music Theory	X							
Musin in our Lives					X	.5	12	12
Orch Alt/ Choir Alt	X	.5	6	6				

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

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High School Course Offerings

Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
Living Env	X	4	77	19, 18, 20, 20	X	2	33	17, 16
Earth Sci	X	3	28	4, 12, 12	X	2	27	15, 12
Chemistry	X	2	34	17, 17	X	1	13	13
Physics	X	1	5	5	X	1	8	8
Honors Living Env	X				X	1	22	22
Honors ES					X	1	20	20
Chem in the Community	X							
Geology	X							
AP Biology	X	1	13	13	X	1	8	8
Anatomy & Physiology	X	1	19	19				
Forensic	X	1	5	5	X	1	14	14
Global Problem Solving	X							
Astronomy					X	1	18	18
Equine Sci (DL)	X	.5	??					
Dairy Sci (DL)	X	.5	??					
UHS Science Research/ AP Capstone	X							

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

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High School Course Offerings

Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
Global 9	X	3	41	1, 26, 13	X	2	32	16, 16
Global 9 H					X	1	11	11
Global 9 A	X	1	15	15				
Global 10	X	3	34	5, 13, 16	X	2	37	21, 16
Global 10 H					X	1	20	20
Global 10 A	X	1	30	30				
US History	X	2	41	20, 21	X	2	38	17, 21
Economics	X	2 (4 half credit classes)	63	21, 24, 8, 10	X	1.5 (3 half credit classes)	48	14, 16, 18
Government	X	2 (4 half credit classes)	59	11, 8, 21, 19	X	1.5 (3 half credit classes)	46	14, 16, 14
Global 10 A	X							
AP Amer Hist	X	1	15	15	X			
FMCC Amer Hist I					X	.5	9	9
FMC Amer Hist II					X	.5	9	9
Contemporary and Social Issues (DL)	X	1	6	6				
History of WWII (DL)	X	.5						
Hist of Holocaust (DL)	X	.5						
Hist of Rock-n-Roll (DL)	X	1						
Traveling through History and Mohawk Valley					X			
Civil War					X			
History of Sport					X	.5	13	13
SUNY Sociology					X	.5	6	6
CHS Psych	X	1	1					
SUNY Psychology					X	.5	10	10

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

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High School Course Offerings

Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
Current Events					X	.5	7	7
Hist – America thru Film					X	.5	7	7
History of NASA					X	.5	15	15
Intro to Theatre					X	.5	9	9
WWII/ Band of Brothers					X	.5	11	11
The World Wars					X	.5	17	17

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

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High School Course Offerings

Technology Computer Science	Canajoharie CSD				Fort Plain CSD			
	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
Foundations								
Tech Design					X	1	16	16
Tech in Our Lives					X	.5	12	12
Adv Materials Processing					X			
DDP	X	2	16	10, 6	X	1 (2 half credit class)	23	10, 13
Material Processing I	X	1	6	6				
Material Processing II	X	1	7	7				
CAD	X	.5	6	6	X	1	7	7
CAD II		.5	7	7	X			
Applied Physics in Eng	X	2	24	9, 15				
Energy & Power	X							
Residential Structures Eng	X							
Production Systems	X							
Transportation Systems	X							
Manufacturing Systems					X	.5	13	13
Design & Construction	X							
Creativity & Innovation	X							
MIG/TIG Welding						1 (2 half credit class)	24	14, 10
Electric Arc Welding						1.5 (3 half credit class)	39	12, 13, 14
Web Page Design XI					X			
Multimedia Production II					X	1	18	18

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

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High School Course Offerings

Fort Plain CSD								
Computer Science								
Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
IT & Business Apprenticeship 2					X	1	21	21
Web Game Design					X			
Computer Applications	X	.5	5	5	X			
Computer Science Internship Program	X							
Computer Science Volunteer	X							

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

Other								
Course	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size	Course Guide	Sections	Enrollment	Avg Class Size
Driver Ed	X							
BOCES CTE Courses	X				X			

X = indicates listed in Course Guide, Grey Shading indicates not offered in 2024-25 Master Schedule

Courses with College Credit Available

Both Canajoharie High School and Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School offer students the opportunity to pursue certain programs outside of the districts’ classrooms, or earn college credit for the coursework done in-district. Both offer similar options for college credit through Fulton Montgomery Community College and SUNY Albany’s University in the HS program.

CHS Stats	FMCC	FMCC Eng 103	FMCC
CHS Pre-Calc	FMCC	FMCC Eng 104	FMCC
CHS French	FMCC	FMCC Eng 235	FMCC
CHS Spanish	FMCC	FMCC Amer History I	FMCC
UHS Accounting	SUNY Albany	FMCC Amer History II	FMCC
CHS Psychology	SUNY Albany	SUNY Psych	FMCC
		SUNY Pre-Calc	FMCC

Career & Technical Education (CTE)

Both districts use the HFM BOCES for a variety of half-day vocational programs. These courses fall within the following departments: Teaching, Construction, Healthcare, Hospitality, Human Services, Information Technology, Manufacturing, and Transportation, and they are available to 11th and 12th graders. Both districts provide students with transportation to BOCES programs. In both districts, certain BOCES programs will earn students’ college credits through the New Visions Program.

Academic Performance

Regents exam pass rates are consistent across both districts, with notable strengths in science and English. A combined district could promote consistency and higher mastery levels through shared expertise and professional development.

NYS Regents

Canajoharie High School and Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School have similar proficiency rates on most regents exams. Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High performance is slightly lower in those exams that have a writing component to them, English, Global, and US History. This falls in line with the below statewide averages in 3-8 testing in ELA. Canajoharie High School performance is lower in the upper level science classes and Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School performance is lower in Physics.

NYS REGENTS EXAM DATA 9-12

	2022-23		2022-23	
	# Took Exam	% Level 4* or 5	# Took Exam	% Level 4* or 5
ENGLISH	77	39%	63	40%
ALGEBRA	78	3%	77	6%
GEOMETRY	46	7%	22	14%
ALGEBRA 2	22	14%	16	6%
GLOBAL	78	28%	59	10%
US HISTORY	71	25%	52	12%
LIVING ENV*	67	30%	56	39%
EARTH SCI*	75	19%	53	26%
CHEM*	30	10%	16	13%
PHYSICS*	6	33%	5	40%

NYS Regents Proficiency Rates (Levels 3 and Above)

Both districts are also below the statewide average for Advanced Regents Diplomas but above the statewide average for Regents Diplomas. This may be attributed to the low enrollment in both districts in upper level math and science courses.

	2022-2023	2023-2024	2023-2024	2022-2023	2023-2024
ENGLISH	82%	85%	79%	79%	73%
ALGEBRA	72%	71%	62%	78%	85%
GEOMETRY	87%	50%	57%	59%	58%
ALGEBRA 2	95%	85%	74%	69%	86%
GLOBAL	79%	85%	77%	73%	72%
US HISTORY	82%	90%	78%	73%	67%
LIVING ENV*	81%	93%	62%	84%	75%
EARTH SCI*	53%	43%	67%	70%	90%
CHEM*	77%	67%	65%	94%	86%
PHYSICS*	33%	62%	74%	100%	55%

Annual Regents ELA Proficiency Rate	82%	79%
Annual Regents Algebra I Proficiency Rate	72%	78%

Source: NYS RIC Regionalization Planning Strengths & Needs Tool and Guidance for Districts Document

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Advanced Placement Courses

	18	27%	12	100%	11	20%	10	50%
			15	73%				
	17	25%	16	93%				
			16	43%				
			21	23%				
	12	18%	5	100%				

Student Enrollment in AP Courses	2019 – 32	2019 – 15	
	2023 – 47	2023 – 11	
Trend in Number of AP Courses Offered	2019 – 4	2019 – 1	
	2023 – 3	2023 – 1	

Source: NYS RIC Regionalization Planning Strengths & Needs Tool and Guidance for Districts Document

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Graduation Rates

Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD have similar graduation rates both at the 4 year and 5 year cohorts. Canajoharie CSD is above the statewide average for the 4 year rate and slightly below the 5 year rate and Fort Plain CSD is just the opposite being below the statewide average for the 4 year rate and slightly above for the 5 year rate. One significant finding is both districts at the 4 year rate are higher than the statewide average for dropouts. Although the data improves for the 5 year rate, this indicator is worth examining further.

**NYS GRADUATION RATES (2022-2023)
2019 August Cohorts**

	4-Year Cohort	Adv. Regents	Regents	Local	Non Diploma	Still Enrolled	GED	Dropout
Canajoharie CSD	89%	31%	59%	0%	1%	1%	0%	8%
Fort Plain CSD	83%	28%	52%	4%	4%	4%	0%	9%
State Average	86%	36%	50%	1%	1%	8%	1%	5%

	5-Year Cohort	Adv. Regents	Regents	Local	Non Diploma	Still Enrolled	GED	Dropout
Canajoharie CSD	87%	36%	51%	0%	4%	3%	0%	7%
Fort Plain CSD	93%	28%	64%	2%	3%	2%	0%	2%
State Average	89%	42%	46%	1%	1%	3%	1%	6%

4-Year Graduation Rate for ALL Students	2023 – 89%	2023 – 83%
	2019 – 85%	2019 – 86%
	2015 – 79%	2015 – 85%

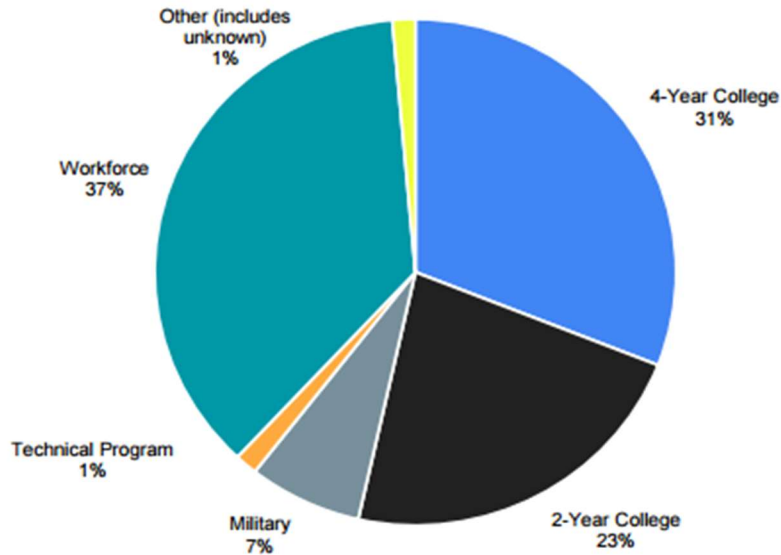
Source: NYS RIC Regionalization Planning Strengths & Needs Tool and Guidance for Districts Document

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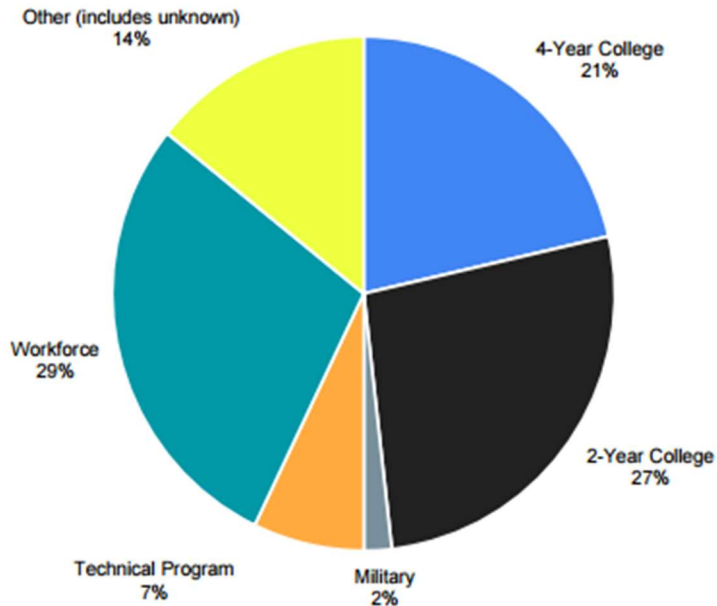
Post-Secondary Plans

Post secondary plans for the districts mirror each other and the profiles of each community as a whole regarding those that are going to a 2 or 4 year school and those entering the workforce, trade/technical school and/or the military.

Canajoharie CSD



Fort Plain CSD



**Post-Secondary Plans
 (2023-24 Graduating Class)**

4-Year College	22	12
2-Year College	16	15
Military	5	1
Technical Program	1	4
Workforce	26	16
Other (includes unknown)	1	8

Instructional Technology Integration

Secondary technology use focuses on project-based learning, research, and college preparation. Consolidated resources could improve access to state-of-the-art tools, supporting innovative teaching strategies.

Virtual Learning Opportunities

Canajoharie High School and Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School both offer virtual programming for secondary level students via the Distance Learning Network. These courses can be taught in-house and delivered over the network to other schools, or the district can receive such courses. The courses are real time, interactive, through a high-definition interactive video system which educators teach courses simultaneously to students in several different school buildings and remote locations.

Enhancing Learning

A merged district could leverage economies of scale to offer additional pathways for career and technical education (CTE), internships, and real-world learning opportunities.

Student Services

Students with Disabilities

Both districts’ special education populations will be an important consideration in this process. Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD must ensure that any student who requires supplemental learning support as defined by their Individual Education Program (IEP) will have the necessary programming and services provided to them in the case of a merger. Currently, both districts provide support to their special education populations with a mix of contracted services and outside placements (costly) due to limited staffing for such programs individually. Both also use some combination of co-teaching model, self-contained, consult, push-in, and resource in-house. Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD both have strong initiatives to keep students in district-run programs.

Both districts serve approximately 130 students with disabilities through co-teaching, resource rooms, and self-contained models. Shared services or a merger could reduce reliance on costly out-of-district placements and enhance in-house programs.

Students with Needs Classifications

Classification	Students
Autism	22
Deaf	0
Other Health Impaired	27
Learning Disability	39
Emotional Disturbance	9
Multiple Disability	5
Intellectual Disability	6
Speech	12
Visually Impaired	1
Preschooler Student with a Disability	17

Classification	Students
Autism	11
Deaf	0
Other Health Impaired	23
Learning Disability	55
Emotional Disturbance	9
Multiple Disability	4
Intellectual Disability	6
Speech	11
Visually Impaired	0
Preschooler Student with a Disability	10

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Fort Plain CSD Special Education Program Snap-Shot

5	0	4 Preschooler with a Disability	3 Integrated Preschool Classroom 2 Itinerant Services	0
4	2	1 OHI 2 SLI 2 504	1 Integrated Co-Teach 3 12:1:1	0
4	1	1 Autism 4 OHI 1 504	1 BOCES 1 12:1:1 2 Integrated Co-Teach	1 6:1:2 TSP
9	0	1 Autism 1 MD 1 OHI 6 SLI	1 12:1:1 3 BOCES 3 Integrated Co-Teach 2 Speech Services	1 12:1:1 ELS 2 6:1:2 ASD
3	1	2 OHI 1 SLI 1 504	2 12:1:1 1 BOCES	1 6:1:2 TSP
7	2	1 Autism 1 ED 1 LS 1 ID 1 OHI 2 SLI 1 504	3 12:1:1 2 BOCES 2 Integrated Co-Teach	1 6:1:2 TSP 16:1:2 ASD
7	2	1 ED 5 LD 1 MD 2 504	4 15:1:1 2 Integrated Co-Teach 1 School for the Deaf	0
7	2	1 Autism 6 LD 2 504	3 15:1 Special Class 1 Crossroads Center 3 Integrated Co-Teach	0
12	3	1 Autism 2 LD 4 LD 6 OHI 3 504	3 12:1:4 8 Integrated Co-Teach 1 BOCES	1 6:1:2 ASD
10	2	3 ED 1 ID 4 LD 2 OHI 2 504	5 15:1 Special Class 2 BOCES 3 Integrated Co-Teach	1 8:1:1 ABS 1 12:1:1 ESL
9	0	1 Autism 6 LD 2 OHI	2 15:1 Special Class 2 BOCES 5 Integrated Co-Teach 1 RR only	2 8:1:1 ABS

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Fort Plain CSD Special Education Program Snap-Shot

	SP ED #	504 #	Classification	Program/Services (IEP Only)	BOCES Program Drill Down
10	9	4	1 Autism 6 LD 2 OHI 4 504	1 Northeast School 1 12:1:4 3 15:1 Special Class 5 Consultant Teacher	0
11	10	4	1 Autism 5 LD 1 MD 3 OHI 4 504	1 BOCES 3 15:1 Special Class 1 UPC Tradewinds 5 Consultant Teacher	1 12:1:1 ESL
12	9	4	1 Autism 5 LD 2 MD 1 OHI 4 504	1 12:1:4 2 15:1 Special Class 4 Consultant Teacher 1 Home/Hospital Instruction	0
Other	6	0	1 Autism 1 LD 3 ID 1 MD	1 15:1 Special Class 5 12:1:4	0

ASD=Autism Spectrum Disorder ; ESL=Educational Life Skills; TSP=Therapeutic Support;
 ABS=Academic/Behavior Support

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Canajoharie CSD Special Education Program Snap-Shot

10	0	10 Preschoolers with disabilities	4 Itinerant Services Only 4 9:1:2 (Whispering Pines) 2 8:1:2 (Whispering Pines)		
5	0	3 AU 1 OHI 1 SLI	4 Direct Consultant Teacher	1 6:1:2 ASD	
10		2 AU 6 SLI 1 MD 1 OHI	1 Homeschool- related services only 1 12:1:6 (Langan) 7 Direct Consultant Teacher/Co-teach		
3	2	2 AU 1 SLI	2 Indirect Consultant Teacher	1 6:1:2 ASD	
7	1	3 AU 1 SLI 3 OHI	1 Indirect Consult 1 6:1:2 ASD 5 Integrated Co-teach	1 6:1:2 ASD	
4	3	2 AU 2 LD	1 Homeschool 1 6:1:2 ASD 2 Special Class Reading		
6	3	2 AU 1 SLI 2 LD 1 OHI	6 Integrated Co-teach		
7	2	3 LD 1 ID 1 AU 1 ED 1 SLI	7 Integrated Co-teach		
6	2	4 LD 2 OHI	6 Integrated Co-teach		

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Canajoharie CSD Special Education Program Snap-Shot

8	5	4 OHI 1 AU 2 ED 1 LD	1 homeschool 7 Integrated Co-teach		
12	3	6 LD 1 OHI 3 ED 1 MD 1 AU	6 Integrated Co-teach 1 Incarcerated 1 Homeschool 1 Residential 6:1:3.5 (Anderson) 1 12:1:6 (Langan)	1 8:1:1	
12	4	1 ID 3 LD 2 AU 4 OHI 2 ED	2 12:1:1 1 homeschool 5 Integrated Co-teach 1 8:1:1 House of Good Shepherd 1 12:1:1 Northeast	1 6:1:2 (Cap. Region BOCES)	
7	4	3 LD 1 AU 1 MD 1 OHI 1 ID	1 12:1:1 1 Direct Consultant Teacher (ADK) 4 Integrated Co-teach	1 12:1:1+3 Life Skills	
14	2	1 AU 3 MD 8 LD 2 OHI	2 12:1:1 1 6:1:2 (Cobleskill) 10 Integrated Co-teach	1 12:1:1+3 Life Skills	

ASD=Autism Spectrum Disorder ; ESL=Educational Life Skills; TSP=Therapeutic Support;
ABS=Academic/Behavior Support

Out-of-District Placements

Currently, both districts rely on external placements for specialized needs. Consolidation could enable in-house program development, saving costs and enhancing inclusion.

Students with 504 Accommodations

Accommodations are well-implemented in both districts. Combined expertise would strengthen service delivery and training for staff.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports Approach

MTSS frameworks are robust, addressing academic and behavioral needs. A merged district could streamline intervention strategies, ensuring equity in access and outcomes.

Student Experiences

Extracurricular Activities

Canajoharie High School and Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School offer a variety of different extracurricular and athletic opportunities at each grade level. At the elementary level, both districts offer limited extracurriculars. Students in Canajoharie High School and Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School may participate in Student Council, Odyssey of the Minds/Gifted and Talented (problem-solving competition), Drama Club. Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School also offers Chess Club, Library Club, and Yearbook and both offer other after-school and summer recreational activities. The table details the number of extracurricular activities offered by Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD at the elementary, middle and high school levels (Canajoharie High School grades 9 to 12 and Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School grades 7 to 12). Districts have already merged for Drama productions. Both districts offer comparable amounts of extracurriculars and are merged in athletics at multiple levels. A merged district would broaden access, creating new opportunities for student engagement.

Extracurricular Activities		
Student Council	9-12	7-12
National Honor Society	11-12	11-12
GSA: Gender and Sexuality Alliance		7-12
Chess Club		Elem/7-12
Drama Club	6-8	Elem/7-12
Girls on the Run		Grades 5&6
Lego Club		7-12
Multi Media Club		7-12
National Junior Honor Society	7-8	7-8
OK2XL		9-12
SADD	6-8	9-12
School Store		9-12
Technology Club		8-12
Yearbook	6-12	9-12
Library Club		Elem/7-12
Gifted and Talented		Grades 4-6
Elem Yearbook		Grades 5&6
OM	9-12	
Youth Sports Liaison	9-12	
AV Club	9-12	
Battle of the Books	6-12	
CHIPS	9-12	
ESports	9-12	
CSI Internship	9-12	
History Club	9-12	
Science Club	9-12	
Art Club	9-12	
STAR	9-12	
CHIPS	6-12	
Total	18	17

Athletics

The districts currently collaborate on many athletic programs, with several sports already merged. A unified district could strengthen team dynamics, expand offerings, and foster community pride.

Athletics

Canajoharie CSD		
Soccer *	VB, JVB, MB, VG, JVG, MG	VB, JVB, MB, VG, JVG, MG
Football *	VB, JVB, MB	VB, MB
Volleyball * (Partial)	VG*, JVG*, MG	VG*, JVG*, MG
Golf *	VB&G	VB&G
Cross Country *	VB&G, MB&G	VB&G, MB&G
Cheerleading *	V	V
Basketball * (Partial)	VB, JVB, MB, VG*, JVG*, MG*	VB, JVB, MB, VG*, JVG*, MG*
Bowling	VB&G	VB&G, JVB
Cross Country Skiing	VB&G	
Swimming *	VB&G, MB&G	VB&G, MB&G
Wrestling *	VB&G, MB&G	VB&G, JVB&G, MB&G
Indoor Track		VB&G
Cheerleading	V	V, JV
Baseball	VB, JVB, MB	VB, MB
Softball	VG, JVG, MG	VG, MG
Track	VB, MB, VG, MG	VB, MB, VG, MG
Unified Basketball		B

**indicates merged sport*

V = Varsity

JV = Junior Varsity

M = Modified

B = Boys

G = Girls

Student Life: Ceremonies, Rituals, & Celebrations

Both districts celebrate student success through awards ceremonies, concerts, and cultural events. Combining traditions would enrich student life and build a cohesive community identity.

Organizational Capacity

The Organizational Capacity analysis highlights significant opportunities for operational efficiencies, resource optimization, and enhanced service delivery in a potential merger of Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD. Both districts currently maintain comparable staffing structures and operational frameworks, with personnel often fulfilling multiple roles. A merger would allow for greater specialization, such as the creation of dedicated roles in curriculum development and human resources, enabling more focused support for staff and students. Attrition patterns suggest a natural pathway to align staffing levels post-merger, avoiding workforce reductions while stabilizing long-term organizational capacity.

Facilities across both districts are well-maintained and integral to community engagement. The merger would promote shared access to public spaces while addressing challenges such as parking, accessibility, and underutilized buildings. Unique assets, like Canajoharie CSD's NYSERDA-supported energy management program and Fort Plain CSD's advanced Career and Technical Education (CTE) facilities, could be leveraged to provide expanded educational opportunities and community services. Consolidation would also allow for enhanced preventive maintenance processes and capital project funding through merger incentive aid, ensuring modernized, sustainable facilities.

Transportation and food service operations present further opportunities for efficiency and enhanced service. Combining transportation fleets and optimizing bus routes would reduce travel times while maintaining broad service coverage. Similarly, shared food service operations would streamline procurement, improve menu offerings, and maximize the impact of federal programs like the Community Eligibility Provision. A centralized technology support system would ensure smoother service delivery district-wide. Together, these enhancements underscore the potential of a merged district to provide more robust, sustainable support for students, staff, and the broader community.

Human Resource Allocations

Both districts currently operate with comparable staffing structures that include principals for each building and district-wide roles such as Directors of Facilities, Transportation Supervisors, and Special Education Directors. A merger offers the opportunity to alleviate administrative overlap by redistributing responsibilities, potentially creating specialized roles like a dedicated Curriculum Director or Human Resources Manager to enhance operational efficiency.

Staffing by Function

Staff members often hold multiple responsibilities due to the smaller size of each district. For instance, principals in both districts frequently take on roles in curriculum development and professional coaching. Merging the districts would enable the creation of specialized district-level positions, such as a dedicated Curriculum Director or Human Resources Manager. A merger could allow staff to focus more deeply on singular areas of expertise, such as focused support for professional development, teacher coaching, and compliance with labor relations.

District Office Staffing

Canajoharie CSD



Elementary (PK-5) Principal Middle School (6-8) Principal High School (9-12) Principal

District-wide Staff

Director of Facilities
 Transportation Supervisor
 Director of Finance/District Treasurer
 Food Service Director (Contracted Service)
 Athletic Coordinator
 Special Education Director

Fort Plain CSD



Elementary (PK-6) Principal Jr./Sr. High School (7-12) Principal

District-wide Staff

Director of Facilities
 Transportation Supervisor
 Director of Finance
 Food Service Director
 Director of Student Engagement/Athletic Coordinator
 Special Education Director

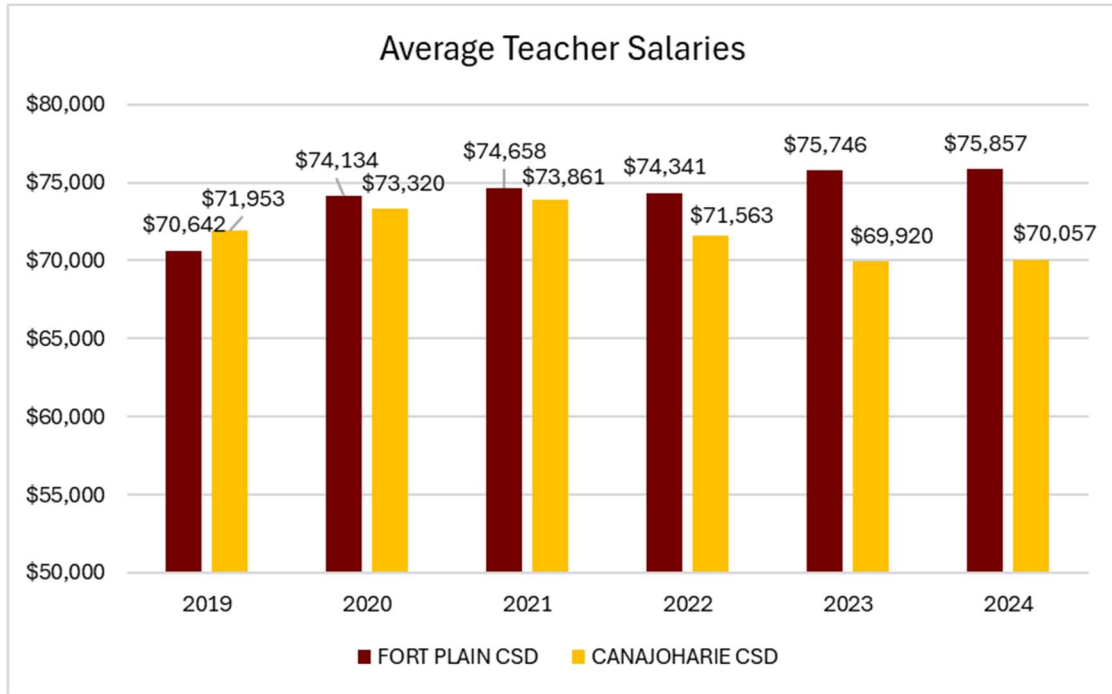
Teacher/Leader Experience

Principals with Fewer than 4 Years of Experience	0%	50%	24%
Teachers with Fewer than 4 Years of Experience	34%	7%	24%
Teachers Teaching Out of Their Subject or Field of Certification	7%	0%	9%

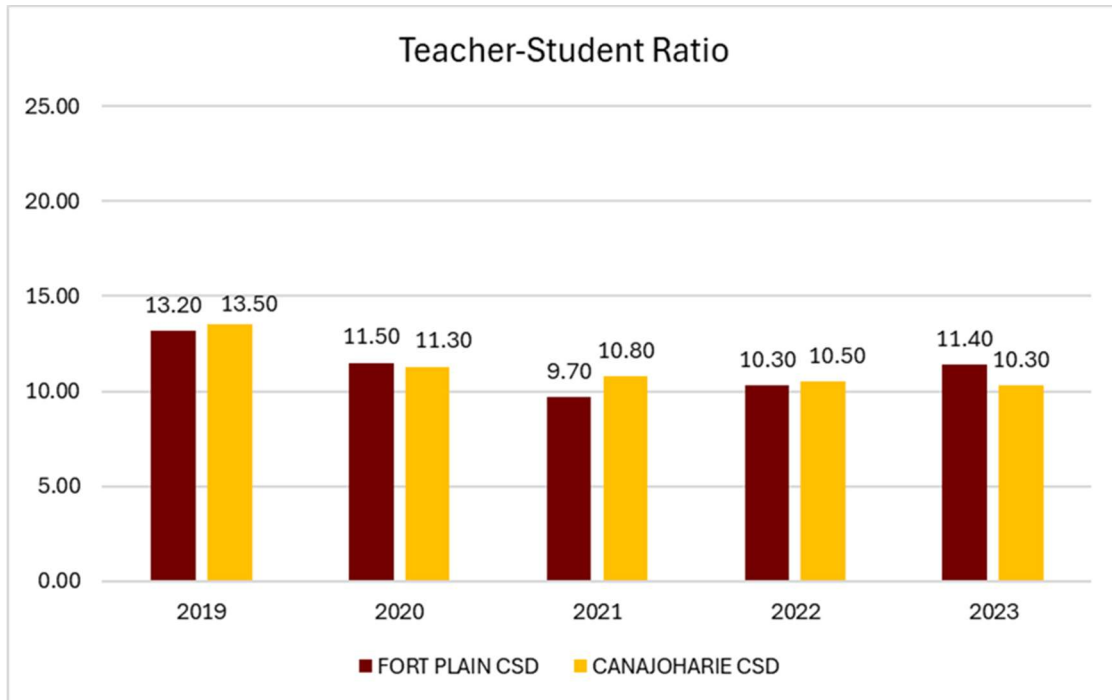
Source: NYS RIC Regionalization Planning Strengths & Needs Tool and Guidance for Districts Document

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FTE Teachers



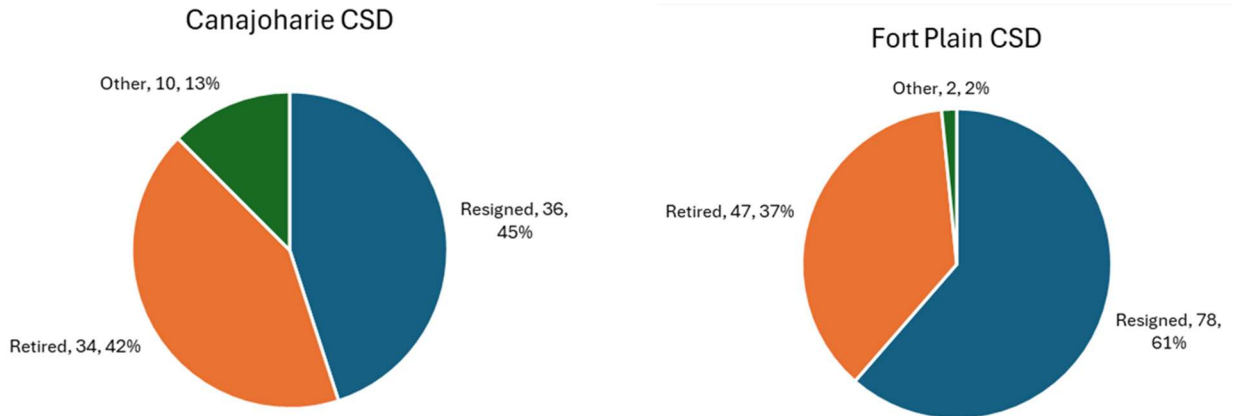
Teacher-Student Ratio



Succession & Attrition Planning

Both districts experience regular staff turnover, with nearly 200 positions changing hands from 2019 to 2024. Attrition presents a natural path to aligning staffing levels post-merger without necessitating layoffs. The merger would also provide stability by addressing staffing shortages through shared services and redistributing roles across a larger workforce.

Attrition Data



Resigned	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Canajoharie CSD	3	1	4	6	13	9
Fort Plain CSD	3	8	13	19	17	18

Retired	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Canajoharie CSD	0	5	10	10	7	2
Fort Plain CSD	1	9	13	12	7	6

Teacher Attrition/Retention

Turnover Rate for ALL Teachers	19%	19%	14%
Turnover Rate for Teachers with Fewer than 5 Years Experience	22%	50%	22%

Source: NYS RIC Regionalization Planning Strengths & Needs Tool and Guidance for Districts Document

Labor Contracts

Current labor contracts would remain intact until a successor agreement is negotiated. Insights from previous mergers indicate that contracts should focus on maintaining equity while prioritizing resources for student outcomes.

Bargaining Units

Both districts operate under well-defined labor agreements for teachers, support staff, and administrators. Specifically, each district has the following recognized bargaining units:

Canajoharie CSD	Contract Dates	Fort Plain CSD	Contract Dates
Canajoharie United School Employees Teachers	July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2025	Fort Plain Teachers' Association (FPTA)	July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027
Canajoharie United School Employees Support	July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2025	Fort Plain School Related Personnel Association	July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2026
Canajoharie Administrators' Association	July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2028	Fort Plain Administrators' Association	July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2025

Relevant Clauses

The following clauses will likely need to be considered, if a merger were to occur, to transition from two distinctly separate contracts into a single collective bargaining contract. It is important to note that, if a merger were to occur, the existing labor agreements will remain in effect until the time a new collective bargaining agreement is negotiated.

Teachers' Contract Considerations

- Aligning approaches to health insurance contributions
- Aligning retirement incentives
- Aligning allowable and accumulated sick leave and sick bank provisions
- Unifying class size and teaching load provisions
- Coordinating extra-duty roles and stipend compensation
- Harmonizing work day and evening responsibilities

Support or Related Personnel Contract Considerations

- Aligning approaches to health insurance contributions
- Aligning retirement incentives
- Aligning allowable and accumulated sick leave and sick bank provisions
- Unifying leave policies
- Harmonizing work hours and overtime policies

Administrator Contract Considerations

- Aligning approaches to health insurance contributions
- Aligning retirement health insurance benefits
- Aligning vacation carryover limits and payouts
- Harmonizing compensation and longevity incentives

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Teacher Salary Schedule Comparison

Step 1	\$ 51,018.86	\$48,048
Step 2	\$ 52,009.64	\$49,742
Step 3	\$ 53,023.21	\$51,436
Step 4	\$ 54,074.05	\$53,130
Step 5	\$ 55,160.08	\$54,824
Step 6	\$ 56,279.25	\$56,518
Step 7	\$ 57,435.68	\$58,212
Step 8	\$ 58,626.29	\$59,906
Step 9	\$ 59,857.27	\$61,600
Step 10	\$ 61,127.59	\$63,294
Step 11	\$ 62,436.21	\$64,988
Step 12	\$ 63,790.39	\$66,682
Step 13	\$ 65,184.95	\$68,376
Step 14	\$ 66,624.03	\$70,070
Step 15	\$ 68,106.59	\$71,764
Step 16	\$ 69,644.02	\$73,458
Step 17	\$ 72,409.32	\$75,152
Step 18	\$ 73,856.68	\$76,846
Step 19	\$ 75,017.26	\$78,540
Step 20	\$ 78,068.30	\$80,234
Step 21	\$ 81,599.73	\$81,928
Step 22	\$ 85,725.43	\$83,622
Step 23	\$ 87,271.14	\$85,316
Step 24	\$ 88,184.28	\$87,010
Step 25	\$ 89,413.19	\$88,704
Step 26	\$ 96,025.02	\$90,398
Step 27	\$ 96,025.02	\$92,092
Step 28	\$ 96,025.02	\$93,786
Step 29	\$ 96,025.02	\$93,786
Step 30	\$ 96,097.52	\$93,786
Step 31	\$ 96,295.26	
Step 32	\$ 97,718.63	

Average Teacher Salaries

Total Teacher Payroll	\$6,751,941	\$6,540,272
Number of Teachers	92	86
Average Teacher Salary	\$73,391	\$76,050

Facility Utilization

Both districts host well-maintained facilities with community spaces that are integral to their respective communities. The merger would ensure continued community access while enhancing efficiency and adaptability.

Overview of District Buildings

Canajoharie CSD

Address	25 School District Rd Canajoharie, NY 13317	136 Scholastic Way Canajoharie, NY 13317
Year of Original Building	1951	2001
Sq. Ft in Current Building	158,427	168,245
Number of Floors	2	2
Grades Housed	PK-8	9-12
Students Served	587	262
Building Condition Survey	SEI Design Group	SEI Design Group
Overall Building Rating	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Fort Plain CSD

Address	25 High Street Fort Plain, NY 13339	1 West Street Fort Plain, NY 13339
Year of Original Building	1954	1915
Sq. Ft in Current Building	101,500	108,800
Number of Floors	1	3
Grades Housed	PK-6	7-12
Students Served	356	305
Building Condition Survey	King + King Architects	King + King Architects
Overall Building Rating	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Hours of Operation

The merger would maintain existing hours of operation while exploring ways to optimize space utilization. Shared facilities, such as gyms and pools, could remain accessible to the community while optimizing schedules for student use.

Student/Community Use Experiences

Each district has distinct assets, such as Canajoharie CSD's energy-efficient systems and Fort Plain CSD's advanced CTE programs. Canajoharie CSD has a pool for school programming and community use. These can be leveraged to expand programming and community engagement opportunities across the merged district. Potential uses for underutilized areas include community medical facilities or collaborative public services.

General Instructional Usage

The following is a snapshot estimation of the current utilization of each facility. This analysis is not exact as in any given school year, the needs of students, staff, and programs evolve making it necessary to be creative and flexible with the allocation of physical space within a building. Each building has a gymnasium, cafeteria, library, and offices that are not included in the instructional room counts.

Canajoharie CSD – East Hill Elementary School

Unique features: large flexible space for indoor recess and other activities, large tiered classroom for varied activities, additional building annex with pool and gymnasium.

Number of Full-Size Classrooms	33																
Number of Core Academic Classrooms	20																
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Grade</th> <th>PK</th> <th>K</th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4</th> <th>5</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Classrooms</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	Classrooms	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	
Grade	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5										
Classrooms	2	3	3	3	3	3	3										
Other Usage of Full-Size Classrooms	13																
Special Education (5), AIS (1), Technology (1), Ot/PT (1), Art (1), Band (1)																	
Usage of Smaller Rooms, Not Full Size for Instruction	4																

Canajoharie CSD – Middle School

Unique features: connected with East Hill Elementary School with shared additional building annex with pool and gymnasium.

Number of Full-Size Classrooms	20												
Number of Core Academic Classrooms	14												
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Content Area</th> <th>English</th> <th>Social Studies</th> <th>Math</th> <th>Science</th> <th>LOTE</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Classrooms</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Content Area	English	Social Studies	Math	Science	LOTE	Classrooms	3	3	3	3	2	
Content Area	English	Social Studies	Math	Science	LOTE								
Classrooms	3	3	3	3	2								
Other Usage of Full-Size Classrooms	6												
Special Education (3), Band (1), Art (1), Health (1)													
Usage of Smaller Rooms, Not Full Size for Instruction	2												
Special Education (2)													

Canajoharie CSD – High School Building

Unique features: large state of the art auditorium, large fitness center, jogging track above gymnasium, large common area for mixed use gatherings, significant storage space in lower level, district and business offices.

Number of Full-Size Classrooms	32												
Number of Core Academic Classrooms	17												
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Content Area</th> <th>English</th> <th>Social Studies</th> <th>Math</th> <th>Science</th> <th>LOTE</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Classrooms</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Content Area	English	Social Studies	Math	Science	LOTE	Classrooms	4	4	4	3	2	
Content Area	English	Social Studies	Math	Science	LOTE								
Classrooms	4	4	4	3	2								
Other Usage of Full-Size Classrooms	15												
Special Education (5), Music (2), Weight Training (1), Computer Lab (1), Distance Learning (1), Technology (1), Art (2), Business (1), Other (1)													
Usage of Smaller Rooms, Not Full Size for Instruction	4												

Fort Plain CSD – Harry Hoag Elementary School Building

Unique features: large library with computer room, district and business offices, full gymnasium with locker rooms.

Number of Full-Size Classrooms	41																		
Number of Core Academic Classrooms	25																		
<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Grade</th> <th>PK</th> <th>K</th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4</th> <th>5</th> <th>6</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">Classrooms</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Classrooms	2	3	4	2	4	3	3	3	
Grade	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6											
Classrooms	2	3	4	2	4	3	3	3											
Other Usage of Full-Size Classrooms	16																		
Special Education (8), Book Room (1), Computer Classroom (1), Remedial Classroom (1), Speech (1), Head Start (1), Art (1), Music (2)																			
Usage of Smaller Rooms, Not Full Size for Instruction	4																		
Remedial Support (3), Psychologist (1)																			

Fort Plain CSD – Junior/Senior High School Building

Unique features: multi-purpose Tech/Computer space, full welding facilities in Tech Lab.

Number of Full-Size Classrooms	35												
Number of Core Academic Classrooms	23												
<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Content Area</th> <th>English</th> <th>Social Studies</th> <th>Math</th> <th>Science</th> <th>LOTE</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">Classrooms</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Content Area	English	Social Studies	Math	Science	LOTE	Classrooms						
Content Area	English	Social Studies	Math	Science	LOTE								
Classrooms													
Other Usage of Full-Size Classrooms	12												
Special Education (3), FACS (1), Music (1), Computer Lab (2), Technology (2), Art (2), Faculty Room (1)													
Usage of Smaller Rooms, Not Full Size for Instruction	2												
Seminar (1), Special Ed (1)													

Building Conditions Survey

All school districts in New York State are required to conduct a Building Conditions Survey (BCS) every five years. The BCS identifies current issues in the buildings and forecasts that may occur in these buildings. Not every item that is identified in the BCS needs to be addressed immediately. The review of each district’s most recent BCS serves as a basis for potential capital improvements that will need to be considered and prioritized moving forward.

Canajoharie CSD – East Hill Elementary School & Middle School Building

Create a new greenhouse	\$	202,300
Spalling	\$	27,000
Windows	\$	254,200
Roof and Skylights (S)	\$	161,800
Exterior Walls/Columns (S)	\$	674,200
Chimneys (S)	\$	13,500
Exterior Steps, Stairs and Ramps (S)	\$	6,800
Exterior Doors	\$	67,500
Ceilings (H)	\$	118,000
Resilient Tiles or Sheet Flooring	\$	161,800
Wood Flooring	\$	33,800
Interior Doors	\$	202,300
Swimming Pool and Swimming Pool Systems	\$	33,800
Interior Bleachers	\$	202,300
Replace Air-O-Mix Unit	\$	269,700
Replace the collapsed duct sock and provide access	\$	168,600
Replace rooftop AHU's not part of any specific work scope	\$	4,404,500
Replace aging unit ventilators	\$	3,943,900
Convert steam boilers to hot water	\$	876,000
Replace the pool dehumidification system	\$	370,800
Replace the Nellis Gym AHU's	\$	256,200
Consider adding ceiling fans to the MS and ES classrooms	\$	145,000
Consider Adding cooling to the upper-level classrooms	\$	1,435,600
Consider adding air conditioning to remainder of MS & ES classrooms	\$	3,975,400
Exhaust Fans	\$	101,200
Replace aging pool sand filters	\$	316,900
Replace the booster heater in the kitchen	\$	20,300
Replace shut offs	\$	27,000
Remove and replace hot water heaters	\$	40,500
Consider removal and replacement of the fire detection & alarm system	\$	640,900
Consider replacing the MDP in Nellis	\$	13,500
Paint rooftop gas pipe OSHA yellow	\$	10,200
Collect water coming off roof and divert off of the pavement	\$	33,800
Convert asphalt gutter to concrete	\$	39,200
Reconstruct parent drop off and bus loop - Mill and top pavement	\$	269,700
Reconstruct MS Parking Lot - Mill and top pavement	\$	269,700
Reconstruct Nellis Parking Area - Mill and top pavement	\$	229,300

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Reconstruct Service Road and associated parking area - Mill and top pavement, remove gravel area and reconstruct with new pavement	\$ 195,600
Expand playground	\$ 168,600
Upgrade basketball courts	\$ 202,300
Building Sub-Total	\$ 20,583,700

Canajoharie CSD – High School Building

Add café tables, high tops, charging ports, & serving options to cafeteria	\$ 168,600
Create concessions stand with toilet rooms	\$ 472,000
Structural Floors - gymnasium	\$ 33,800
Upper wall where auditorium meets the roof over the corridor	\$ 32,400
Cafeteria Roof is taking on water	\$ 354,000
Band Room/Technology Room is taking on water	\$ 259,600
Snow guards	\$ 60,700
First floor entry canopies	\$ 27,000
Change ceilings from acoustic tile to gypsum board in locker rooms	\$ 124,600
Continue replacing Dorma exit hardware	\$ 105,200
Expansion joints	\$ 20,300
Tented ceiling	\$ 174,000
Add magnetic hold opens & fire alarms to doors at receiving in kitchen.	\$ 27,000
Replace cracked ceramic tile	\$ 5,400
Replace cafeteria rooftop AHU #3	\$ 134,900
Replace other rooftop AHU's	\$ 674,200
Add shut off valves to better zone the mechanical piping system	\$ 21,600
Provide new dust collection and make up air unit	\$ 289,900
Replace the dishwasher	\$ 54,000
Connect sump to building automation system to alarm when full.	\$ 6,800
Hot Water Heaters approaching the end of their life	\$ 47,200
Add eye wash station	\$ 8,800
Consider removal and replacement of the fire detection & alarm system	\$ 680,600
Consider upgrading the auditorium sound system	\$ 236,000
Improve site retention per recommendations in the Barclay Street Watershed Study	\$ 222,500
Reconstruct aging asphalt paving - Mill & top pavement, base remains	\$ 741,600
Add underdrainage to the baseball outfield	\$ 256,200
Add a road and parking area to serve the fitness area	\$ 330,400
Consider replacing exhibition field with synthetic turf	\$ 1,685,400
Expand soccer/softball fields parking area	\$ 168,600
Adding field lighting to synthetic turf field extends play time	\$ 1,281,000
Sound system	\$ 80,900
Railing - Press box	\$ 20,300
Building Sub-Total	\$ 8,805,500

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Fort Plain CSD – Harry Hoag Elementary School Building

Pave access road to athletic fields, add sidewalk adjacent to baseball field, add access roads between soccer fields & track, add parking adjacent to playground	\$ 154,275
Regrade baseball field	\$ 294,938
Replace drip edge at EIFS panels (failing)	\$ 63,525
Replace cafeteria windows	\$ 100,733
Replace B-wing corridor and classroom finishes	\$ 4,475,790
Replace master clock system	\$ 99,825
Building Sub-Total	\$ 5,189,085

Fort Plain CSD – Junior/Senior High School Building

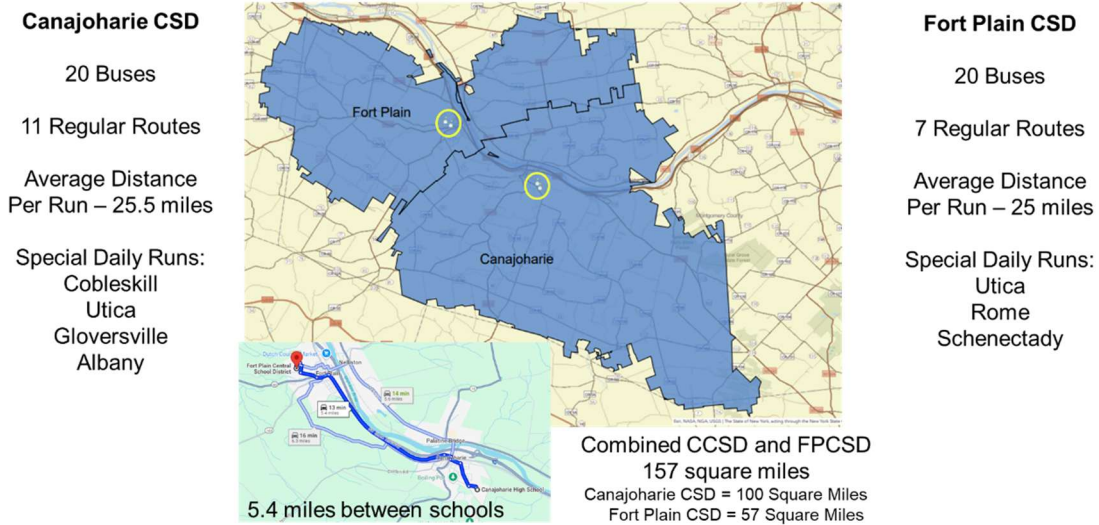
Reconstruct concrete steps between West St. & building	\$ 363,000
Masonry reconstruction (1915 facade)	\$ 907,500
Renovate Auditorium Complete	\$ 1,361,250
Replace HVAC System in Main Lobby	\$ 254,100
Fitness Room Skylights Leaks	\$ 272,250
Replace chiller	\$ 517,275
Add basement classrooms & teacher lounge to energy management system	\$ 117,975
Replace master clock system	\$ 86,213
Building Sub-Total	\$ 3,879,563

Total Potential Cost Estimate for Capital Improvements

Canajoharie CSD – East Hill Elementary School & Middle School Building	\$20,350,700
Canajoharie CSD – High School Building	\$ 8,805,500
Fort Plain CSD – Harry Hoag Elementary School Building	\$ 5,189,085
Fort Plain CSD – Junior/Senior High School Building	<u>\$ 3,879,563</u>
Total Potential Capital Project Budget for Combined Districts	\$38,224,848

Transportation

Both districts operate transportation fleets of 20 buses, with 11 routes in Canajoharie CSD and 7 in Fort Plain CSD. Routes average approximately 25 miles per run. A merger would enable route optimization, ensuring shorter bus rides while maintaining comprehensive coverage across the combined 157 square miles.



Maintenance Process

A consolidated approach to fleet maintenance would centralize resources and expertise, improving operational efficiency.

Facility Capacity

Both districts have indoor facilities for bus storage for their entire bus fleet. The facilities are in good working order and are currently meeting the needs of proactively servicing the fleet.

Address	76 Carlisle Road Canajoharie, NY 13317	25 High Street Fort Plain, NY 13339
Year of Original Building	2023	2011
Sq. Ft in Current Building	22,125	20,032
Number of Floors	1	1
Building Condition Survey	SEI Design Group	King + King Architects
Overall Building Rating	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Space Adequacy Rating	Good	Good

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Fleet Inventory

Canajoharie CSD owns its fleet, while Fort Plain CSD leases buses. A merged district could evaluate and standardize transportation approaches, potentially saving costs through bulk purchases and shared maintenance. The following data is a snap shot in time inventory from data provided in August 2024.

Canajoharie CSD

2	2015	Good	7	Caravan	146,000
9	2017	Great	7	Caravan	130,000
13	2018	Great	7	Caravan	127,000
19	2019	Great	7	Caravan	70,000
20	2021	Good	66	International	60,000
21	2021	Good	66	International	50,000
22	2021	Good	66	International	40,000
23	2021	Great	7	Town & Country	55,000
24	2022	Great	70	Thomas	25,000
25	2022	Great	70	Thomas	15,000
26	2022	Great	70	Thomas	25,000
27	2023	Great	8	Traverse	55,000
28	2023	Great	70	Thomas	10,000
29	2023	Great	70	Thomas	20,000
30	2023	Great	60+2 *WC	Thomas	10,000
31	2023	Great	8	Traverse	15,000
32	2024	Great	70	Thomas	10,000
33	2024	Great	70	Thomas	7,000
34	2024	Great	70	Thomas	10,000
35	2024	Great	7	G Cherokee	1,000
36	2025	Great	70	Thomas	4,000
37	2025	Great	70	Thomas	7,000
38	2025	Great	70	Thomas	7,000
39	2025	Great	70	Thomas	4,000
40	2025	Great	60+2 *WC	Thomas	1,000

*WC – wheel chair accessible

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Fort Plain CSD

19	2018	Good	48 + 2 WC*	International	51,389
24	2019	Good	72	International	31,585
25	2019	Good	72	International	31,177
26	2019	Good	72	International	31,878
27	2020	Good	72	Blue Bird	26,508
28	2020	Good	24	Ford Transit Van	63,017
29	2020	Good	24	Ford Transit Van	86,116
30	2021	Good	7	Dodge Durango	53,678
31	2021	Good	7	Dodge Durango	52,265
32	2022	Good	22 + 2 WC*	Chevy Trans Tech	40,910
33	2021	Good	72	International	23,844
34	2021	Good	24	Ford Transit Van	31,670
35	2022	Good	72	International	14,517
36	2022	Good	72	International	17,544
37	2022	Good	72	International	11,525
38	2022	Good	24	Ford Transit Van	6,604
39	2022	New	24	Ford Transit Van	0
40	2022	New	8	Chevy Suburban	0
41	2022	New	72	International	0
42	2022	New	72	International	0

*WC – wheel chair accessible

Operations Management

Merging districts would enhance the capacity for preventative maintenance and custodial services by centralizing these functions.

Buildings & Grounds Maintenance

Both districts engage in a comprehensive approach to building and grounds maintenance, focusing on proactive equipment replacement, energy efficiency, and maintaining the integrity of the facilities.

Staffing

Both districts sustain dedicated, committed, and knowledgeable building and grounds maintenance teams. Each district's lean staffing models responsible for managing all building operations may require additional support if a merged district were to modify facility purposes and usage rates.

Preventative Maintenance

Both districts have a proactive approach to preventative maintenance across all facilities. Both districts are accessing operational budgets and capital projects to preserve capital assets and to proactively replace aging equipment as part of a preventative maintenance program.

Canajoharie CSD identified ongoing maintenance needs associated with the pool. They are actively monitoring building systems and addressing problems before they become major failures.

NYSERDA Energy Manager Role

With access to Canajoharie CSD’s NYSEKDA-supported energy manager, both districts would benefit from cost savings and sustainability initiatives, making facilities more efficient and environmentally friendly.

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | NYSEKDA

Canajoharie CSD has a “unique” – really one-of-its-kind NYSEKDA grant-supported School-based Energy Manager.

Our Vision: Together, World Ready
Every Learner.

- Canajoharie Central School District is an under-resourced and engaged community. An almost 20% poverty rate (2020 Census Data) adversely affects the resources available to maintain and improve the energy performance and indoor air quality of the schools within the district. With only 2 individuals on the 10 member District Energy Team that have energy related backgrounds, knowledge is essential to effectively complete the Energy Master Plan.

Energy Master Plan Deliverables:

- Assemble District Energy Team
- Audits, Walk Throughs and Reporting
- Create Energy Management Plan
- Grant Research and Writing
- Create Energy Curriculum (pushed into STEM)
- Stakeholder Presentations
- Community Communication

District Energy Team/Energy Champions:

- Superintendent
- Energy Manager
- Facilities Director
- Curriculum Director
- Principals
- Teacher
- Students

MISSION GOALS VALUES

Elementary School - Early 1950's

Middle School - Mid 1970's

- These schools are aging structures that have equipment nearing the end of their useful life and becoming more difficult to maintain due to obsolescence of parts and frequency of repairs, contributing to reduced efficiency and indoor air quality.
- Educated practices and decisions will provide continued and effective improvements in energy efficiency and indoor air quality, move the district towards alternative energy resources and promote decarbonization initiatives that will reduce GHG emissions. Better for the district, better for the community, better for all.

<https://www.canajoharieschools.org/page/canjo-energy-news>

The Energy Manager role plays a critical role in managing energy usage and driving sustainability initiatives across the Canajoharie CSD’s three school buildings. The role provides funding, expertise, and personnel to conduct comprehensive audits of all energy-consuming equipment, implement maintenance plans, and streamline operations through a central work order system. The Energy Manager has already delivered significant improvements, such as replacing ceiling tiles, removing outdated technology, and transitioning to more efficient smart boards. These efforts have reduced cleaning and maintenance requirements, leading to cost savings and operational efficiencies.

Looking ahead, the Energy Manager role is responsible for energy management, electric bus fleet electrification, and comprehensive energy education programs for staff and students. Through the role, Canajoharie CSD is actively pursuing NYSEKDA grant funding to support initiatives like ground source heat pumps and expanded solar energy projects, with the goal of achieving net-zero energy consumption. The Energy Manager's expertise and collaborative approach have been invaluable, fostering strong community engagement and earning national recognition for the district's energy management plan. As the potential merger is considered, the Energy Manager's role will be crucial in identifying opportunities to leverage energy efficiency and sustainability to drive long-term financial sustainability for all facilities within a combined district.

Food Service

Both districts have robust food service programs supported by the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), ensuring all students eat for free. They operate four kitchens combined, providing similar participation rates.

Cafeteria Service Capacity

Both districts have sufficient storage capacity for bulk food purchases, particularly Canajoharie CSD's large freezer space and Fort Plain CSD's expansive dry storage. The equipment and facilities are well-maintained and do not require major replacements or repairs at this time.

Canajoharie High School Cafeteria



Food Service Director – Contracted Service w/BOCES
3 Operating Kitchens
Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) School
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) School

Fort Plain Jr/Sr High School Cafeteria



Food Service Director – District Employee
2 Operating Kitchens
Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) School
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) School

Staffing

Canajoharie CSD utilizes a Capital Region BOCES service to oversee the food service program. Fort Plain CSD employs a full-time food service director with extensive experience in both districts, as the individual has served as a shared food service director for both districts in her tenure.

Student Utilization

Both districts participate in the Community Eligibility Program (CEP), ensuring all students can access offerings at no cost. Participation rates are strong, with 60-80% for lunch across all grade levels. Alternative meal programs in both high schools have broadened menu options that contribute to increased participation. Collaboration could enhance menu variety and streamline procurement.

Family Satisfaction

The success of these programs reflects high levels of family satisfaction, which can be further supported by shared resources and expanded meal offerings. Noticeable increases in participation rates occurred in both districts when CEP was implemented. Both districts also participate in the federal summer meals program that provides approximately six weeks of stable food access to families in the community.

Financial Sustainability

The feasibility study for the potential merger of Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD demonstrates robust financial sustainability supported by sound fiscal stewardship, balanced budgets, and forward-looking financial planning. Both districts rely heavily on state aid—62% for Canajoharie CSD and 70% for Fort Plain CSD—supplemented by local taxes, federal contributions, and reserves. While both districts are currently in strong financial positions, projected budget deficits for FY 2024-25 highlight the need for strategic planning to manage rising expenditures, which are expected to outpace revenue growth over time.

The financial advantages of consolidation are significant. A merged district would leverage economies of scale, administrative efficiencies, and state reorganization incentive aid to stabilize tax rates and enhance fiscal equity. Tax rates for both districts are closely aligned, minimizing financial disparities for taxpayers, and voter support for budgets remains consistently high, with average approval rates exceeding 74% and 82% in Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD, respectively. Additionally, the merged district would benefit from enhanced flexibility in addressing uncertainties surrounding state aid, particularly the "save harmless" provisions, which protect current funding levels despite enrollment declines.

The capital improvement planning and debt service strategies in both districts are well-aligned, with infrastructure investments supported by prudent reserve use. Incentive aid from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) would further bolster long-term sustainability, enabling reinvestment in programs, facilities, and tax rate equalization. The unified fiscal strategy positions the merged district to provide high-quality educational experiences while maintaining strong financial health and meeting community expectations.

Annual Budget FY 2023-24

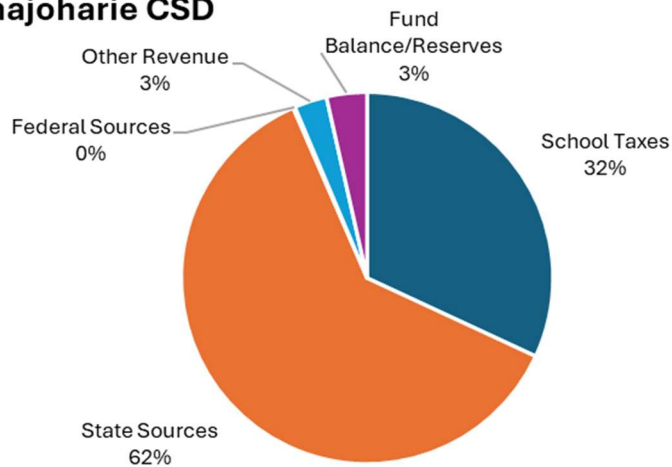
State aid forms the majority of revenue for both districts, with Canajoharie CSD receiving 62% and Fort Plain CSD 70% of their funds from state sources. Local taxes constitute the second-largest share, highlighting the importance of balancing state funding dependencies and local tax efforts. Fort Plain’s reliance on state aid reflects slightly greater needs-based adjustments.

Salaries and benefits dominate expenditure, constituting over 65% in both districts, which is standard for K-12 institutions. The parity in debt service suggests comparable historical investments in infrastructure.

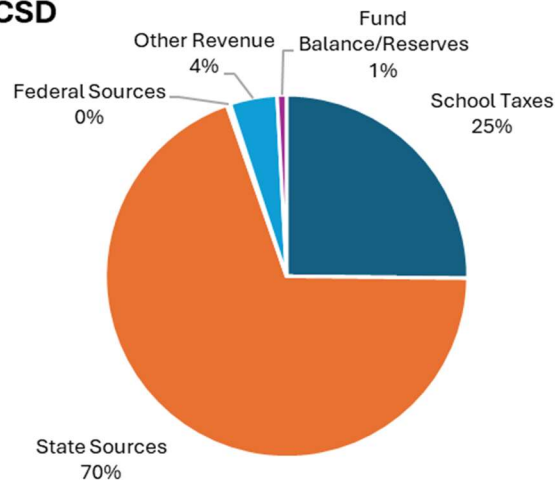
General Fund 2024-25

Revenue	Canajoharie CSD	Fort Plain CSD
School Taxes	\$ 8,107,485	\$ 6,004,077
State Sources	\$15,638,187	\$16,562,981
Federal Sources	\$ 45,000	\$ 78,500
Other Revenue	\$ 720,000	\$ 998,442
Fund Balance/Reserves	\$ 895,171	\$ 200,000
TOTAL	\$25,405,843	\$23,844,000

Canajoharie CSD



Fort Plain CSD



State Aid

There are various types of state aid that provide revenue to local school districts. The main type is Foundation Aid, as it is intended to support the constitutional mandate to provide a sound, basic education for all students in NYS. Other types are more variable as they depend on the amount of services or expenditures used by a district and, therefore, are calculated annually.

Foundation Aid in New York State is a funding formula designed to provide additional financial support to school districts, particularly those with higher needs. Established in 2007, it aims to ensure that all students have access to a quality education, regardless of their socioeconomic background. The formula considers factors like student enrollment, poverty levels, and the local property tax base. Over the past few years, the state has phased in increases to this aid to address funding disparities among districts. In 2023-24, the state fully funded the Foundation Aid formula. Both districts are “hold harmless” in the receipt of New York State Aid. For 2024-25, the districts did not receive any additional Foundation Aid.

Building Aid refers to financial assistance provided by the state to support school districts in funding construction and renovation projects. This aid helps cover the costs of building new schools, expanding existing facilities, and making necessary improvements.

Transportation Aid refers to financial assistance provided by the state to support school districts in managing transportation services. It also covers the costs of purchasing or leasing school buses.

Board of Cooperative Educational Services, or BOCES Aid is funding provided to support BOCES programs and services. These programs typically include specialized educational services, career and technical education, and professional development for educators. The aid helps school districts offset costs associated with these shared services. The funding formula for BOCES aid considers factors like student enrollment and the services provided.

High Cost Aid and Private Excess Cost Aid are two types of financial assistance programs in New York State designed to help school districts manage the costs of providing special education services. Both programs aim to ensure that students with disabilities receive the support they need while helping districts manage their budgets effectively.

- **High Cost Aid** is available to school districts that incur significant expenses for certain special education students. This aid helps cover costs that exceed a specified threshold, making it easier for districts to afford services for students with severe disabilities or complex needs. The aid is based on a formula that considers the total costs of services and the number of eligible students.
- **Private Excess Cost Aid** provides financial support to school districts for students with disabilities who are placed in private schools. If a district's costs for these placements exceed a certain amount, they can receive reimbursement for the excess costs. This program helps districts manage the financial burden of ensuring that students receive appropriate educational services, even if those services are not available in public schools.

Instructional Materials Aid is a funding program in New York State designed to assist school districts in purchasing educational materials and resources. This aid helps cover the costs of textbooks, digital content, and other instructional materials that support student learning. It is calculated based on several factors, primarily focusing on the number of students enrolled in a school district.

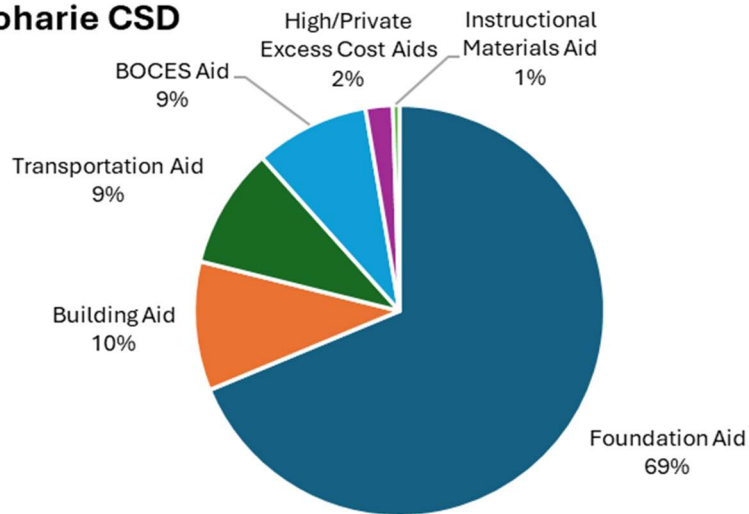
High Tax Aid is a financial assistance program aimed at helping school districts with high tax burdens, particularly those in areas with high property taxes. It has been frozen since 2009-10.

Budget Revenues

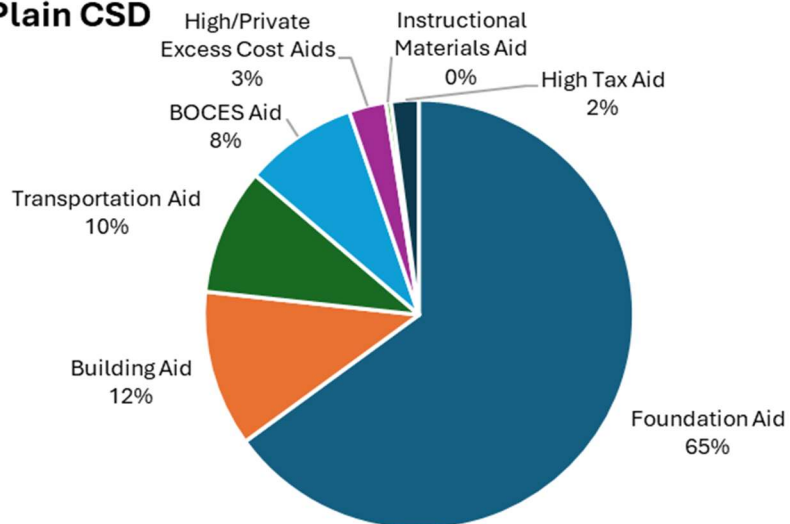
2024-25 State Aid Per NYS Enacted Budget

Type of State Aid	Canajoharie CSD	Fort Plain CSD
Foundation Aid	\$10,781,326	\$10,760,942
Building Aid	\$ 1,592,054	\$ 1,946,874
Transportation Aid	\$ 1,485,530	\$ 1,576,013
BOCES Aid	\$ 1,410,613	\$ 1,407,213
High/Private Excess Cost Aids	\$ 336,918	\$ 462,998
Instructional Materials Aid	\$ 79,388	\$ 64,376
High Tax Aid		\$ 344,565
TOTAL	\$15,685,829	\$16,562,981

Canajoharie CSD

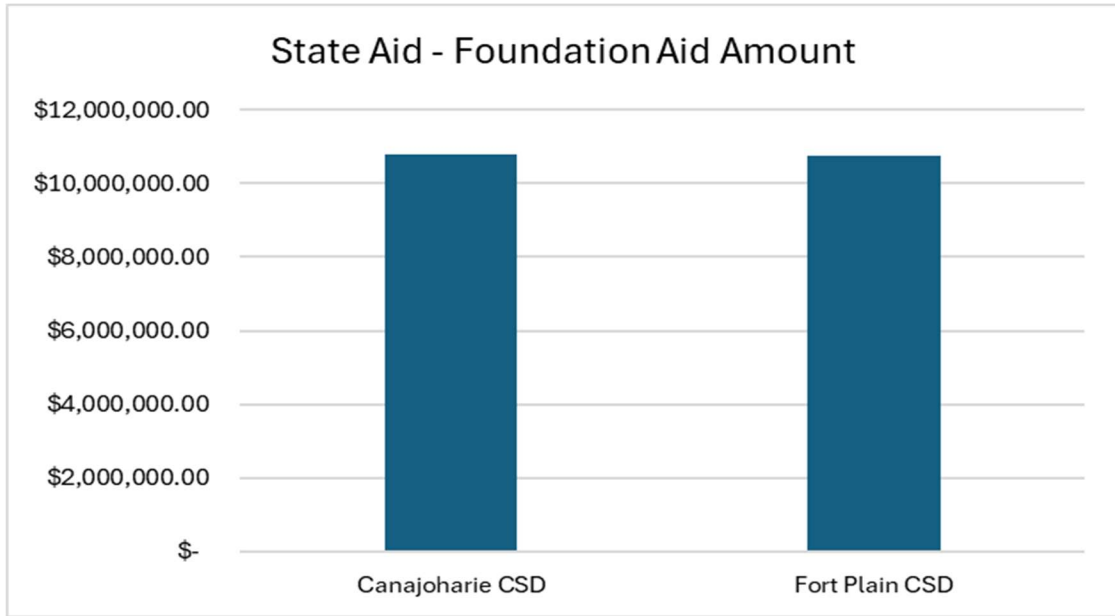


Fort Plain CSD

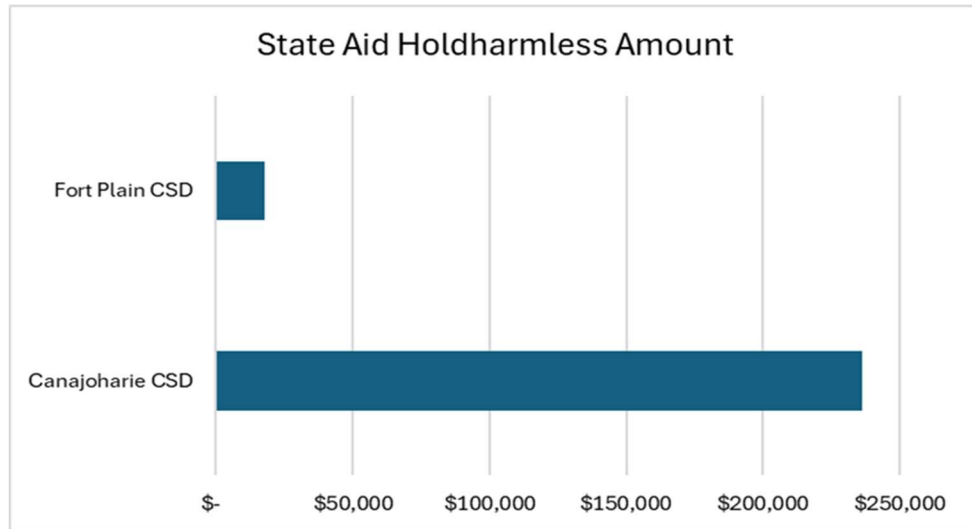


Save Harmless

Both districts receive a significant portion of state aid in the form of Foundation Aid – Canajoharie CSD 69% and Fort Plain CSD 65%.



Both districts are in “save harmless” status, ensuring no reductions in aid despite declining enrollments. However, future legislative changes could impact this provision, adding uncertainty to fiscal planning.



Hold Harmless Amounts based on the 2024-25 Enacted Budget

Description	Canajoharie CSD	Fort Plain CSD
Foundation Aid	\$10,781,326	\$10,760,942
Foundation Aid per Formula	\$10,545,222	\$10,742,811
Hold Harmless Amount	\$ 236,104	\$ 18,131

School Taxes

There are three main elements that go into the tax rate calculation for the district. These are the tax levy, property assessments, and each town's equalization rates.

- **Tax Levy**

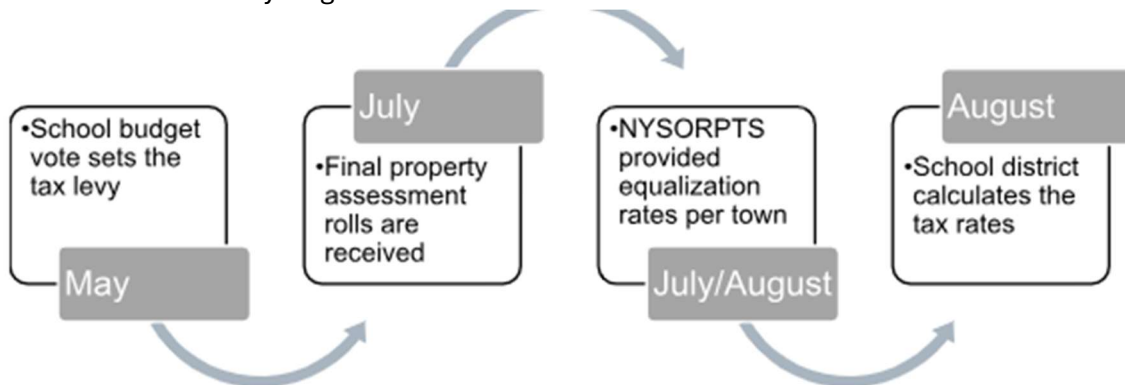
This is the total amount of money the Board of Education determines will be needed to balance the school budget after State Aid and other revenue sources are considered. This is set by school district in May at time of budget.

- **Property Assessments**

Each town prepares a Final Assessment Roll for that year listing all parcels of property and the assessed value of each. These are determined by each town and are finalized in July.

- **Equalization Rates**

The State Office of Real Property Services (ORPS) attempts to “equalize” property assessments. It compares properties in each town and how they are currently assessed and calculates an equalization rate for each town. The equalization rate represents the state’s judgment of how closely assessed values in that town match true market value of the properties. These are set by NYS and finalized in July/August.



The difference between the tax levy and tax rate is an important distinction. The tax levy is the total amount of taxes that need to be collected to operate the district. As the above diagram suggests, each May the voters approve the tax levy set at an amount equal to the proposed annual appropriations plan (or spending plan – a.k.a. budget).

As illustrated in the flow chart above, the tax rate is then determined by a non-school district process where there is an individual dollar rate per thousand of the assessed value of a given property. This is then used to calculate a yearly school tax bill each August.

Canajoharie CSD & Fort Plain CSD: Feasibility Study for the Purpose of Centralization
Final Report – January 2025

Tax Rate Calculation

- Changes in the property assessments and equalization rates impact each individual town’s tax rates.
- The school district uses the total assessed value in each town and the state equalization rates to calculate the percentage of the school tax levy that must be paid by landowners in that town that year. In other words, the district first calculates each town’s portion of the overall school tax burden.
- Each town’s portion of the tax levy is then divided by the total assessed value of land in that town to determine the school tax rate per one thousand dollars of assessed value for that town.

Description	Canajoharie CSD	Fort Plain CSD
Tax Levy	\$8,107,485	\$6,004,077
Number of Parcels	3763	2922
Number of Towns	8	5
Tax on Full Value	\$15.27	\$15.45

The difference between the tax rates is very small. The merged district would include 6,685 parcels across ten towns. The amount needed to equalize taxes where there would be no increase in any town based on current equalization rates & assessments is \$73,801.

	Canajoharie CSD	Fort Plain CSD	Merged District	Merged District with levy adjustment
Canajoharie	15.269923	15.459690	15.350091	15.269813
Carlisle	32.147207		32.315982	32.146975
Charleston	24.829143		24.959498	24.828964
Danube		24.617341	24.442821	24.314989
Ephratah		28.999606	28.794019	28.643431
Minden	19.576825	19.820259	19.679746	19.576824
Mohawk	25.032661		25.164084	25.032480
Palatine	39.153649	39.640231	39.359209	39.153367
Root	24.829143		24.959498	24.828964
Sharon	32.147207		32.315982	32.146975
Percentage Increase(decrease)	0.53%	(0.71%)		0.00%

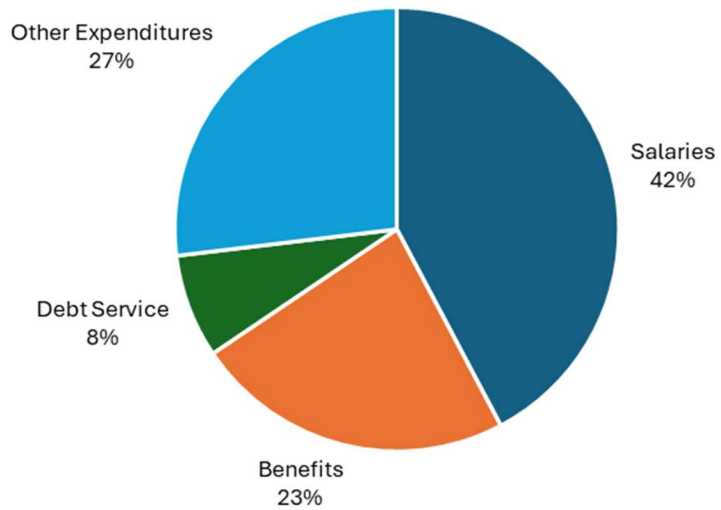
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Budget Expenditures

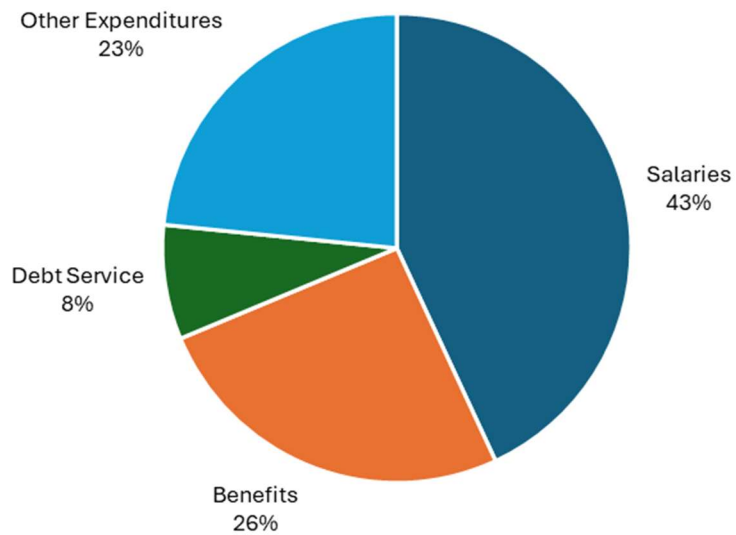
General Fund 2024-25

Expenditures	Canajoharie CSD	Fort Plain CSD
Salaries	\$10,734,555	\$10,272,083
Benefits	\$ 5,919,159	\$ 6,110,798
Debt Service	\$ 1,917,216	\$ 1,880,825
Other Expenditures	\$ 6,834,913	\$ 5,580,294
TOTAL	\$25,405,843	\$23,844,000

Canajoharie CSD



Fort Plain CSD



Debt Service and Building Aid

Debt service refers to the money required to pay interest and principal on the district’s outstanding bonds or other long-term debt obligations. School districts issue bonds to finance capital projects such as building new schools, renovating existing buildings, or purchasing large equipment.

Debt service includes:

1. Principal payments: The amount of the debt that is repaid over time.
2. Interest payments: The cost of borrowing money, paid periodically to bondholders.

Debt service is a significant part of each school district's budget representing roughly 8% of the total spending plan. The district must budget sufficient funds each year to make these payments, which are typically spread out over several years or decades, depending on the terms of the debt. This money is used to meet the district's legal obligations to repay bonds or loans taken to finance capital improvements.

As mentioned earlier, New York State provides building aid as a reimbursement for eligible capital expenditures. Below is a summary of the outstanding debt and anticipated building aid for both current and proposed capital projects in each district. This includes all existing debt service and projections for new voter-approved projects that have not yet obtained permanent financing.

In the case of a merged district, the newly formed district will assume responsibility for all existing outstanding debt.

- Any new projects undertaken will qualify for the maximum building aid reimbursement rate of 98%. This incentive is available for a period of ten years following the consolidation date.
- This incentive is available for a period of ten years following the consolidation date.
- Another financial incentive relates to existing debt, it is aided at the higher of the two previous district’s percentages prior to the date of consolidation:

Voter Approval Date			
Prior to 7/1/98	BLD Aid Ratio	81.40%	87.50%
On of after 7/1/98 but prior to 6/30/2000	BLD 10 Aid Ratio	91.40%	95.00%
On or after 7/1/2000 but prior to 6/30/2005	BLD 3 Aid Ratio	88.20%	88.00%
On or after 7/1/2005	BLD 4 Aid Ratio (EPC)	78.20%	78.00%
On or after 7/1/2005	BLD 4 Aid Ratio	92.10%	91.90%

- This incentive calculation would generate an additional \$222,321 of building aid on existing debt payments through 2042.

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Canajoharie CSD Debt and Projected Building Aid

includes estimates for December 2021 voter-approved project

2025	\$1,280,000	\$429,994	\$1,709,994	\$1,473,361	\$236,633
2026	\$1,746,300	\$502,208	\$2,248,508	\$2,017,487	\$231,021
2027	\$1,045,000	\$423,744	\$1,468,744	\$1,227,616	\$241,128
2028	\$775,000	\$380,150	\$1,155,150	\$1,227,616	\$(72,466)
2029	\$815,000	\$348,642	\$1,163,642	\$1,227,616	\$(63,974)
2030	\$850,000	\$315,521	\$1,165,521	\$1,227,616	\$(62,095)
2031	\$875,000	\$280,712	\$1,155,712	\$1,227,616	\$(71,904)
2032	\$805,000	\$244,690	\$1,049,690	\$1,227,616	\$(177,926)
2033	\$845,000	\$210,604	\$1,055,604	\$1,169,636	\$(114,032)
2034	\$880,000	\$174,816	\$1,054,816	\$1,109,570	\$(54,754)
2035	\$915,000	\$140,390	\$1,055,390	\$1,109,570	\$(54,180)
2036	\$515,000	\$104,550	\$619,550	\$725,945	\$(106,395)
2037	\$425,000	\$81,900	\$506,900	\$586,954	\$(80,054)
2038	\$445,000	\$62,775	\$507,775	\$586,954	\$(79,179)
2039	\$465,000	\$42,750	\$507,750	\$586,954	\$(79,204)
2040	\$485,000	\$21,825	\$506,825	\$586,954	\$(80,129)
	\$13,166,300	\$3,765,270	\$16,931,570	\$17,319,081	\$(387,511)

Canajoharie CSD & Fort Plain CSD: Feasibility Study for the Purpose of Centralization
Final Report – January 2025

Fort Plain CSD Debt and Projected Building Aid

includes estimates for October 2024 voter-approved project

2025	\$1,430,558	\$534,629	\$1,965,187	\$2,030,501	\$(65,314)
2026	\$638,116	\$466,179	\$1,104,295	\$1,146,722	\$(42,427)
2027	\$680,897	\$882,148	\$1,563,045	\$1,146,722	\$416,323
2028	\$1,108,824	\$937,571	\$2,046,395	\$2,069,847	\$(23,452)
2029	\$1,156,905	\$878,140	\$2,035,045	\$2,069,847	\$(34,802)
2030	\$1,225,147	\$816,098	\$2,041,245	\$2,069,847	\$(28,602)
2031	\$1,288,559	\$750,336	\$2,038,895	\$2,069,847	\$(30,952)
2032	\$1,352,149	\$685,696	\$2,037,845	\$2,069,847	\$(32,002)
2033	\$1,415,927	\$617,568	\$2,033,495	\$2,069,847	\$(36,352)
2034	\$1,494,903	\$546,042	\$2,040,945	\$2,069,847	\$(28,902)
2035	\$1,559,088	\$476,501	\$2,035,589	\$2,069,847	\$(34,258)
2036	\$1,633,491	\$403,785	\$2,037,276	\$2,069,847	\$(32,571)
2037	\$1,008,125	\$326,964	\$1,335,089	\$1,385,876	\$(50,787)
2038	\$1,063,002	\$274,474	\$1,337,476	\$1,362,067	\$(24,591)
2039	\$1,118,134	\$218,661	\$1,336,795	\$1,338,257	\$(1,462)
2040	\$1,123,575	\$159,841	\$1,283,416	\$1,257,463	\$25,953
2041	\$825,000	\$102,000	\$927,000	\$923,125	\$3,875
2042	\$875,000	\$52,500	\$927,500	\$923,125	\$4,375
	\$20,997,400	\$9,129,133	\$30,126,533	\$30,142,481	\$(15,948)

Fiscal Stewardship & Financial Planning

Financial Position

The financial position of the school district includes a summary of the assets, liabilities and fund balance. The primary indicator of fiscal health is fund balance (or the savings of the school district).

	Canajoharie CSD	Fort Plain CSD
General Fund Balance		
Non-spendable	\$ -	\$ -
Restricted Reserves	\$ 8,265,107	\$ 13,115,010
Assigned Fund Balance	\$ 1,113,128	\$ 937,004
Unassigned Fund Balance	\$ 3,702,511	\$ 953,761
Total Fund Balance	\$ 13,080,746	\$ 15,005,775
Employee Benefit Accrued Liability	\$ 54,220	\$ 1,121,316
Workers' Compensation	\$ -	\$ 210,068
Capital Reserve*	\$ 3,863,768	\$ 8,680,000
Capital Reserve - Buses	\$ 305,937	\$ -
Repair Reserve	\$ 73,756	\$ 300,000
Retirement Contribution Reserve (ERS)	\$ 3,188,067	\$ 1,393,936
Retirement contribution - Sub Fund (TRS)	\$ 630,523	\$ 909,690
Unemployment Insurance Reserve	\$ 148,836	\$ 500,000
Total Restricted Reserves	\$ 8,265,107	\$ 13,115,010
Debt Service		
Assigned Fund Balance	\$ 196,165	\$ 1,464,489

* The recently approved capital project in Fort Plain includes the use of \$1,180,000 from the capital reserve.

Long-Range Fiscal Plans

Long-range planning (LRP) is a process that typically spans several years, during which the school districts review prior actual budget performance and anticipate future revenues and expenditures based on potential challenges and opportunities. The reliability of the LRP depends heavily on the forecasts. It is a snapshot at a specific point in time and provides the districts with the ability to make strategic decisions based on anticipated changes.

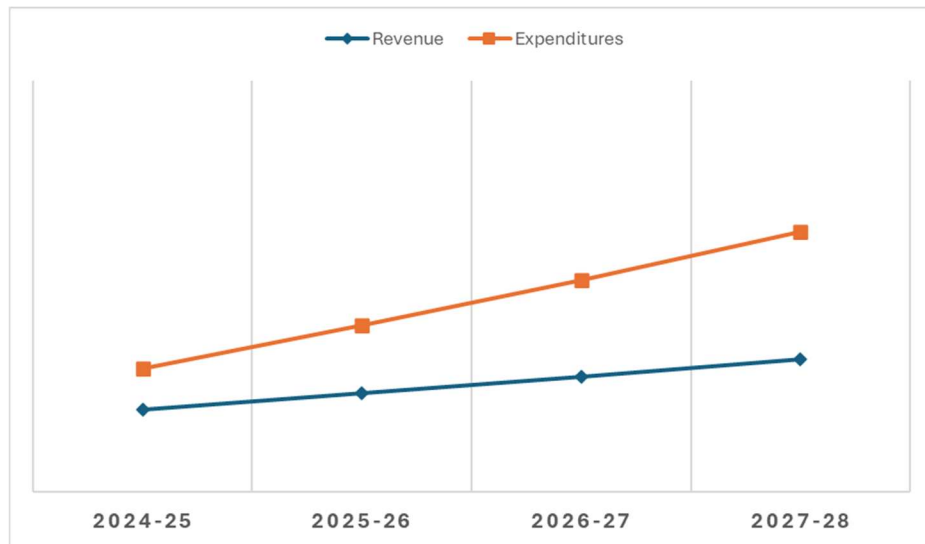
Canajoharie CSD	2023-24 Audited	2024-25 Budget
Revenues	\$25,939,365	\$24,510,672
Expenditures	\$22,561,802	\$25,405,843
Operating Surplus (Deficit)*	\$ 3,377,563	\$ (895,171)

Fort Plain CSD	2023-24 Audited	2024-25 Budget
Revenues	\$23,149,303	\$23,644,000
Expenditures	\$20,986,693	\$23,844,000
Operating Surplus (Deficit)*	\$ 2,162,610	\$ (200,000)

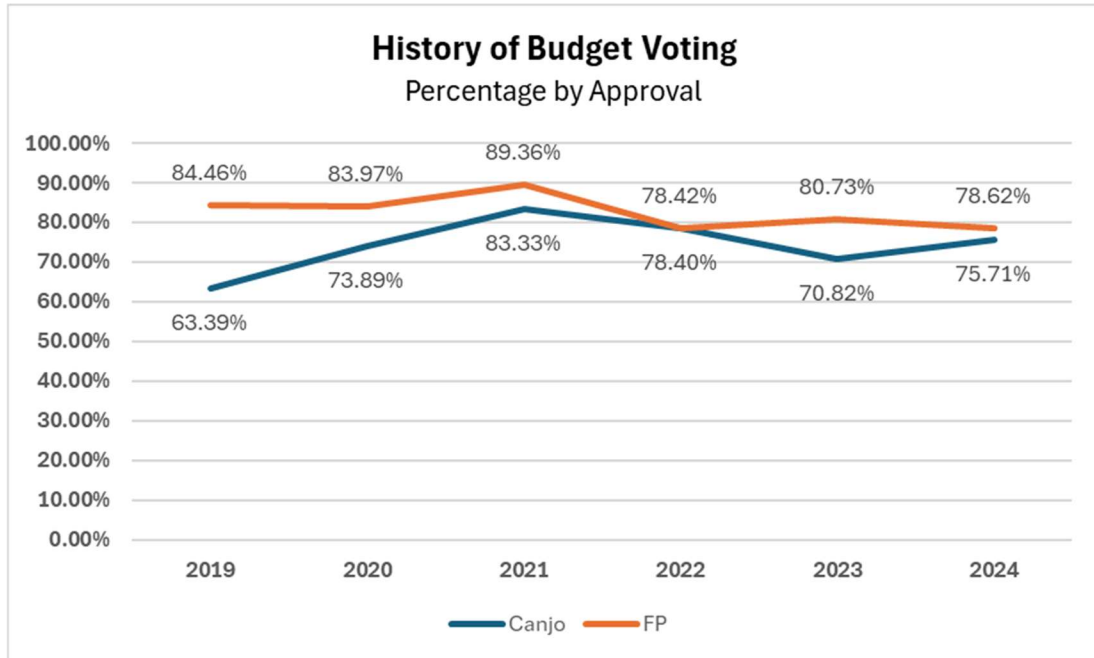
*The operating surpluses generated in 2023-24 were unique due to one-time revenues including COVID related reimbursements and Education Stabilization Funds.

Merged district Long Range Projection:

Both districts are in a very sound financial position; however, anticipated expenditures will outpace forecasted revenues over time. The average increase in expenditures ranges from 4%-6% while revenue increases range from 2%-3%. In order to bridge the gap and balance future budgets, the districts may utilize reserves or make changes to programming/personnel.



Budget Approval % Margins



Year	Canajoharie CSD	Percentage	Fort Plain CSD	Percentage
2024	134 Yes - 43 No	75.71%	239 Yes - 65 No	78.62%
2023	165 Yes - 68 No	70.82%	88 Yes - 21 No	80.73%
2022	225 Yes - 62 No	78.40%	109 Yes - 30 No	78.42%
2021	180 Yes - 36 No	83.33%	126 Yes - 15 No	89.36%
2020	283 Yes - 100 No	73.89%	241 Yes - 46 No	83.97%
2019	161 Yes - 93 No	63.39%	163 Yes - 30 No	84.46%
Average		74.25%		82.59%

Reorganization Incentive Aid

The 2024-25 Enacted Budget enhances operating aid for districts that merge after July 1, 2024. For districts that merge after July 1, 2024, selected operating aid is based on Foundation Aid in the year prior to the merger. Incentive Operating Aid is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Incentive Operating Aid for the first 5 years of operation as a reorganized district} = 0.40 \times (\text{Selected Operating Aid} \times \text{Total Aidable Pupil Units})$$

After receiving Reorganization Incentive Operating Aid for five years, the additional 40 percent apportionment will be reduced by four percentage points each year until the apportionment reaches zero in the fifteenth year of reorganization. The sum of Selected Operating Aid per pupil multiplied by TAPU plus Incentive Operating Aid may not exceed 95 percent of the district's Approved Operating Expenditure used for aid calculations in the current school year.

The merged district would be eligible for the following RIOA:

Year	School Year	Percentage	Additional Aid
1	2026-27	40%	\$5,949,427
2	2027-28	40%	\$5,949,427
3	2028-29	40%	\$5,949,427
4	2029-30	40%	\$5,949,427
5	2030-31	40%	\$5,949,427
6	2031-32	36%	\$5,354,484
7	2032-33	32%	\$4,759,541
8	2033-34	28%	\$4,164,599
9	2034-35	24%	\$3,569,656
10	2035-36	20%	\$2,974,713
11	2036-37	16%	\$2,379,771
12	2037-38	12%	\$1,784,828
13	2038-39	8%	\$1,189,885
14	2039-40	4%	\$ 594,943
15	2040-41	0%	\$ -0-
TOTAL			\$56,519,554

Important Note: Incentive Aid amounts provided are a projection, and all actual Aid apportioned to a new school district following a reorganization is subject to final calculation by the State Aid Unit once all variables are fixed for the coming year.

Reorganization Incentive Building Aid

For school districts that reorganize, Incentive Building Aid is 30 percent of the Building Aid otherwise paid on an approved building project. Incentive Building Aid is made available for new facilities capital projects started within 10 years of the effective date of reorganization. In no case, however, may the sum of regular Building Aid and Incentive Building Aid exceed 95 percent of approved building expenditures in these areas or 98 percent for districts eligible for the high-needs Supplemental Building Aid Ratio.

Building Aid Ratios

Canajoharie CSD	Fort Plain CSD	Merged District
93.7%	92.4%	95%

Additional notes for clarification based on NYSED Review:

- Reorganization Incentive Building Aid: New Buildings / Adding New Space
 - When adding new space, the highest district building aid ratio prior to reorganizing is increased by 30%, **up to a maximum Aid Ratio of 95%**. The Office of Facilities Planning calculates a **Maximum Cost Allowance for Building Aid**, based on projected enrollment after reorganizing, for all new construction projects. Costs above the MCA are not eligible for Building Aid.
 - New capital projects must start within the first 10 years after a merger for enhanced Building Aid ratio to be applied.
 - Enhanced ratio is not permanent.
 - *****Note** also that the highest ratio is increased by 30% of that ratio—so the formula is: $(Ratio \times 0.3) + (Ratio) = \text{Enhanced Ratio}$, where Enhanced Ratio cannot be greater than 95%.
- Reorganization Incentive Building Aid: Renovating Existing Facilities and Existing Capital Debt
 - If the reorganized District renovates current buildings **without adding new space**, approved projects are aided at the enhanced Building Aid Ratio.
 - Maximum Cost Allowance for existing buildings will not be reduced if no new space is added during renovation.
 - Additionally, NYSED will adjust Building Aid payments for existing capital debt to match the higher of the two previous districts’ building aid ratios (Aid Ratio is not enhanced).

Community Engagement

ThoughtExchange 1 – June/July 2024

What are your initial thoughts and questions about the feasibility study for the purpose of consolidation of Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD?



245
Participants

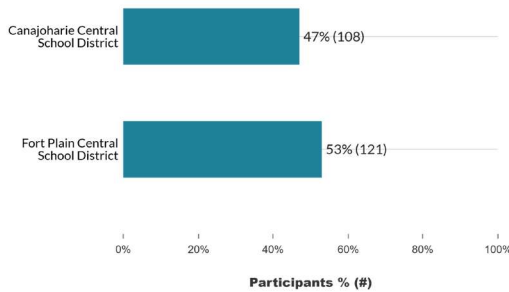


155
Thoughts

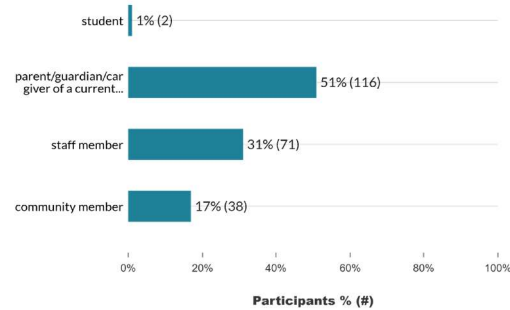


5,063
Ratings

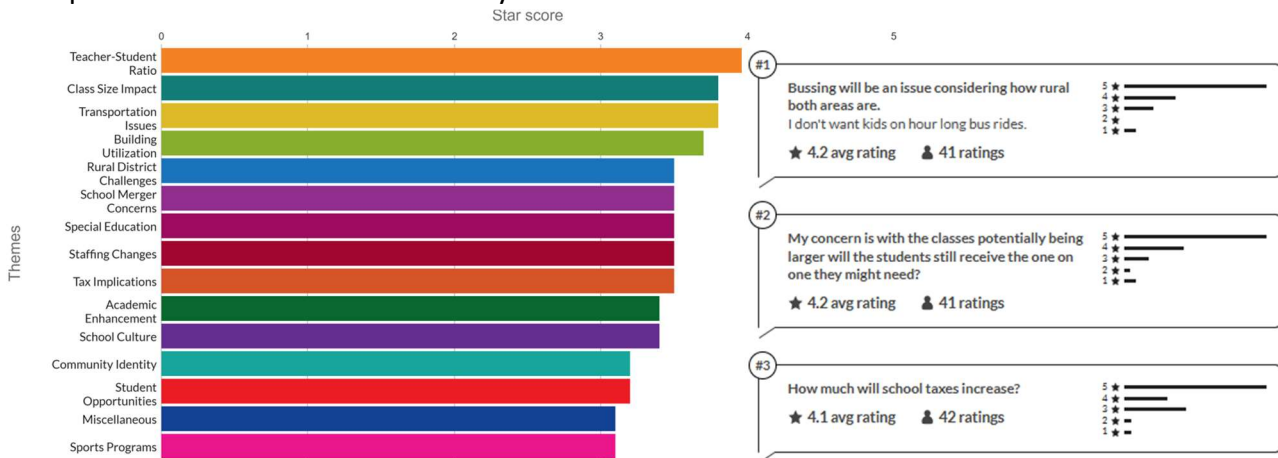
Which community do you reside in?



Which best describes your current role within your school community?



The responses to the feasibility study for consolidating Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD reveal a mix of opinions and concerns. Some respondents are indifferent, while others strongly oppose or support the merger. Key concerns include potential increases in class sizes, longer bus rides, and the impact on individualized attention and school traditions. Questions about tax implications, transportation logistics, and the allocation of buildings and staff are prevalent. Supporters highlight potential academic and extracurricular benefits, while opponents fear negative impacts on school culture and community identity. Overall, the responses underscore the need for thorough, transparent evaluation and community involvement.



Full Interactive Report at: <https://my.thoughtexchange.com/report/d81523e941d220da3fb7a6aa7bfc8f8d>

Top Themes

1 Class Sizes

Participants frequently expressed concerns about the potential increase in class sizes resulting from the merger. Many believe that smaller class sizes allow for more individualized attention and better student outcomes. There is a fear that larger class sizes could lead to disengagement and make it harder for teachers to differentiate instruction. Some responses highlighted the benefits of small class sizes in rural districts, emphasizing the importance of maintaining this aspect. Overall, the perception is that increased class sizes could negatively impact the quality of education.

2 Transportation

Transportation emerged as a significant concern, with many participants worried about longer bus rides for students. The rural nature of both districts means that transportation logistics could become more complicated and costly. There are concerns about the impact on students' time, including less time for homework and family. Some responses also mentioned the potential need for increased transportation budgets and the challenges of coordinating bus schedules. Overall, the perception is that transportation could be a major logistical and financial hurdle in the merger.

3 Educational Opportunities

Many participants are optimistic that the merger could provide greater academic and extracurricular opportunities for students. They believe that combining resources could lead to a more diverse array of courses and programs, including advanced placement and vocational training. Some responses highlighted the potential for enhanced learning experiences and better preparation for college and careers. However, there are also concerns about the potential loss of existing programs and the need to ensure that new opportunities are equitably distributed. Overall, the perception is mixed, with hopes for improved opportunities tempered by concerns about implementation.

4 Financial Impact

The financial implications of the merger are a major concern for many participants. Some believe that merging could lead to cost savings and more efficient use of resources, potentially lowering taxes. However, others are worried about the initial costs of the merger, including potential increases in taxes and the financial burden of new facilities or transportation needs. There are also concerns about the sustainability of any financial benefits and the impact on staff salaries and job security. Overall, the perception is that the financial impact needs careful consideration and transparent communication.

5 Community and Culture

Participants expressed concerns about the impact of the merger on community identity and school culture. Many value the small, close-knit nature of their current schools and worry that merging could dilute this sense of community. There are also concerns about how traditions and school spirit will be maintained in a larger, combined district. Some responses highlighted the importance of involving the community in the decision-making process to ensure that all voices are heard. Overall, the perception is that maintaining a strong sense of community and culture is crucial for the success of the merger.

Top Thoughts


- 4.2 Bussing will be an issue considering how rural both areas are. I don't want kids on hour long bus rides.
- 4.2 My concern is with the classes potentially being larger will the students still receive the one on one they might need?
- 4.2 How much will school taxes increase?
- 4.1 Transportation and Class Sizes - Transportation would be horrible as both schools cover large areas. I don't want to drive 20+ minutes each way, twice Rural schools mean smaller class sizes which is a huge appeal for those who attend FP and Canjo. Student to teacher ratio is important.
- 4.1 Will this merger enhance the education of the students? Will programs get lost or cut? Will class sizes remain small? Who will make these decisions? A merger should consider the improvement of the education experience, not only the money that could be saved by merging.
- 4.1 I am curious as to the current staffing. How many cuts will have to be made and how will this impact class sizes. I feel smaller class sizes are better for students.
- 4.1 I believe a thorough study with transparency and community involvement is essential. School identity is a major factor and the community needs to know all the information to make an informed decision without emotion
- 4.1 With having a bigger school district I believe departmentalizing the elementary school is a negative move. This is important because young students need to be able to build a strong relationship with their teacher.
- 4 The draw to the rural districts is smaller class sizes.
- 4 What will the child to teacher ratio be A lot of kids struggle in school and putting more kids in with less 1:1 time does not seem like the best choice
- 4 1st thought is that this is going to be detrimental to the students due to increased class sizes and longer bus commutes. Small class sizes allow for more individualized attention and longer bus commutes are an increased risk for accidents.
- 4 Will staff be cut? Will class sizes remain reasonable? What buildings will be used? The schools in both communities are a central part of the community identity. That identity should be nurtured.
- 4 I am wondering about transportation. Will this lengthen student time on busses. It is already a challenge to meet time frames with working parents. Earlier / later could affect that negatively.
- 4 I think the smaller classes give better attention to the kids. I feel kids can focus more when theres not 25+ students in a room. More time to work with the students individually.

ThoughtExchange 2 – October/November 2024

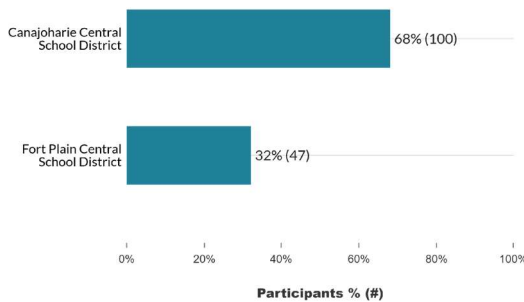
As we're about mid-way through the feasibility study for the purpose of consolidation of Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD process, what are your thoughts and questions?

 **155**
Participants

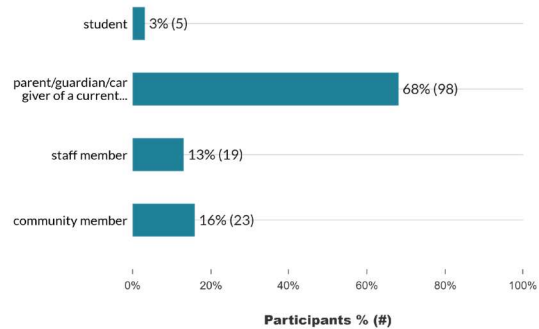
 **91**
Thoughts

 **2,232**
Ratings

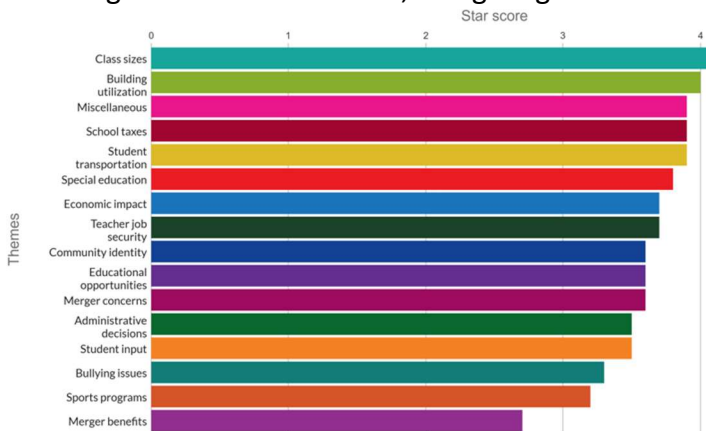
Which community do you reside in?



Which best describes your current role within your school community?



Respondents expressed a range of concerns and opinions about the potential consolidation of Canajoharie CSD and Fort Plain CSD. Key issues include the impact on taxes, job security for teachers, class sizes, and the potential for vacant buildings. Some worry about losing the small community feel and the effect on student transportation and school identity. Others see potential benefits in expanded educational opportunities and resources. There is a call for more detailed information and community input, particularly from students. Overall, opinions are divided, with some strongly against the merger and others in favor, citing long-term benefits.



#1

Class size is extremely important in the lower grade levels. How will a merger effect the number of students in each classroom? Most students learn better in smaller classes.

★ 4.3 avg rating 🗣️ 11 ratings

#2

Concerned about the class sizes. A reduced availability of individualized attention between students and teachers with the increased volume of students in each class/grade level.

★ 4.2 avg rating 🗣️ 12 ratings

#3

I hope that the results of the study will be made public by the organization doing the study in an unbiased format. The public deserves to know how a merger will effect the education of all students, the tax rates and the employees currently employed at both schools

★ 4.2 avg rating 🗣️ 11 ratings

Full Interactive Report at:

<https://my.thoughtexchange.com/report/1f3e613a9d6cce833d2085eec1478e24>

Top Themes

1 Taxes

Concerns about taxes were frequently mentioned by participants. Many are worried that a merger will lead to increased taxes, which they feel they cannot afford. Some participants noted that Fort Plain CSD has been more conservative with tax increases compared to Canajoharie. There is also skepticism about whether the promised financial benefits of the merger will materialize. Overall, the perception is that the financial implications of the merger are a significant concern for the community.

2 Job Security

Job security for teachers and staff is a major concern among participants. Many fear that the merger will result in job losses, particularly after the initial state funding boost diminishes. There is also anxiety about the potential for teachers to be spread too thin, affecting the quality of education. Some participants are already considering applying to other districts due to the uncertainty. The overall sentiment is one of apprehension and uncertainty regarding employment stability.

3 Class Size

Participants are concerned about the impact of the merger on class sizes. Many believe that smaller class sizes are beneficial for student learning and fear that a merger will lead to overcrowded classrooms. There is a worry that larger class sizes will reduce the amount of individualized attention students receive. Some participants also mentioned the potential negative impact on special education services. The general perception is that maintaining small class sizes is crucial for effective education.

4 Community Identity

The potential loss of community identity is a significant concern for many participants. They fear that merging the two districts will dilute the unique characteristics and sense of community in each area. There is also concern about the impact on community events and traditions, such as homecoming parades. Some participants feel that the merger could lead to a loss of community involvement and pride. Overall, the sentiment is that preserving community identity is important.

5 Building Utilization

Participants are worried about what will happen to the school buildings if the merger goes through. There is concern that vacant buildings will become liabilities and contribute to economic and social blight in the community. Some participants are also worried about the logistics of where different grade levels will be housed. The potential for increased transportation challenges and longer bus rides is another concern. The overall perception is that clear plans for building utilization are needed.

Top Thoughts

- 4.3 Class size is extremely important in the lower grade levels. How will a merger effect the number of students in each classroom? Most students learn better in smaller classes.
- 4.2 Concerned about the class sizes. A reduced availability of individualized attention between students and teachers with the increased volume of students in each class/grade level.
- 4.2 I hope that the results of the study will be made public by the organization doing the study in an unbiased format. The public deserves to know how a merger will effect the education of all students, the tax rates and the employees currently employed at both schools
- 4.1 I just reviewed all the documents pertaining to findings thus far. There is no real information outlining any benefit to doing this. We cannot make a decision based on hypothetical, vague data. Looking at a neighboring district, what was projected to happen, actually did not happen.

- 4.1 Will school taxes go up? I can't afford the school taxes now
- 4.0 Has there been thought of what grades would be located at what school building if the merger moves forward? Having siblings close and available for transportation to/from school is important.
- 4.0 It's still unclear what a merger would actually look like in terms of building utilization, academics, extracurriculars, staffing, taxes, etc. Without a clear idea, it seems it would be irresponsible to vote in favor of a merger that can only be defined after it happens.
- 4.0 How long does the state finding boost last once a school merger takes place? I'm concerned about the possible spike in school taxes once the state cuts back on giving a large percent of the school budget post-merger.
- 4.0 I'm wondering if this will truly expand class electives and optics for students, or will there be projected teacher cuts in next 5yrs? It seems realistic to keep all teachers initially while the state gives you a budget boost but once the budget boost goes down, then what?
- 4.0 Why would we compare ourselves to districts who have merged between 30-70 years ago (BP, CV, CR and FF) as stated and not the most recent one (OESJ) . It's common knowledge OESJ did not go smoothly. Taxes were projected to go down. They didn't. Buildings were supposed to remain open. They didn't.
- 4.0 I don't feel as if much information has been answered in terms of specific questions from the community. Everything still seems very vague. I think community members from both districts have certain topics/concerns that are very important to them and how they would vote.

Focus Groups

On October 30, 2024, three (3) focus groups were convened to explore perceptions, understand thinking, and gather feedback for consideration regarding the potential merger. The first focus group comprised solely of high school-aged students representing both school districts. The second and third focus groups comprised volunteer community members representing both communities.

Focus Group 1 – Students

Perceived Benefits

While these points were mentioned as potential benefits, it's important to note that students also expressed concerns and questions about the merger. Their support was often balanced with apprehensions about changes to their current school experience and community identity.

- **Expanded Course Offerings:** Students expressed enthusiasm about the possibility of more diverse class options, particularly Advanced Placement (AP) courses and electives that might not be feasible in smaller, separate districts
- **Enhanced Educational Opportunities:** There was a general sense that a merged district could provide better educational resources and experiences, potentially preparing students more effectively for college and careers
- **Larger Student Body:** Some students saw benefits in having a larger peer group, which could lead to more diverse social interactions and friendships
- **Improved Extracurricular Activities:** Students mentioned the potential for new or expanded extracurricular offerings due to the combined resources and larger student population - students' expressed interest activities like: marching band, color guard, FFA, and orchestra
- **Better Resources:** There was an expectation that a merged district might have access to improved technology, facilities, and educational materials
- **Competitive Sports Teams:** Some athletes saw the potential for stronger, more competitive sports teams by combining talent from both schools in those sports, not already merged
- **Preparation for Future:** Students recognized that exposure to a larger, more diverse student body could better prepare them for experiences beyond high school
- **Potential for Specialized Programs:** There was interest in the possibility of introducing specialized programs or courses that weren't currently available in either school
- **Long-term Sustainability:** Some students understood that merging could help ensure the long-term viability of quality education in their communities
- **Cultural Exchange:** A few students saw value in the opportunity to interact with and learn from students from the neighboring community

Perceived Challenges or Obstacles

These points reflect the students' deep connection to their current school experiences and their apprehensions about potential changes. While they recognized potential benefits, these questions were significant in their discussions about the merger.

- **Potential impact on the small-school atmosphere:** Students expressed concern about losing the close-knit, familiar environment they currently enjoy in their smaller schools
- **Longer Bus Rides:** Many students worried about potentially longer commutes, especially those living farther from the school buildings
- **Impact on Sports Teams:** There were questions regarding how merging would affect existing sports teams, including competition for spots and changes in team dynamics, for those sports not already merged
- **School Identity:** Students expressed strong connections, especially for their parents, to their current school identities, mascots, and traditions - many students expressed there is current connections between the two districts in sports, musicals, and social activities
- **Class Sizes:** Some students worried that class sizes might increase, potentially reducing individual attention from teachers
- **Social Adjustments:** There were questions regarding integrating with students from the other school and potential conflicts of blending the school cultures
- **Extracurricular Participation:** Students wondered if a larger student body might mean fewer opportunities to participate in certain activities or sports
- **Community Support:** Some students questioned whether the strong community support they currently experience would be diluted in a larger, merged district
- **Transportation for After-School Activities:** Questions were raised about how students would get to and from after-school activities, especially with potentially longer distances
- **Adjustment Period:** Students recognized there would be a challenging adjustment period as the two school cultures merged
- **Teacher-Student Relationships:** Some students worried about maintaining close relationships with teachers in a potentially larger school environment
- **Balancing Traditions:** There were questions about how to fairly incorporate traditions and practices from both schools
- **BOCES** - students identified questions about the potential for restricted openings or opportunities at BOCES, relating to a “quota” system for number of student slots per district currently within the region

What Adults Should Consider

Students were directly asked to provide feedback and thoughts for adults in this process. By addressing these elements with care, stakeholders can make informed decisions that honor the unique identities of both districts while supporting a thriving educational future. When exploring the potential impacts of centralization, students recommend that it is essential for adults to thoughtfully consider the following perspectives:

- **Focus on the Greater Good:** Set aside personal pride and prioritize the collective future of both communities and students.
- **Social Dynamics:** Acknowledge the proximity of the districts, yet remain sensitive to the differences in student personalities and interactions.
- **Transportation Challenges:** Consider ways to minimize extended bus times for students, particularly those from farther distances.
- **Educational Outcomes:** Weigh the educational advantages and disadvantages for students, understanding that change can bring both opportunities and challenges.
- **Class Sizes:** Assess the implications of increased student class sizes on individualized attention and quality of education.
- **Long-Term Vision:** Look beyond the immediate future, planning for the next 10–20 years to ensure sustainable benefits.
- **Community Growth:** Recognize that centralization might attract new families to the area, enhancing its appeal for prospective residents.
- **Enrollment Policies:** Deliberate on whether to open or limit enrollment for students from outside the districts.
- **Safety Considerations:** Evaluate the potential effects of increased student populations on safety and social harmony, balancing risks and opportunities for new friendships.
- **Preserving Traditions:** Understand and respect the emotional attachment to traditions, ensuring that symbols of community identity and shared history are preserved.
- **Cultural Integration:** Appreciate the importance of both school communities while fostering unity in the merged district.

Focus Group 2 – Community

Perceived Benefits

It's important to note that while these benefits were recognized, they were often discussed alongside questions regarding preserving community identity and addressing logistical challenges. The overall tone was one of cautious optimism, acknowledging potential advantages while also being mindful of the complexities involved in merging two distinct school communities.

- **Financial Stability:** Participants highlighted the significant financial benefits, particularly the additional state aid for 15 years, which could provide long-term stability for the district
- **Enhanced Educational Programs:** There was recognition that a larger district could offer a wider range of courses and programs, potentially including more advanced classes and specialized subjects
- **Improved Resource Allocation:** Some participants saw the potential for more efficient use of resources, both in terms of personnel and facilities, leading to better overall educational experiences
- **Teacher Recruitment and Retention:** A merged district was viewed as potentially more attractive for recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, especially in specialized subject areas
- **Expanded Extracurricular Opportunities:** Participants noted that a larger student body could support a more diverse range of extracurricular activities and sports programs
- **Modernized Facilities:** Some saw the potential for upgrading and better utilizing school facilities with the combined resources of both districts
- **Long-term Sustainability:** There was acknowledgment that merging could help ensure the long-term viability of quality education in both communities, especially in light of declining rural populations
- **Shared Services:** Participants recognized the benefits of sharing services and resources between the two communities, potentially leading to cost savings and improved efficiencies
- **Broader Social Experiences:** Some noted that students would have the opportunity to interact with a larger, more diverse peer group, potentially better preparing them for future experiences
- **Competitive Advantage:** A few participants suggested that a larger, merged district might be better positioned to compete with other districts in terms of educational offerings and resources

Perceived Challenges or Obstacles

These points reflect a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in merging two school districts. While participants recognized potential benefits, they also showed a keen awareness of the challenges that would need to be addressed for a successful merger.

- **Transportation Logistics:** Participants expressed questions about the impact of longer bus routes for students, especially those living at the edges of the district
- **Community Identity:** There were questions regarding preserving unique identities of Canajoharie and Fort Plain, including school traditions and community connections
- **Staff Concerns:** Questions were raised about potential impacts on staff, including job security, seniority, and changes in work locations
- **Building Utilization:** Participants wondered how existing school buildings would be used and whether some might be closed or repurposed
- **Cultural Integration:** Participants discussed considerations related to merging two distinct school cultures and the potential for conflicts or difficulties in blending communities
- **Decision-Making Process:** Some participants questioned how decisions would be made in a merged district and whether both communities would have equal representation.
- **Impact on Class Sizes:** There were questions regarding potential increases in class sizes and how this might affect the quality of education
- **Extracurricular Activities:** Questions were raised about how sports teams and other extracurricular activities would be managed in a merged district
- **Transition Period:** Participants recognized that there would be challenges during the transition period as systems and cultures are integrated
- **Long-term Financial Planning:** While financial benefits were acknowledged, there were questions about long-term financial sustainability after the initial merger incentives end.
- **Community Support:** Some worried about maintaining strong community support for schools if the merger led to a perceived loss of local control
- **Student Adjustment:** Questions were expressed about how students would adapt to new environments, potentially larger schools, and different peer groups

Focus Group 3 – Community

Perceived Benefits

It's important to note that in Focus Group 3, while these benefits were acknowledged, there was also significant discussion about concerns and challenges. The participants seemed to approach the potential merger with a balanced perspective, recognizing both opportunities and obstacles. The overall tone was one of cautious consideration, with participants weighing the potential benefits against the complexities of merging two distinct school communities.

- **Expanded Educational Opportunities:** Participants recognized that a merged district could offer a wider range of courses and programs, potentially benefiting students with diverse interests and needs
- **Resource Optimization:** There was acknowledgment that combining resources could lead to more efficient use of facilities, staff, and educational materials
- **Financial Stability:** While not explicitly discussed in detail, there was an underlying recognition of the potential financial benefits, including additional state aid
- **Enhanced Extracurricular Activities:** Some participants saw the potential for a broader range of extracurricular offerings due to the larger student population
- **Improved Staffing:** There was mention of the possibility of attracting and retaining more specialized teachers and support staff in a larger district
- **Long-term Sustainability:** Participants recognized that merging could help ensure the long-term viability of quality education in both communities, especially in light of demographic changes
- **Broader Social Experiences:** Some noted that students would have the opportunity to interact with a larger, more diverse peer group, potentially better preparing them for future experiences
- **Potential for Specialized Programs:** There was interest in the possibility of introducing more specialized programs or services that might not be feasible in smaller, separate districts
- **Modernized Facilities:** Some participants saw the potential for upgrading and better utilizing school facilities with the combined resources of both districts
- **Collaborative Opportunities:** There was recognition that a merger could foster more collaboration between educators, potentially leading to innovative teaching practices

Perceived Challenges or Obstacles

These points reflect a deep consideration of the practical and emotional challenges involved in merging two school districts. While participants seemed to understand potential benefits, they also showed a strong awareness of the complexities and potential drawbacks that would need to be carefully addressed for a successful merger.

- **Community Identity:** Participants expressed questions regarding maintaining the unique identities of both Canajoharie and Fort Plain communities within a merged district
- **Transportation Issues:** There were worries about longer bus rides for students, particularly those living at the outskirts of the district
- **Staff Impact:** Questions were raised about potential changes in staffing, including job security, seniority, and possible relocations
- **School Culture Integration:** Participants discussed considerations related to merging two distinct school cultures and the potential challenges in creating a unified environment
- **Building Utilization:** Participants wondered how existing school buildings would be used and whether some might be closed or repurposed
- **Student Adjustment:** There were questions regarding how students would adapt to new environments, potentially larger schools, and different peer groups
- **Equitable Resource Distribution:** Questions were raised about how resources would be fairly distributed between the two communities in a merged district
- **Decision-Making Representation:** Participants expressed questions regarding ensuring equal representation from both communities in district decision-making processes
- **Impact on Special Education Services:** There were questions about how special education programs and services might be affected by the merger
- **Transition Challenges:** Participants recognized the difficulties that might arise during the transition period as systems and cultures are integrated
- **Long-term Sustainability:** While potential benefits were acknowledged, there were questions about the long-term sustainability of the merged district after initial incentives end
- **Community Engagement:** Some worried about maintaining strong community involvement and support if the merger led to a perceived loss of local control
- **Class Sizes and Individual Attention:** There were questions regarding potential increases in class sizes and how this might affect individualized student attention

Project Team

We believe our strength in providing the analysis, insights, and recommendations needed for this project lies in our depth of experience, breadth of leadership competencies, and collaborative approach. As you can see from our distinguished, veteran, and accomplished team, we have the team to provide the needed sensible, pragmatic, and valued process that will result in actionable, viable, and sustainable recommendations.



Jason Andrews, Principal Adviser

Jason A. Andrews, EdD has been superintendent of Windsor Central School District since January 2006, and was named the 2019 NYS Superintendent of the Year. Previously, he served as a high school teacher, coach, cocurricular adviser, and middle school principal.

In his current role, he focuses on systemic implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) as the vehicle to ensure student learning and a culture of continuous improvement. Dr. Andrews serves as the codirector of the New York State Superintendents Development Program and is a member of the State University of New York Broome Community College Board of Trustees. He also works with schools across the country as a consultant with specific expertise in strategic planning, leadership, Professional Learning Communities, Response to Intervention, and school culture.

Dr. Andrews is a leader among superintendents and currently serves as President of the NYS Council of School Superintendents, the NYS Education Commissioner's Advisory Council, and the National Center for Educational Research and Technology National Board and the Governing Board for AASA. In addition, he facilitates Board of Education strategic planning sessions and retreats across New York State for the NYS School Boards Association and various BOCES. He also works as an expert witness in cases involving school districts. Dr. Andrews served on the Board of Education for the Harpursville Central School District from 1993 to 2000. He also serves on numerous community boards and committees, with a particular emphasis on issues related to workforce development and poverty.



Matt Cole, Project Lead Facilitator

Matt is the Founder/CEO of New Ground Learning, an educational consulting practice that provides leadership services to school districts and coaching services to EdTech companies. Drawing on his 24 years as a public educator, with the last decade serving as a school superintendent, he offers practical, pragmatic, and innovative insights into fostering well-being within an organization, cultivating common purpose and collective commitment through *Same Page Leading*, creating high performance, results-focused experiences, cracking-the-code for aligning aspirations with perspirations, and calibrating strategy for intentional, high performance.

As a facilitator, coach, or consultant, he provides process-minded, results-oriented strategic leadership and experiences to leaders and institutions in the private and public sectors. Whether acting as a leadership coach, workshop facilitator, or keynote speaker, he engages learners in developing an intentional culture of continuous improvement to ensure equity in opportunity and access for all to pursue excellence driven by empowerment and efficacy.



Scott Bischooping, Project Facilitator

Scott retired as District Superintendent for Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES in July 2019 where he served since Feb 2013. He currently consults with districts and serves as the Director of Development & Member Services for NYS Rural Schools Association.

He previously served in the Livonia CSD for 25 years in many different capacities, including Superintendent, Business Education Teacher, High School Principal, and Director of Instruction. Most recently Scott served as an Interim Superintendent with several of our rural districts.



Cosimo Tangorra, Merger/Consolidation Expert Adviser

Cos, superintendent of schools for the New Hartford Central School District, has extensive and varied management experience in P–12 Education. He has been a teacher, academic administrator, principal, and superintendent of schools. He also served as Deputy Commissioner of Education for the State of New York.

An advocate for equity, he is dedicated to strategic planning that focuses on programs that prepare students for “their futures and not our past,” modernizing school facilities, and community partnerships. School District Reorganization is an area of professional interest for Dr. Tangorra and was the topic of his doctoral dissertation.



Jeff Ziegler, Educational Experiences Expert Adviser

Jeff is a private education consultant, with 40 years in public education. He served as the superintendent of the Fort Edward Union Free School District for eight years. Since retiring as Fort Edward superintendent in 2016, Ziegler has served in numerous interim leadership positions. Most recent positions include interim superintendent at the Duaneburg Central School District, prior to that, Albany City School District at the Alternative School, and interim superintendent stints at both Middleburgh and Fort Plain School Districts. Ziegler also served as interim curriculum director in the Lake George and Schuylerville school districts.



Kathryn Blackman, Financial Sustainability Expert Adviser

Since 2013, Kathy has served as the Controller of the Central Business Office at Broome Tioga BOCES. Prior to working for BOCES, she served as the School Business Official at Chenango Forks Central School District for 19 years. Kathy has 40 years of school finance experience - including being an external auditor for school districts. She earned her MBA and is currently a NYS Certified Public Accountant. Kathy has an abundance of hands-on experience in management and business leadership. As a result, she is a resourceful and visionary leader who demonstrates a strong commitment and dedication to successful management of the organization.



John Evans, Organizational Capacity Expert Adviser

John is currently the shared superintendent for the Roscoe & Livingston Manor Central School Districts. During his 30 years in education, John has served as a technology education teacher, coach, Technology Director, Athletic Director, Adjunct Professor for NYIT, 7-12 Assistant Principal, Assistant Superintendent and for the last fourteen of those years serving as the superintendent for the Roscoe CSD.

During his 14 tenure at RCS John spent ten of those years also shared as the superintendent for the Downsville CSD. Lastly, something unheard of in NY, from January of 2017 through June of 2022 John served as a 3-way shared superintendent for the Roscoe, Downsville & Livingston Manor CSD. This unique shared leadership model has allowed these three small rural schools to achieve greater efficiencies through sharing and collaboration while greatly expanding the educational opportunities for students across all three districts.