CANAJOHARIE & FORT PLAIN
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

MERGER
Information Sheet

MERGER AID

- The merged district would receive $83.9 million in additional state aid over 14 years.
- Aid could be used to equalize tax rates, advance academic programming and establish employment contracts.
- Aid could minimize the tax levy increase through 2041 and maintain adequate staffing to maximize job opportunities.

ENROLLMENT OVER TIME

Canajoharie CSD
- 2000: 93 (graduates)
- 2025: 60 (graduates)
- 2025: 50 (k-3)

Fort Plain CSD
- 2000: 72 (graduates)
- 2025: 47 (graduates)
- 2025: 42 (k-3)

There has been an overall decrease in student enrollment of 35% in both districts since 2000.

BUILDING USE AND STUDENT PROJECTIONS

Canajoharie CSD High School

Canajoharie High School currently houses the district's Grade 9-12 students. If approved, it has been recommended that the building become the merged district's high school. The following numbers show current and future/potential student population.

- 2000: 404 (Grades 9-12)
- 2025: 260 (Grades 9-12)
- 2028: 445 (Grades 9-12, with merger)
- Projected high school average, post-merger: 372 (Grades 9-12)

Fort Plain Jr./Sr.

Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School currently houses the district's Grade 7-12 students. If a merger is approved, it has been recommended that the building become the merged district's middle school (Grades 6-8). The following numbers show the current and future/potential student population.

- 2000: 456
- 2025: 286
- 2028: 344 (Grades 6-8, with merger)
- Projected middle school average, post-merger: 279 (Grades 6-8)

STUDENT/EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- District reserve and fund balances would be combined to maximize programming.
- Additional pathway options such as expanded BOCES programs including Career and Technical Education (CTE), New Visions, P-TECH.
- Special Education programming in the district.
- In-district early intervention programs.
- Additional college and career offerings.
- Increased participation in extra-curricular programs.
- Pool programs for all elementary levels.
- District-level professional development activities to transform instruction and sharing of best practices.

BENEFITS

- Maximized budgets, with a large allocation of merger aid in the first six years (62% of $83.9 million).
- The merged district would receive 95% state aid on building projects.
- Would allow for an updated reconfiguration of educational and office spaces that maximize space.

MERGED DISTRICT CONFIGURATION

Elementary: Grades PreK-5
- 2 Elementary Schools - Harry Hoag and East Hill

Middle School: Grades 6-8
- Fort Plain Jr/Sr High School

High School: Grades 9-12
- Canajoharie High School

District Office/BOCES/ Early Intervention
- Canajoharie Middle School

Community-Based Program (for example, health-based clinic)
- Fort Plain District Office

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **$83.9 million: state merger incentive aid.**
- **Tax rates: equalized.**
- **Tax increases minimized through 2041.**
- **Community-based elementary schools.**
- **All buildings utilized.**
- **Maximized job opportunities; staffing right-sized over time through attrition**
- **Expanded pathways for student learning.**
- **Transportation/commuting time for students minimized.**

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Q: Why are the districts discussing a merger again?

A: School boards and administrators throughout the years have students' and communities' needs at the forefront of decision making, particularly when there are changes to the fiscal landscape. We strive to keep our community informed about the options we are considering in light of fiscal change and as the needs of students transform--including the sharing of services or merger.

Q: What is the financial outlook for both districts?

A: Currently, both districts are in sound financial shape and able to meet their annual expenses with revenue from voter approved budgets and state and federal aid. We are concerned, however, about what the future may bring. Declining enrollment makes it more expensive, per pupil, to educate our students. If our districts continue with modest, below-tax cap increases in our budgets and receive only minimal or flat annual increases in aid, our expenses (such as increasing costs for materials and supplies, paying staff salaries and benefits and other needs related to educating students) will exceed revenue sources. This would both impact the students' educational experience and could mean either loss of programs and/or jobs in the near future.

Q: What additional tax burden will each homeowner incur if this is implemented?

A: One of the concepts behind the additional $83.9 million of state aid would be to equalize the tax rates for both districts. The plan for the 14 years of additional aid would be to minimize tax increases. The unknown is what the state will supply in foundation aid in the future.

Q: How would this impact jobs?

A: The plan is to maintain existing positions and right-size the workforce through attrition and retirement over time based on declining enrollment and redundancies that may arise. More than 50 positions are eligible for retirement from both districts in the coming three to five years. Too, a number of individuals in positions the districts now contract for are eligible to retire in the coming years.

Q: What would happen to the school buildings?

A: It has been recommended that a merged district maintain the two community elementary schools (preK-5), create a middle school (grades 6-8) at the Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School and a high school (grades 9-12) at Canajoharie High School. Canajoharie Middle School would be repurposed for district offices, special programming and early intervention. Fort Plain district offices could be repurposed for community-based organizations, such as a health-based clinic.

Q: How would a new Board of Education be created for a new, merged district?

A: If there is a binding vote, a question on the ballot will ask, "How many BOE members will serve the new district; 5, 7 or 9?" If a binding vote is approved, time will be allowed for residents to apply for positions on the new BOE, with an election occurring soon after the binding vote.

Q: Would out-of-district students be allowed to attend the new district?

A: The Board of the merged district will approve its own set of policies. Currently both districts permit children of staff to attend. CCSD permits out-of-district students to attend with tuition and FPCSD does not.