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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESTRUCTURING RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary objective of this report is to provide the Ferndale Board of Education and residents of the Ferndale Public School District with specific recommendations to reorganize the school district. These recommendations are the result of an assessment of the programmatic and financial needs of the school district and are being suggested as a means to protect both the short and long-term programmatic and financial health of our public schools.

It is important to understand that the recommendations represent the culmination of a year-long review of the school district and its needs. A preliminary assessment of those needs was presented to the Board of Education on March 31, 2001, along with possible restructuring alternatives designed to meet the district's needs (EXHIBIT 1). Additionally, the Superintendent presented information in April, May, and June 2001 to forty (40) school and community groups about these needs and possible solutions (EXHIBIT 2). Staff and community feedback about the alternatives was solicited at the meetings and considered in the development of these final recommendations. Research regarding the various options was continued in July and August in preparation for the development of these recommendations. Outlined below is a summary of the preliminary restructuring options presented to the Board and the community:

- Consolidate the existing six elementary schools into four K-5 schools, while maintaining two middle schools and one high school.

- Consolidate the existing six K-5 elementary schools into five center-based (grade-level) schools - preschool-K, grades 1-2, grades 3-4, grades 5-6, with one K-6 magnet school for extended school year and open classroom program. Grades 7-8 would be combined into one school, while the high school would continue to operate as a separate 9-12 facility.
- Consolidate the existing six elementary schools into four center-based (grade-level) schools - grades K-2, grades 3-4, and grades 5-6, with one K-6 magnet school for extended school year and open classroom program. Preschool programs would be housed in a separate non-K-12 school, with grades 7-8 combined into one school. The high school would continue to operate as a separate 9-12 facility.
- Consolidate the existing six elementary schools into four center-based (grade-level) schools - grades K-2, grades 3-4, and grades 5-6, with one K-6 magnet school for extended school year and open classroom programs. Preschool programs would operate in a separate non-K-12 school, while grades 7-8 would be combined into a separate school located in the high school facility. The high school would continue to operate in its current site as a 9-12 school on the high school campus.
- District schools not used for K-12 instruction would be used for other purposes including, but not limited to, preschool programming, university extension programs, administrative offices, alternative education programming, and community centers for after-school and evening enrichment and recreational programs.

Overview of the Need for Restructuring

Declining enrollment and the financial distress associated with such declines are at the heart of the need for restructuring. The facilities and staff infrastructure of the school district are too large for the current and projected student enrollment in the school district. This excessive infrastructure has forced many program, staff, and facilities cuts over the past 10 years (EXHIBIT 3). These reductions have resulted in a fragmented and inconsistently delivered instructional program, hindering our ability to improve student achievement, the rating of our school district by outside sources, and the equitable delivery of educational programs and services to all students.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that the concerns about declining enrollment and the need for a definitive response to those concerns are not new. In a report

prepared by an unknown author for the Board of Education in 1973 (EXHIBIT 4), it was noted that the school district's K-12 enrollment in September 1973 was 6,983 students housed in one high school, one junior high school, and ten (10) K-6 elementary schools. The report concluded by citing the following:

“The school district is also faced with the problem of declining enrollment as the figures below indicate:

1971-1972	Loss of 174 students
1972-1973	Loss of 458 students
1973-1974	Loss of 458 students
1974-1975 (projected)	Loss of 283 students

To date no schools have been closed; however, a study of facility use will be ongoing during the 1974-75 school year.”¹

Additionally, a Citizens' Advisory Facilities Study Committee report prepared by Tom Singer in January 1998 (EXHIBIT 5) discussed the impact of declining enrollment on the various bond issue projects, stating “the entire bond program needs...to be reviewed in light of the continuing decline in school enrollment.” The report further stated “In the face of projected continuing declines in elementary enrollments and state revenues, the School Board needs to be in the process of making some hard decisions and putting together solid plans to cut operating costs.” Also noted in the conclusions and recommendations section of the facilities report was the following:

“No plan will be easy. All will require a great deal of thought and implementation and will cause disruptions and pain. However, with disruption and change come possibilities. There are possibilities for the School District to reinvent itself, to become stronger and more productive, and to gain support and involvement from the community.”²

¹ Report on the History and Status of the Ferndale Public Schools submitted to the Board of Education, 1973, (author unknown), p. 4.

² Singer, Tom. Analysis and Conclusions for the Citizens' Advisory Facilities Study Committee, January 5, 1998, p. 5.

Finally, in a "Demographic History of the Ferndale School District , 1960-2000" prepared by demographer Kurt Metzger (EXHIBIT 6), it was pointed out that in 1960, 47.2% (4,453) of all Ferndale households contained children. In 2000, the percentage of households with children was 23.5% (2,315). Equally important in understanding the demographic changes in the community is to look at youth population trends. The report stated:

"In 1950, almost one-third (32.3 percent) of Ferndale's population were children - less than 18 years of age. Baby-boom births brought this share as high as 34.2 percent in 1960...by 1980 the child population represented only 26.5 percent of Ferndale's population. After stabilization during the 1980s, with a slight drop to 25.8 percent in 1990, dramatic household changes during the 1990's brought the share down a full 5.4 points to 20.4 percent of the population. The decade of the 1990s witnessed the largest percentage drop in children of any decade - 30.5 percent...While Ferndale will never again experience such large losses in its child population, neither can it expect to regain the shares that it had as recently as 10 years previously."³

Also important to consider when reviewing the demographics of the Ferndale Schools is the birth rates over the past 15 years. The report states:

"The number of births in the area fluctuated during the second half of the 1980's, but hit their highest point in 1990...If one averaged births across 5-year periods, the last 5 years stand out as well below (almost 20 percent) either of the previous two periods. This trend is not expected to reverse in the near future, so that the school district can expect continued lower than normal numbers of students entering the system."⁴

The report concluded with the following statement:

"However, Ferndale's diversity, coupled with societal trends, portends a diminishing base of students in the years to come. Here are a few of the local factors at work:

- Ferndale contains small homes, not conducive to housing large families.
- Ferndale's housing stock has become too expensive for lower-income, larger (often ethnic) families. [Only Royal Oak Township provides low cost, affordable housing.]

³ Metzger, Kurt. "Demographic History of the Ferndale School District, 1960-2000," 2001, p. 2.

⁴ Metzger, p. 6.

- Ferndale and Pleasant Ridge have become very attractive, and welcoming, to gay and lesbian households.
- Ferndale's location, between Detroit and Royal Oak, makes it very attractive to young singles and married couples.
- The rebirth of Ferndale's downtown, driven by restaurants and clubs for the young, will continue to attract young professionals with the income necessary for home purchases.

The Ferndale School District is faced with a slowly decreasing student base into the near future. Decisions must be made that provide the best educational options for the current enrollment."⁵

Therefore in light of these demographic reports, it appears the school district must prepare for the inevitable continuing decline in student enrollment.

Overview of Staff and Community Response to The Restructuring Plans

It was apparent to the Board and administration as assessment of the programmatic and financial needs of the district was undertaken, that it would be necessary to implement needed organizational changes no later than the 2002-2003 school year because not to do so could result in a deficit that would force a state take over of the district. This timeline was driven by a continuing decline in the quality of educational services provided to district students, while the impact of years of program and staff cuts collided with three years of deficit budgets and declining fund equity. In fact, it was clear to the administration that nearly 10 percent (\$4,000,000) of the district's \$41,000,000 budget would need to be cut by the fall of 2002 if the declining program quality and declining fund equity trends were to be reversed, and a negative fund equity financial position and subsequent state take-over of the district avoided. The only way financial reductions of this magnitude could be accomplished would be through a major overhaul of the district's educational delivery system.

⁵ Metzger, p. 10.

In view of the limited time available to reverse the seriously declining financial status of the district, it was decided to use the Board-approved strategic plan developed in 2000 by the district's Long-Range Planning Committee as the basis for possible corrective action (EXHIBIT 7). Many months of hard work by this planning committee identified five-year goals for the district that were deemed feasible and appropriate by the Board. The next logical step was to use the work of this community group as the basis for developing an implementation strategy for the five-year goals. The preliminary restructuring options offered to the Board and the community in spring 2001 were considered as possible implementation strategies for the five-year goals.

Additionally, the limited timeframe for decision-making about the future organizational structure of the district made it necessary and appropriate to communicate the needs of the district and alternative solutions to meet those needs as quickly and completely as possible to the district staff and to the community at large. Since the restructuring options were developed by the Superintendent as a result of his review of district programs and finances, the Superintendent decided to personally meet with the staff and community to explain, seek comment and feedback, and answer questions about the proposals.

The staff response to the proposals was very positive. Teaching and non-teaching employees of the district had expressed frustration over years of inadequate materials and supplies, annual staff reductions, large class sizes, and wage freezes. Staff members universally expressed a desire for a comprehensive solution to the district's problems, one that would be long lasting. While there were questions about some of the proposed alternatives, there was a relieved consensus that change was necessary if the district was to flourish in the years to come.

Community reaction to the restructuring proposals was mixed. While many parents had a general understanding of the financial needs of the district, it was apparent there was not a universal understanding as to the severity of the concerns. Similarly, depending upon the area of the district, some parents felt better than others about the quality of educational services received by their children. Therefore, it was necessary, in presentations about the restructuring options to discuss in some detail the programmatic and financial realities of the district as a preface to discussion of the restructuring options.

As a result of these discussions, parents had opportunities to pose questions and comments about the restructuring options--some were positive and some negative. Notwithstanding the nature of the comments, it is important to realize that the district is willing and prepared to work with parents and residents to minimize transition concerns associated with restructuring. Outlined below is a summary of the general topics of concern expressed during the presentations. Responses to some of the specific questions are listed in the exhibit. (EXHIBIT 8):

- **Incorporating 7th and 8th grade students into the high school building.** Some parents expressed concern about the safety of younger children when integrated with high school students. Others were concerned about whether or not the building could be zoned in a way that would reduce interaction between middle school and senior high students.
- **Elimination of the neighborhood school (K-5) configuration.** Some parents felt that assigning students to a school by grade-level rather than by geographic area of the school district would diminish the quality of programs for their children. Other parents felt a center-based (grade-level) approach would have a negative impact on the quality of neighborhoods in the school district. Still others were concerned about their inability to walk students to school in what for many families has been a pedestrian community.
- **The number of transitions from one school to another.** Some parents felt that it would be difficult for children to move from school to school every two or three years. They indicated these transitions might be disruptive to students.

- **The impact that closing schools to K-12 instruction would have on the neighborhoods of those schools closed.** Residents were concerned that buildings might not be maintained and that non-K-12 programs placed in reassigned buildings might have a negative impact on property values.
- **The importance of parent involvement in the schools.** It was felt by some parents that moving to a grade-level configuration would diminish parent involvement in the schools. Others believed reduced parent involvement could have a negative effect on student achievement.
- **Transportation.** Some parents expressed concern about the need to move more students by school bus in order to make the grade-level configuration work. Concern was also expressed about the cost of increased transportation and inconvenience this transportation might create for parents.

Outlined below are examples of the positive comments made by parents and residents as they responded to the presentations and related discussions (EXHIBIT 8):

- One resident said the existing school system **“is an educational structure that no longer fits the conditions of the community nor the changing environment of our society.”**
- Other residents said **the plan seemed enlightened, with a focus on what is good for children.** It was also suggested the district’s current status could be used as a benchmark to evaluate new data from a reconfigured district.
- It was also suggested by one resident that **“the plan recognizes social diversity - an ever-increasing reality of the American experience - within the school, as it exists in the community and workplace.”**
- Some parents commented that **the center-based approach would be fair across the board and that every child would receive an equal education.**
- With regard to **neighborhood schools**, one resident said, **“They are a nice thought, but the practicality that it can exist in this century, it may not be possible.”**
- **Many parents who spoke positively of the proposals indicated they appreciated the fact that everyone in the district would participate in the change. Previously, when schools were closed, the impact of the change was on specific localized communities and students, not the entire community and all students.**

Restructuring and Unitary Status of the District

After more than 20 years of supervision of the Ferndale Schools by the U.S. District Court under a desegregation order, the court entered a judgment declaring that the Ferndale Public Schools had achieved "unitary status" and that supervision of the court with regard to desegregation matters would no longer be necessary. One of the requirements associated with the attainment of "unitary status" was a commitment by the Board of Education that segregated schools would not recur. In fact, the Board approved a resolution on November 20, 1995, committing to maintaining unitary schools that are unsegregated (EXHIBIT 9). Outlined below is that resolution:

"WHEREAS, on June 8, 1995, the School District of the City of Ferndale, Michigan, requested the United States District Court to find and declare that the School District achieved unitary status and

WHEREAS, a hearing on the motion is now scheduled for November 30, 1995 before United States District Judge Horace W. Gilmore; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education once again desires to publicly express and reaffirm its policy to continue to abide by the United States Constitution and the applicable laws of the United States and the State of Michigan relating to "maintaining the unitary character of the entire school district" and to also again declare and reaffirm its policies, commitments and intentions with respect to maintaining and promoting a unitary school district.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Education of the School District of the City of Ferndale, Oakland County, Michigan, that:

It hereby declares and reaffirms that it is the school district's official policy and commitment to continue to abide by the United States Constitution and the applicable laws of the United States and the State of Michigan relating to maintaining unitary character of the entire school district.

It hereby declares and reaffirms that the school "district is committed to and has accepted the principle of stable, unsegregated education opportunities" and will not suffer unlawful, intentional discrimination in the future.

It further hereby declares and reaffirms its commitment and intention to maintain its current anti-discrimination policies regarding hiring, promotions, faculty and administrator assignments, special programs and extra-curricular activities.

It further declares and reaffirms its commitment and intention to maintain the school district's anti-discrimination policies as stated in its policy manual.

Any resolutions or parts of resolutions inconsistent with the foregoing resolution shall be, and hereby are, rescinded to the extent of any such inconsistency."

It is important to review this commitment to integrated education as part of any restructuring recommendations because of the district's commitment and requirement to ensure that any actions the Board might take do not have the effect of resegregating the school district. Thus, all decisions made by the Board of Education in reorganization of the district must meet the test of maintaining or improving upon the racial balance of the district at the time unitary status was granted.

Information Not Available at Time of Preliminary Planning

Since the preliminary restructuring plans were developed, other information has come to light that has implications for the final restructuring decisions. Outlined below is a summary of that information:

- The State of Michigan is experiencing a revenue shortfall due to a worsening of the economy. This shortfall has resulted in legislative action reducing funding for education. At this writing, the financial impact of education cuts on the Ferndale Schools are estimated at \$250,000 for this budget year. Cuts in future years may be even more severe.
- In 2000, the school district initiated a plan to ensure that all students attending the Ferndale Schools are doing so legitimately. Residency inconsistencies were questioned and if students could not provide proof of residency they were excluded from school. This initiative has resulted in the exclusion of more than 75 students from the Ferndale Schools.
- The number of Schools of Choice students enrolled for the 2001-2002 school year was less than those enrolled last year. Approximately 40 students have been enrolled this year, compared with approximately 85 students last year.

- Due to the residency exclusions, fewer than expected Schools of Choice students, and greater than predicted resident enrollment decline, the total district enrollment in the K-12 program is more than 100 students less than projected, a total of 233 students less than last year. The negative financial impact of the lower-than-expected enrollment could be as high as \$750,000.
- The countywide millage election on the ballot September 25, 2001 for additional special education and vocational education funding was approved by county voters and will increase funding by nearly \$1.2 million, with a positive net general fund impact of approximately \$900,000.

Factors Considered in Developing Restructuring Recommendations

The final restructuring decisions included in this report are designed to meet the program and financial needs of the Ferndale Schools in a manner consistent with the Board-approved mission of the school district - to “provide all our students with quality educational programs while promoting the values of diversity and responsible citizenship.”

Additionally, it is important to understand that the restructuring decisions have been made after full consideration of the present financial status of the school district, the comments and suggestions of parents and community residents, and the fact that the conditions of the district that make restructuring necessary have not improved. In fact, the financial and enrollment concerns of the district have worsened in the past year.

While deliberating the restructuring alternatives, it was evident to the superintendent that there was no one option that would satisfy the concerns of all individuals associated with the school district. In fact, each of the options has advantages and disadvantages that favored one group or another. It soon became apparent that the final recommendations needed to be based on what would provide the greatest likelihood of ensuring student success, and financial and programmatic stability for the school district.

Furthermore, it became apparent that regardless of the recommendations, there would be individuals or groups of individuals who would oppose one recommendation or another, and that such opposition should not drive the recommendations. In fact, in these deliberations, the course of least resistance, while a temptation, was not an option. The final recommendations are based on what it will take to move the district into the 21st century, understanding that the district is different today than it was 10 years ago. Consequently, it is impossible to continue business as usual.

Due to the worsening financial and enrollment status of the district, it is even more important that the restructuring approach be an aggressive one. Time is of the essence, making it necessary to initiate a comprehensive reorganization as opposed to one that is phased in over time.

The Recommendations and a Call for Unity

The Ferndale Public Schools community has endured a long period of program cuts, declining performance, and financial uncertainty. The time has come to make significant changes that will create a successful future for the district. The goal of restructuring the Ferndale Public Schools is to create the best full-service school district possible.

Recognizing that the community has been disparate in many ways, the District is calling on every member of our school community to join together in supporting the future of the district. Only by working together will we be able to achieve our goal and provide our school community with a district that generates pride in its successes. In that spirit of cooperation, the Superintendent's recommendations for reorganization of the Ferndale Public Schools are outlined below:

Restructuring Recommendations

- 1. Consolidate the district's six elementary schools into three center-based (grade-level) schools as outlined below:**
 - **Roosevelt Elementary School - Kindergarten - 2nd Grade**
 - **Wilson Elementary School - 3rd and 4th Grades**
 - **Paul E. Best School - 5th and 6th Grades**
- 2. Establish one district magnet school to be located at Calvin Coolidge School that combines the district's Extended School Year Program and Open Classroom Program into one academy.**
- 3. Combine students in grades 7 and 8 into one middle school to be housed at the Ferndale High School facility in an area of the building that is separate from students in grades 9-12.**
- 4. Continue Ferndale High School classes in the present high school facility in an area of the building that is separate from students in grades 7-8.**
- 5. Combine district preschool programs (Head Start, Chapter I, and Best/4-Kids) into one Early Education and Nurturing Center to be located at Ulysses S. Grant School.**
- 6. Relocate the high school alternative education program and district administrative offices to Warren G. Harding School.**
- 7. Continue negotiations with member schools of the Center for Advanced Studies and the Arts (CASA) for relocation of the program from the Oak Park School District to Andrew Jackson School.**
- 8. Continue negotiations with area universities for extension classes to be held at Taft School, along with other adult programming that is suitable for that school facility.**
- 9. Place a sinking fund millage on the ballot in 2003 to generate funds for continued repairs and improvements to school facilities as promised during the bond issue campaign.**

Finally, as these recommendations are considered, parents and community residents will understand that in the transition to a center-based instructional delivery system, the entire school community will literally come together throughout their school years. All teachers in like grades will teach together in the same building. It is important, as our schools come together, that our community members stand together in support of the school district and these recommendations. The remainder of this report is devoted to a detailed analysis of the restructuring recommendations and how the Ferndale community can work together, with the schools, to ensure a safe and secure environment for students as we prepare them for success.

SECTION II

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESTRUCTURING PLAN – A VISION OF UNITY

The primary objective of the restructuring recommendations included in this report is to reverse the 10-year trend in the Ferndale Public Schools of program cuts, declining performance, and financial uncertainty so the Board-adopted mission of the school district can be fully realized. More specifically, the stated mission of the Ferndale Schools is to “provide all our students with quality education programs while promoting the values of diversity and responsible citizenship”

Additionally, the recommendations are designed to be an implementation plan for the five-year goals developed by the district’s Long Range Planning Committee and approved by the Ferndale Board of Education in September 2000 (EXHIBIT 7). Outlined below are the approved five-year goals for the Ferndale Schools:

- Find sufficient funds to maintain quality education for all students.
- Develop and implement instructional strategies so all students will achieve.
- Stabilize and increase enrollment.
- Become more competitive to attract and retain students.
- Attract and maintain quality staff who will implement quality programs.
- Promote the strengths and success of our schools to improve the district’s image.
- Ensure a physically safe and emotionally safe environment, so learning can be optimized.
- Develop and implement a staff development plan that is comprehensive, research-based, and ultimately ensures increased student achievement.

- Maintain our facilities, so we will not lose our effective learning environment we now have.
- Keep our technology current.

Given these stated goals and the restructuring recommendations included in this report, the proposed vision for the Ferndale Public Schools is:

"To create one truly unified school community with the common goal among staff, students, parents, and school district residents of becoming one of the best, most efficient, small, full-service public school districts in Michigan.

Considering the financial and programmatic realities of the Ferndale Schools as they are today, consolidating the many neighborhood elementary and middle schools into fewer schools, using a center-based (grade-level) approach to delivering instruction, will allow optimum student performance and financial stability as the district's K-12 enrollment declines to approximately 3,000 students by the 2005-2006 school year.

Accomplishing the stated vision will not be easy as the community faces the unwelcome move away from neighborhood schools and the staff faces position reductions to meet enrollment realities. Once complete, however, the school consolidation and change in grade configuration will eliminate the recent trend of annual pink slips for employees and prepare students for high achievement in school, on standardized tests, and in their future careers. A secure and thriving financial foundation for the school district will also have been established.

And finally, by working together the school district vision will be achieved and the school community will be provided a school district of which they will continue to be proud."

SECTION III

THE RECOMMENDATIONS: AN ANALYSIS

As the details of the restructuring recommendations are reviewed in this section of the report, it is important to understand that not all details associated with implementation of the recommendations are resolved at this time. In fact, many decisions will not be made until the final plan is approved and transition activities begin. It is during the transition phase that staff, parent, and Board committee involvement will drive decisions about many of the final details necessary for effective and efficient implementation of the plan.

The primary purpose of this section of the report is to provide necessary details of the plan and validate its workability. Transition decisions and related needs will also be identified, so the reader will have a comprehensive overview of all that must be accomplished prior to full implementation of the restructuring plan in the 2002-2003 school year.

Although some implementation decisions will not be made until the transition phase, the outcomes of restructuring are clear and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Improved pupil achievement.
- Well-defined courses of study in all content areas from kindergarten through 12th grade.
- Adequate materials, supplies, and equipment available to teachers to support the instructional program.
- The establishment of consistent intervention programs for all academically talented and at-risk children.
- Smaller class sizes in the primary and intermediate grades.
- A balanced budget that will allow financial stability for the school district.

- Improved ratings of our school district by outside sources.
- Continued use of all Ferndale Schools for purposes designed to enhance the quality of the school and community.

The decision to recommend a center-based (grade-level) approach as the way to meet desired outcomes was made because it is the most appropriate grade configuration at this time. Such a configuration works well in a smaller school district like Ferndale, especially with projections of a continuing decline in enrollment and the need for a more equitable delivery of educational services.

The K-12 enrollment of the Ferndale Schools has been steadily declining over many years, some 1,016 students since 1992 (EXHIBIT 10) and by more than 3,320 students since 1973 (EXHIBIT 4). Enrollment declined 233 students from September 2000 to September 2001 (EXHIBIT 11) and is projected to decline even further over the next five years (EXHIBIT 12) to between 2,900 and 3,300 students.

To put our enrollment decline into perspective, it is important to understand that in 1973, the district's 6,983 K-12 students were served in one high school, one junior high school, and ten elementary schools. In 1992, when the district's K-12 enrollment was 4,677, these students were served by one high school, two junior high schools, and eight elementary schools. Today, the district's 3,661 students are served by one high school, two middle schools, and six elementary schools. Since 1973, the K-12 enrollment has declined by 48 percent and is expected to decline over the next several years to 54 percent of what it was in 1973, while the facilities in use to serve these students has declined by 25 percent. The infrastructure cost of serving today's 3,661 students in the present facilities is excessive and drains resources from the instructional program.

Given the grade-level distribution of our present student population, it is possible to group students by grade in a way that accommodates the needed consolidation of

students into fewer schools. It also allows a greater percentage of the district's financial resources to be allocated to: (1) direct teaching and learning functions in ways that allow equity in the delivery of instruction, (2) greater flexibility in instructional methodology, (3) an increased emphasis on the individual learning needs of students, (4) added support services such as counselors and social workers, (5) improved opportunities for teachers to work together to ensure consistency in the delivery of instruction, and a (6) cohesive student and parent population that works and learns together throughout a child's K-12 experience.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to meet all financial and programmatic needs of the Ferndale Schools in the present elementary and middle grade configuration. Variations of the traditional grade configuration (closing more neighborhood schools and expanding neighborhood attendance areas) are also not viable options. Long-term financial stability, equity, and consistency in the delivery of instruction are not possible without a comprehensive reorganization of the school district.

While the research on grade configuration is not definitive with regard to improvements in student achievement, it is clear that there are successful districts configured by grade-level, just as there are effective school districts configured in the more traditional neighborhood approach. Despite the lack of one "right" way, the following recommendations to consolidate schools and change the grade configuration in the Ferndale Schools are based on the unique needs and interests of the schools at this time in the district's history.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Consolidate the district's six elementary schools into three center-based (grade-level) schools

Roosevelt Elementary School - Kindergarten - 2nd grade

Roosevelt School is one of the two largest elementary schools in the district and is centrally located north of Nine Mile Road. Maximum enrollment in kindergarten - 2nd grade in the 2002-2003 school year will range from 503 to 588 regular education students, depending upon the number of Schools of Choice students enrolled. This enrollment estimate is likely high since it assumes Middle Cities enrollment projections without adjustment for the lower than projected enrollment in the 2001-2002 school year. In fact, on a district-wide basis, current year enrollment (3,661) is near the number estimated (3,649) by Middle Cities for the 2002-2003 school year.

Notwithstanding the above, the tables below document the districts enrollment calculations. Assumptions in determining enrollment exclude estimates of enrolled special education students and Magnet School enrollment at current year levels.

TABLE A: Projected 2002-2003 Roosevelt Enrollment
WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Total	Special Education Enrollment	Magnet School Enrollment	Regular Education Enrollment
Kindergarten Class	238	0	48	*190
First Grade	222	0	65	157
Second Grade	228	15	57	156
Total K-2	688	15	170	503

* Total kindergarten students. Only 80 will be in school at any one time due to the return to a ½ day program.

TABLE B: Projected 2002-2003 Roosevelt Enrollment
WITH SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Total	Special Education Enrollment	Magnet School Enrollment	Regular Education Enrollment
Kindergarten Class	271	0	48	*223
First Grade	260	0	65	195
Second Grade	242	15	57	170
Total K-2	773	15	170	588

* Total Kindergarten students. Only 112 will be in school at any one time due to the return to a half-day program.

Using the estimated 2002-2003 enrollment, the maximum number of rooms, including those for special education, needed to accommodate the projected enrollment, ranges from 25 to 29 for class sizes of 17:1, from 21 to 25 rooms for class sizes of 20:1, and from 18 to 21 rooms for class sizes of 24:1. The classroom needs **(assume a half-day kindergarten program)** and do not include rooms for special subjects such as art, music, and physical education. Minimally, the gym and two additional rooms are needed for these subjects. The tables below document the calculations used to determine classroom needs. (Highlighted is the anticipated room use for 2002-2003)

TABLE C: Roosevelt Classroom Requirements
WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Special Education Classrooms	Regular Education Classrooms 17:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 20:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required
Kindergarten Class (1/2 day)	0	6	6	5	5	4	4
First Grade	0	9	9	7	7	6	6
Second Grade	1	9	10	8	9	7	8
Total K-2	1	24	25	20	21	17	18

TABLE D: Roosevelt Classroom Requirements
WITH SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Special Education Classrooms	Regular Education Classrooms 17:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 20:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required
Kindergarten Class(1/2 day)	0	7	7	6	6	5	5
First Grade	0	11	11	9	9	8	8
Second Grade	1	10	11	9	10	7	8
Total K-2	1	28	29	24	25	20	21

From a facilities perspective, there are a total of 35 instructional spaces, including those for traditional classrooms, special education, small group, and special subjects, in Roosevelt Elementary School. These spaces are greater in number than the needed spaces. The table below summarizes the available spaces, while (EXHIBIT 13) is a composite floor plan for the building.

TABLE E: Roosevelt Elementary School - Room Availability

	Classrooms	Special Use Rooms	TOTAL
Main Floor	22	7	29
Lower Floor	6	0	6
Totals	28	7	35

Once a final decision is made to use Roosevelt Elementary School for students in kindergarten through 2nd grade, a number of other factors will need to be considered prior to full implementation of the plan in the 2002-2003 school year. These transition considerations are important and include the following:

Transition Considerations:

- Make final decisions regarding room utilization, i.e., where will the kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and special classrooms be located and how will the actual move take place?
- Evaluate the science delivery model most appropriate for a primary school including classroom needs and curriculum needs.
- Evaluate and secure classroom furniture, instructional equipment, technology, and student locker needs for use with students in grades K-2, especially considering the creation of adequate kindergarten classrooms.
- Evaluate and ensure adequacy of playground equipment for primary students.
- Evaluate and ensure adequacy of parking needs at the school.
- Develop, in cooperation with local police authorities, a traffic pattern for parent drop-off and pick-up of students, as well as school bus drop-off and pick-up of students.
- Notify parents of students to be located in the Roosevelt building in 2002-2003 of appropriate orientation programs and PTA activities designed to make the transition to the school as smooth as possible.
- Redesign kindergarten enrollment procedures and information so they are consistent with a half-day program located in one school.
- Evaluate the need for a full-day option for kindergarten students, with one half of the day conducted in a day-care setting.
- Evaluate the need for kindergarten, first grade, and second grade transitional programming, establishing such programs as appropriate and necessary.

- Establish a system of communicating with staff in the 3-4 building about the academic needs of students leaving Roosevelt for that building.
- Finalize staffing for the building.
- Establish financial policy and procedures associated with building activity accounts, and building budgets for the new school consolidation plan.
- Consider official name for the school, e.g., Roosevelt Early Childhood Center.

Wilson Elementary School - 3rd and 4th Grade

Wilson School is one of the two largest elementary schools in the district and is located in the southeast quadrant of the school district, south of Nine Mile Road. Maximum enrollment in 3rd and 4th grade in the 2002-2003 school year is projected to range from 295 to 310 students, depending upon the number of Schools of Choice students enrolled. As with all of the enrollment estimates in this section of the report, they are on the high side. The district's actual 2001-2002 enrollment (3,661) is less than projected for this year and near the Middle Cities projection for 2002-2003 (3,649). The tables below document the enrollment calculations, using an estimated enrollment in special education and current year enrollment for students in these grades who will attend the Magnet School.

**TABLE F: Projected 2002-2003 Wilson Enrollment
WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE**

	Enrollment	Special Education	Magnet School Enrollment	Regular Education
Third Grade	231	19	66	146
Fourth Grade	242	19	74	149
Total 3-4	473	38	140	295

**TABLE G: Projected 2002-2003 Wilson Enrollment
WITH SCHOOLS OF CHOICE**

	Enrollment	Special Education	Magnet School Enrollment	Regular Education
Third Grade	238	19	66	153
Fourth Grade	250	19	74	157
Total 3-4	488	38	140	310

Using the estimated 2002-2003 enrollment, the number of rooms, including those for special education, needed to accommodate the estimated enrollment range is 17 rooms for class sizes of 20:1, 15 rooms for class sizes of 22:1, and 14 to 15 rooms for class sizes of 24:1. The classroom needs do not include rooms for special subjects such as art, music, and physical education. Minimally, the gym and two additional rooms are needed for these subjects. The tables below document the calculations used to determine classroom needs. (Highlighted is the anticipated room use for 2002-2003)

**TABLE H: Wilson Classroom Requirements
WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE**

	Special Education Classrooms	Regular Education Classrooms 20:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 22:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required
Third Grade	1	7	8	6	7	5	6
Fourth Grade	2	7	9	6	8	6	8
Total 3-4	3	14	17	12	15	11	14

**TABLE I: Wilson Classroom Requirements
WITH SCHOOLS OF CHOICE**

	Special Education Classrooms	Regular Education Classrooms 20:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 22:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required
Third Grade	1	7	8	6	7	6	7
Fourth Grade	2	7	9	6	8	6	8
Total 3-4	3	14	17	12	15	12	15

From a facilities perspective, there are a total of 30 instructional spaces in Wilson Elementary School, including those for traditional classroom, special education, small group, and special subjects. These spaces exceed the need for spaces to accommodate 3rd and 4th grade students. The table below summarizes the available spaces, while (EXHIBIT 14) is a composite floor plan for the building.

TABLE J: Wilson Elementary School - Room Availability

	Classrooms	Special Use Rooms	TOTALS
A WING	7	2	9
B WING	12	1	13
C WING	7	1	8
Totals	26	4	30

Once a final decision is made to use Wilson Elementary School for students in 3rd and 4th grade, a number of other factors will need to be considered prior to full implementation of the plan in the 2002-2003 school year. These transition considerations are important and include the following:

Transition Considerations:

- Make final decisions regarding room utilization, i.e., where will the 3rd grade, 4th grade, and special classrooms be located, and how will the actual move take place?
- Evaluate and meet the needs for classroom furniture, instructional equipment, technology, and student lockers for use by 3rd and 4th grade students.
- Evaluate and ensure the adequacy of playground equipment for intermediate students.
- Evaluate and ensure the adequacy of parking needs at the school
- Develop, in cooperation with local police authorities, a traffic pattern for parent drop-off and pick-up of students, as well as school bus drop-off and pick-up of students.
- Notify parents of students to be located at Wilson School in 2002-2003 of appropriate orientation programs and PTA activities designed to make the transition to the school as smooth as possible.
- Evaluate the need for transitional programming in 3rd and 4th grade, establishing such programs as appropriate and necessary.
- Establish a system of communicating with staff in the K-2 building and the 5-6 building about the academic needs of students entering and leaving the building.
- Finalize the staffing for the building.
- Establish financial policy and procedures associated with building activity accounts and building budgets for the new school consolidation plan.
- Consider the official name for the school, e.g., Wilson Elementary School.

Paul E. Best School - 5th and 6th Grade

Best School, which is currently used as a middle school, is located in the northwest quadrant of the school district in the City of Oak Park, north of Nine Mile Road.

Maximum regular education enrollment in 5th and 6th grade in the 2002-2003 school year is projected to range from 382 to 416 students, depending upon the number of Schools of Choice students enrolled. As with all of the enrollment projections in this report, they are considered to be conservative since the actual 2001-2002 district enrollment (3,661) is less than projected for this year and near the Middle Cities projection for 2002-2003 (3,649). The tables below document the enrollment calculations, using an estimated enrollment in special education and current year enrollment for students in these grades who will likely be enrolled in the Magnet School.

TABLE K: Projected 2002-2003 Best Enrollment
WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Enrollment Total	Special Education	Magnet School Enrollment	Regular Education
Fifth Grade	265	27	77	161
Sixth Grade	298	27	50	221
Total 5-6	563	54	127	382

TABLE L: Projected 2002-2003 Best Enrollment
WITH SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Enrollment Total	Special Education	Magnet School Enrollment	Regular Education
Fifth Grade	280	27	77	176
Sixth Grade	317	27	50	240
Total 5-6	597	54	127	416

Using the estimated 2002-2003 enrollment, the number of rooms, including those for special education, needed to accommodate the estimated enrollment range is from 21 to 22 for class sizes of 24:1, from 20 to 21 for class sizes of 25:1 and from 19 to 21 for class sizes of 26:1. The classroom needs do not include rooms for special subjects such as art, music, and physical education. Minimally, the gym and two additional rooms are needed for these subjects. The tables below document the calculations used to determine classroom needs. (Highlighted is the anticipated room use for 2002-2003)

TABLE M: Best Classroom Requirements
WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Special Education Classrooms	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 25:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 26:1	Rooms Required
Fifth Grade	3	7	10	6	9	6	9
Sixth Grade	2	9	11	9	11	8	10
Total 5-6	5	16	21	15	20	14	19

TABLE N: Best Classroom Requirements
WITH SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Special Education Classrooms	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 25:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 26:1	Rooms Required
Fifth Grade	3	7	10	7	10	7	10
Sixth Grade	2	10	12	9	11	9	11
Total 5-6	5	17	22	16	21	16	21

From a facilities perspective, there are a total of 25 instructional spaces, including those for traditional classrooms, special education, small group, and special subjects, in Best School. These spaces are equal to or exceed the need for spaces to accommodate 5th and 6th grade students. The table below summarizes the available spaces, while (EXHIBIT 15) is a composite floor plan for the building.

TABLE O: Best School - Room Availability

Classroom Type	Classrooms	Special Use Rooms	TOTAL
Regular Classrooms	17		17
Science Rooms	3		3
Special Education		2	2
Computer Lab		1	1
Gym		2	2
Total	20	5	25

Once a final decision is made to use Best School for students in 5th and 6th grade, a number of other factors will need to be considered prior to full implementation of the

plan in the 2002-2003 school year. These transition considerations are important and include the following:

Transition Considerations:

- Make final decisions regarding room utilization, i.e., where will the 5th grade, 6th grade, and special classrooms be located, and how will the actual move take place?
- Evaluate and meet the school's needs for age appropriate classroom furniture, instructional equipment, technology, and student lockers.
- Evaluate and ensure the adequacy of playground equipment for intermediate students.
- Evaluate and ensure the adequacy of parking needs at the school.
- Develop, in cooperation with local police authorities, a traffic pattern for parent drop-off and pick-up of students, as well as school bus drop-off and pick-up of students.
- Notify parents of students to be located at Best School in 2002-2003 of appropriate orientation programs and PTA activities designed to make the transition to the school as smooth as possible.
- Establish a system of communicating with staff in the 3-4 building and the 7-8 building about the academic needs of students entering and leaving the building.
- Work with staff, students, and parents on the use of middle school instructional practices as a delivery model for 5th and 6th grade.
- Finalize staffing for the building.
- Establish financial policy and procedures associated with activity accounts and building budgets for the new school consolidation plan.
- Consider the official name for the school, e.g. Best Intermediate School.

Recommendation 2: Establish one district magnet school to be located at Calvin Coolidge School that combines the district's Extended School Year Program and Open Classroom Program into one academy.

Given the rich history of the district's Open Classroom Program and the success over the past 10 years of the 200-day Extended School Year Program with a multi-age delivery system, it is recommended that these programs continue as a K-6 option for parents, but that the two programs be combined into one school to operate

independently of one another or in an integrated way as determined by the Board's Program Committee in cooperation with administration, staff and parents. Initial enrollment in the school will be offered to those students currently enrolled. Students currently not enrolled in these programs will be offered the opportunity to enroll on a space-available basis. It is recommended the magnet school be located in what is now Coolidge Middle School.

Calvin Coolidge School - K-6 Magnet School

Coolidge School, which is currently being used as a middle school, is located in the northeast quadrant of the school district, north of Nine Mile Road. The 2001-2002 enrollment in the Open Classroom and Extended School Year programs total 393 students: 203 in the Extended program, and 190 in the Open program. Enrollment in the magnet school in 2002-2003 is projected to range from 377 students to 471 students, depending upon the method used to project enrollment. The 377 number is based on the application of a 10.83% historical average of all K-12 students to the Middle Cities enrollment projection without Schools of Choice. The 471 number is close to the estimated capacity of the school and assumes a 25% increase in the projected enrollment due to greater interest in the Magnet School because it provides a K-6 alternative to the center-based (grade-level) approach. The tables below illustrate the enrollment calculations described above.

TABLE P: Calculation of Magnet School Enrollment
AS A PERCENTAGE OF K-12 ENROLLMENT

Total Enrollment 2000-01	3895.48
Taft Open	205
Harding	217
Total	422
Percent of Total	10.83%

TABLE Q: Projected Coolidge Magnet School Enrollment
AS A PERCENTAGE OF K-12 ENROLLMENT

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Total K-12 Enrollment	3477	3284	3098	2923
Total Magnet School Enrollment	377	356	336	317

TABLE R: Projected Coolidge Magnet School Enrollment
WITH A 25% INCREASE

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Total K-12 Enrollment	3477	3284	3098	2923
Magnet School Enrollment	377	356	336	317
25% Enrollment increase	94	89	84	79
Total Magnet School Enrollment	471	445	420	396

TABLE S: Projected Coolidge Magnet School Capacity

Classroom Type	Enrollment Per Room	Number of Rooms	Total Enrollment
Kindergarten*	34	2	*68
Regular Classroom	20	20	400
Special Education Classroom	12	3	36
Total	66	25	504

* Based on both a morning and an afternoon session of Kindergarten with 17 students

In an effort to illustrate classroom requirements for the Magnet School, the 2001-2002 enrollment was used, assuming 50 new kindergarten students - a total of 419 students. Classrooms needed to accommodate these students would be 20 rooms for class sizes of 24:1 and 24 rooms for class sizes of 20:1. The classroom needs do not include rooms for special subjects such as art, music, and physical education. Minimally, the gym and two other classrooms would be needed for these subjects. The table below illustrates the calculations used to determine classroom needs. (Highlighted is the anticipated room use for 2002-2003)

TABLE T: Coolidge Magnet School Classroom Requirements

	Special Education Classrooms	Enrollment		Regular Education Classrooms 20:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required
		Open	Extended Year				
Kindergarten Class	0	25	25	3	3	2	2
First Grade	0	24	25	2	2	2	2
Second Grade	0	27	32	3	3	2	2
Third Grade	0	30	25	3	3	2	2
Fourth Grade	1	37	27	3	4	3	4
Fifth Grade	1	26	43	3	4	3	4
Sixth Grade	1	22	51	4	5	3	4
Total	3	191	228	21	24	17	20

From a facilities perspective, there are a total of 26 instructional spaces, including those for traditional classrooms, special education, small group, and special subjects, in Coolidge School. These spaces meet or exceed the magnet school classroom needs, using the historical target class size for these programs of 24:1 students. The table below summarizes the available spaces, while (EXHIBIT 16) is a composite floor plan for the building.

TABLE U: Coolidge School - Room Availability

Classroom Type	Traditional Rooms	Small or Special Use Rooms	TOTAL
Regular Classroom	18		18
Special Education		2	2
Small Rooms:		2	2
Art Room		1	1
Industrial Art		1	1
Music Room		2	2
Total Rooms	18	8	26

Once a final decision is made to use Coolidge School for students in the Extended School Year and Magnet School programs, a number of other factors will need to be considered prior to full implementation of the plan in the 2002-2003 school year. These transition considerations are important and include the following:

Transition Considerations:

- Make final decisions regarding whether or not the two programs will operate independently of one another or in an integrated way. These decisions will be based on the recommendation of the Board Program Committee in cooperation with Extended School Year and Open Classroom administrators, staff, and parents.
- Make final decisions about the school calendar, i.e., will it be a common calendar for both programs or will the Extended program operate on the 200-day calendar, while the Open program operates on a traditional calendar? These decisions will be based on the recommendation of the Board Program Committee in cooperation with Extended School Year and Open Classroom administrators, staff, and parents.
- Make final decisions regarding enrollment procedures for these programs. Students currently enrolled in the programs will have first option. These decisions will be based on the recommendation of the Board Policy Committee in cooperation with the student services department and the Extended School Year and Open Classroom administrators, staff, and parents.
- Once recommendations about program configuration are made, final decisions about room utilization will need to be made, including how the actual move will take place.
- Evaluate and meet the school needs for age appropriate classroom furniture, instructional equipment, technology, and student lockers.
- Evaluate and ensure the adequacy of playground equipment for Magnet School students.
- Evaluate and ensure the adequacy of parking needs at the school.
- Develop, in cooperation with local police authorities, a traffic pattern for parent drop-off and pick-up of students, as well as school bus drop-off and pick-up of students.
- Notify parents of Magnet School students of appropriate orientation programs and PTA activities designed to make the transition to the school as smooth as possible.
- Finalize the staffing for the building.
- Establish financial policy and procedures associated with building activity accounts and building budgets under the new school consolidation plan.
- Consider the official name for the school, e.g., Coolidge Magnet School

Recommendation 3: Combine students in grades 7 and 8 into one middle school to be housed at the Ferndale High School facility in an area of the building that is separate from students in grades 9-12.

This recommendation was made with great care because of the concerns expressed by community residents about such a configuration. It is, however, a recommendation that must be made in view of the district's continuing enrollment decline and the underutilization of the current high school facility. Furthermore, it is a recommendation made with full confidence that it will be successful and safe. The most precise way to describe this recommendation is with the 7th and 8th grade Middle School as a school within a school. It will not be an integrated 7-12 school. This recommendation is intended to maximize the use of space within the school district, while ensuring that a separate school identity is maintained for the 7th and 8th grade middle school students. Outlined below are some of the factors that make this recommendation not only appropriate, but also feasible:

- Combining 7th and 8th grade students from both middle schools into one school will greatly enhance the consistency in curriculum and instruction for these students. Teachers will be able to work together in a way that will better meet the needs of all students.
- The 7th and 8th grade middle school will be located on the third floor of the high school facility, contained in an area that is separated from the remainder of the building by stairwells and hallways that will be monitored.
- Student entry to the middle school will be separate from the high school entry, through doors and stairways now used for office purposes.
- The middle school day, starting and ending times, will be staggered from the high school starting and ending times to reduce interaction. While the exact times have not yet been determined it is likely the middle school day will be similar to the current middle school day, with the high school day starting later and ending later.
- The middle school will have its own staff and administration, including a principal and at least one assistant principal, guidance counselors, social work services, clerical support and other specialists needed to ensure that the best practices for middle school instruction continue in place for all 7th and 8th grade students.

- A Board-employed security coordinator, Ferndale Police Liaison officer, and six security guards are presently assigned to the high school facility. This security arrangement will continue and be expanded as appropriate to ensure the safety and well being of all students and staff in the building. Security staff will be posted at middle school entry points, as well as at other key locations throughout the building in an effort to reassure parents and students there will be appropriate separation.
- While middle school students will need to move to other areas of the building such as the cafeteria, media center, gymnasium, pools, and, in the cases of elective courses, the band and choir rooms, it has been determined that such movement can be made through hallways and at times that will avoid a direct interface with high school students. Access to these facilities will greatly enhance course offerings for middle school students.
- The general climate in the high school facility will improve as students enrolled in the alternative education program move to another facility. The pilot program conducted in Fall 2001 for these students who find a traditional high school setting difficult to handle, has already demonstrated an improved educational climate at Ferndale High School.
- Arts Across the Curriculum and the Open Classroom Program will be able to continue at the 7th and 8th grade-level, along with more accelerated programming for eligible students who are interested in such programs. Additionally, broader-based music and theater programs will be possible for interested students.
- Recognizing that athletic facilities are limited, it may be necessary, in the short run, for some athletic practices and contests to be held at alternate locations as they presently are in the case of football. A long-term athletic facilities plan will be developed to accommodate the athletic and extra-curricular needs of both middle school and high school students.
- A majority of remaining bond issue funds will be used to improve and enhance middle school and high school spaces, including the return to classrooms of spaces now used for district administrative offices. Other improvements to lockers, doors, music, theater, and art areas will also be completed. All renovations and improvements will be made upon the recommendation of the Board Building and Site Committee.

In order to assess the feasibility, from a room utilization perspective, of placing the 7th and 8th grade middle school in the high school, it is important to look at the 7th and 8th grade separately from the high school from an enrollment and space needs perspective, and then look at both schools in a combined way. The information outlined below summarizes this enrollment and room utilization information.

A Combined 7th and 8th Grade Middle School

Combining 7th and 8th grade students from Best and Coolidge Middle Schools into one district-wide middle school will result in a regular education enrollment in the 2002-2003 school year projected to range between 531 and 559 students, depending on the number of Schools of Choice students enrolled. As with all of the enrollment projections included in this report, they are based on the Middle Cities enrollment projections for the 2002-2003. These estimates are considered to be conservative estimates since the actual 2001-2002 district enrollment was less than projected. The tables that follow illustrate the enrollment calculations, noting an estimated enrollment for special education.

TABLE V: Projected 2002-2003 Middle School Enrollment
WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Enrollment	Special Education	Regular Education
Seventh Grade	265	26	239
Eighth Grade	318	26	292
Total 7-8	583	52	531

TABLE W: Projected 2002-2003 Middle School Enrollment
WITH SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Enrollment	Special Education	Regular Education
Seventh Grade	279	26	253
Eighth Grade	332	26	306
Total 7-8	611	52	559

Using the estimated 2002-2003 enrollment, the number of rooms, including those for special education, needed to accommodate the estimated enrollment range is from 26 to 28 rooms for class sizes of 24:1; 26 to 27 rooms for class sizes of 25:1; and from 25 to 26 for class sizes of 26:1. The classroom needs do not include rooms for special subjects unique to the middle school curriculum. The tables below illustrate the calculations used to determine classroom needs. (Highlighted is the anticipated room use for 2002-2003)

TABLE X: Middle School Classroom Requirements
WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Special Education Classrooms	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 25:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 26:1	Rooms Required
Seventh Grade	2	10	12	10	12	9	11
Eighth Grade	2	12	14	12	14	12	14
Total 7-8	4	22	26	22	26	21	25

Table Y: Middle School Classroom Requirements
WITH SCHOOL OF CHOICE

	Special Education Classrooms	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 25:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 26:1	Rooms Required
Seventh Grade	2	11	13	10	12	10	12
Eight Grade	2	13	15	13	15	12	14
Total 7-8	4	24	28	23	27	22	26

One High School - Grades 9-12

Using the Middle Cities enrollment projections for 2002-2003, it is projected the high school enrollment will be between 1,100 and 1,110 students, depending upon the enrollment of Schools of Choice students. The tables below illustrate the enrollment calculations, using an estimated enrollment for special education students.

Additionally, no reduction factor has been used for OTC and CASA students released for part of the day to attend classes at these facilities or for alternative education students who will no longer be located in the high school facility.

TABLE Z: Projected 2002-2003 High School Enrollment
WITH SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Enrollment	Special Education	Regular Education
9 th Grade	400	18	382
10 th Grade	319	17	302
11 th Grade	227	18	209
12 th Grade	224	17	207
Total 9-12	1170	70	1100

TABLE AA: Projected 2002-2003 High School Enrollment
WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Enrollment	Special Education	Regular Education
9 th Grade	410	18	392
10 th Grade	319	17	302
11 th Grade	227	18	209
12 th Grade	224	17	207
Total 9-12	1180	70	1110

Given the estimated 2002-2003 enrollment, the number of rooms, including those for special education, needed to accommodate the estimated enrollment is 53 rooms for class sizes of 24:1, 49 to 50 rooms for class sizes of 25:1 and 49 rooms for class sizes of 26:1. The tables below illustrate the calculations used to determine classroom needs. (Highlighted is the anticipated room use for 2002-2003)

TABLE BB: High School Classroom Requirements
WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Special Education Classrooms	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 25:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 26:1	Rooms Required
9 th Grade	2	16	18	15	17	15	17
10 th Grade	2	13	15	12	14	12	14
11 th Grade	1	9	10	8	9	8	9
12 th Grade	1	9	10	8	9	8	9
Total 9-12	6	47	53	43	49	43	49

TABLE CC: High School Classroom Requirements
WITH SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Special Education Classrooms	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 25:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 26:1	Rooms Required
9 th Grade	2	16	18	16	18	15	17
10 th Grade	2	13	15	12	14	12	14
11 th Grade	1	9	10	8	9	8	9
12 th Grade	1	9	10	8	9	8	9
Total 9-12	6	47	53	44	50	43	49

Two Schools Within the High School Facility - A Combined Perspective

When incorporating the 7th and 8th grade middle school into the high school facility, the total number of students attending the two schools will range from 1,631 students to 1,669 students, depending upon the numbers of Schools of Choice students enrolled. At one point in the history of the school district, more than 2500 students attended the high school. The tables below illustrate the enrollment calculations, using an estimated enrollment in special education. No reduction factor has been incorporated for students attending classes for part of their school day at OTC or CASA. Additionally, no reduction factor has been included for movement of the alternative school program to another location.

TABLE DD: Projected 2002-2003 Middle School & High School Students in
the High School Facility
WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Enrollment	Special Education	Regular Education
Seventh Grade	265	26	239
Eighth Grade	318	26	292
9 th Grade	400	18	382
10 th Grade	319	17	302
11 th Grade	227	18	209
12 th Grade	224	17	207
Total 9-12	1753	122	1631

TABLE EE: Projected 2002 -2003 Middle School & High School Students in
the High School Facility
WITH SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Enrollment	Special Education	Regular Education
Seventh Grade	279	26	253
Eighth Grade	332	26	306
9th Grade	410	18	392
10th Grade	319	17	302
11th Grade	227	18	209
12th Grade	224	17	207
Total 9-12	1791	122	1669

Using the estimated 2002-2003 enrollment, the number of rooms, including those for special education, needed to accommodate the estimated enrollment is 76 to 78 rooms for class sizes of 24:1; 72 to 74 rooms for class sizes of 25:1; and 71 to 72 rooms for class sizes of 26:1. The tables below illustrate the calculations used to determine classroom needs. (Highlighted is the anticipated room use for 2002-2003)

TABLE FF: Middle School and High School Classroom Requirements in the
High School Facility
WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

	Special Education Classrooms	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 25:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 26:1	Rooms Required
7th Grade	2	10	12	10	12	9	11
8th Grade	1	12	13	12	13	12	13
9th Grade	1	16	17	15	16	15	16
10th Grade	1	13	14	12	13	12	13
11th Grade	1	9	10	8	9	8	9
12th Grade	1	9	10	8	9	8	9
Total 9-12	7	69	76	65	72	64	71

TABLE GG: Middle School and High School Classroom Requirements in the
High School Facility
WITH SCHOOL OF CHOICE

	Special Education Classrooms	Regular Education Classrooms 24:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 25:1	Rooms Required	Regular Education Classrooms 26:1	Rooms Required
Seventh Grade	2	11	13	10	12	10	12
Eighth Grade	1	13	14	13	14	12	13
9th Grade	1	16	17	16	17	15	16
10th Grade	1	13	14	12	13	12	13
11th Grade	1	9	10	8	9	8	9
12th Grade	1	9	10	8	9	8	9
Total 9-12	7	71	78	67	74	65	72

From a facilities perspective, there are a total of 88 instructional spaces in the high school building, including those for traditional classroom purposes and those for special use purposes. The table below summarizes the available spaces.

TABLE HH: Ferndale High School Facility - Room Availability

	Classrooms	Special Use Rooms	Total Teaching Stations
First Floor	10		
Science Labs		5	
Pool		2	
Weight Room		1	
Info Station		1	
First Floor Totals	10	9	19
Second Floor	14		
Science Labs		5	
Gym		1	
Aux. Gym		1	
Auditorium		1	
Band Room (229)		1	
Choir Room (230)		1	
Computer Lab (225)	1		
Drafting (226)	1		
Art (218 &219)		2	
Foods (220)		1	
Child Care (221)		1	
Child Care (221a)		1	
Sewing (222)		1	
Elementary Science Center (223)		NA	
Wood Shop (224)		1	
Theatre work room (227)		1	
Fine Arts Storage (228)		1	
Info Station		1	
School Store		1	
Second Floor Totals	16	21	37
Third Floor	24		
Administrative Offices		8	
Third Floor Totals	24	8	32
Totals	50	38	88

To be more specific, when the 7th and 8th grade middle school enrollment and the high school enrollment is looked at from the perspective of daily teaching periods needed for instruction and then compared with the number of teaching periods available in the building's classrooms each day, it clearly illustrates the availability of space in the high school facility for both schools. In fact, 149 teaching periods are needed each day for 7th and 8th graders to accommodate their core academic and exploratory program needs. In the high school, 293 teaching periods are needed each day to accommodate the academic and special needs of students in grades 9-12. If the high school building is divided as previously described, 189 teaching

periods are available each day for 7th and 8th graders, while 348 teaching periods are available for high school students. (EXHIBIT 17) is a composite floor plan of the high school facility that graphically displays the separation of the 7th and 8th grade middle school and the high school.

Once a final decision is made to use the current high school facility to house the 7th and 8th grade middle school and the high school, a number of other factors will need to be considered prior to full implementation of the plan in the 2002-2003 school year. These transition considerations are important and include the following:

Transition Considerations:

- Make final decisions regarding how 7th and 8th grade students will be grouped for instruction, so that Arts Across the Curriculum and Open Classroom Programs can continue to be available for these students. These decisions will be based on the recommendation of the Board Program Committee in cooperation with administrators, staff, and parents.
- In cooperation with staff and administration finalize facility improvements necessary to use the current high school facility for both a 7th and 8th grade middle school and a high school. These decisions will be based on the recommendation of the Board Building and Site Committee.
- Once program decisions are made, final decisions about room utilization will need to be made as well as how the actual move will take place..
- Evaluate and meet the schools needs for age-appropriate classroom furniture, instructional equipment, technology, student lockers. etc.
- Evaluate and ensure the adequacy of parking needs at the school.
- Develop, in cooperation with local police authorities, a traffic pattern for parent drop-off and pick-up of students, school bus drop-off and pick-up of 7th and 8th grade students, as well as staff parking on site.
- Finalize the daily time schedules for both schools.
- Develop a master class schedule for both schools.
- Develop a plan to meet the extra-curricular needs of all students assigned to the building.
- Finalize the staffing for the building.
- Establish financial policy and procedures associated with building activity accounts and building budgets for the new school consolidation plan.
- Consider the official name for the 7th and 8th grade middle school, e.g., Ferndale Middle School.

Recommendation 4: Continue Ferndale High School Classes in the present high school facility in an area of the building that is separate from students in grades 7-8.

This recommendation is closely aligned with the previous recommendations to incorporate students in grades 7 and 8 into the high school facility as a separate school. The availability of space in the present high school facility to house the 7th and 8th grade middle school and the high school (grades 9-12) is demonstrated on the tables in the previous section. Given the goal of maximizing space in an underutilized facility and increasing our ability to offer a broader range of educational services to all middle school and high school students, it makes sense from a programmatic and financial perspective to expand the use of the high school facility as previously described.

Once a final decision is made to use the current high school facility to house the 7th and 8th grade middle school and the high school, a number of other factors will need to be considered prior to full implementation of the plan in the 2002-2003 school year. These transition considerations are important and include the following:

Transition Considerations:

- Give consideration to any organizational or curricular changes necessary in grades 9-12. Previously, discussions have been held regarding the establishment of two academies, one for students in grades 9 and 10; and the other for students in grades 11 and 12. The primary purpose of these considerations is to look at the 9th and 10th grade years as transitional years for high school students. Such a configuration is especially appropriate if a 7th and 8th grade middle school is incorporated into the high school facility.
- Once final organization and program decisions are made, room utilization decisions will need to be made to ensure compatibility with the organizational structure of the high school. An important consideration in this decision-making process is the relocation of the Ferndale Youth Assistance office to a more prominent location at the facility. Additionally, decisions will need to be made about how the actual move will occur.

- Finalize improvements necessary to ensure adequacy of facilities for both the 7th and 8th grade middle school program and high school program. These decisions will be based on a staffing review and the recommendations of the Board Building and Site Committee.
- Evaluate and meet the facility's needs for instructional equipment, technology, student lockers, etc.
- Evaluate and ensure the adequacy of student and staff parking needs at the site, including appropriate traffic patterns for parent drop-off and pick-up of students at the two schools.
- Finalize the daily time schedule for the high school, ensuring a start staggered from that of the 7th and 8th grade middle school.
- Develop a master class schedule for the entire building, ensuring that it is developed in cooperation with the 7th and 8th grade middle school class schedule, especially as it relates to facilities used by both schools.
- Finalize staffing for the building.
- Establish financial policy and procedures associated with building activity accounts and building budgets for the new school consolidation plan.
- Develop a plan to meet the extra-curricular needs of all students assigned to the building.

Recommendation 5: Combine district preschool programs (Head Start, Chapter I, and Best/4-Kids) into one Early Education and Nurturing Center to be located at Ulysses S. Grant School.

Presently, preschool and early childhood programs operated by the Ferndale Schools are located in several buildings and historically have been administered independently of one another. One of the primary goals of restructuring is to place the district's early childhood programs in one location and under one administrative umbrella. The goal of this configuration is to ensure consistency in curriculum and instruction. As a result, all of the nearly 220 children in district preschool programs will be as ready as possible for kindergarten. This is especially important in light of our decision to return to half-day kindergarten programs. The recommendations to create an Early Education and Nurturing Center at Grant School is being made an effort to ensure the continued use of the school as an educational facility, recognizing the educational history of the school and its importance to the community. Bringing early childhood programs together at

Grant School will allow for sharing of resources, staff, and facilities to serve the needs of our youngest learners better. Equally important, and also possible under this configuration, is for Grant School to serve as a centralized location for the district's screening, assessment, and remedial programs of the district.

Additionally, Grant School would be a prime location for county intervention programs. Since the district is located in the southernmost part of the county, offering a local site for Oakland County programs would greatly benefit the community.

Equally important for the school community is the need for a wellness and health center. Locating such a center at Grant School, in partnership with a local hospital, would give district staff, students, and community residents easy access to health and wellness support. OSHA and state mandates such as CPR/First Aid, bloodborne pathogen training, flu and hepatitis B immunizations, student immunizations, vision and hearing screening could be centralized at Grant, along with health appraisals and seminars on such topics as nutrition, smoking cessation, and Project Living.

It is also believed that Grant School would be a good location for daytime enrichment programming and intergenerational activities. Currently there is little space available throughout the district for daytime enrichment classes. Offering programs at this center for new and prospective parents would introduce them to all the services available to them before their children entered school. Offering retired community members activities and classes during the day would expand their options, and possibly garner new volunteers for our schools.

Other suggested programs to be located at Grant School include offices for the district volunteer program, allowing for centralized volunteer training and support; office and meeting space for the PTA Council for the purpose of fostering more community with

preschool parents; and classrooms for various Ferndale Youth Assistance programs and classes.

Finally, it is recommended that a portion of Grant School be offered to the Charter Township of Royal Oak for offices. A cooperative venture with the Township would be an appropriate collaborative effort. It would demonstrate to the community that the School District and the Township are working together to ensure the continuation of educational services and the establishment of community services at Grant School. Such a joint venture also will ensure that historical value and community pride in Grant School will continue.

Once a final decision is made to use Grant School as an Early Education and Nurturing Center, as well as a possible location for the offices of the Charter Township of Royal Oak, a number of other factors will need to be considered prior to full implementation of the plan in the 2002-2003 school year. These transition considerations are important and include the following:

Transition Considerations:

- Since nearly all of the district's early childhood programs would need to be co-located at Grant, the facility will need to be reviewed for the purpose of state licensing as a preschool facility. This should be a routine process, but is necessary before a preschool can be housed in the facility.
- Continue discussions with Providence Hospital regarding the establishment of a community health center at Grant. The access of the general public to these services will need to be evaluated, as would any liabilities therein.
- Upon final decisions about program offerings in the school, room utilization decisions will need to be made as well as decisions about how the actual move will take place. (EXHIBIT 18) is a composite floor plan of Grant School showing the spaces available.
- Facility improvements necessary for Grant School to be used for the proposed purpose will need to be considered and presented to the Board Building and Site Committee for final recommendation.

- Evaluate and meet the school's need for age-appropriate classroom furniture, instructional equipment, food service requirements, telephone needs, parking needs, etc.
- Custodial, security, and maintenance needs must be evaluated since the schedules of preschool programs, health care clinics, enrichment classes, and township offices may vary considerably from a traditional school.
- Negotiate facility use agreements as appropriate with others using the facility, including the Charter Township of Royal Oak, Oakland County, and Providence Hospital.
- Finalize staffing for the building, including the bargaining implications associated with current salary schedule differences among the various preschool programs.
- Consider the official name for the early education and nurturing center, e.g., Grant Early Education and Nurturing Center.

Recommendation 6: Relocate the high school alternative education program and district administrative offices to Warren G. Harding School.

A decision to incorporate the 7th and 8th grade middle school into the high school facility as a separate school will require relocation of the district administrative offices. Since Harding Elementary is the smallest of the district's schools, it is appropriate to be used as the site for district administrative offices. The school's media center is an ideal location for a Board meeting room, as well as for other district meetings, Board committee meetings, and other similar district activities and events. There would be very little building renovation necessary to use Harding Elementary as district administrative offices.

Additionally, it is appropriate to consider using some of the Harding classrooms for the high school Alternative Education program. While the program is being piloted this year in the high school facility, it is more appropriate to operate the program at a location separate from the high school. Given an offsite enrollment of approximately 60 students, no more than four classrooms will be needed at any one time for the program. A composite floor plan of Harding School is included as (EXHIBIT 19).

The combination of administrative offices and the alternative high school program also ensures appropriate administrative support and supervision of the alternative education program. While it is anticipated that there will be a program coordinator in addition to other program staff, the daily presence of district administrators creates an additional built-in support system for the program.

Once a final decision is made to use Harding School for administrative offices and the alternative high school program, a number of factors will need to be considered prior to full implementation of the plan in the 2002-2003 school year. These transition considerations are important and include the following:

Transition Considerations:

- Work with the high school administration and current alternative school staff on the final offsite program design for the alternative school, including supervision, staffing, and classroom needs.
- Finalize district departments and related staff to be located in the administrative offices at Harding School, as well as the space needs associated with each of those departments.
- Once alternative school program decisions and administrative offices to be located at Harding are determined, final decisions about space utilization will need to be made as well as how the actual move would take place.
- Evaluate and meet the school's needs for classroom and office furniture.
- Evaluate and ensure the adequacy of parking needs at the school.
- Finalize staffing for the building.
- Consider the official name for the administrative facility, e.g., Harding Center.

Recommendation 7: Continue negotiations with member schools of the Center for Advanced Studies and the Arts (CASA) for relocation of the program from the Oak Park School District to Andrew Jackson School.

The Center for Advanced Studies and the Arts (CASA) is a program designed to provide an enriched learning environment for academically and artistically talented students from the Berkley, Clawson, Ferndale, Lamphere, Madison, and Oak Park School districts.

The six school districts operate as a consortium, each providing staff and financial support to the program. Classes are presently held at the Oak Park Clinton Center.

Students attend CASA for two periods of their school day, studying subjects typically not offered in their home schools. Advanced placement courses, extensive dance and art opportunities, as well as subjects such as comparative religions and philosophy are the heart of the CASA program.

CASA was initially established cooperatively by the Berkley, Ferndale, and Oak Park school districts. Lamphere, Madison, and Clawson have been added to the consortium in recent years. As the program has grown to nearly 350 students, the space available for program operations has become limited and generally prohibits future expansion of the program. A composite floor plan of Jackson School that shows the space available for the CASA program is included as (EXHIBIT 20).

Given the CASA space needs and the need in the Ferndale Schools to reduce the number of buildings used for K-12 instruction, it was suggested that one of the Ferndale Schools no longer used after restructuring might be an ideal location for the CASA program. Discussions about relocation were initially held with the CASA Steering Committee composed of high school principals and assistant superintendents, followed by a resolution approved by the member district superintendents authorizing negotiation

of an agreement for use of Jackson Elementary School as a new site for the CASA program.

At this writing, negotiations of an agreement for CASA's location at Jackson School have not been concluded, but are ongoing. Included as part of the negotiations are discussions related to facilities modifications that are necessary for use of the building by CASA, as well as the terms of a lease agreement.

Once a final decision is made regarding restructuring of the Ferndale Schools, a final decision is then possible regarding the use of Jackson School for the CASA program. A number of other factors will also need to be considered prior to full implementation of the plan in the 2002-2003 school year. These transition considerations are important and include the following:

Transition Considerations:

- Finalize short and long-term facility improvements needed for use of Jackson School as the site for the CASA program.
- Establish a plan for completion of these improvements and the method to be used by the member districts to pay for those improvements.
- Negotiate a lease agreement with the CASA member districts to include such matters as the term of the lease and annual payments to offset an appropriate portion of custodial and utility costs.
- Receive a transition plan from CASA that includes parent notification about the change, as well as the actual process of moving CASA materials and supplies from the Oak Park site to Jackson School.
- Finalize the daily time schedule for use of the facility by CASA.
- Finalize Ferndale staffing needed for the building.
- Consider the official name for the school, e.g., Jackson Center for Advanced Studies.

Recommendation 8: Continue negotiations with area universities for extension classes to be held at Taft School, along with other adult programming that is suitable for that facility.

Presently, the Ferndale Schools collaborate with area businesses for training purposes, with most of those activities conducted at the adult and community education business-training center located in leased space on Nine Mile Road near Hilton in Ferndale. The size of this space and parking are limited, making it difficult to accommodate all of the training needs of the community.

Additionally, the district's adult and community education program has been unable, due to limited space, to meet community needs for higher education programming and other life-long learning opportunities not presently provided by the school district.

Given the present restrictions on providing more business training and other life-long learning experiences, it is recommended that a business conference and life-long learning center be created at Taft School around the concept of a higher education, business training, and conference center. It could include one or more university extension programs with classes offered mostly in the late afternoon and evening hours. This could include a distance-learning site for college classes, business conferences and/or State of Michigan Virtual High School.

Under this plan, the current adult and community education business training center would be relocated to this site to offer computer training, strategic planning, and customized training for business. This would allow the staff of the adult and community education business-training center to oversee and expand opportunities for corporate seminars and education with the community and the district.

Additionally, the center could offer full service for short and long term conferences and seminars, with room for group interaction and breakout sessions. Food services could also be available since a prep kitchen for lunches, etc. is already located in the building. It could be the central location for Ferndale district employee training and meetings, as well as a faculty and staff resource center. This could include internet access and group planning of curriculum and schedules. Agencies and businesses could be offered office space for lease or rent. For example, chamber of commerce or the downtown development authority representatives might find it convenient to have office space available in a business training and conference center. This location would also have the potential of establishing business partnerships for our schools and building a strong link to career focused education initiatives.

Finally, Taft School might also be a good place to locate a shared time program with private schools. Accommodating private school children with classes like art, physical education, music, and computers that are unavailable at their home school would allow the district to generate additional state aid revenue. These classes would likely take place during hours that were otherwise low in use. A composite floor plan of Taft School showing the space available for the purposes described is included as (EXHIBIT 21).

Once a decision is made to restructure the Ferndale Schools, it will be possible to make final decisions for the use of Taft School as described in this section of the report. Prior to full implementation of the plan in the 2002-2003 school year a number of factors will need to be considered. These transition considerations are important and include the following:

Transition Considerations:

- Finalize discussions with Baker College, Wayne State University, and Oakland University regarding the use of Taft School for university extension classes. Conduct a follow-up on initial contacts with Michigan State University for similar programs. Negotiate agreements as appropriate with the various universities for these programs.
- Continue discussions with the Ferndale Chamber of Commerce regarding office space that might co-locate with the business-training center. Initial interest has been expressed. More discussion is needed.
- Evaluate the costs to operate a business conference and life-long learning center, developing a rental fee structure and policy for the facility. With the exception of on-going maintenance of the building, it is expected that other overhead and staffing expenses for the facility will be covered through reduction in current training center lease costs or in a self-supporting way from fees and partnerships with agencies using the facility.
- Adequate technology will be important if Taft School is to be marketed as a business-training center. While some technology is in place at the existing Nine Mile site, advanced technology will be needed. Partnerships will need to be planned and funds secured to help bear this cost, as well as to finalize curricular issues associated with programs like distance learning.
- The shared-time program with private schools for special classes (not offered in those schools) has implications for supervision, bargaining and transportation. All would have to be thoroughly reviewed prior to any final decisions regarding the feasibility of this program.
- Custodial, security, food service, telephone needs, and maintenance needs will have to be evaluated since the schedules and possible food service needs of a business-training and life-long learning center will vary considerably from a traditional school.
- Once plans are made regarding building use, final decisions about space utilization will need to be made.
- Evaluate and ensure the adequacy of parking needs at the school.
- Develop a marketing plan to ensure that the Taft School site will be attractive and not be a deterrent to its proposed use. Marketing will play a major role in the ultimate success of the site.
- Consider the official name for the business conference and life-long learning center, e.g., Taft Business Education Center.

Recommendation 9: Place a sinking fund millage on the ballot in 2003 to generate funds for repairs and improvements to school facilities as promised during the bond issue campaign.

The Ferndale School District community made a major investment in its schools six years ago when a nearly \$50 million bond issue was approved. Revenue from the bond issue was used to improve all district schools, including full reconstruction of Coolidge School and partial reconstruction of Harding School. These improvements make the Ferndale schools viable for many years to come, and attractive for a variety of uses, including those for K-12 instruction, as well as for the other purposes mentioned in this report - an early education and nurturing center, administrative offices and alternative high school education programming, relocation of the CASA program, and a business conference and life-long learning center.

Notwithstanding the above, other facility improvements are still needed in the school district, including the repair and improvement of many district parking lots, replacement of roofs on some school buildings, and improvement of the district's indoor and outdoor athletic and extra-curricular facilities. Also needed are on-going repairs and improvements necessary to ensure that the renovations already made to the district's schools do not deteriorate over time. Regardless of how our buildings are used, it is important that they all be adequately maintained.

Therefore, in an effort to ensure that needed improvements to existing facilities are made, it is recommended the Board of Education place a sinking fund millage on the ballot. Such a millage is designed to generate tax revenue to be used only for facility improvement purposes. Such funds cannot be co-mingled with general funds, or used for salaries or other general fund purposes. In fact, voter approval of such a millage would allow expenses for facility improvements now budgeted in the general fund to be

deferred to the sinking fund, allowing more resources to be allocated to the district's instructional program.

Using the current assessed value of property in the Ferndale School District, an assessment of one mill for five years will generate more than \$500,000 annually to be used for facility improvements. The cost of such a millage to a homeowner with property valued at \$100,000 will be about \$50 per year.

It is suggested the sinking fund millage be placed on the ballot in the 2003 calendar year. Prior to doing so, a number of factors need to be considered. These transition considerations are outlined below:

Transition Considerations:

- Compile a comprehensive list of facilities needs for consideration by the Board's Building and Site Committee. This list will serve as the basis for marketing a sinking fund millage to the community.
- Monitor growth in the district's assessed value to determine the most appropriate millage amount based on the identified needs and the timeframe in which those needs must be met.
- Determine the most appropriate time to place a sinking fund millage on the ballot. It is likely the earliest such a millage could be placed before the voters is in calendar year 2003.

SECTION IV

TRANSPORTATION IMPLICATIONS OF RESTRUCTURING

The Ferndale Board of Education presently transports approximately 1,100 students to and from school daily in kindergarten through eighth grade. Eligibility for transportation is based on Board of Education Policy #5021, a copy of which is included as (EXHIBIT 22). Generally, the policy provides transportation for students who reside more than one mile from their school or for those who reside less than one mile from school, but must cross major roadways or walk in areas where there are no sidewalks. Students receiving special education services are also eligible for transportation.

To analyze transportation needs that will exist after school district restructuring, it is first necessary to determine available bus capacity, and then assign those resources related to the specific restructuring plan and develop actual transport times and bus loads. The analysis included here is based on the district's current number of buses and a desire to move to a center-based (grade-level) configuration with no more than a three-tiered delivery system.

Current Bus Capacity

The district currently operates seventeen buses with capacities ranging from 24 to 78 students. Two of the buses have over 100,000 miles and are restricted for use as spares. One bus with wheelchair capability is used exclusively for 24 preschool children. Another bus with wheelchair capacity is used to transport students to and from OTC and CASA. Three buses are used for special education to transport 15 students to

Lamphere, 12 students to Hazel Park Beecher, and 15 students to Harding. A fourth bus transports 16 students to Jardon and is combined with a regular run to Harding. Another 38 special education students are transported through the use of outside contractors - Servicar (27), Ambutrans (6), and Mike's (5). The Servicar students include those in the PPI class at Wilson, students previously transported in-house, but now outsourced due to the new seating requirements for three-year-olds.

Assuming all of the above remain the same for next year, this would leave the district with nine (9) buses plus the partial Jardon run for general education. An option to free additional buses for general education next year is to transport more students via Servicar. However, such a decision could only be made after a complete cost analysis and a evaluation of the bargaining implications of such a decision. Notwithstanding the Servicar option, the rated capacity of the 10 buses available for general education ranges from 72 to 78 students per bus or 720 to 780 students per run (assuming students sit three to a seat). Practically, the capacity is closer to 50 to 60 students per bus (assuming two students to a seat), or 500 to 600 students per run.

Defined Bus Load

In defining the busload, the following grade configuration and destinations are assumed:

Grade 7-8	Ferndale Middle School
Grade 5-6	Best Intermediate School
Grade 3-4	Wilson Elementary School
Grade K-2	Roosevelt Early Childhood Center
Magnet K-6	Coolidge Magnet School

The one-mile or major safety concern rule as outlined in our current transportation policy has been used to define acceptable walking distance, with the exception of Roosevelt School where a one-half mile walking distance is used due the K-2 school configuration. The estimate was developed using the district's Poly-Plot transportation software. The current year enrollment was rolled forward one year, removing an estimated number of students likely to attend the magnet school, and dividing the number of kindergarten students in half since only half-day kindergarten will be provided next year. It is estimated there will be 1709 students eligible for transportation in the 2002-2003 school year. The tables below illustrate the calculations used to determine transportation eligibility.

Table II: Calculations Used to Determine Eligibility for Transportation WITHOUT SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

CURRENT 2001 - 2002 ENROLLMENT				
Grade	Total	Open	Harding	Other
K	233	24	23	186
1	223	28	23	172
2	229	29	24	176
3	236	37	24	175
4	267	25	41	201
5	284	21	43	220
6	280	24		256
7	303			303
8	237			237
TOTAL	2292	188	178	1926

PROJECTED 2002-2003 ENROLLMENT				
Grade	Total	Open	Harding	Other
K	233	24	23	186
1	233	24	23	186
2	223	28	23	172
3	229	29	24	176
4	236	37	24	175
5	267	25	41	201
6	284	21	43	220
7	280			280
8	303			303
TOTAL	2288	188	201	1899

TABLE JJ: Estimated Students Qualified for Transportation

	Total Students	Walking Distance	Riding Bus	NOTES
MAGNET	389	49	340	Total in 3rd Run = 340
Middle School-8TH	303	124	179	
Middle School -7TH	280	122	158	Includes 14 @ Taft
TOTAL	583	246	337	
BEST - 6TH	220	81	139	
BEST - 5TH	201	66	135	
TOTAL	421	147	274	Total 1st Run = 611
WILSON - 4TH	175	22	153	
WILSON - 3RD	176	18	158	
TOTAL	351	40	311	
ROOSEVELT - 2nd	172	31	141	
ROOSEVELT - 1ST	186	33	153	
ROOSEVELT - K	186	33	153	½ -day kindergarten
TOTAL	544	97	447	Total in 2nd Run = 758
GRAND TOTAL	2288	578	1709	

Given the distribution of students as noted on the above tables, it is recommended these students be transported on three runs, with the first run being for approximately 611 students in grades 5-8, the second run for approximately 681 students (assuming ½ day kindergarten) in kindergarten through 4th grade, and the third run for approximately 340 magnet school students. It is important to understand that these numbers assume all eligible students ride the school buses. Additionally, the times of the three runs have not yet been analyzed and will depend on the starting and ending times of the various schools. A graphic look at the information on the above tables is included on the maps in (EXHIBIT 23).

General Transportation Conclusions

To meet the transportation requirements associated with restructuring, it will be necessary to purchase two additional school buses and/or alter how we are currently providing special education and other required transportation to make more buses available for general education transportation. Notwithstanding the above, the district has not purchased new buses for two years and a continuing need exists for such purchases, especially for buses equipped with child seats and for special education purposes. Other factors that may impact transportation needs for the 2002-2003 school year include the following:

- Some special education runs may be scheduled during the magnet school run, making more buses available for K-8 runs.
- The number of children enrolled in district latchkey programs and driven to and from school by their parents has not been factored into the transportation calculations and could result in fewer than estimated students being transported.
- The projected district enrollment decline and an adjustment for additional students attending the magnet school may create additional balance among the three tiers and result in fewer than estimated students being transported on the 5-8 and K-4 runs.

Since many of the uncertainties regarding transportation will not be determined until 2002-2003 enrollment information becomes clearer, action should be taken, regardless of the restructuring decisions, to purchase two additional school buses. Once final restructuring decisions are made, a number of other transportation factors will need to be considered prior to full implementation of the restructuring plan in the 2002-2003 school year. These transition considerations are important and include the following:

Transition Considerations:

- Complete final assessment of transportation options, including alternate methods of providing special education transportation, to determine the exact number of buses available for transportation in the 2002-2003 school year.
- Make routing decisions to determine whether or not shuttles will be used in the K-4 and 5-8 transportation configuration or whether separate buses will be used for each school.
- Establish routes and route times for each of the transportation tiers based on school starting and ending times.
- Engage in on-going recruiting of school bus drivers.
- Notify parents of bus stops and times when their children will be picked up by the school bus.
- Prepare specifications for the purchase of additional school buses.
- Coordinate transportation with programs outside the district such as CASA, Jardon, and OTC.
- Define availability and times for field trips during the day.
- Coordinate school ending times with extra-curricular activities after school.

SECTION V

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IMPLICATIONS OF RESTRUCTURING

The Ferndale Schools have been faced in recent years with program, staff, and facilities cuts that have resulted in a fragmented and inconsistently delivered instructional program, making it presently impossible to improve student achievement and ensure the equitable delivery of educational programs and services to all students. The financial distress that forced these cuts and the subsequent decline in student achievement is expected to continue in the school district. Facing the financial and programmatic realities of the school district is essential if the declining trend in student achievement is to be reversed.

One measure of the inconsistent delivery of educational services is MEAP testing. The tables below demonstrate the wide achievement differences between elementary schools, and middle schools. Inconsistent curriculum delivery becomes clear by examining which schools had results above the state average on specific tests. These results also point to how low the Ferndale scores are in comparison to the state averages on these same tests.

Table KK: Ferndale Elementary School MEAP Results by Building
 HIGHLIGHTED AREAS ARE BELOW STATE AVERAGE

MEAP Scores by Elementary School	READING 4th Grade		MATHEMATICS 4th Grade		SCIENCE 5th Grade		WRITING 5th Grade		SOCIAL STUDIES 5th Grade	
	1999-2000	2000-2001	1999-2000	2000-2001	1999-2000	2000-2001	1999-2000	2000-2001	1999-2000	2000-2001
Grant	17.0	17.8	18.9	15.6	3.8	0.0	40.4	36.7	1.9	6.1
Harding	50.0	62.2	60.7	84.4	14.3	12.9	45.7	38.7	2.9	2.9
Jackson	34.2	65.9	66.7	61.0	24.1	19.5	89.3	73.2	0.0	7.3
Roosevelt	73.3	73.3	88.6	95.0	37.0	48.1	93.0	56.6	23.6	20.4
Taft	63.5	41.7	65.4	58.3	28.1	52.5	58.5	45.9	10.7	17.7
Wilson	33.3	36.5	50.0	57.7	20.0	16.0	77.3	26.5	4.3	2.0
District Average	44.5	50.2	58.2	63.6	23.8	27.3	65.9	46.1	9.3	10.0
State Average	58.2	60.4	74.8	72.3	43.6	41.6	67.8	61.1	20.6	18.8

TABLE LL: Ferndale Middle School MEAP Results by Building
 BELOW STATE AVERAGE

MEAP Scores by Middle School	READING 7th Grade		MATHEMATICS 7th Grade		SCIENCE 8th Grade		WRITING 8th Grade		SOCIAL STUDIES 8th Grade	
	1999-2000	2000-2001	1999-2000	2000-2001	1999-2000	2000-2001	1999-2000	2000-2001	1999-2000	2000-2001
Best	48.9	57.9	64.4	NT**	16.1	24.3	69.6	72.8	24.3	30.4
Coolidge	28.1	44.2	64.4	NT**	21.1	3.4	58.3	50.4	21.3	6.8
District Average	40.8	51.9	64.4	NT**	18.1	16.2	65.0	64.3	23.0	21.2
State Average	48.4	57.9	62.8	NT**	24.2	19.7	66.8	67.0	30.8	30.0

** NT: Not tested in 2000-2001. Scores are in comparison to the state averages on these same tests.

Additionally, the Ferndale Schools have been rated poorly by outside sources such as The Detroit News as they annually compare school districts in the Metro Detroit Area by county. In 2001, The Detroit News gave the Ferndale Schools a D+ rating, one of the lowest in Oakland County. Such low ratings negatively impact the image of the school district and the morale of staff, students, and parents.

It is important to understand that the restructuring recommendations contained in this report will not immediately reverse the declining trends in student achievement and district ratings. Rather, the restructuring recommendations will create a learning environment capable of reversing the declining trends. The new learning environment

created through the center-based (grade-level) approach to grouping students as recommended in this report features the following advantages:

- Consolidates resources by building, increasing instructional efficiency, quality, and equity.
- Provides greater flexibility in instructional methodology, including the use of looping, transitional programs, multi-age programming, interdisciplinary instruction, team teaching, and the traditional contained classroom.
- Eliminates the need for grade-level splits, and allows for small class sizes since the desired pupil-teacher ratio can more easily be targeted.
- Promotes sharing and eliminates the need to duplicate materials, supplies and equipment across multiple buildings with multiple grade-levels.
- Allows teachers greater opportunities for staff development and increases the probability that the curriculum will be delivered consistently to all students at each grade-level.
- Creates a school climate with a focus on age-appropriate activities.
- Provides opportunities to focus on intervention programs for at-risk students in an effort to remedy deficiencies.
- Provides opportunities to focus on intervention programs for academically talented students in an effort to extend their learning opportunities.

A need also exists for both short-term and long-term plans to address curriculum, instruction, staff development and student achievement needs. The purpose of this section of the restructuring report is to identify some of the factors that need to be considered beyond the physical restructuring of the district, if improvement is to occur.

A Framework for Curriculum and Instruction

Simply stated, we must be concerned about curriculum (what we teach), instruction (how we teach), and assessment (how we evaluate what students have learned). Best practice research identifies eight key variables of learning and instruction that are necessary in all classrooms, including the following:

- Identify the defined tasks and desired levels of achievement (curriculum - what we teach)
- Create a vision of learning in which students are engaged.
- Determine the instructional models to be used (how we teach).
- Identify the defined characteristics of the learning context.
- Determine the organization of the classroom.
- Identify the defined role of the learner.
- Identify the defined role of the teacher.
- Determine how achievement is to be measured (how we know if children are mastering the skills and knowledge required in our curriculum).⁶

More specifically, from an instructional perspective, the classroom teacher must be provided with an understandable professional teaching framework and the capacity to identify and implement correct instructional strategies and learning activities for selected student outcomes. Danielson and McGreal in their research on instruction have stated the following:

“Just as students bring different strengths to aid their learning, so teachers have different strengths, which are expressed in their ‘style,’ none are better than any other. Where one teacher may be nurturing, another may be firm; where one teacher lectures, another may use small groups.

Effective teaching is grounded in the belief that both positions are inadequate. Indeed, selecting instructional approaches rests absolutely with a teacher; this decision is a critical element of professionalism. Decisions about instructional strategies and learning activities involve matching the desired outcomes of a lesson or a unit (i.e., what the students are to learn) with the approaches selected. Not only should the instructional goals be worthwhile, but the methods and materials chosen should be appropriate for those goals and help students attain them.”⁷

More specifically, a number of curriculum and instruction activities need to be initiated immediately and continued in the months and years ahead. Each is designed to bring

⁶ "The Importance of a Framework for Learning," Curriculum Framework Curriculum Development Handbook, prepared by the FPS, K-12 Instructional Council, 1996, p.1.

⁷ Danielson, Charlotte & McGreal, Thomas L., *Teacher Evaluation to Enhance Professional Practice*, Published by Educational Testing Service (ETS), 2000.

clarity to the curriculum, instruction, and assessment issues facing our schools, with the desired goal of improving student achievement.

- Conduct a curriculum audit. Ask all teachers to identify what they are teaching in their classrooms.
- Compare what is being taught across the district in an effort to identify commonalities and discrepancies.
- Using the Michigan Frameworks content standards (the state model curriculum for each content area), identify the modifications that need to be made in what we teach to meet the content goals of the model curriculum, and adjusting local courses of study accordingly.
- Establish a five-year cycle of curriculum review in which all courses of study are evaluated, with modifications recommended as needed.
- Purchase textbook and supplemental materials needed immediately to assist teachers and students in meeting the desired learning outcomes.
- Establish a five-year cycle of textbook and supplemental material replacement that follows the five-year course of study review cycle.
- Continue to use Principal-Led teams from each building to resolve assessment issues, especially as they relate to item analysis and testing outcomes associated with the MEAP.
- Establish a systematic, district-wide approach to teacher/staff development designed to ensure that all teachers are equipped to meet the needs of our diverse student population as grouped by grade-level throughout the district.
- Expand the district-wide teacher staff development program to include participation in a best practices model that best meets the needs of our school district staff and students.
- Reinstate curriculum support personnel at the building level to assist teachers, principals, and central administration in accomplishing the desired curriculum and instruction outcomes, including grade-level leaders, content specialists, and department chairpersons.
- Reorganize our current instructional committee network to maximize its focus on the improvement of student achievement and the equitable delivery of educational programs and services to all students. An example of an instructional committee network includes a Board Program Committee, K-12 Coordinating Council, Elementary Coordinating Council (K-5), Secondary Coordinating Council (5-12), Continuous Improvement Teams, elementary principals, and secondary principals.

Local Program Considerations

In light of the above general curriculum, instruction, and assessment needs in the school district, it is also important to also consider the impact of restructuring on existing local school district programs, including PACE, Arts Across the Curriculum, Elementary Open Classroom, Middle School Open Classroom, and the Extended School Year Program.

Executive summaries of these programs are included in (EXHIBIT 24). Outlined below are brief descriptions of each program and the recommendations associated with each:

- The **PACE** program is a half-day per week pull-out program for eligible students in grades 4-6. It is designed to provide bright students with opportunities to engage in challenging content, pursue topics of interest, engage in creative problem solving, and exercise critical thinking skills.

It is recommended that the district revise the PACE program in an effort to create a K-12 program for gifted and talented students. The final format of the program should take the best of what currently exists in the district for academically talented students and expand it into a continuum of services designed to meet the individual needs of all eligible students at all grade-levels.

- **The Arts Across the Curriculum** program is designed to advance and strengthen learning by using innovative strategies, including real-life tasks and authentic environments for learning. It integrates the district's core academic curriculum with the arts - creative movement, drama, music - using thematic instruction. The program also offers unique experiences in the arts through the use of visiting arts specialists from the metropolitan area. The program will engage students in structured arts activities and provide them with special opportunities to express themselves creatively.

It is recommended that Arts Across the Curriculum be continued in the school district and offered to students in the 5-6 building as well as in the 7th and 8th middle school. Since it will be operating at the 7th and 8th grade-level in the same building as the Middle School Open Classroom Transition program, consideration will have to be given to scheduling, eligibility, and whether or not components of the program can be combined with the Open Classroom transition program.

- The **Elementary Open Classroom** program is a district magnet educational program available to interested families on a space available basis. Within the consistent, predictable classroom structure, students are expected to work independently, demonstrate self-direction, develop self-confidence, and assume responsibility for their own learning and behavior. The Open Classroom's individualized expectations demand high levels of achievement and a parent involvement component.

It is recommended the Elementary Open Classroom program be continued as an option for K-6 students, combined at Coolidge School with the Extended School Year program. The future configuration and calendar of the Open Classroom program will be determined through discussions with the administration, staff, and parents of the open classroom and extended school year programs. It is not anticipated that an Open Classroom option will be offered in the 5th and 6th grade building.

- The **Middle School Open Classroom Transition** program is an academically challenging program for middle school students. It is considered a transition program because it moves students from an individualized program to a academic environment that promotes student-motivated learning. Students work with interdisciplinary teacher teams on integrated projects. Additionally students are required to read 18 novels per year, participate in a “writing workshop”, and integrate the use of technology in their classroom projects and activities.

It is recommended that the Middle School Open Classroom Transition program continue to operate at the 7th and 8th grade-level. Since it will be operating in the same school as Arts Across the Curriculum, consideration will need to be given to scheduling, eligibility, and whether or not components of the program can be combined with the Arts Across the Curriculum program.

- The **Extended School Year** program is a district magnet program available to all interested families and features 200 days of instruction divided into five eight-week sessions. Instructional strategies used in the program include multi-age instruction, basic skill development, computer-assisted instruction, and project-based instruction.

It is recommended the Extended School Year program be continued as an option for students, combined at Coolidge School with the Open Classroom Transition program. The future configuration and calendar of the program will be determined through discussions with the administration, staff, and parents of the open classroom and extended school year programs.

Finally, it is important to also comment on the elementary science program used in the school district. Presently, it is a hands-on program in which science kits are prepared by the district science coordinator for various units of the elementary science curriculum. A full review of this program is necessary to ensure that the state benchmarks and model curriculum are incorporated into the Ferndale elementary science program. It is also important to review the delivery model for elementary science from a cost and program efficiency perspective.

Once a final restructuring decision is made, the curriculum and instruction transition matters included in this section will be evaluated carefully prior to full implementation of the restructuring plan in the 2002-2003 school year

SECTION VI

SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS OF RESTRUCTURING

A growing body of research indicates that some schools are more effective than others. More specifically, the researchers have found certain characteristics and practices in successful schools. These critical characteristics of effective schools include a clear sense of mission, strong building leadership, high expectations for students and staff, frequent monitoring of student progress, a safe and orderly learning environment, and parent and community involvement. (Henderson & Lezotte, 1988; Kijai, 1988).⁸ Outlined below is a brief summary of these basic components of an instructionally effective school. Our goals are to establish a school climate like this.

- **A sense of mission.** Effective schools make a conscious decision to become effective schools and that is their mission. A collegial decision and commitment is made to ensure minimum mastery of basic school skills for all students. Pupil acquisition of basic skills takes precedence over all other school activities.
- **Strong building leadership.** Effective schools have principals who are, in fact, the instructional leaders of the staff. They are creative, bold, supportive, and dedicated to the mission of the school.
- **High expectations for all students and staff.** Effective schools expect teachers to teach and students to learn. Standards are high, but realistic. No student is allowed to attain less than minimum mastery of basic skills. Teachers believe they have the ability to provide the required instructional program, and that all students can master the basic skills they teach.
- **Frequent monitoring of student progress.** Effective schools have teachers and principals who are constantly aware of pupil progress in relationship to the instructional objectives, monitoring that progress regularly and in a variety of ways.

⁸ Henderson, A., & Lezotte, L., "School-based improvement and effective schools: a perfect match." *NETWORK for Public Schools*, 1988, 13(5), p. 1-5. And Kijai, J. "Discriminating ability of the school effectiveness correlates." Paper, *Educational Association*, New Orleans, LA, April 1988.

- **A positive learning climate.** Effective schools have an atmosphere that is safe and orderly without being rigid, quiet without being oppressive, and generally conducive to the instructional mission. The climate is warm and responsive.
- **Sufficient opportunity for learning.** Effective schools emphasize more time on task. The more time spent in instruction, the greater learning that takes place.
- **Parent and community involvement.** Effective schools have broad support and involvement from parents and the community.

It is important to understand that achieving the elements of effective schools are inherent throughout the restructuring recommendations included in this report. All are certainly goals of the Ferndale Schools as the restructuring of our schools is completed.

One element of effective schools that is important for special consideration in this section of the report is a **positive learning climate**. Safe and orderly schools are essential if we are to improve student achievement. They are also essential in the Ferndale Schools as we consider restructuring. Parents and students alike will experience some anxiety about the transition to a center-based (grade-level) grade configuration as children from across the district come together into one school and one school community. It is important that provisions are made to ease anxiety over this change.

While many transition activities are planned to help students and parents meet one another prior to implementation of these restructuring recommendations (see the Transition Section of this report), there will still be a need for parents and students to observe good student behavior, so they will feel safe and secure in the schools to which they are assigned. The purpose of this section of the report is to outline our plans to ensure the safety and security of all schools.

Student Behavior Policies and Procedures

A major step was taken during the 2000-2001 school year to ensure a safe and orderly school climate, when the Board of Education reviewed and approved new policies and procedures for students, including a revised Code of Conduct and school disciplinary procedures. Additionally, all district parents were provided a district-wide Student Handbook at the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year in an effort to help them better understand the expectations for students attending our schools.

School principals and other administrators participated in the development of the district-wide student policies and procedures, and welcomed them as a standard for all Ferndale Schools. They have worked diligently to consistently enforce the school Code of Conduct this year and will be doing so in the future. It is believed these new policies and procedures are just one example of an initiative currently underway to ensure a safe and orderly environment for learning.

Human Dignity

Equally important in ensuring a safe and orderly school climate is the Board of Education's long-standing Human Dignity Policy (EXHIBIT 25). This policy reflects the school district belief that every individual deserves to be able to come to school without the fear of demeaning remarks, bullying, or other similarly hostile actions. This policy prohibits the harassment of students, staff, and other individuals using the school. More specifically, the policy reads as follows:

“The Board of Education, recognizing that we are a multi-racial, multi-ethnic school district, believes it is a part of our mission to provide a positive, harmonious environment in which respect for the diverse make up of our school community is promoted. A major aim of education in the Ferndale School District is the development of a reasonable commitment to the core values of a democratic society. In accordance with this aim, the school district will not tolerate behavior by students or staff that insults, degrades, or stereotypes any race, gender, handicap, physical condition, sexual orientation, marital status, ethnic group, or religion. Appropriate consequences for offending this policy will be specified in the student code of conduct of each school building.”

Ferndale School principals take this policy seriously and have worked hard to consistently enforce the policy in their schools. They will continue to enforce this policy when our schools are restructured, and students and parents come together from across the district. It is believed this policy establishes the standard for a positive school climate in a restructured, center-based (grade-level) school district.

Administrative Support Systems

One of the common questions asked by parents and others as the concept of a center-based (grade-level) configuration for the Ferndale Schools was presented and discussed last spring was whether or not bringing students together from across the district would create the potential for a more disruptive atmosphere in our school classrooms. We have acknowledged this concern, but believe that quite the contrary is true. With good school rules, the district’s Human Dignity policy, and the planned additional support for school principals, the climate in our school is expected to not only be safe and orderly, but very positive.

Presently, in our elementary and junior high schools, on-going staff cuts have reduced significantly the support necessary for building principals to effectively serve as instructional leaders and, at the same time, monitor student behavior and school climate.

In some schools, the only support to the principal is the school secretary. These restructuring recommendations provide for a reallocation of current staff in a way that will allow guidance counselors, additional social workers, and assistant principals, where appropriate, to assist principals in fostering a positive school climate that significantly reduces the potential for disruptive behavior.

More specifically, the additional staff support for school principals will provide opportunities for students and parents to seek services at the school building level that have the potential to help them resolve not only school-related problems, but also those that might be family-centered. One of the elements of effective schools is home involvement in the education of children. With increased support staff at the school level, we will have a much greater opportunity to foster an atmosphere in which the school and parents/guardians are working together to ensure a positive learning environment.

Other School Safety and Security Considerations

Prior to September 11, 2001, this section of the report may not have been necessary. Since the tragic terrorist attack on America and the recent uneasiness over anthrax infections, it has become necessary for public schools to take every precaution possible to help students and parents feel safe and secure from outside influences.

At this writing, action has been taken to lock school doors, except for those that can be monitored. All school employees have been informed of new procedures to be used for handling mail. Other discussions are underway regarding appropriate and necessary actions to add security staff to all school buildings, as well as to further restrict school

access to those who are registered and receive visitor identification passes. Other actions will be taken as the need rises in the weeks and months ahead.

In the final analysis, regardless of the reason, it is the responsibility of the school district to ensure a safe, secure, and orderly environment for our students. Ferndale principals and other administrators understand this responsibility and believe, with consistent enforcement of school rules, including the district's Human Dignity policy and additional support staff, that they can and will ensure a safe, secure, and orderly environment for our students. On-going monitoring of school climate is an essential responsibility of the Board of Education and school district employees.

SECTION VII

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS OF RESTRUCTURING

The allocation of staff in the Ferndale Schools is at the heart of the restructuring recommendations contained in this report, especially as it relates to the programmatic and financial stability of the district. More specifically, as restructuring plans are implemented, some positions in the school district will be lost, while others will be reallocated for other purposes. Presently, operating nine schools inhibits the level of staff efficiency needed to contain costs and provide other needed services. As schools and staff positions are consolidated, it then becomes possible to reduce costs and maintain sufficient funds to reinstate needed staff and services.

The primary purpose of this section of the report is to address staffing in a general rather than in a specific way, identifying staffing targets rather than specific positions to be reduced. It is important to understand that actual staff reductions are subject to the terms of the collective bargaining agreements between the Board of Education and the various unions representing school district employees. Final decisions regarding position reductions will be made during the transition phase following the restructuring decision by the Board. These staffing decisions will be made in a manner consistent with all collective bargaining agreements.

Fiscal Year 2001-2002 Staffing

Last spring, when the initial discussion of school district restructuring was proposed, a number of staff positions were identified as necessary for reduction in the 2001-2002 school year in order to meet a target deficit for this fiscal year of \$1.4 million. Outlined

below is a summary of those staffing modifications, as well as others in place for the 2001-2002 fiscal year:

- Eliminated all Language Arts Teaching Assistants (LATAS) in district elementary schools at an estimated savings of \$245,011.
- Reduced five teachers and various aides and support staff due to declining enrollment at an estimated savings of \$295,000.
- Replaced eight teachers who retired at the top of the pay scale at the end of the 2000-2001 school year with teachers at the bottom of the pay scale at an estimated savings of \$280,000.
- Replaced an elementary principal who retired at the end of the 2000-2001 school year with an interim elementary principal, knowing that elementary principals will be reduced as part of the restructuring plan.
- Replaced a middle school principal who resigned at the end of the 2000-2001 school year with an interim middle school principal, knowing that only one 7th and 8th grade middle school principal will be needed when the restructuring plan is implemented.
- Replaced the Director of Human Resources, a central office position, with an interim director, knowing that one central administrator position will be eliminated as part of the restructuring plan.
- Reorganized supervision of the district's warehouse, transportation and buildings and grounds functions at no additional cost to the district by reallocating positions within the department after the loss of two department employees.

Transition Staffing

One of the most significant staffing recommendations included in this report is the appointment of a **Transition Coordinator**. It is the intent of this section to announce that Assistant High School Principal Gary Sophiea will serve in that capacity, effective with the approval of a final restructuring decision. While Mr. Sophiea will continue to support the high school administration in certain areas such as student accounting, his primary responsibility during the remainder of the 2001-2002 school year will be to coordinate, with other district administrators, the various transition activities that need to

be completed prior to full implementation of the restructuring plan in the 2002-2003 school year. He will report directly to the Superintendent during the transition period, returning to his position as assistant high school principal at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year. Temporary arrangements are being made to replace Mr. Sophiea at the high school with an interim assistant principal.

Given the nature of the restructuring recommendations, especially the location of a 7th and 8th grade middle school as a separate school in the high school facility, Mr. Sophiea is the ideal choice for Transition Coordinator. He has had experience as Coolidge Middle School Principal, as well as experience at the high school. His knowledge of the staff and community will serve him well in the capacity of Transition Coordinator.

One of the questions asked about the restructuring recommendations is whether or not there is enough time to complete the activities necessary to fully implement the restructuring plan at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year. The appointment of Mr. Sophiea as Transition Coordinator will ensure close monitoring of all transition activities and reinforce our ability to complete the required tasks in a timely manner.

Fiscal Year 2002-2003 Staffing

Staffing in the 2002-2003 school year, as outlined in this section of the report, reflects consolidation of the K-12 program from nine buildings to five buildings. The four buildings not to be used for K-12 instruction will be reused for other purposes as previously described in this report. Many of the costs associated with the reuse of these facilities will be covered through the reallocation of other district staff and programs to these buildings, as well as through lease agreements and other self-supporting revenue. Some general fund custodial and utility costs will be needed to support the reuse of

these facilities. These costs have been factored into the financial analysis included in another section of this report.

Additionally, it is important to review the staffing targets for the 2002-2003 school year. These targets are designed to enhance staffing in some areas, as well as reduce positions no longer necessary as our nine K-12 schools are consolidated into five schools. To put the staffing targets into some context, it is also important to review class sizes in the school district this year (EXHIBIT 26). The exhibit shows that current K-5 classes average 21:1, while 6-8 classes average 19:1. High School class sizes average 22.5:1. These class sizes are lower than in previous years, but indicative of our staffing inefficiency since we are unable to hit target class sizes with such a large number of buildings and so little enrollment in each. Outlined below is a summary of the 2002-2003 staffing targets. As always, it is important to remember that these targets may be modified slightly as final building schedules are developed.

- Class size targets for the 2002-2003 school year are 17:1 to 20:1 in kindergarten through second grade, 20:1 to 22:1 in grades 3 and 4, and 24:1 in grades 5 and 6. Class sizes in grades 7-12 are targeted at 25:1 to 26:1. Using these targets, it is our intent to reduce four teaching positions as enrollment continues to decline and eight other teaching positions associated with the move to a center-based grade configuration. We are also intending to leave eight other teaching positions in the budget, but reallocated for other purposes. It is hoped that most of these positions can be reduced through attrition rather than layoff.
- Eight retirements are anticipated in the 2002-2003 school year. Some or all of these positions may not be replaced, depending upon whether or not they fit with the positions to be reduced. In any event, if they are replaced, there is a significant cost savings since teachers at a lower pay scale will be employed to replace the retirees.
- The kindergarten program will be reduced to a half-day program, reducing the number of full-time-equivalent teachers by half, and eliminating all of the teacher aides associated with the kindergarten program.

- Two principal positions and one central office position will be eliminated in the 2002-2003 school year. The elimination of the central office position will be facilitated through restructuring of the Deputy Superintendent position to include responsibility for the personnel function. A curriculum coordinator position will be added to the staff of the Deputy Superintendent without additional cost to the district by reallocating a current district position.
- Custodial, clerical, library aide, and lunch aide positions will be reduced in the buildings to be closed to K-12 instruction. The net effect of these positions will not be one for one since some custodial services will be needed in the reused buildings and the 7th and 8th grade middle school will need additional administrative and clerical support.
- From seven to ten additional positions will be reduced as part of an overall downsizing plan. These position reductions will be possible through greater circuit, technology, special education, adult education, and other support staff efficiency.
- A minimum of two additional guidance counselor positions will be added at no additional cost to the general fund by reallocating current positions as described above. These two positions, along with the reassignment of two middle school counselors, will allow every elementary school to have at least one full-time guidance counselor.
- A minimum of one additional social worker will be added at no additional cost to the general fund by reallocating teaching positions as described above. This position will allow every school to have at least one full-time social worker.
- Five teaching positions remain available for reallocation as needed in the 2002-2003 school year for such purposes as expanding the district's gifted and talented program, initiating a return of foreign language at the elementary school level, additional administrative support as needed, or new classes to be offered at the secondary level. Final decisions regarding the allocation of this staff will be made when the final program and staffing configuration of the district is determined during the transition period after Board approval of the restructuring plan.

Staffing in 2003-2004 and Beyond

As we look to the future, it is hoped that staffing modifications will reflect only changes in enrollment and program enhancement. Once the financial corner is turned in the district, it will be possible to concentrate on adjusting staff, as needed, if enrollment declines or increases. It may also be possible to add staff to enhance programs. As always, the future depends upon state funding for schools and our own operational efficiency

SECTION VIII

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF RESTRUCTURING

As the financial implications of restructuring are reviewed in this section of the report, it is important to understand that several assumptions have been made that could change in the months ahead. Many of them have to do with district enrollment and state funding, both of which have a significant impact on our local budget. Outlined below are some of these important assumptions:

- A loss of \$250,000 in state categorical funding has been factored into the current year budget, as well as in the estimates of revenue for subsequent years. Unfortunately, this is only an estimate and does not reflect the Governor's veto of the Fiscal Year 2003 foundation grant increases and all categorical funding.
- Revenue assumptions are based on a K-12 enrollment of 3660 students in this fiscal year, with a net loss of 60 additional students projected next year and each year thereafter. This estimate was used because we expect to retain approximately 60 students due to success of the new alternative high school program. These students will offset a projected enrollment decline of approximately 120 students in each of the next three years.
- Notwithstanding the governor's veto of the FY 03 budget, revenue assumptions are still based on an increase of \$200 in the per pupil foundation allowance in each of the budget years for which projections have been made.
- An increase of \$900,000 has been included in the revenue estimates for the expected net receipts from the recently approved special education millage. An additional \$50,000 has also been added for anticipated Medicaid reimbursements.
- Adult education pupil (16 to 20 year old students) enrollment is estimated at 460 for each of the budget years, while participants (students over 20 years of age) are estimated at 1255 for each of the budget years.
- Adult education participant funding is estimated to continue at current levels, although it is possible that some or all of this funding could be lost as the legislature struggles with next year's total education budget.

- A three-percent across-the-board assumption has been made for expenditure increases. It is important to understand that disproportionate increases above three percent could occur in such budget areas as healthcare and retirement costs.

The uncertainty over state funding combined with a greater than anticipated student loss this year make the district's budget more tenuous than previously expected. Last spring, we anticipated a \$1 million surplus if we moved to a center-based (grade-level) education delivery system, with two schools no longer used for K-12 instruction, but reused for other purposes. Today, we need to reuse four schools in order to turn a surplus of \$992,407 in the 2002-2003 school year, exclusive of fund equity.

To put the budget constraints of the district into a different perspective, if no action were taken to contain costs, school district deficits would continue as outlined below and noted in (EXHIBIT 27), resulting in a cumulative deficit, exclusive of fund equity, over the four-year period of (\$12,120,158).

FY 2002	(\$1,465,255)
FY 2003	(\$2,329,953)
FY 2004	(\$3,491,776)
FY 2005	(\$4,833,154)

While the Board cannot legally accrue this deficit over the four-year period, it illustrates the seriousness of the district's financial problems and the need to take significant action now. Equally important, is the fact that we will use all of our fund equity by the end of FY 2003 if no reductions are made, placing the district in a true deficit of more than \$1.3 million and a possible state take-over of the district.

The current year budget (EXHIBIT 28) was approved with a \$1,465,000 deficit, causing our fund equity to decline to \$1,019,953 by June 30, 2002. This deficit and a declining fund equity is evidence that significant cost reductions are necessary now if the district is

to remain financially stable. (EXHIBITS 29 and 30) represent financial scenarios that illustrate how financial stability can be achieved through the recommendations included in this report.

SECTION IX

TRANSITION IMPLICATIONS OF RESTRUCTURING

One of the most important aspects of restructuring is the process of preparing students, parents, staff, and the community for the changes that lie ahead. This preparation must focus on ways to bring the school community together. Small changes such as making the “Eagles” the school mascot and brown and white the school colors for all of the Ferndale Schools will go a long way to establish a united sense of school community. The remainder of this section outlines how we can bring the Ferndale Public Schools “Together in 2002.”

Transition Goal

The overall goal of transitional activities is to build a strong sense of community throughout the district. By offering welcoming activities and a strong social support network, the district’s goal is to facilitate students’ adjustment to their new schools and create an atmosphere conducive to optimal performance. (Programs like these will be most successful with a clear policy commitment from administration.)

The transition activities employed here will be implemented with the restructuring, but should remain ongoing annually to ensure smooth transitions from grade to grade and building to building. Our goal is to counteract the assumption that “schools with very narrow grade spans experience frequent student turnover, which can influence the

school's identity and sense of community."⁹ By contrast, schools with a strong sense of community can provide smooth transitions year after year.

Definition of Community

Common attributes of schools that have successfully achieved a sense of community are: respect, caring, inclusiveness, trust, empowerment, and commitment.¹⁰ The goal of the school community will be to maintain open communication, widespread participation, teamwork, and incorporated diversity. Employees, students and parents must share the district's vision for the future of the school, common purpose and values. Attention will need to be dedicated to helping at-risk students overcome barriers to feeling part of the school. To reduce and prevent dropouts, "effective schools must provide at-risk students with a community of support."¹¹

Developing a strong sense of community will be an important component of the long-term success of the district restructuring plan. There will be many changes in established roles and relationships, as well as the fundamental approaches to teaching and learning. "Unless a sound fabric of interpersonal relationships can be woven as improvement activities are planned and launched, potential benefits of these activities may be lost to tension and dissension."¹²

⁹ Renchler, Ron. "Grade Span," *Research Round Up*, National Association of Elementary School Principals, Spring 2000, p. 2.

¹⁰ Royal, Mark A. and Rossi, Robert J., "Schools as Communities," *ERIC Digest*, Number 11 (ED405641) by http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed405641.html, 1997.

¹¹ Wehlage, Gary G., and others. "Reducing the Risk: Schools as Communities of Support." New York: The Falmer Press, 1989.

¹² "Schools as Communities," p. 3.

School Community Groups

At any grade level, the feeling of connectedness to a community is essential to feeling welcome. Although the district at-large may seem vast, when students, parents/guardians, and teachers develop their own smaller units of community relationships, they feel a stronger sense of belonging to the district as a whole.

- **Individual Classes: Community in a Classroom:** This relationship will be established annually. There will usually be a few students in each class who knew each other from prior years, but the job of the teacher is to create a cohesive group at the beginning of the year that assimilates all students into the class culture. Students develop a strong bond with classmates and teacher.
- **Grade-Level: Cohort Community, i.e., Class of 2010:** This relationship will be built on throughout K-12 education. As opposed to a commitment to the bricks and mortar of the school building, teachers, and administrators, and students and parents will be bonded to each other with a strong class identity: “We are the class of 2010!” As students and their parents move through the grades, they will have opportunities to meet and interact with most of the district’s families in their grade. Families who join the district in later grades will need to be welcomed and assimilated into the cohort community.
- **School Community: Teachers & Leadership:** Administrators and teachers will develop their own community and remain in the same building together year after year. They will develop relationships with students and families annually, just as individual classroom cultures are developed.
- **District Community: All schools in the district:** Connected by a continuous stream of students who move together throughout their school years.
- **Municipal Community: Ferndale, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak Township:** The community connection will extend into the cities served by the district. The students and their families are residents of the community which interacts through local commerce, and community social events.

Core Communication Groups

Several different audiences compose the school community. They are identified below as the district’s core communication groups. Each group will be reached and included in communication strategies, but representatives of each group can also act as key

communicators who are able to articulate the vision and goals of the district to the community beyond the district.

- Students
- Parents
- PTA/Parent Leaders
- Community-at-Large
- Teachers
- Employees

Key Strategies

1. **Ensure a welcoming atmosphere** in the schools. Below are some suggestions, but before we implement any strategies, a needs assessment walk-through should be conducted at each school building with the Welcoming Committee Members to evaluate what new students and families see and experience.
 - **Signs that clearly welcome visitors** and indicate the entrances and parking areas.
 - **Hang Welcoming Banners** in school entrances
 - **Provide welcome packets** (available in schools and Student Services: folder with:
 - Map
 - District Brochure with information about general and special programs. Tone will be welcoming, inviting students to participate in activities that interest them.
 - Calendar of district activities and a district telephone directory
 - School schedule
 - Age-appropriate introductory information, i.e., coloring picture
 - School logo keepsake, i.e., pencil, key tag, window sticker
 - Staff and school contact names and numbers
 - **Welcome table at entrances** with guidelines for entering the building, directions to the school office for sign-in, and additional school information.

- **Name tags** for everyone at every event

Check in at registration to track who attends and who might need more personalized invitations to participate. Personal invitations from another parent or student will be sent to those who appear to need something more, i.e., moving from another part of the district, language/cultural barriers. Follow up will include “thank you” notes from the class, or a student in the class.
 - **Introductions** become part of the culture. This means all teachers and principals are encouraged to introduce classroom parents to each other at the beginning of the year, and to be sensitive to shyness of new parents and include them in the group. If parents have an opportunity at the beginning of the school year to go around the room (at curriculum night, for example) and say, at minimum, “We are _____’s parents, _____ and _____.” The group will at least have names with faces as the year gets underway.
2. **Provide building tours to facilitate familiarity** and confidence in the new school during the 2001-2002 school year, over the summer, and at the beginning of school year.
- **Student Tours** will first be held at the receiving school in Spring 2002. Teachers who will be in the receiving school can attend, as well.
 - **Parent Tours:** After the students have had fieldtrips to tour the receiving school, parents can visit at night and meet the administrators and teachers who will be in their new school. A second series of tours can be held in the late summer just prior to the start of school when class assignments are finalized.
3. **Provide social supports** that facilitate involvement.
- Identify barriers to participation to "minimize stigma and maximize positive attitudes,"¹³ i.e.:
 - Access to transportation (solution: carpooling, include on survey)
 - Babysitting needs (solution: daycare provided by high school students)
 - Negative attitude (solution: personal phone call and invitation from teacher or administrator to find out more)
 - Socio-economic gap (solution: implementation of all-school welcoming atmosphere)
 - Cultural and individual diversity (same as above)
 - Allow, celebrate, and encourage any level of participation that occurs.
 - Provide activities that develop and encourage social skills and improve group interaction.

¹³ "Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families. A Technical Aid Packet," California University, Los Angeles. Center for Mental Health Schools. Pub. 1998 (ERIC Reports 425230), p. 10.

Note: Although the literature frequently recommends offering a “mutual interest group composed of others with the same cultural background,”¹⁴ this kind of segregation will not contribute to the district’s goal to unify our school community. Instead, we can create events that encourage members of the school community to share and celebrate their cultural and individual diversity. New families will receive a “Welcome to Your School Survey” (EXHIBIT 31) that asks about activities in which they might be interested in participating, and also asks about potential barriers to participation.

4. **Peer buddies** for students new to the school within classrooms.

- Classmates will be asked to help welcome new students to the school. The children will be given guidance on how to help the new classmate feel comfortable. During the first few days, they will accompany the new student to lunch and recess, and introduce the student to other classmates. Certificates of appreciation, and coupons for free lunch, will be given to the peer buddy volunteers.

5. **Personal invitations** to participate.

An on-going welcoming committee can invite new families to participate in school activities with personal phone calls, notes home. A sample script would read like this: “I’m _____, and I’d like to personally invite you to _____. I’ll be happy to meet you at _____ and introduce you to some other parents and teachers at the event.” Parents can be linked through information provided on the Welcome to Your School surveys.

- From teacher
- From classmates: Signed by all the students
- From principal
- From PTA leaders

6. **Encourage home involvement.** Parents/guardians can be given a checklist to indicate their interests, availability, hobbies. We can help them get involved by inviting parents/guardians to:¹⁵

- Visit the school
- Volunteer
- Go on Field Trips
- Help with school newsletter
- Organize social events
- Plan and attend learning workshops
- Attend curriculum nights
- Establish family social networks

¹⁴ "Welcoming and Involving New Students," p. 10.

¹⁵ "Welcoming and Involving New Students," p. 11.

7. **Evaluate adjustment** three weeks into school year. Conduct a spot survey to determine how students and parents/guardians feel about their new school.
8. **Provide interventions** for students who may need more support.

“How well a school addresses the problems of welcoming and involving new students and families is an important qualitative indicator of program adequacy and staff attitudes and thus, is a probable predictor of efficacy. . . . Interventions to enhance welcoming and home involvement are as complex as any other psychological and educational intervention. . . . The success of programs to enhance welcoming and home involvement is first and foremost in the hands of policy makers.”¹⁶

Interventions can include meeting with the school counseling staff to talk about what can be done to help the student feel more comfortable, and parent/guardian meetings or phone calls to develop alternate approaches to helping the student feel comfortable.

Transition Welcoming Committees

Each school will have its own transition welcoming committee that focuses on age-appropriate activities specific to that school.

- School Principal
- School Social Worker/Counselor
- Teachers who represent each incoming school
- Parents who represent each incoming school
- Secretaries who know the children
- Public Relations Director, who will act as the “change agent” to facilitate organizational activities.
- Student leaders, where appropriate
- New Student Welcoming Committee can take on the on-going tour and orientation activities.

Creating a welcoming environment for all depends on staff support of the concept.

¹⁶ “Welcoming and Involving New Students,” p. 12.

Activities/Get to Know You Events

Elementary School Level - Grades K-2, 3-4, 5-6

Cross-District Friend-Building Program: Students who will be in school together next year will have opportunities to start getting to know each other through a cross-district friend-building program. They will be matched with a new friend/pen pal with whom they can write letters and emails, send holiday and birthday greetings throughout the school year. We can arrange intra-district fieldtrips during which the children will meet their pen pals and have opportunities for friend-building activities.

After the children have met each other, Parent Get To Know You events can be held for the children to introduce their new friends to their parents. The children can also introduce their parents to each other. Discussion topics for friend-building will be provided.

Goal: To get to know at least four new people who will be in school together for the first time upon the restructuring implementation.

Method for Student Friend-Building: The children will meet in the gym at their school wearing nametags. There will be a contest to see who can find their pen pal first. Once the children have found their pen pals, they will break into smaller groups of 20 students, each with a moderator. Each pair will spend five minutes talking and listening to each other. The students who talk first will tell the other students five things they enjoy doing. The listening students do just that. No interrupting, no questions, just listening and remembering the details. Then the pairs will switch places. Once they have had an opportunity to introduce themselves, they will find another pair and introduce their partners to the other pair. This way there will be clusters of four students who will each introduce their pen pals to another group. After the four go through introductions, they will find another group of four and create eight and run through the introductions again. This kind of group introduction can be continued until everyone in the room has had an opportunity to meet, but must be timed carefully so as not to bore the participants. Going to eight participants can make the kids feel more shy, so it may be best to stop at groups of four. Before they part, the moderators will make sure all the students have recorded the names of the four/eight in their groups.

Initially group kids by interests "Who has been on an airplane," "Who has an older brother or sister?" "Who loves to play sports?" "Who likes to watch Rugrats?" "Who likes Mac & Cheese?" "Who has traveled to Canada?" "Who has a red car at home?" "Who likes to do art projects?"

Method for Parent Friend-Building: After the students have their friend-building fieldtrip, an open house will be scheduled at the destination school for parents and students to get acquainted. Students will look for their pen pals and their four/eight friends they met at the field trip. They will be instructed in how to introduce their parents to each other and bring together the entire group. This should create clusters of 8-16 people who will have conversation starter cards to help break the ice.

Parents and students will play a school-related game together, further developing relationships; or a guest speaker could talk to the parent group about "How to help your child prepare for the transition."

Potential Disadvantages to the Program: Friends met during the 2001-2002 school year may not remain in the district the following year. Students who make an investment in new friends who they don't see in the new school may be disappointed. Expanding the friend group to four or eight students will provide better odds of them finding familiar new faces in the fall.

Friends made in the program may be disappointed by not being in the same classroom in the new school, but they should be reminded that they will see their friends on the playground and at all-school events.

Some parents may not be willing or comfortable with participating in the activities. If they are disgruntled with the transition, they may resist making friends. If they are shy, these activities could be difficult for them.

Other Transitional Friend-Building Activities: National Volunteer Day (spring) and Make A Difference Day (fall) clean up events can be arranged at each school. Teams of parents, school employees, and students can work together to spruce up their future school (spring 2002) and current school (in fall 2002). Examples of activities that can be completed in a one-day event are: Placing woodchips around planting beds; planting trees and shrubs; litter pick up; painting railings, walkway markers, four-square and hopscotch games, and court markers; and light repair. This kind of project can be a great opportunity to unite the school community in a project that is for the benefit of their school.

Middle School Level - Grades 7-8

Welcome/Transition Program: District middle school students and their parents will want to know what their experience at the new location within the Ferndale High School facilities will be like. In addition to traditional transition activities that give students and parents introductions to the middle school concept, the incoming classes and their parents will need some extra reassurance that their new school is indeed designed to serve students in their age group.

Middle School transition programs will include activities that provide the incoming students with social support. "Parent involvement in young adolescent students' transition is critical."¹⁷ Our goal must be to make parents feel comfortable coming to the school and reassured that their involvement makes a significant difference in student achievement. It's important that the transitional process includes several opportunities to get to know teachers and other students in the school.¹⁸ Sue DesJardins, Communication Director, Avondale Public Schools recommends encouraging parents to help in the school as hall monitors. She reports that parents who can see for themselves how students interact in the school will feel more comfortable about the transition.¹⁹

Transition Activities for Winter 2002:

- Meetings at current school to prepare students for the transition.
- Email pen pals with other students who will be joining them at the new school.
- Visits to new school by teachers, students, and parents.
- Organized tours will be designed to show parents clearly where the middle school students will be located, reassure them that their children will not be in the same hallways as the high school students, and generate excitement about the extensive facilities for physical education, science, and performing arts at the high school site.

Transition Activities for Summer & Fall 2002:

- Picnics hosted by PTAs and teachers in the summer prior to the start of school.
- School open houses and curriculum nights will give parents opportunities to see the school and learn from their children and teachers how the initial transition is going.

School Tours: Beginning in Spring 2002, open house tours will be hosted by each school for its incoming fall class.

- K-2 School
- 3-4 School
- 5-6 School
- K-6 Magnet School
- 7-8 Junior High School
- 9-12 Ferndale High School (Extravaganza Open House)

¹⁷ Mizelle, Nancy B. & Irvin, Judith L. "Transition from Middle School into High School," <http://www.nmsa.org/services/transition.htm>, National Middle School Association, 2001.

¹⁸ "The Transition to Middle School," <http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content5/trans.2.mid.school.html>.

¹⁹ Phone interview with Sue DesJardins, Communication Director, Avondale Public Schools, October 5, 2001.

Goal: By having an opportunity to visit the school, see the building layout and facilities, meet the teachers and administrators, and learn about the curriculum, parents and students will feel more comfortable about the transition.

Each year, the class that will be the senior group in the building for the following year will sponsor the incoming class by hosting welcoming events such as between-school visits.

Back-to-School Barbecue Picnics: In August, before school starts, newly reorganized PTAs can host family barbecue picnics for their incoming families.

- K-2 School
- 3-4 School
- 5-6 School
- K-6 Magnet School
- 7-8 Junior High School
- 9-12 Ferndale High School

Marketing Materials

District Tagline: Ferndale Public Schools - Together

Logo: All Schools will adopt the Ferndale Eagles as their mascot. A new district logo will be designed that demonstrates the unified image of Ferndale Schools with an Eagle outstretching its wing to protect three progressively smaller eagles under the wing. The logo design will demonstrate the warmth and togetherness of the new Ferndale Schools.

Key Messages:

- The Best School District We Can Be
- Ferndale Schools Together
- Safe and Secure Environment for Students
- Preparing Students for Success
- Helping All Students Achieve More
- To staff: Consistent messages inspire confidence

Materials: Local businesses and community groups will be approached to “Adopt Our Schools” and underwrite the expenses of providing the following items to students at the beginning of the school year.

T-Shirts: one of the most costly items, can be printed on front and back. The backs can have collected logos of sponsoring organizations with a header like: Friends of Ferndale Schools Together. The fronts will have the new district logo and "Class of 2010," for example. We will be encouraging students to develop a sense of connection to their class cohort group rather than an affinity for a school building. The students will remain together in the class group throughout their school years.

SECTION X

EVALUATION PLAN: A FOCUS ON QUALITY, VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE

An important component of any organizational change is to evaluate its effectiveness. Educational institutions, in particular, can benefit from a structured evaluation that provides systematic assessment of the quality, value and significance of the proposed changes. The Ferndale Public Schools will implement an evaluation plan to assess the district's status prior to restructuring, and once the center-based (grade-level) schools are established.²⁰

The general methodology for this evaluation comes from the applied social sciences (e.g. education, social work, social psychology etc.) and incorporates both valid and reliable measures, and fair and ethical outcomes. The description of the proposed evaluation focuses on two distinct types of evaluation: formative (ongoing) and summative (at the end and long-term).

Before the evaluation of the restructuring plan and center-based (grade-level) approach begins, several important planning activities must occur. These activities will take place at the outset to ensure that the evaluation fits the District's objectives. These evaluation activities include: the development of a framework, the creation of a plan and the determination of available resources.

The evaluation framework (EXHIBIT 32) will serve as the guide for the complete evaluation and will include the key concepts and objectives. It is from the framework that

²⁰ This Evaluation Plan has been developed with the assistance of Carol J. Boyd, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, Professor of Nursing and Women's Studies, Director and Research Scientist, Substance Abuse Research Center, University of Michigan.

the evaluation plan will be developed. The plan describes two aspects: 1) the types of measures used to assess change, and 2) the ways in which the measures will be administered, scored, and reported. The evaluation plan forces participants to consider carefully the resources needed before the onset of the evaluation, and provides an overview of the manner in which the evaluations will be implemented.

The formative and summative evaluations correspond to unique phases in the overall evaluation. For instance, formative evaluations provide ongoing feedback about the development of and transition to the center-based (grade-level) approach; this is in contrast to a summative evaluation that assesses the value of the center-based (grade-level) approach after it is in operation. The summative evaluation will help the District's administrators decide whether the center-based (grade-level) approach should be discarded, modified or continued. And finally, the summative evaluation will address long-term indicators of change, including MEAP scores, student enrollment patterns, parental involvement in school activities, etc. These indicators provide additional evidence of program effectiveness.

Any serious analysis of the center-based (grade-level) approach must consider numerous factors related to educational performance and faculty preparation and competence. There are many important aspects of education that are difficult to document, but are of great value (e.g. The 7th grader who decides to take an advanced math course because a 6th grade teacher inspired her). Thus, qualitative and quantitative data are required to create a "whole picture". Data sources for this proposed evaluation include quantitative data such as baseline and follow-up information from standardized tests (MEAP, Stanford, ACT, etc.), financial records, enrollment and staffing records, and non-standardized student, teacher and parent assessments. In addition, qualitative data will be collected as it pertains to community, student and

parental perceptions and involvement; thus, the evaluation will also include data on PTA membership, co-curricular and community involvement, increased appreciation for diversity, and perceptions of the school environment.

Formative Evaluation: Examples of questions to be answered during the formative evaluation:

- What is the quality of faculty training? Was in-service provided? Who attended and how many hours?
- How did the district handle human resources issues during the implementation and transition?
- How is the new programming being marketed and received?
- What is being done to assist parents with the transition?
- Are baseline data being collected, and if so, how?
- What policy changes are required during implementation and transition?

Summative Evaluation: Examples of questions to be answered during the summative evaluation.

- What is the value of the center-based (grade-level) approach?
- What new programs have resulted from the center-based (grade-level) approach? Are these programs improving the quality of life for Ferndale students?
- What are the best predictors of student retention?
- Does the center-based (grade-level) approach allow the District to meet its objectives?
- Is the center-based (grade-level) approach cost-effective?
- What are the unintended results of the center-based (grade-level) approach?

Once a final decision is made to implement a center-based (grade-level) approach, a number of factors will need to be considered prior to full implementation of the evaluation

component of the plan in the 2002-2003 school year. These transition considerations are important and include the following:

Transition Considerations:

- Finalize the actual evaluation process to study the effectiveness of the transition to a center-based (grade-level) approach. The goals to be measured include, but are not limited to:
 - Improved pupil achievement.
 - Well-defined courses of study.
 - Adequate materials, supplies, and equipment.
 - Establishment of consistent instructional programs for academically talented and at-risk children.
 - Small class sizes (primary and intermediate)
 - Balanced budget
 - Improved district ratings.
 - Reuse of school buildings.
- Collect and gather data prior to implementation for baseline analysis.
- Analyze data.
- Develop a methodology for collecting additional data during the first, second and fifth year of implementation.
- Evaluate data collected in subsequent years against baseline data to make decisions about program efficiency.

SECTION XI

RATIONALE AND SUPPORT FOR THE PLAN

The recommendation to move to a center-based (grade-level) approach for the Ferndale Public Schools came as a result of an assessment of both the programmatic and financial needs of the school district. Although this approach is designed to protect the short and long-term health of the district, it is also based on sound educational practice. In addition, the district recognizes that making the change away from K-5-configured neighborhood schools elicits concern among many parents. Parent concerns have been carefully considered in making these recommendations; and furthermore, transition activities have been designed to address and minimize concerns throughout implementation of the plan. It is important to note that many other school districts nationwide have successfully implemented similar grade configurations to those proposed in this plan, and that transition considerations will include careful planning throughout to ensure success upon implementation.

This section of the report includes:

- 1) A review of educational literature regarding center-based (grade-level) instruction,
- 2) An independently conducted community survey that measured values and perceptions about education in general, and the Ferndale Public Schools.
- 3) Summaries of interviews with administrators at Michigan school districts with similar configurations.

A Review of Educational Literature Regarding Center-Based (Grade-Level) Instruction

Prior to making initial recommendations, the superintendent requested an independent review of the literature about grade configuration from Beverley B. Geltner, PhD.

(EXHIBIT 33). Among the conclusions in Geltner's initial findings were this:

"A critical basis for decision making should include an analysis of which grade-level groupings can best position the district to offer educational programs which accord with the latest knowledge about effective teaching and learning." ²¹

The educational value of the center-based (grade-level) approach is significant. It will provide opportunities for all teachers in the same grade to work together, thereby increasing opportunities for teacher interaction and planning by grade level. Transitional programming and grade looping will also be possible.

The financial efficiency of the center-based (grade-level) approach is also significant because the district will be able to reduce class size while employing the appropriate number of teachers needed per grade, according to the preferred pupil-teacher ratio, i.e., 220 first graders with a 17:1 pupil-teacher ratio will need 13 teachers. In the current configuration, the district is unable to provide small, or even consistent, class sizes across the district because of the uneven distribution of students in each school.

Specific Elementary School Concerns

Although research does not provide a definitive answer, in a report written following implementation of a grade-level school program, Allan S. Vann describes the advantages of the reorganization process as: 1) an ability to focus more clearly on age-

²¹ Geltner, Beverley B., "Analysis of Research on Grade Configurations," April 2001, p 4.

specific educational and social needs of children; 2) Class size was better balanced; 3) Racial and ethnic minorities were better balanced; 4) Grade-level curricula, instruction, and other programs were more consistent; and 5) Operational costs were reduced.²²

In addition to instructional and administrative benefits, teachers who have worked in grade-level schools, especially those for very young, K-2, children, "contend that the children are better off in the smaller settings. The students also fare better without older kids around who intimidate them."²³

Several researchers (Jacobson, Vann, Renchler) report that a commonly perceived disadvantage to grade-centered schools was the reduced contact teachers had with colleagues from other grade levels. Recognizing this, the Ferndale Schools will make arrangements for teachers from different grade-level schools to meet regularly throughout the school year. These meetings will be an ongoing component of the annual transition process, so teachers know about students and curricula in both the current and the receiving school.

Paglin and Fager, who have done extensive surveys of schools with various grade configurations, note that districts considering implementing a center-based (grade-level) approach should carefully consider the following:

"How many points of transition and articulation will occur in the K-12 system? How will these be addressed? What mechanisms or channels of communication will be used to ensure that students move smoothly through the system, in terms of both academics and social and emotional adjustment?"²⁴

²² Vann, Allan S., "When Your K-5 School Changes to a 3-5: Five Years Later," *The Reflective Principal*, September 1998, p. 62.

²³ Jacobson, Linda, "Of Primary Concern: Should young children have a school of their own?" *Teacher Magazine*, Nov/Dec 1998, p. 10.

²⁴ Paglin and Fager, "Grade Configuration: Who Goes Where?" Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Office of Educational Research (OER), Department of Education, 1997.p. 6.

Recognizing the need to address complex transition issues, the restructuring plan has transition activities included at all stages of implementation. These are in addition to specially designed transition programs to ease students' social and emotional adjustment. In addition, communications among the grade levels will be coordinated at a district level. Individual school newsletters can be made available to students at all grade levels, so everyone in the district is aware of activities. For example, multi-level sharing of science fairs, recitals, and sports events can help children and their parents keep in touch with what is going on at other grade levels.

By developing comprehensive transition activities, the district aims to reduce parents' concerns about frequent moves from school to school. The nurturing atmosphere that is created in each center-based (grade-level) school will be carried over into the next school. The goal is to develop affiliations and connections that are strong with other families in the same grade level/class who will be together throughout the K-12 experience, rather to the specific school buildings.

Specific Middle School Concerns

The district administration recognizes that parents of 7th and 8th grade students may be concerned about their children attending school at the Ferndale High School site. The new Ferndale Middle School will be zoned and scheduled to separate the students. The current high school facility is over 300,000 square feet and underutilized. It makes good fiscal sense to fully utilize the space, and the two schools will be carefully monitored to ensure the middle school and high school cultures are mutually exclusive.

A study of a school in Oregon shows that this kind of intermediate step toward high school "allows students to have a high school experience without the constraints of dealing with younger students."²⁵

The Ferndale Public Schools will continue to operate both the 5th and 6th grade school and the 7th and 8th grade school using best practices of middle school education. The middle school was "conceived as a more child-centered institution (rather than traditional junior high schools) with responsive practices such as interdisciplinary team teaching, advisory programs, and flexible scheduling."²⁶

Studies show that "students who made the transition to high school at grade 7 (that is, those who attended high schools with the 7-12 configuration) dropped out significantly less often than did students making the transition at either the ninth or tenth-grade level."

Another study (McEwin and Alexander) found that middle level students achieve more success and participate more in extracurricular activities when their schools design "programs which focus on the unique characteristics and needs of young adolescents."²⁷

Schools designed specifically for early adolescents "rank personal growth and the development of self-esteem and self-knowledge as a higher priority than do other schools."²⁸

In addition, by giving them a school of their own with outstanding facilities for science, music, physical education, and theatre, like those at the Ferndale High School facility, "when students move on to the senior high, they have had time to gain confidence and

²⁵ Paglin and Fager, p. 15.

²⁶ Paglin and Fager, p. 17.

²⁷ McEwin, C. Kenneth, and Alexander, William M., "What is the place of the middle grades in the K-8 school? Findings from a national survey of middle grades programs and practices in K-8 schools," *Middle School Journal*, September 1990, p. 10.

²⁸ Epstein, Joyce L., "What Matters in the Middle Grades-Grade Span or Practices?" *Phi Delta Kappan*, February 1990, p. 440.

they know everyone at their grade level, instead of only the one-third (or one-half with the current Ferndale Public Schools configuration) they would have known from a feeder school.²⁹ Although they will not technically be in high school, the location will provide a point of pride for the middle school students. At the same time, it will give them a safe zone in which to function as middle schoolers.

Another recommendation from a middle school in Washington is to "create as much continuity as possible during the students' brief stay by . . . delaying high school transition activities until as late in the eighth-grade year as possible. This way, students don't have the sense that their time at the school is over before it actually is."³⁰

The goals addressed here are all high priorities in the planned middle school configuration for 5th and 6th grades, and 7th and 8th grades.

Community Survey

Prior to finalizing the restructuring plan, the district felt it was important to know how members of the community value education, and what qualities and programs they feel are important to providing quality educational services. The purpose of this survey, conducted by EPIC-MRA, was to measure those values and qualities, and to ensure that as the restructuring plan is implemented, community values will be incorporated in the implementation of the plan.

Survey results validate that the community is aware of the district's past and present difficulties. Furthermore, by expressing its values, the community recognizes that a need exists to make significant changes that will ensure the Ferndale Public Schools district

²⁹ Paglin and Fager, p. 15-16.

³⁰ Paglin and Fager, p. 20.

becomes and remains a school district that can provide quality education services for all children in the community.

The survey was not intended to drive decisions; however, the district administration felt it was important to know public opinion as the district moves toward implementation of restructuring plans. The ancillary goal of the survey was to learn about how members of the community at-large knew about and felt about 1) the individual components of the restructuring proposals, and 2) the prospect of a sinking fund millage to support building repair and facilities improvements.

Many people surveyed reported that in recent years the district has remained the same or declined in its ability to deliver services and serve students. In addition, 62 percent of those surveyed emphasized the importance of providing a balanced budget with less cost for operations of fewer schools. The survey results also indicate overwhelming support for the overriding goals of restructuring, including equity, improved student achievement, and providing smaller classes; however, public attitudes toward individual components of the restructuring proposals varied.

Although the community solidly supports most of the goals of the restructuring plans, the opinions about key components, such as grade-level configuration, and combining the 7th and 8th grades as a separate school within the high school facility, will require the district administration to take extra care in reassuring people that they can be comfortable with these configurations. (EXHIBIT 34)³¹

³¹ Executive Summary of Survey of the Ferndale Public Schools Community Conducted by EPIC-MRA, September 2001.

Recommendations from Other Districts

As was recommended throughout the literature, we spoke a great deal with colleagues in similar districts who have recently implemented either a center-based (grade-level) approach, and/or a middle school located in a high school facility (EXHIBIT 35). The overwhelming consensus was that, like the Ferndale Public Schools, school districts move to these configurations for four basic reasons: "Educational philosophy, racial (or socio-economic) integration, enrollment pressures affecting facility usage, and general economic pressures."³²

For seven years, the Avondale (Auburn Hills area) School District has had a district wide 5-6, 7-8, and 9-12 configuration. K-4 still attend neighborhood schools, but all students come together for 5th grade. Sue DesJardins, Avondale Communications Director, says the program has been "phenomenal" because of the curriculum enhancements the district was able to implement. Parents liked the more advanced programming available to 5th graders, and that 6th graders were not with 7th and 8th graders.

Avondale Meadows has been a 5-6 school for seven years. The Principal, Susan Sonye, finds that the transition between 4th and 5th grades is most difficult in her district, because it is the first one students make. The subsequent 6th to 7th transition is easy by contrast. Annual transition activities are designed to ease concerns felt by incoming 4th graders and their parents during a concentrated three week period in the Spring.

The Saline Area Schools are in a former farm community that has grown into a bedroom community of Ann Arbor. The current enrollment of 5,100 students is projected to increase. The current configuration includes a K-1 early childhood center, two 2-4

³² Vann, Allan S. "Grade-Level Reorganization in a Small School District: Making and Implementing the Decision," *ERS Spectrum*, Fall 1992, p. 17.

elementary schools (that assign students beyond walking distance based on lottery to avoid east/west divisions, with plans to add one more 2-4 building), one 5-6 school, one 7-8 grade middle school, and one 9-12 high school.

When the Saline district implemented the grade-level configuration 15 years ago, parents expressed real concern, but the district moved ahead, and parents "loved it," according to Community Education Director Nancy Brenton. Parents were initially concerned about the number of transitions their kids would make.

The Saline district recently conducted parent surveys to determine how parents felt about the grade-level configuration and whether they would be willing to change. The parents surveyed acknowledged that the downsides of grade-level schools were that they missed 1) the neighborhood continuity of feel, 2) recognition of and by the principal, and 3) PTA continuity from year to year. They also noted that students don't have older role models in school, nor as many opportunities for cross-age tutoring.

However, parents and staff alike focused on the advantages and emphasized they were not willing to give up the following features: 1) schools can be designed to be developmentally age appropriate, i.e., rules, regulations, décor can be targeted to a specific age level. 2) teachers working together can coordinate their curriculum, and 3) resources are coordinated. Support was overwhelming throughout the Saline Area Schools to retain the grade-level configuration.

Parents in Saline like the 5-6 school that "keeps 6th graders younger longer," says Brenton. They note that a significant developmental change occurs between 6th and 8th grades. The curriculum and extracurricular activities can be geared toward a more specific age.

Regarding the early childhood center, the Saline community expressed a strong desire to maintain the current program because it is developmentally appropriate. Brenton says, "They get a really good start when everything is geared toward just their age."

Grand Blanc Community Schools, located in Genesee County near Flint, has, among several K-5 configured schools, a pair of sister schools located on a common campus. Superintendent Gary Lipe reports that the K-2 and 3-5 schools provide many cross-over events for students. The students ride the bus together, dropping the younger students off first, and are from the same attendance areas.

Lipe reports that "the atmosphere of the early elementary school is wonderful." Teachers are terrific, parents felt welcome. He said he has not had one complaint. He says, "The nurturing environment makes believers out of them." In fact, the program worked so well, the district is seeking a millage to fund another pair of buildings. Another measure of their success is that they have been able to decertify as a Title I school.

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Flint Community Schools established a 7-12 Southwestern Academy that in fall 2001 became a 6-12 school. Superintendent James E. Ray indicated that this alternative/magnet school employs one principal and three assistant principals. He says, "We show very clearly that we have the needed administrative resources." He said his administrators have made it clear to parents that the appropriate staff is there, there is an open door policy. He recommends doing the public relations work up front: "invite parents up and let them visit the school with 5th and 6th graders. Let them walk the building."

Of all the school districts interviewed for this report, the consensus was that although parents are likely to resist change, the end results, when based on sound educational practices, are well received.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is essential to note that "sound educational practices are more important than grade span." By implementing a comprehensive restructuring plan, the Ferndale Public Schools will be able to address curricular and instructional issues in an effective way that is not possible within the current configuration. The overriding goal of restructuring is to provide a safe, nurturing, small-scale environment for all our students that will allow them to thrive in a manner appropriate to their age group. All students will benefit from an efficiently run school system with a coordinated curriculum designed to prepare them for success throughout their lives.

SECTION XII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In concluding this restructuring report, it is appropriate to return to where we started – with a charge to the superintendent from the Board of Education to assess the financial and programmatic needs of the school district and to prepare a plan to meet those needs. Furthermore, the Board directed that the plan be designed in a way that ensures improved student achievement and financial stability of the school district.

The recommendations in this report conclude nine months of assessment and discussion of possible ways to resolve years of program cuts, declining enrollment, poor student achievement, and financial uncertainty. In the final analysis, it was determined that the plans to consolidate the K-12 program into fewer schools, and move to a center-based grade configuration was the most financially and programmatically sound approach. Even combining the 7th and 8th grade into one middle school and locating it in the high school facility, while not a popular move, holds great promise for quality educational programs and a positive, safe, and secure learning environment. By making this move now, the district avoids the need to do so in two years when further declines in the student population will make it necessary.

The recommendation to reuse the district's schools that are no longer used for the K-12 program provides the community with assurance that all of the district's schools will be used for purposes that benefit the community. The location of the Center For Advanced Studies and the Arts (CASA) in a Ferndale school, creation of a university extension and business training center, consolidation of district preschool programs at one site, and the

establishment of a community wellness center, among other things, are examples of these benefits.

While deliberating the restructuring alternatives, it was evident that no one option would satisfy the concerns of all individuals associated with the school district. In fact, each of the options considered contained advantages and disadvantages that favored one group or another. Furthermore, it became apparent that regardless of the recommendations, there would be individuals or groups of individuals who would oppose one recommendation or another.

Consequently, it was determined that opposition to the restructuring alternatives should not drive the recommendations. While the course of least resistance was at times a temptation, it was never an option. The worsening financial and enrollment status of the district, combined with a worsening state economy and reductions in state funding for education make the need for comprehensive restructuring even clearer.

Furthermore, it is important not to lose sight of our adopted mission - to "provide all our students with quality education programs while promoting the values of diversity and responsible citizenship." This mission translates into a vision of "one truly unified school community with the common goal among staff, students, parents, and school district residents of becoming one of the best, most efficient, small, full-service public school districts in Michigan."

The time has come to make significant changes that will create a successful future for the Ferndale Public School district. Recognizing the community is disparate in many ways over the restructuring proposals, we are still calling on every member of our community to join together in supporting these changes and the future of the district.

Only by working together will we be able to provide our school community with a district that generates pride in its successes.

Finally, in the transition to a center-based instructional delivery system, the entire student body will literally come together throughout their school years. All teachers in like grades will teach together throughout their school years. It is important, as our schools come together, that our community members stand together in support of the school district and these recommendations.

It is with this hope for unity and promise of a bright future for the Ferndale Schools that this report is presented