

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Arkport-Canaseraga Merger Study Advisory Committee  
FROM: Alan Pole and Bill Silky  
RE: Meeting Notes-Meeting of December 11, 2017  
DATE: December 13, 2017

**Attendance:**

Committee Members: Tim Bailey, Heidi Beecher, Lacey Deiter, Caitilin Dewey, John Feenaughty, Shannon Gilbert, Kathleen Henry, Steve Kenyon, Kyla McCormick, Wendy O'Donnell, Jenny Reynolds, Jason Shambach, Mariann Walsh, Dan Washburn, Lindsay Wilson, and Karly Wright

Consultants: Alan Pole, and Bill Silky

Superintendent Advisors: Jesse Harper and Chad Groff

Observers: Jason Kernan, Richard Kinney, Fran Hoffman, Cindy York, Tracy Scott, Noel Livingston, Jeremiah Franklin, Laura Buisch, Julianne Merry, Graham Marcus, Michelle Chamberlin, Mark Young, Jesse Kernan, Michelle Sleight, David Mikolajczyk, Elizabeth Mikolajczyk, Robert Kellogg, Joe Pollinger, Bob Moose, Lois Harvey, Deb Moose, Jill Egmond, and Jennifer Swarts

Location: Canaseraga Central School

1. Chad Groff, Superintendent in Canaseraga, welcomed everyone to the district, thanked the committee members for their service, and introduced the merger study consultants. Committee members were asked to introduce themselves and describe their connection with the school districts.
2. Alan Pole also thanked the committee members for their service and reviewed the meeting protocol for the evening
3. Meetings of the Merger Advisory Committee will be held from 6:00-9:00 pm as follows:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Location</b>
12/11/17	<b>Organization, Overview, Enrollment Projections, Programs, and Facilities</b>	<b>Canaseraga</b>
2/7/18	Transportation, Staffing, and Finance	Arkport
4/16/18	Review of Draft Report	Canaseraga
June 18, 2018	Final Report to the Boards	TBD

4. A contact list of the members of the Merger Study Advisory Committee was shared with email addresses. Members of the group were asked to verify the accuracy of the information, as email will serve as the primary means of communication between the consultants and the committee members. Whenever possible, meeting materials will be emailed to all committee members prior to the meeting. Paper copies of the materials will be made available at each meeting.

5. Meeting notes will be provided after each meeting. The notes will be emailed to all committee members and copied to the two superintendents. It will be the responsibility of the superintendents to distribute the notes within their district, as they deem appropriate. It is anticipated that, at a minimum, notes will be provided to board members and posted on each district's website. Meeting notes will also be emailed to the District Superintendent and the State Education Department. The Power Point that is used at each meeting will also be posted on the districts' websites after each meeting occurs.

6. All meetings of the advisory committee will be open. Members of the public will be welcome at these meetings. The public will be asked to allow the committee to do its work for the first part of the meeting. At the conclusion of each meeting, the observers will have the opportunity to offer comments or ask questions. In addition, the consultants will remain after the meeting should anyone wish to speak with them at that time.

7. Alan Pole presented a PowerPoint overview of the school district merger process in New York State. He indicated that the merger study is designed to provide information for the school districts, the communities, and the Commissioner on enrollments, program, facilities, transportation, staffing, and finances. The study will describe the current status of the districts and will provide a set of recommendations for the Arkport Board of Education to consider should the annexation occur. Each of the Boards of Education will have an opportunity to decide how to proceed once the study is concluded.

The expectations of the Merger Advisory Committee members were reviewed. He indicated that the function of the committee is to advise the consultants, to communicate with the public about the process, and to prepare informative materials. The committee includes 8 people from each school community including 4 community members, 2 teachers, 1 building administrator, and 1 support staff. The superintendents are not members of the committee but serve as resources to the committee. Committee members are expected to attend all committee meetings, freely express their points of view, be key communicators with stakeholder groups, and be a respectful, contributing member of the committee. Alan asked that all committee members come to the meetings with an open mind.

He emphasized that the consultants bring an outside, unbiased perspective and will ensure that the process is open. They will maintain contact with the State Education

Department and the District Superintendent, will produce meetings notes after each committee meeting, and will be responsible for the final report. The final report will not recommend whether or not a merger should occur.

The draft time line for the merger study was reviewed. The study begins with this meeting in December 2017 and is slated to be completed by April 2018. The study will be reviewed by the State Education Department in May 2018 and presented to the Boards of Education in June 2018. In July, August, and September 2018, the districts will have public information and discussion sessions culminating in a decision by the two Boards of Education about whether or not to go forward. If both boards vote in go forward, then an Advisory Referendum (straw vote) will be held in October 2018 and, if the votes in each district are positive then a Final (Statutory) Referendum will be held in December 2018. If that vote is positive in both districts then the new district will begin operations effective July 1, 2019. While these dates are all subject to review and change as circumstances occur, the State Education will set the final schedule once the study has been completed.

Alan also reviewed the difference between this study and the study that occurred three years ago. Alfred-Almond is not participating in this study and this is an “annexation” study whereas the last study was a “centralization” study. Should a merger occur as an outcome of this study, Canaseraga would be annexed to Arkport. To prepare for this possibility, the two boards of education have agreed upon the following assurances:

- a. Name-The name of the newly formed district would be Arkport-Canaseraga Central School District.
- b. Academic Programs-The academic programs offered currently in both districts would be expanded as determined appropriate by the board with the intention of improving the educational opportunities of all children within the district.
- c. Faculty/Staff Retention-All current faculty and staff of both the Arkport and Canaseraga districts would be maintained for a minimum of five years with reductions by attrition when appropriate.
- d. Building Use-The Canaseraga building will be used for the foreseeable future.
- e. Mascot and Colors-Upon a positive vote for an annexation, student representatives from both districts will be given an opportunity to make recommendations to the board of education regarding the district mascot, school colors, and alma mater. Until that time both Canaseraga and Arkport uniforms will be utilized where appropriate with the goal of producing budget economies.
- f. Board Members-Upon a successful annexation vote, the Arkport board will initiate a district vote to request to increase in size of the school board from 5 to 7 members, to be held at the annual election. If successful, the election of board members would be done at a special election.

8. Bill Silky presented an overview of past enrollments for Arkport and Canaseraga as well as projected future enrollments for both districts. The study begins by reviewing enrollment trends as enrollment influences all decisions regarding staffing, class and curricular offerings, facilities, transportation, and finances.

Enrollments in both districts have been declining over the past few years. Since the 2012-2013 school year, the enrollment in Arkport has declined 11.6% from 509 to 450 and the enrollment in Canaseraga has declined by 4.3% from 233 to 223.

To predict future enrollment, the consultants employ the Cohort Survival Projection method that uses information on the number of births in each school district over a period of years and calculates patterns of enrollment. A cohort survival ratio is developed that tracks how each cohort of students changes as it moves through the grade levels. This ratio, used with the live birth information, predicts what the enrollment will be for a period of years given consistent and predictable conditions. It does not take into account significant economic development changes such as a major employer leaving or entering the area and other similar changes. However, it is not anticipated that either of these conditions will be taking place within the borders of these two school districts.

Using this method, the Arkport enrollment is predicted to decrease from 450 in 2017-18 to 424 in the 2024-2025 **school** year, a decrease of 26 students. Canaseraga's enrollment is projected to decrease from 223 in 2017-18 to 218 in the 2024-2025 year, a decrease of 5 students. If the districts were to be merged, the combined enrollment projects a relatively constant merged enrollment from 673 students in 2017-18 to 642 students in 2024-25.

The number of home schooled students, non-resident students, and resident students enrolled in non-public schools are all factors that are considered in projecting enrollment. It is not anticipated that any of these factors will impact the enrollment projections that have been made for this study.

The committee was asked to talk in small groups and identify the big ideas that were part of the enrollment discussion. The groups offered the following:

- ✓ Because enrollment is projected to stay relatively steady, class sized won't become too large
- ✓ It looks like enrollment has stabilized
- ✓ With stable enrollments, there is a better chance the Canaseraga school will stay open for a longer period of time
- ✓ Most districts in New York State are declining in enrollment so we are not that different
- ✓ Knowing about the assurances will help people accept the idea of annexation

9. Bill Silky presented an overview of the instructional program for both districts at the elementary level. The length of the student and staff days in both districts is very similar.

He also reviewed the elementary section sizes; Arkport has 2 sections of each grade level in kindergarten through grade 6; Canaseraga has one section per grade level. All elementary classes in both districts, with the exception of one sixth grade, are below the state average of 22 students per class. Canaseraga offers a Pre-K program while the Pre-K program in Arkport is off site.

Bill also reviewed the elementary curriculum that is used at both districts and there is quite a bit of similarity. He then summarized the amount of time that elementary school students receive special area subjects and stated it is also quite similar in the two districts. He then reviewed the results of the NYS grades 3-8 assessments that are given each year. In examining these data over the past four years, there are some differences in the results of the two districts but on the whole, the results are much more similar than different. Bill reminded the audience that with such small numbers of students taking these assessments in any year, one or two students can skew the data. Also, New York State changed the ELA and Mathematics assessments and cautioned that assessments taken before 2016 cannot be compared with those of later years due to this change. Finally, Bill reviewed the percentage of special education students in each district with Arkport having 11.9% and Canaseraga having 17.5%.

10. Alan Pole reviewed the secondary course offerings by section with an emphasis on opportunities for students and efficiencies in the districts' offerings. In addition to reviewing the courses offered in each district, he reviewed the percentage of juniors and seniors who attend career and technical education courses at BOCES, 44.6% for Arkport and 63.3% for Canaseraga.

In terms of the districts' efficiency, Arkport has 24.8% of its secondary courses with fewer than ten students while 40.6% of the secondary courses in Canaseraga have fewer than ten students. This will continue to create challenges for the districts in the future. With respect to opportunities for students, Alan described how a merged district could reorganize its course sections and provide greater operating efficiency and/or create additional opportunities for students.

Athletic participation was reviewed. All interscholastic athletics are currently shared between the two districts. Student participation in extracurricular clubs was also reviewed.

Finally, secondary student assessment results for the two districts were reviewed. Arkport and Canaseraga students perform quite similarly on Regents exams with one district performing better on some assessments and the other district performing better on other assessments.

The big ideas for the instructional program were reviewed as follows:

- ✓ Students will have access to all courses, clubs, and sports from both districts...and more
- ✓ All sports are currently shared between the two districts

- ✓ Efficiencies in staffing classes will result in opportunities for reducing staff or adding more courses
- ✓ Performance on state assessments is more alike than different between the two districts

11. Questions and comments were then received from the audience members who attended the meeting.

12. The next advisory committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 7, 2018 at Arkport. A tour of the school will begin at 5:15 for anyone who is interested. The meeting of the Merger Study Advisory Committee will begin at 6:00 p.m.

We believe this covers the essence of the discussions at our meeting on December 11. If you have questions with these notes, please feel free to contact me. We will also review these notes as the first agenda item at our next meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you again on 2.7.18 in Arkport!

C: Jesse Harper  
Chad Groff  
Jim Frame  
Christina Coughlin  
Althea Johnson