

CHATHAM CENTRAL SCHOOLS



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

March 11, 2011

The Chatham School Community is faced with a long term challenge of providing program to meet increasing instructional needs in a time of unprecedented economic challenges. We are also facing a long term trend of declining enrollment. The District is actively considering many options to increase efficiency in order to meet these challenges. One step in this process is the Board of Education's recent decision to commission a facilities study to examine the feasibility of consolidating the District from three to two schools.

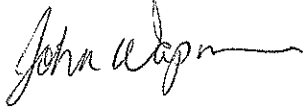
Over the past few years, Chatham has responded to economic difficulties with an ongoing focus on increasing our efficiency. As our number of students has declined we reduced staffing levels, while at the same time maintaining and improving our educational program. We instituted the "one-bell" transportation system and implemented measures to increase the energy efficiency of our buildings. We have centralized some operations, and are also exploring shared services with other districts whenever possible. Our efforts have allowed us to make \$4.3 million in budget reductions over the past two years. Our goal has been and will continue to be to use these cost saving initiatives and our remaining resources to preserve and strengthen our instructional program.

These difficult financial times are not over. Through our long term financial planning and cost cutting efforts, Chatham, unlike many districts, is not currently faced with dramatic program cuts. However, the financial truth is this: If our district does not continue to find further efficiencies it will soon be faced with cutting programs that make Chatham's schools shine as a special place. To avoid this it has become clear that the Board must take a hard look at all of our facilities. One difficult and complex task it must consider is the feasibility of closing a building.

I want to emphasize that we are not planning to close a building this year. The process of studying consolidation will occur in two parts. This spring a representative group of staff, parents, and students are working to outline the skills and knowledge our students will need to be successful in the 21st century. This outline will ensure that we keep our focus on the educational needs of our students as we move forward. The Board has passed a resolution to hire a consultant to gather data regarding the financial and logistical aspects of consolidating buildings. This study will provide information about potential cost savings, impact on the other buildings, updating enrollment projections, etc. Once we have this information and have concluded that this potential decision is logistically possible we will proceed with the second part of our study. During the 2011-12 school year we will conduct community discussions to determine the best actions for our students and our district. At that time, the Board will reach out to our Chatham Central School District community members and invite their participation in this process.

In the coming weeks, we will establish a link on the district website, www.chathamcentralschools.com where we will post any updated information about the facilities study. In the meantime, if you have any questions please feel free to attend a Board of Education meeting or contact Superintendent Cheryl Nuciforo at 392-1501.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Wapner", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Wapner
Chatham School Board President