

# CHATHAM CENTRAL SCHOOLS



March 22, 2011

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Over the past two years, Chatham Central School District has taken a number of steps to maintain and enhance our program by controlling costs through increased efficiency. One step in this process is our recent decision to engage in a facilities study to examine the feasibility of consolidating from three to two school buildings.

As you are aware, school districts are facing challenging times. Our students are facing higher standards, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands a much more complex set of skills for our graduates to be successful. At the same time, the economic climate promises static or dwindling resources. In Chatham, we are also experiencing a pattern of declining enrollment. We have met this challenge by focusing on increasing our efficiency. We have centralized some operations, reduced staffing levels to reflect declining enrollment, instituted "one-bell" transportation, and implemented measures to increase the energy efficiency of our buildings. We are also exploring options for sharing services with other Districts. These types of activities allow us to use our limited resources to preserve and strengthen our instructional program.

As times grow more difficult we will need to seek still more cost effective options. For that reason, the Board and administration have decided to study whether we can make more efficient use of our facilities over time by consolidating from three to two buildings. We are in the very early stages of this process. No decision to consolidate has yet been made, and we will not take the step of moving to two buildings this year. Instead, over the next several months, we will take two steps to gather important information:

1. A representative group of staff, parents, and students are working to develop a definition of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning for Chatham. They have been charged with outlining what our students need to know and be able to do when they graduate from Chatham High School. This definition will ensure that we keep our focus on the educational needs of our students as we move forward.
2. We are in the process of contracting with 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, updated enrollment projections, etc.

During the 2011-2012 school year, once we have both the educational and the operational information we need, we will conduct community discussions to determine the best actions for our students and the District.

We feel it is important to begin this process now, before the financial climate becomes even more challenging. This ensures that if we are faced with significant program cuts in a year or two, we will have the information we need to explore consolidating buildings as a cost saving option. Taking the time for a thoughtful process also ensures that *if* we decide we want or need to consolidate our buildings, we would do it in a way that is best for our students and programs.

Chatham Central School District, 50 Woodbridge Avenue, Chatham, New York 12037

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Illustration after  
Louis Comfort Tiffany window  
at the Chatham Public Library

In the coming weeks, we will establish a link on the district website [www.chathamcentralschools.com](http://www.chathamcentralschools.com), where we will post any updated information about this process. During the 2011-2012 school year, watch for invitations on the website, and through communications sent home, to participate in the community discussions. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact my office at 392-1501.

Public schools are facing challenging times, but I am confident that by working together in a careful and thorough process, we will provide the best possible educational program for our students.

Sincerely,

*Cheryl A. Nucifora*

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Superintendent