

Merger Study Final Report
Oppenheim-Ephratah
and St. Johnsville
Central School Districts

Prepared by

Castallo & Silky-Education Consultants

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Table of Contents

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Acknowledgements	3
2. Purpose of Study	5
3. Background	7
4. Student Enrollment History and Projections	11
5. Instructional and Extra-Curricular Programs	21
6. Fiscal Condition of the Districts	57
7. Student Transportation	83
8. Facilities	94
9. Staffing	99
10. Key Findings and Recommendations	114

Chapter 1

Acknowledgements

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We also owe a large debt of gratitude to the members of the study Advisory Committee listed below. These individuals devoted considerable time and effort to assist us with this important work. They are to be sincerely commended for the commitment they have shown to their respective communities:

Oppenheim-Ephratah Committee Members

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Philip M. Martin

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Date

Chapter 2

Purpose of the Study

A number of factors are affecting the operation of public school districts in New York State today. State standards continue to rise, requiring students to do more in order to attain a high school diploma. These standards are driven by a rapidly changing world where more skills than ever before are required in order to be successful in college, the world of work, or both. Pressures on schools to increase the number of students who successfully complete high school continue to mount. In short, the state is requiring more of students and communities want to provide as many opportunities as possible for their young people.

At the same time that communities strive to do more for their students, enrollments in many school districts are declining. In small districts like Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville, maintaining and expanding opportunities for students is an especially significant challenge if student enrollments are on a downward path.

The third challenge facing school districts in New York State is one of resources. As districts strive to provide more for their students, financial challenges continue to grow in the nation and in New York State in particular. The national economy is more precarious than it has been in decades. The state budget is in dire straits facing enormous deficits in the future. Although many school budgets passed in 2010, the coming year looms large in terms of additional revenue challenges. State aid to most school districts is being cut. Fixed costs for school districts continue to rise. There is abundant conversation about school districts running out of money. It is clearly time for courageous school leaders to begin discussions about doing business differently.

In the spring of 2009, the St. Johnsville board of education expressed interest in pursuing a study to examine the merger of its school district with a neighboring district. Both the Fort Plain and Oppenheim-Ephratah Central School Districts expressed interest by joining St. Johnsville in a merger feasibility study. The study was undertaken to determine with which district St. Johnsville might study the possibility of merger. As a result, the following purpose was defined for the study:

Should, from a financial or instructional program perspective, the St. Johnsville School District enter into a merger study with either the Fort Plain School District or the Oppenheim-Ephratah School District? If yes, with which district should merger be studied?

In December 2009, consultants completed the study recommending that St. Johnsville and Oppenheim-Ephratah should be the two districts that would make the best partners for studying merger.

In 2010 the St. Johnsville and Oppenheim-Ephratah boards of education expressed interest in pursuing a study to examine the merger of the districts. Both districts approached the State Education Department and the New York State Department of State to secure funding for this study. The districts did receive a state grant to support this study and St. Johnsville was appointed as the Local Education Agency (LEA) to administer the funding. The districts selected Castallo and Silky-Education Consultants from Syracuse to conduct the study. In November and December 2010 each board of education identified members of their respective school communities to form an advisory committee. The purpose of the advisory committee was to offer assistance to the consultants as they went about their work and to serve as key communicators back to their school district communities.

The study began in earnest in January 2011 with an initial meeting of the advisory committee. This report represents the culmination of our work and offers an overview of each district in the essential areas of operation when a merger is being considered: enrollment and enrollment projections, program (academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular), facilities, finances, transportation, and staffing patterns including employee contracts. This report also contains our recommendations for consideration by a new Board of Education should residents of both Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville Central School Districts approve a merger.

Chapter 3

Background

The Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville Central School Districts are both located in the Mohawk Valley of New York State, just north of the New York State Thruway, approximately half way between Utica and Albany. Located in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains, the districts are rural in nature and are communities where the school buildings serve as the hub of school and community activity. There is no major industry in the area, with the school district being the largest employer in each of the communities. The vast majority of the property is residential and many of the residents are on fixed incomes.

The St. Johnsville Central School District was created in 1942. It includes portions of the towns of Danube, Minden, Ephratah, St. Johnsville, Palatine, and Manheim. Oppenheim-Ephratah was created in 1939 and includes portions of the towns of Oppenheim, St. Johnsville, Manheim, Ephratah, and Stratford. St. Johnsville is a component district of the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES while Oppenheim-Ephratah is part of the Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego BOCES.

Table 3.1 Background Information on the Study Districts		
	<i>Oppenheim-Ephratah</i>	<i>St. Johnsville</i>
Board of Education (year of term expiration)	Glenn Blanchard, President (2013) David Rackmyre, Vice President (2012) Jay Countryman (2013) Jennifer Frasier (2012) Michelle Lansburg (2011) Susanne Sammons (2013) Brandon Smith (2011)	D. Christopher Mosher, President (2015) James Richard, Vice President (2011) Nan DeNinno (2012) Darren Bellen (2013) Patricia Christensen (2014)
Superintendent	Dan Russom	Ralph Acquaro, Interim
2009-10 Enrollment	347	448
Area of District	84 square miles	34 square miles
BOCES	Herkimer	Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery
Transportation Aid Ratio	90%	90%
BOCES Aid Ratio	77.4%	82.1%
Selected Building Aid Ratio	91.2%	96.2%
Combined Wealth Ratio	.429	.470
Grade Level Configurations	Pre-K - 5 6-8 9-12	Pre-K - 6 7-8 9-12
Eligible for Free Lunch	33%	34%
Eligible for Reduced Price Lunch	11%	13%
White	99%	98%
African American	-	1%
Hispanic	-	1%

As can be seen from the table above, the St. Johnsville school district has an area of 34 square miles while Oppenheim-Ephratah covers 84 square miles. Should the districts merge, the area of the combined district would be 118 square miles. Should the merged district become a part of the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES, four of the component school districts in that BOCES would be larger in area and nine of the districts would be smaller. Should the merged district become a part of the Herkimer

BOCES, two of the component school districts would be larger in area and eight of the districts would be smaller.

When the merger study has been completed, it will be reviewed by the State Education Department. Following SED approval of the report, presentations on the study will be made to the two boards of education. Ample opportunity for questions and answers will be provided to the boards and their staff. It is anticipated that the boards of education will take time to deliberate about this report and then make their decisions about how to proceed in a way that will best serve their districts.

This merger study has been about the centralization of Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville. In a centralization, a new school district is created which encompasses the entire property of the two school districts being merged. A new board of education is elected to oversee the operations of the newly created school district.

Should the Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville boards of education decide to move forward, an advisory referendum or “straw vote” is taken in both school district communities. In the past, both districts have had experiences with advisory referenda. In 1990, St. Johnsville had an advisory referendum with Little Falls that was defeated by a vote of 439 to 268. In 2005, Oppenheim-Ephratah had an advisory referendum with Dolgeville that was defeated by a vote of 318 to 275.

If a majority of the voters in both communities approve the straw vote, the Commissioner of Education will then formally lay out the merged school district and call for a formal referendum. At this same public referendum, the public will also vote on whether there will be 5, 7, or 9 members on the board of education should the merger vote be successful and whether their terms of office will be 3, 4, or 5 years. If the merger vote is successful in both districts, the votes on the two propositions regarding board of education structure will be combined from both districts with the results of the total tally prevailing.

Should the residents voting from both school districts approve the merger in the public referendum, the merger of the two school districts is approved. Should the merger vote not receive majority voter approval in both districts, the merger vote fails and the

two school districts remain in their current status. Within a year and a day, a second vote on reorganization may be held. If the first vote failed in only one of the districts, it is possible that only that district will need to hold a second vote with the positive vote from the other district remaining valid. Subsequent to a successful merger vote, the Commissioner of Education calls a special meeting in the merged school district in order to elect a new board of education. Once this board of education is elected, it is empowered with all of the authority and responsibility of any other school district board of education to oversee the operations of the new school district.

A merged school district inherits all of the property of the previous two school districts as well as many of the contractual obligations that existed in both of the previous districts. One of the major decisions that the new board of education will make is to hire the new superintendent for the school district. While existing contractual obligations for the sitting superintendents must be honored by the new board of education, neither superintendent has a contractual right to the position of superintendent. The superintendent in St. Johnsville is in an interim status, while the superintendent in Oppenheim-Ephratah has a contract which expires in 2015. The BOCES District Superintendent can serve as a valuable resource for the board of education in the process of selecting a superintendent.

Centralized school districts come into formal operation on July 1 of a given year. The consultants are quite confident that, should a merger take place, the steps outlined above can be accomplished for a new school district to be formed by July 1, 2012.

Chapter 4

Student Enrollment History and Projections

Accurate student enrollment projections are essential for district long range planning. Virtually all aspects of a school district's operation, including program, staffing, facilities, and finances, are related to the number of students enrolled. For this reason, updated enrollment projections are critical and serve as the first aspect of analysis for this study.

The procedure for projecting student enrollments is referred to as the Cohort Survival Method. This methodology is highly reliable and is the most frequently used projective technique for making short-term school enrollment projections. To calculate enrollment projections, the following data and procedures are used:

- Six years of district enrollment by grade level
- Calculation of survival ratios by grade level
- Kindergarten enrollment projections based on resident live births

A survival ratio is obtained by dividing a given grade's enrollment by the enrollment of the preceding grade a year earlier. For example, the number of students in grade three in any year is divided by the number of students in grade two of the previous year. The ratio indicates the proportion of the cohort "surviving" to the following year. Cohort refers to the enrollment in a grade for a given year.

Using grade-to-grade survival ratios, an average of these ratios for each cohort progression is obtained. This average is referred to as an average projective survival ratio. This ratio is then multiplied by each current grade enrollment to obtain the projected enrollment for the next successive year. The multiplicative process is continued for each successive year.

Survival ratios usually have values close to one, but may be less than or greater than one. Where the survival ratio is less than one, fewer students "survived" to the next grade. Where the survival ratio is more than one, more students "survived" to the next grade. Grade-to-grade survival ratios reflect the net effects of deaths, dropouts, the

number of students who are home schooled, promotion policies, transfers to and from nonpublic schools, and migration patterns in and out of the school district.

Since estimating births introduces a possible source of error into the model, enrollment projections are most accurate when existing data on live residential births can be used. Live birth data is currently available from the New York State Department of Health for both school districts from 2002 through 2009. Enrollment projections are therefore most accurate for five years into the future for the elementary grades.

The methodology used in this study was an extrapolation of kindergarten enrollment cohorts from live birth data for the two school districts. Live birth data for Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville from 2002-2009 is shown in the following table:

Table 4.1 Number of Live Births, 2002-2009		
Calendar Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
2002	22	39
2003	24	34
2004	25	38
2005	27	32
2006	29	38
2007	30	40
2008	28	50
2009	29	41

Comparing the number of live births in any year with the number of students entering kindergarten five years later will produce a ratio. This ratio of live births to entering kindergarten students is the factor that is used to project kindergarten enrollments from live births into the future. Combining the kindergarten enrollment projections with the cohort survival ratios for each grade level, the K-12 enrollments for Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville can now be projected through the 2015-16 school year. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 on the following pages present the projected enrollments for both of the study districts. “U.S.” in the table represents “ungraded secondary” school students.

**Table 4.2
Oppenheim-Ephratah K-12 Enrollment History and Projection
October 2010**

Yr/Gr	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	U.S.	K-12	K-5	6-8	9-12
05-06	26	28	26	27	26	25	44	32	43	41	30	30	22	2	402	158	119	123
06-07	33	26	30	23	26	25	21	45	32	37	40	27	27	1	393	163	98	131
07-08	24	37	23	28	23	29	23	24	38	35	33	37	23	0	377	164	85	128
08-09	24	23	35	25	30	25	28	23	29	41	39	36	32	3	393	162	80	148
09-10	22	26	22	32	23	27	24	31	21	25	40	37	29	3	362	152	76	131
10-11	28	21	27	20	33	19	29	24	29	23	26	37	31	0	347	148	82	117
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		K-12	K-5	6-8	9-12
11-12	29	29	21	26	20	32	18	30	24	29	23	25	31	1	337	157	72	108
12-13	30	30	28	20	26	20	30	19	29	24	29	22	21	1	328	154	78	96
13-14	28	31	29	27	20	25	19	32	19	29	24	28	19	1	330	160	70	100
14-15	29	29	30	28	27	20	24	20	31	19	29	23	24	1	333	163	75	95
15-16	29	30	28	29	28	26	19	25	20	31	19	28	20	1	332	170	64	98
16-17		30	29	27	29	27	25	20	25	20	31	18	24				70	93
17-18			29	28	27	28	26	26	20	25	20	30	15				72	90
18-19				28	28	26	27	27	25	20	25	19	26				79	90
19-20					28	27	25	28	26	25	20	24	16				79	85
20-21						27	26	26	27	26	25	19	20				79	90

**Table 4.3
St. Johnsville K-12 Enrollment History and Projection
October 2010**

Yr/Gr	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	U.S.	K-12	K-5	6-8	9-12
05-06	33	40	40	41	29	30	27	39	40	32	43	40	31	0	465	213	106	146
06-07	42	38	41	43	39	27	30	29	43	36	31	41	42	0	482	230	102	150
07-08	34	37	38	40	44	40	28	28	30	39	36	26	42	4	466	233	86	143
08-09	41	32	38	33	34	45	41	30	27	30	33	36	29	3	452	223	98	128
09-10	42	38	32	32	30	38	44	38	33	29	34	34	33	3	460	212	115	130
10-11	29	43	39	31	31	27	43	41	43	26	32	35	27	1	448	200	127	120
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		K-12	K-5	6-8	9-12
11-12	39	28	44	37	29	31	28	43	44	40	26	31	34	2	456	208	115	131
12-13	41	38	29	42	35	29	32	28	46	41	40	25	30	2	458	214	106	136
13-14	52	40	39	28	39	35	30	32	30	43	41	39	25	2	475	233	92	148
14-15	42	51	41	37	26	39	36	30	34	28	43	40	38	2	487	236	100	149
15-16	45	41	52	39	35	26	40	36	32	32	28	42	39	2	489	238	108	141
16-17		44	42	49	37	35	27	40	39	30	32	27	41				106	130
17-18			45	40	46	37	36	27	43	36	30	31	26				106	123
18-19				43	38	46	38	36	29	40	36	29	30				103	135
19-20					40	38	47	38	39	27	40	35	28				124	130
20-21						40	39	47	41	36	27	39	34				127	136

Overall, both districts have declined in enrollment in the past five years, Oppenheim-Ephratah more so than St. Johnsville. The K-12 enrollment in Oppenheim-Ephratah declined by 14% from 2005-06 to 2010-11 (402-347) and is projected to drop 15 more students by 2015-16 (-4%). The K-12 enrollment in St. Johnsville declined by 4% from 2005-06 to 2010-11 (465 to 448), but is projected to increase 9% (from 448 to 489) in 2015-16.

K-6 enrollment in Oppenheim-Ephratah decreased in the past five years from 202 to 177 (-12%), and is projected to increase by 12 students over the next five years to 189. Enrollment in grades 7-8 in Oppenheim-Ephratah declined by 29% in the past five years (75 to 53), and is projected to decrease by 15% to 45 in 2015-16. High school enrollment decreased from 123 to 117 over the past five years (5%), and is projected to decrease to 98 in 2015-16, a decline of 16%.

At St. Johnsville, K-6 enrollment increased slightly over the past five years from 240 to 243 (1%) and is projected to increase further over the next five years to 278 (14%). The enrollment in grades 7-8 increased by 6% in the past five years (79 to 84), but is projected to decrease to 68 (19 %) in 2015-16. High school enrollment declined by 18% over the past five years (146 to 120), yet is projected to increase by 18% to 141 through 2015-16.

Should the districts decide to merge, Table 4.4 shows the projected enrollment of the merged district.

<p align="center">Table 4.4 Oppenheim-Ephratah/St. Johnsville Combined K-12 Enrollment History and Projection October 2010</p>																		
Yr/Gr	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	U.S.	K-12	K-5	6-8	9-12
05-06	59	68	66	68	55	55	71	71	83	73	73	70	53	2	867	371	225	269
06-07	75	64	71	66	65	52	51	74	75	73	71	68	69	1	875	393	200	281
07-08	58	74	61	68	67	69	51	52	68	74	69	63	65	4	843	397	171	271
08-09	65	55	73	58	64	70	69	53	56	71	72	72	61	6	845	385	178	276
09-10	64	64	54	64	53	65	68	69	54	54	74	71	62	6	822	364	191	261
10-11	57	64	66	51	64	46	72	65	72	49	58	72	58	1	795	348	209	237
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		K-12	K-5	6-8	9-12
11-12	68	57	65	63	49	63	46	73	68	69	49	56	65	3	794	365	187	239
12-13	71	68	57	62	61	49	62	47	75	65	69	47	51	3	787	368	184	232
13-14	80	71	68	55	59	60	49	64	49	72	65	67	44	3	806	393	162	248
14-15	71	80	71	65	53	59	60	50	65	47	72	63	62	3	821	399	175	244
15-16	74	71	80	68	63	52	59	61	52	63	47	70	59	3	822	408	172	239
16-17		74	71	76	66	62	52	60	64	50	63	45	65				176	223
17-18			74	68	73	65	62	53	63	61	50	61	41				178	213
18-19				70	66	72	65	62	54	60	61	48	56				181	225
19-20					68	65	72	64	65	52	60	59	44				201	215
20-21						67	65	73	68	62	52	58	54				206	226

On a combined basis, K-12 enrollments have dropped from 867 to 795 students (8%) in the past five years. In the next five years to 2015-16 combined K-12 enrollment is projected to initially decrease then increase slightly to 822 students, or a 3% increase. Without merger, the 2015-16 enrollments will be 332 in Oppenheim-Ephratah and 489 in St. Johnsville. The program opportunities that would be available to students in an 822-student school district would be greater than those opportunities in a 332-student district or a 489-student district.

The number of district resident students attending non-public schools is an important consideration when projecting future enrollments, especially if there is a large number and possibility of one or more of the non-public schools closing and students returning to the public school system. Table 4.5 shows the number of students in both Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville that have attended non-public schools since 2005-06.

Table 4.5		
Resident Students in Non-Public Schools from 2005-06 to 2010-11		
Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
2005-06	4	0
2006-07	0	0
2007-08	1	0
2008-09	1	5
2009-10	1	7
2010-11	1	6

In total, the number of students attending non-public schools the two school districts varied from zero to eight.

We also examined the number of students in each district that are home schooled. The following table shows the homeschooled populations for both districts.

Table 4.6				
Home Schooled Students from 2005-06 to 2010-11				
Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah		St. Johnsville	
	Number	% of total enrollment	Number	% of total enrollment
2005-06	9	2.24	10	2.49
2006-07	10	2.54	8	1.66
2007-08	10	2.65	14	3.00
2008-09	9	2.29	13	2.88
2009-10	12	3.31	10	2.17
2010-11	10	2.88	9	2.01

The percentage of students home schooled in school districts in New York State usually ranges from 2-3% and is relatively constant. The same is true with Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville. Based on these six year histories, we see no reason to believe that the number of resident students in non-public schools or the number of home schooled students will change significantly or in any other way influence the student enrollment projections which are made in this chapter.

Lastly, we examined the number of students from the study districts that are enrolled in neighboring public school districts, and the number of non-district students attending either of the study districts. This information is provided in the next two tables.

Table 4.7			
Students from Study Districts Attending Other Districts-2009-10			
Oppenheim-Ephratah		St. Johnsville	
District	Number of Students	District	Number of Students
Dolgeville	46	Little Falls	14
Johnstown	9	Fort Plain	4
St. Johnsville	5	O-E	3
Wheelerville	9	Cherry Valley	1
Little Falls	4	Dolgeville	2
Gloversville	3		
TOTAL	76	TOTAL	24

Table 4.8
Students from Other Districts Attending Study Districts-2010-11

St. Johnsville			Oppenheim-Ephratah		
Grade	District	No. of Students	Grade	District	No. of Students
K	Johnstown	1	K	Johnstown	1
1	Johnstown	1	1	St. Johnsville	1
1	Ft. Plain	1	1	Dolgeville	2
2	Ft. Plain	1	2	Dolgeville	1
2	O-E	1	2	Wheelerville	1
2	Little Falls	1			
			3	St. Johnsville	2
4	Ft. Plain	1			
4	Johnstown	1			
4	Dolgeville	1			
6	Little Falls	2	6	St. Johnsville	2
6	Ft. Plain	1	6	Johnstown	1
7	O-E	1			
7	Little Falls	1			
8	Little Falls	1	8	Broadalbin	2
8	O-E	1	8	St. Johnsville	1
8	Dolgeville	1			
			9	St. Johnsville	3
9	Ft. Plain	1	9	Johnstown	1
9	Little Falls	1	9	Gloversville	1
10	Gloversville	1	10	Gloversville	2
			10	Johnstown	1
			10	St. Johnsville	1
			10	Mohawk	1
			11	St. Johnsville	2
			11	Dolgeville	1
			11	Mohawk	1
12	Johnstown	1	12	Fort Plain	1
			12	Dolgeville	1
TOTAL		21	TOTAL		30

The information in the previous two tables is interesting in that it is common for districts in this region of the state to accept students from other districts without charging tuition, and, clearly, students and their families take advantage of this practice. In 2009-10, twenty-four St. Johnsville students attended other districts and three of them went to Oppenheim-Ephratah. Seventy-six Oppenheim-Ephratah students attended other districts and five of them went to St. Johnsville. The forty-six Oppenheim-Ephratah students attending Dolgeville is high, yet is significantly lower than it was five years ago when it was in the 60's. It is the conventional wisdom in the area that many of these students attend Dolgeville in order to play football. In 2010-11, thirty out-of-district students attended Oppenheim-Ephratah thirteen of whom were from St. Johnsville. Twenty-one out-of-district students attended St. Johnsville, three of whom were from Oppenheim-Ephratah.

In summary, seventy-six students from Oppenheim-Ephratah attend other districts and thirty students from other districts attend Oppenheim-Ephratah, a net loss of forty-six students. Twenty-four students from St. Johnsville attend other districts and twenty-one students from other districts attend St. Johnsville, a net loss of three students. In total, the two study districts have a net loss of forty-nine students for the 2010-11 school year.

It is difficult to predict the impact that a merger would have on this out-migration of students. We see no reason to predict that a larger number of students would leave Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville if they were to merge. On the contrary, a larger merged school district with more opportunities for students might reduce the number of students attending other districts and might possibly increase the number of out-of-district students who might attend the merged district.

It is also important to examine the overall demographic population trends for a geographic area and to estimate how these might impact school district enrollments. The following table illustrates population trends for the village of St. Johnsville and the townships of Ephratah and Oppenheim that correlate with the two study school districts. Although there has been a slight decrease (1.0%) in overall population from 2000 and

2009 (0.8% decline in Ephratah and 5.1% decline in St. Johnsville, offset by a 2.6% increase in Oppenheim), it is too early to detect if this is an overall downward trend that might affect school district enrollments.

Table 4.9 Population Data			
	2000 Population	2009 Population	Difference
Ephratah	1,693	1,680	-0.8%
Oppenheim	1,774	1,820	+2.6%
St. Johnsville	1,685	1,599	-5.1%
Total	5,152	5,099	-1.0%

In conclusion, the projected student enrollments have not required adjustment to account for any returning students from home schooling, non-public schools, or other public school districts, non-resident students attending the study districts, or overall village or town population trends. Consequently, the projected enrollment numbers in Tables 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 are best estimates.

Chapter 5

Instructional and Extra-Curricular Program

The essential function of any school is to educate the students who attend that school. The purpose of this chapter is to review the academic and extra-curricular programs that are available to the students in Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville and the opportunities that might exist should a merger of the two districts occur. This chapter will examine the elementary, middle, and high school programs in that order.

The grade configuration of school districts varies from one district to another. Research on grade configuration is inconclusive as to the one best arrangement. In a study of this sort, it is important to begin by describing the existing grade organization of the two districts.

Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
Elementary: PreK-5	Elementary: PreK-6
Middle: 6-8	Middle: 7-8
High: 9-12	High: 9-12

As can be seen in Table 5.1, Oppenheim-Ephratah has a PreK-5, 6-8, 9-12 grade arrangement while St. Johnsville is structured in a PreK-6, 7-8, and 9-12 configuration. It should be noted however that these grade arrangements do not conform to the school buildings. In Oppenheim-Ephratah all grades PreK-12 are housed in the same school building. At St. Johnsville, PreK-6 and 7-12 occupy separate buildings.

If a merger is to occur, the new district will have to make a determination as to the most appropriate grade configuration given the overarching curricular philosophy and the available building space. For this study it is important to choose a grade configuration for the purpose of comparing instructional programs. Based the broader range of program offerings for sixth grade in a typical middle school setting we have chosen to use PreK-5, 6-8, 9-12 as the grade configuration for instructional comparisons only in this study.

We now turn our attention to the instructional program at each level of schooling in the study districts. The following sections are grouped as elementary school (PreK-5), middle school (6-8), and high school (9-12).

Elementary School (Grades K-5)

The best place to begin describing the instructional program of any school or school district is with an overview of the instructional day. As the following table illustrates, both districts have approximately the same beginning and ending times of the day for elementary school students. The elementary school student day is twelve minutes longer in St. Johnsville than in Oppenheim-Ephratah, and while a final length of day would have to be agreed upon by the new district, this should not be a major change for students.

The elementary school teacher workday, however, is structurally different between the two districts. Teachers at Oppenheim-Ephratah have a fifteen minute longer day, Monday through Thursday, yet a twenty-five minute shorter day on Friday, resulting in a thirty-five minute longer workweek. This difference would require resolution if the two districts merged.

Table 5.2 Daily Elementary School (K-5) Schedules				
	Oppenheim-Ephratah		St. Johnsville	
	Start/End Times	Length of Day	Start/End Times	Length of Day
Staff Start	8:00	7 hr 15 min Mon-Thurs 6 hr 35 min-Fri	8:00	7 hr
Staff End	3:15 Mon-Thurs 2:35 Friday		3:00	
Student Start	8:05	6 hr 28 min	8:10	6 hr 40 min
Student End	2:33		2:50	

Table 5.3 presents a summary of the elementary school (K-5) sections and the class size of each section. As a larger school district, St. Johnsville has more sections of each elementary school grade than Oppenheim-Ephratah. In grades kindergarten, one, and four, class sizes are comparable. However, in grades two, three, and five, class sizes

at St. Johnsville are significantly smaller than those in Oppenheim-Ephratah. St. Johnsville has an elementary school class size guideline of 20-22 for kindergarten and first grade, and 20-25 for the grades thereafter.

Table 5.3 Elementary School Sections/Section Sizes for 2010-11				
Grade Level	Oppenheim-Ephratah		St. Johnsville	
	No. Of Sections	Section Sizes	No. Of Sections	Section Sizes
Kindergarten	2	13,15	2	14,15
1	1	23	2	20,21
2	1	26	2	17,18
3	1	20	2	12,14
4	2	14,19	2	14,17
5	1	19	2	12,13

If a merger were to occur class sizes, no doubt, would become more equivalent by grade and by school. Relative to class size, one of the major benefits of merging two school populations is economy of scale. Using a modification of the previous table and the class size guidelines of 20-22 for grades K and 1, and 20-25 for grades 2-5, we can get a sense of how economy of scale applies to the number of classes necessary for grades K-5.

Table 5.4 Comparison of K-5 Sections: Current vs. Merged Into One Building									
Grade Level	O-E	STJ	No. Of Students	No. Of Sections		Merged District-1 Building	No. Of Sections	No. Of Fewer Sections	Net Reduction in Sections
K	13, 15	14, 15	57	4		19, 19, 19	3	1	4 fewer classes of grades K-5
1	23	20, 21	64	3		21, 21, 22	3	-	
2	26	17, 18	61	3		20, 20, 21	3	-	
3	20	12, 14	46	3		23, 23	2	1	
4	14, 19	14, 17	64	4		21, 21, 22	3	1	
5	19	12, 13	44	3		22, 22	2	1	

With this comparison we can clearly see one of the major benefits of merger---a reduction in the number of class sections necessary to provide a comparable instructional program consistent with existing class size guidelines. On the other hand, it should be recognized that in order to achieve this reduction in the number of classes, the current elementary schools would have to be merged into a single building. Redrawing the elementary school attendance boundaries but retaining two elementary school buildings might result in some efficiencies/savings from the current structure but less savings than could be realized as shown in Table 5.4 above. Should such a move take place, opportunities to effectively group for instruction would also become available.

The heart of every school's instructional program is its core academic curriculum. The following table summarizes the elementary school curriculum in both study districts. As indicated earlier, for the sake of comparison, grade 6 for both districts is included in the middle school section reviewed later in this chapter.

Table 5.5 Elementary School (K-5) Curriculum		
Curricular Area	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott Foresman (Pre-K – 5) • Rigby leveled books, (K-3) • Mc Dougal & Littell Bridges to Literature; NY Assessment Prep Reading; Renaissance Place Accelerated Reader Program; trade books from WebMax (1-8) 	<p>Core Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundations/Wilson’s reading program (K-1) • Open Court & SRA/McGraw Hill (K-3) • Houghton-Mifflin (4-5) Traditions Houghton-Mifflin (4) <p>Supplementary Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied Methods/Wilson’s reading program (remedial and special education) (3-6) • Guided reading program/Rigby leveled books (1), A-Z leveled books (K-3), trade books (3-5) • Accelerated Reader (K-5) • Treasury of Literature, Harcourt Brace (2 & 5)
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher created programs (K-2) • Scott-Foresman & Addison Wesley (3-5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MacMillan/McGraw Hill New York Math Connects (K-5)
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BOCES science kits (K-5) • Learning Focused Strategies (K) • Scott-Foresman (1-5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MacMillan/McGraw-Hill (K-5)
Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher created units (K) • Scott Foresman (1-5) • McGraw-Hill United States; National Geographic World Cultures Reading Expeditions (5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No text, themes and trade books (K) • MacMillan/McGraw-Hill (1) • The World and Its People (2) • Scott Foresman (3 & 5) • Social Studies New York Pearson Education (4)

There is no consistency at any grade level between the two districts relative to textbook series that serve as the foundation for instruction in the core curricular areas. If the districts were to merge, considerable discussion and agreement on common textbook series and programs in nearly every elementary school subject area would be required.

Beyond the core curriculum, each elementary school offers special area subjects in providing a well-rounded education to students. Both districts offer art, music, library, physical education, and technology in their elementary schools. However, as Table 5.6 illustrates, Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville offer significantly different amounts of art, music, library, and physical education per week to students in grades K-5, as well as having different scheduling formats. Oppenheim-Ephratah operates on a weekly five-day, Monday through Friday, schedule, while St. Johnsville operates on a six-day cycle. A common agreed upon amount of special area instruction would have to be determined following merger of the districts.

Table 5.6 Elementary School Special Area Subjects (K-5)		
Special Area	Oppenheim-Ephratah Five Day Cycle	St. Johnsville Six Day Cycle
Art	40 minutes/week, K-2, 4-5 80 minutes/week, 3	40 minutes/cycle, K-5
Music	40 minutes/week, K-2, 4-5 80 minutes/week, 3 40 minutes/week, 4 (Beginner Band) 80 minutes/week, 5 (Cadet Band) 80 minutes/week, 4-5 (Elem. Chorus) Instrumental lessons, 4-5	40 minutes/cycle, K-5 80 minutes/cycle, 4-5 (Band) 40 minutes/cycle, 4-6 (Chorus) Instrumental lessons, 4-5
Physical Education	100 minutes/week, K-2, 4-5, 6 120 minutes/week, 3	120 minutes/cycle, K-5
Library	60 minutes/week, K-2 80 minutes/week, 3 40 minutes/week, 4-5	40 minutes/cycle, K-5
Technology	40 minutes/week, (wood), 2-3 40 minutes/week, (keyboarding), 4-5	40 minutes/cycle, (computer applications), K-5
A.I.S. Reading	40 – 200 minutes/week, K-5	240 minutes/cycle, K 200 minutes/cycle, 1-3 120 minutes/cycle, 4-5
Remedial Math	40 – 200 minutes/week, K-5	80 minutes/cycle, K 120 minutes/cycle, 1-3
A.I.S. Math	40 – 200 minutes/week, K-5	120 minutes/cycle, 4 80 minutes/cycle, 5
Extra Help Services Available (Teacher/Parent Request)	40 – 160 minutes/week, K-5 (10 th period)	120 minutes/cycle, K-6 (20 minutes each session) 240 minutes/cycle, 3-6 (40 minutes per session/after school)

Although not illustrated in Table 5.6, the following curricular information is important to an understanding of the elementary school program in Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville. In St. Johnsville, band and chorus begin in fourth grade. A librarian divides time between the elementary school and the middle/high school buildings, spending a half-day in each building. The library is closed when the librarian is not in attendance. Counseling services are provided two days per week by Catholic Charities and one day per week by St. Mary's Mental Health with no cost to the district. A school psychologist provides part-time service to the elementary school. The building has a full-time nurse. St. Johnsville Elementary School also offers the Advantage After-School program, without charge, Monday through Friday. The program is funded through the New York State Office of Child and Family Services. The school district also provides a swim program in conjunction with the Canajoharie School District.

In Oppenheim-Ephratah, band and chorus also begin at fourth grade. The elementary school library is open 80% of the day, staffed by a library assistant under the supervision of the middle/high school librarian. In addition, the district provides intramurals and several club activities after school for elementary school students.

Finally, to ensure a complete picture of the elementary school instructional program, it is necessary to present a summary of student academic performance. At the elementary school level in New York State, the best way to accomplish this is by examining student performance on the English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics state tests administered in grades 3-8. Before presenting recent results for Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville, it is important to understand the rating system currently used in New York. The following summary describes the four-level system in place.

Student Performance on State Assessments

Performance Level Descriptors

Level 1-Not Meeting Learning Standards---Student performance does not demonstrate an understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level.

Level 2-Partially Meeting Learning Standards---Student performance demonstrates a partial understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level.

Level 3-Meeting Learning Standards---Student performance demonstrates an understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level.

Level 4-Meeting Learning Standards with Distinction---Student performance demonstrates a thorough understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level.

Table 5.7								
Percent of Students Scoring at Each Level								
English/Language Arts								
Grade 3								
Level	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	STJ (43)	OE (23)	STJ (42)	OE (27)	STJ (30)	OE (23)	STJ (34)	OE (31)
1	12	9	10	4	7	0	15	19
2	25	13	28	22	40	17	38	48
3	54	69	50	52	50	79	38	26
4	9	9	12	22	3	4	9	7
() indicates the number tested								

Table 5.8								
Percent of Students Scoring at Each Level								
Mathematics								
Grade 3								
Level	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	STJ (43)	OE (23)	STJ (42)	OE (28)	STJ (30)	OE (22)	STJ (35)	OE (31)
1	5	0	5	0	3	0	17	16
2	11	9	2	4	7	0	26	19
3	75	65	76	82	77	91	29	45
4	9	26	17	14	13	9	29	19
() indicates the number tested								

Table 5.9								
Percent of Students Scoring at Each Level								
English/Language Arts								
Grade 4								
Level	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	STJ (41)	OE (26)	STJ (47)	OE (23)	STJ (34)	OE (30)	STJ (31)	OE (20)
1	17	4	9	4	3	7	0	10
2	27	34	25	5	12	20	39	30
3	54	58	57	69	79	70	55	55
4	2	4	9	22	6	3	6	5
() indicates the number tested								

Table 5.10								
Percent of Students Scoring at Each Level								
Mathematics								
Grade 4								
Level	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	STJ (40)	OE (26)	STJ (47)	OE (23)	STJ (35)	OE (29)	STJ (31)	OE (20)
1	12	0	6	0	3	3	0	10
2	10	12	13	9	8	11	29	50
3	60	88	66	69	66	69	52	30
4	18	0	15	22	23	17	19	10
() indicates the number tested								

Table 5.11								
Percent of Students Scoring at Each Level								
English/Language Arts								
Grade 5								
Level	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	STJ (28)	OE (24)	STJ (40)	OE (29)	STJ (46)	OE (23)	STJ (39)	OE (27)
1	21	12	5	7	0	0	10	7
2	25	46	27	21	28	9	44	41
3	50	42	60	72	57	78	41	37
4	4	0	8	0	15	13	5	15
() indicates the number tested								

Table 5.12 Percent of Students Scoring at Each Level Mathematics Grade 5								
Level	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	STJ (26)	OE (25)	STJ (40)	OE (29)	STJ (47)	OE (22)	STJ (39)	OE (27)
1	15	8	12	7	0	0	3	0
2	23	36	10	7	19	14	33	44
3	47	44	63	86	72	63	49	37
4	15	12	15	0	9	23	15	19
() indicates the number tested								

In examining any assessment results between two school districts, there will always be some differences. Such is the case with Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville. There are times when O-E students score higher than St. Johnsville students and there are times when St. Johnsville students score higher than Oppenheim-Ephratah students. However, in looking at the big picture results of these assessments, the student performance for these two districts is remarkably similar. In examining the percentage of students who score at levels 3 and 4, the levels at which the state has determined that students are on track to successfully progress through school, the results are nearly identical.

Middle School (Grades 6-8)

As with the elementary school, we look at the middle grades by first considering the daily schedules in each of the study districts. Table 5.13 summarizes this comparison.

Table 5.13 Daily Middle School (6-8) Schedules				
	Oppenheim-Ephratah		St. Johnsville	
	Start/End Times	Length of Day	Start/End Times	Length of Day
Staff Start	8:00	7 hr 15 min Mon-Thurs 6 hr 35 min Fri	8:00	7 hr
Staff End	3:15 Mon-Thurs 2:35 Friday		3:00	
Student Start	8:05	6 hr 28 min	8:10	6 hr 40 min
Student End	2:33		2:50	

In the same manner as the elementary school day comparison, both districts have approximately the same beginning and ending times of the day for middle school students. The middle school student day is twelve minutes longer in St. Johnsville than Oppenheim-Ephratah, and, while a final length of day would have to be agreed upon by the new district, this should not be a major change for students.

The middle school teacher workday, however, is structurally different between the two districts. Teachers in Oppenheim-Ephratah have a fifteen minute longer day, Monday through Thursday, yet a twenty-five minute shorter day on Friday, resulting in a thirty-five minute longer workweek. This difference would require resolution if the two districts merged.

Table 5.14 presents a summary of middle school (6-8) sections. Again, St. Johnsville has more sections of each middle school grade than Oppenheim-Ephratah. The table does not reflect the number of AIS sections per grade, which varies between the districts and within each school.

Table 5.14 Middle School Sections in Core Curricular Areas-2010-11				
Grade Level	Oppenheim-Ephratah		St. Johnsville	
	No. Students	No. Sections	No. Students	No. Sections
6	29	2	43	2
7	24	2	41	2
8	29	2	43	2

As we did with the elementary school program, we again show a modified version of Table 5.14 as an illustration of the staffing economy of scale relative to consolidated populations in a merger, based on the St. Johnsville class size guideline of 20-25 students per class.

Table 5.15 Comparison of 6-8 Sections: Current v. Merged-2010-11									
Grade	O-E	STJ	No. of Current Students	No. of Current Sections		Class Sizes Merged District	No. of Sections Merged District	No. of Fewer Sections	Net Reduction In Sections
6	29	43	72	4		24, 24, 24	3	1	3 fewer sections in grades 6-8
7	24	41	65	4		21, 22, 22	3	1	
8	29	43	72	4		24, 24, 24	3	1	

Economy of scale continues to provide benefits relative to the number of sections necessary to provide a comparable instructional program within standard class size guidelines. In terms of the typical structure of sixth grade classes it is clear that consolidated 6-8 student populations could result in a reduction of one class section within the 20-25-class size guideline. Again, as we observed with the elementary school program, in order to achieve the efficiencies outlined in the table above, all of the students in grades 6-8 would have to be located in the same school building.

However, the possibility of reducing staffing by one section in each of the core academic areas in seventh and eighth grades, as shown in Table 5.15, is less certain. For example, a seventh grade English teacher may have six instructional classes per day, one supervisory duty, one planning period, and one lunch period. A reduction of one English class is unlikely to have an impact on English teacher staffing. The same would be true for math, science, and social studies staffing. Should the districts merge, a close examination of middle school department staffing, weighing the number of sections needed for regular class instruction with A.I.S. instruction, along with the core educational philosophy, would be necessary.

Table 5.16 Middle School Subjects (6-8)		
Special Area	Oppenheim-Ephratah Five Day Cycle	St. Johnsville Six Day Cycle
English	200 minutes/week, 6-8	252 minutes/cycle, 6 252 minutes/cycle, 7-8
Social Studies	200 minutes/week, 6-8	252 minutes/cycle, 6 252 minutes/cycle, 7-8
Math	200 minutes/week, 6-8	252 minutes/cycle, 6 252 minutes/cycle, 7-8
Science	200 minutes/week, 6-8	252 minutes/cycle, 6 252 minutes/cycle, 7-8
Art	100 minutes/week, 6-7	40 minutes/cycle, 6
Music	100 minutes/week, 6	40 minutes/cycle, 6 126 minutes/cycle, 7
Physical Education	100 minutes/week, 6-7	120 minutes/cycle, 6 126 minutes/cycle, 7-8
Library	No formal instruction	No formal instruction
Technology	100 minutes/week, 6 (Intro to Agr) 100 minutes/week, Technology 7 100 minutes/week, Technology 8	40 minutes/cycle, 6 (Computer App) 126 minutes/cycle, Technology 7 252 minutes/cycle, Technology 8
H & C. S.	100 minutes/week, 7-8	126 minutes/cycle, 7-8
Language	100 minutes/week, 8	252 minutes/cycle, 7-8
Reading (Title 1)	100 minutes/week, 6 40 minutes/week, 7 (2 sections) 100 minutes/week, 7-8 (5 sections) 100 minutes/week, 8 (2 sections)	180 minutes/cycle, 6
Health	100 minutes/week, 7	126 minutes/cycle, 7
A. I. S.	100 minutes/week, 6-8 (ELA) 80 minutes/week, 6-8 (Writing) 100 minutes/week, 6-8 (Math)	120 minutes/cycle, 6 (ELA) 80 minutes/cycle, 6 (Math)
Study Skills	200 minutes/week, 6 (2 sections) 100 minutes/week, 7-8 (4 sections)	

In addition to the above, students in grades 6-8 in both schools have band and chorus opportunities beyond the formal class schedule. Both schools also provide A I. S., counseling, psychologist, social worker, and nurse services. Beyond the school day, Oppenheim-Ephratah provides soccer, basketball, baseball, and softball intramurals as well as a Drug Quiz Team, Gardening Club, SADD, Student Council, Technology Club, Future Farmers of America, marching band, jazz band, class council, OE singers, Junior

Honor Society, Art Club, and Ski Club for students in grades 6-8. While seventh and eighth grade students do not have intramurals at St. Johnsville, they do have the opportunity to participate in student council, art club, ski club, Future Farmers of America, as well as girls and boys modified soccer and basketball, or girls softball or boys baseball.

Finally, in completing the picture of the middle school (6-8) instructional program, a summary of student academic performance on the English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics state tests administered in grade 6-8. The following summary, along with the rating system, describes the four-level system in place.

Performance Level Descriptors

Grades 3-8 Assessment System

Level 1-Not Meeting Learning Standards---Student performance does not demonstrate an understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level.

Level 2-Partially Meeting Learning Standards---Student performance demonstrates a partial understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level.

Level 3-Meeting Learning Standards---Student performance demonstrates an understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level.

Level 4-Meeting Learning Standards with Distinction---Student performance demonstrates a thorough understanding of the content expected in the subject and grade level.

Table 5.17 Percent of Students Scoring at Each Level English/Language Arts Grade 6								
Level	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	STJ (30)	OE (22)	STJ (28)	OE (23)	STJ (36)	OE (28)	STJ (42)	OE (25)
1	3	0	0	0	0	0	14	16
2	34	41	46	61	11	11	26	40
3	53	45	50	39	78	85	50	44
4	10	14	4	0	11	4	10	0
() indicates the number tested								

Table 5.18								
Percent of Students Scoring at Each Level								
Mathematics								
Grade 6								
Level	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	STJ (30)	OE (21)	STJ (28)	OE (23)	STJ (36)	OE (29)	STJ (42)	OE (25)
1	17	10	21	22	3	7	2	8
2	16	14	15	35	5	7	38	44
3	64	71	53	43	78	86	40	40
4	3	5	11	0	14	0	19	8
() indicates the number tested								

Table 5.19								
Percent of Students Scoring at Each Level								
English/Language Arts								
Grade 7								
Level	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	STJ (30)	OE (44)	STJ (27)	OE (23)	STJ (26)	OE (22)	STJ (39)	OE (28)
1	3	2	0	4	0	0	10	11
2	30	57	30	31	42	50	44	71
3	67	39	70	61	58	50	33	14
4	0	2	0	4	0	0	13	4
() indicates the number tested								

Table 5.20								
Percent of Students Scoring at Each Level								
Mathematics								
Grade 7								
Level	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	STJ (30)	OE (44)	STJ (27)	OE (24)	STJ (27)	OE (22)	STJ (39)	OE (28)
1	3	9	0	4	0	9	5	4
2	24	30	22	33	26	23	67	82
3	63	56	56	55	63	68	26	14
4	10	5	22	8	11	0	3	0
() indicates the number tested								

Table 5.21								
Percent of Students Scoring at Each Level								
English/Language Arts								
Grade 8								
Level	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	STJ (40)	OE (33)	STJ (30)	OE (36)	STJ (27)	OE (27)	STJ (32)	OE (22)
1	0	12	10	6	0	4	13	23
2	40	52	23	38	22	40	56	59
3	52	36	64	53	78	52	28	18
4	8	0	3	3	0	4	3	0
() indicates the number tested								

Table 5.22								
Percent of Students Scoring at Each Level								
Mathematics								
Grade 8								
Level	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	STJ (39)	OE (35)	STJ (29)	OE (37)	STJ (87)	OE (27)	STJ (32)	OE (22)
1	8	20	10	5	11	4	13	41
2	33	40	7	30	7	22	75	46
3	49	40	69	57	75	74	13	14
4	10	0	14	8	7	0	0	0
() indicates the number tested								

Tables 5.17 through 5.22 present a summary of grades 6–8 student performance on New York State tests for each district during the most recent four years of available data. After considerable study of these data, we come to a different conclusion that we reached in analyzing the elementary school student performance data. While the performance in the elementary school grades was quite similar, we find that St. Johnsville students in grades 6 through 8 fairly consistently score higher than their counterparts in Oppenheim-Ephratah. There are two assessments for each of the three grade levels for each of the four years that were studied. This means that there are twenty-four opportunities for comparison of the two districts' scores. In examining the percentage of

students scoring at levels 3 and 4, we find that the two districts had equal percentages on two occasions, Oppenheim-Ephratah students scored higher on two occasions, and St. Johnsville students scored higher on twenty of the twenty four comparisons.

High School (Grades 9-12)

Once again we begin by summarizing the daily high school schedules of the two schools being considered. The high school teacher workday is structurally different between the two districts. Teachers at Oppenheim-Ephratah have a fifteen minute longer day, Monday through Thursday, yet a twenty-five minute shorter day on Friday, resulting in a thirty-five minute longer workweek. This difference would require resolution if the two districts merged.

Table 5.23 Daily High School Schedules				
	Oppenheim-Ephratah		St. Johnsville	
	<i>Start/End Times</i>	<i>Length of Day</i>	<i>Start/End Times</i>	<i>Length of Day</i>
Staff Start	8:00	7 hr 15 min 6 hr 35 min on Friday	7:50	6 hr 52 min
Staff End	3:15 2:35 on Friday		2:42	
Student Start	8:05	6 hr 28 min	8:00	6 hr 42 min
Student End	2:33		2:42	

St. Johnsville high school students start at 8:00 a.m. and end at 2:42 p.m. resulting in a 6 hour, 42 minute student day. Oppenheim-Ephratah high school students start at 8:05 a.m. and end the day at 2:33 p.m. resulting in a 6 hour, 28 minute student day. These differences in start and end times are not terribly different and, with a difference of only 14 minutes in the length of the student day, it is reasonable to assume that a common schedule for the high school could be achieved quite easily should a merger occur.

Table 5.24 that follows presents an overview of the curriculum in each district's high school. In addition to identifying the courses taught during 2010-11, the number of sections of each course and each section size is also shown in this table. For example, in

Oppenheim-Ephratah there are two sections of English 9 with section sizes of 10 and 12; St. Johnsville has one section of English 9 with 23 students in the class.

In addition to showing the current classes being offered, number of sections, and section sizes, the table also shows what might reasonably be expected to happen to the section sizes should the two districts decide to merge. This analysis assumes that all of the courses that are currently being offered will continue to be offered. No new course offerings have been introduced. Where the same courses are currently being offered in person in one high school and through distance learning in the other high school, those sections have been combined for purposes of a merged high school analysis, e.g.; pre-calculus and calculus. Course sections that are shown with a / between two numbers are half year courses. The creation of section sizes in the potentially merged district is guided by the language in the St. Johnsville teacher contract that optimum class size for the high school is 20-25 students per class. No section has more than 25 students.

We also believe that the consolidation of classes described in the following table is very plausible given the size of a new merged high school. Scheduling students in a small high school offers limited flexibility. The limited number of periods, BOCES classes, limited certification flexibility for staff, and facilities constraints often limit scheduling options. Should the high schools merge, we believe that much more flexibility would be available for arranging student schedules and therefore the reductions in section numbers identified could be realized.

Finally, we offer a word of caution. The reduction in the number of sections shown in the following table should not be assumed to be directly connected to staff reductions. Following mergers, curriculum opportunities expand for students. Table 5.24 frees up teacher schedules in order to offer more electives and broaden the high school curriculum. It is also noted that many merged districts' boards of education agree to reduce staff only by attrition. If this is the position taken by the board of education in this merged district, a combination of more electives and staff reductions through attrition can be implemented over an extended period of time.

**Table 5.24
High School Curriculum Offerings-2010-11**

Course	OE	STJ	No. of Students	No. of Sections		Merged District	No. of Sections	No. of Fewer Sections	Net Reduction in Sections
ENGLISH									
English 9	10, 12	23	45	3		23, 22	2	1	5 fewer sections of English
English 10	11, 10	18	39	3		20, 19	2	1	
English 10 Honors		10	10	1		10	1	-	
English 11	23, 13	18	54	3		18, 18, 18	3	-	
English 11 Honors		11	11	1		11	1	-	
English 12	12, 7	13	32	3		16, 16	2	1	
AP English		11	11	1		11	1	-	
Film Literature	2, 6		8	2		8	1	1	
Creative Writing	2, 6		8	2		8	1	1	
SOCIAL STUDIES									
Global History 9	12, 12	24	48	3		24, 24	2	1	4 fewer sections of social studies
Global History 10	12, 13	10, 17	52	4		17, 17, 18	3	1	
US History	23, 17	10, 19	69	4		23, 23, 23	3	1	
Economics (1/2 yr.)	8/16	13, 15	52	4		17, 17, 18	3	1/2	
Participation in Government (1/2 yr.)	8/16	13, 15	52	4		17, 17, 18	3	1/2	
AP US History (DL)		3	3	1		3	1	-	
Sociology	3		3	1		3	1	-	
Social Problems	3		3	1		3	1	-	
Psychology (DL)		5	5	1		5	1	-	
History of the Holocaust (DL)		6	6	1		6	1	-	
Warfare (DL)		4	4	1		4	1	-	
Social Studies Enrichment	6		6	1		6	1	-	

MATH									
Geometry	7, 6	21	34	3		17, 17	2	1	3 fewer sections of math
Algebra I	10		10	1		10	1	-	
Integrated Algebra	22	12	34	2		17, 17	2	-	
Integrated Algebra 1		19	19	1		19	1	-	
Integrated Algebra 2		12	12	1		12	1	-	
Algebra 2		12	12	1		12	1	-	
Trigonometry	14	13	27	2		13, 14	2	-	
Pre-Calculus (DL) & Pre Calculus	9	6	15	2		15	1	1	
Calculus & Calculus (DL)		7	7	2		7	1	1	
SCIENCE									
Earth Science	13, 9	13, 5	40	4		20, 20	2	2	14.5 fewer sections of science
Earth Science Lab	4, 10, 7	4, 9, 5	39	6		20, 19	2	4	
Living Environment	11, 14	20	45	3		22, 23	2	1	
Living Environment Lab	11, 10	8, 10, 12	51	5		17, 17, 17	3	2	
Ecology		3	3	1		3	1	-	
Environmental Science	7	14, 13	34	3		17, 17	2	1	
AP Biology		3	3	1		3	1	-	
Chemistry	21		21	1		21	1	-	
Chemistry Lab	10, 11		21	2		21	1	1	
Forensics		9	9	1		9	1	-	
Physics		11, 11	22	2		22	1	1	
Physics Lab		11	11	1		11	1	0	
Animal Science & Animal Science (DL)	11	8/7, 12/13, 13	53	5		17, 18, 18	3	2	
Vertebrate Biology	6		6	1		6	1	-	
Plant Science	12		12	1		12	1	-	
Veterinary Science	11		11	1		11	1	-	
Introduction to Agriculture	10		10	1		10	1	-	

Ag Communications (1/2 yr.)		12/9	21	2		21	1	½	
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FOREIGN LANGUAGE									
Spanish 1	11, 9, 1	20, 17	58	5		19, 19, 20	3	2	4 fewer sections of Spanish
Spanish 2	11	3	14	2		14	1	1	
Spanish 3	11	6	17	2		17	1	1	
Spanish 4		4	4	1		4	1	-	
BUSINESS									
Accounting I		8	8	1		8	1	-	1 less section of business
Money Management	8, 6		14	2		14	1	1	
Business Math		23	23	1		23	1	-	
TECHNOLOGY									
Materials Processing		7	7	1		7	1	-	1 less section of tech
Transportation Systems	5		5	1		5	1	-	
Introduction to Graphics		9	9	1		9	1	-	
Design/Drawing – Production	6	5/6	12	2		12	1	1	
Computer Software Applications		13	13	1		13	1	-	
Web Design		17/15	32	2		17, 15	2	-	
Woodworking	7		7	1		7	1	-	
Math in Technology	13		13	1		13	1	-	
MUSIC									
Handbell Choir		12	12	1		12	1	-	
Jazz Ensemble		19	19	1		19	1	-	
Band		48	48	1		48	1	-	
Chorus	64	21	21	1		85	2	-	
Jazz Band	26					26	1		
Band	86					86	1		

Music Theory II	4					4	1		
Instrumental Lessons									
ART									
Drawing & Painting	3		3	1		3	1	-	4 fewer sections of art
Ceramics		16/11	27	2		16, 11	2	-	
Photography		6/5							
Advanced Art	5		5	1		5	1	-	
Multimedia Art	6,8		14	2		14	1	1	
Studio in Art	4, 5, 7	13, 13	42	5		21, 21	2	3	
PHYSICAL EDUCATION									
Phys Ed	25, 24, 14, 10, 17, 19, 14, 8								
Weight & Cardio	3, 3, 13		3						
ACADEMIC INTERVENTION SERVICES									
AIS	4, 6, 3								
HEALTH									
Health	14, 5, 16	24, 14	73	5		24, 24, 25	3	2	3 fewer sections of health
Parenting	14, 3, 16		33	3		17, 16	2	1	
OTHER									
Driver Education	10, 10		20	2		10, 10	2	-	
<p><i>SUMMARY: SHOULD THE TWO SCHOOL DISTRICTS MERGE, IT WOULD BE REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT 39.5 SECTIONS OF COURSES COULD BE FREED UP AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL, 30.5 IN THE CORE ACADEMIC AREAS OF ENGLISH, SOCIAL STUDIES, MATH, SCIENCE, AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND 9 IN THE RELATED AREAS OF BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY, ART, AND HEALTH. GIVEN THESE CHANGES, THERE WOULD STILL BE 23 SECTIONS OF COURSES OFFERED IN THE HIGH SCHOOL WITH FEWER THAN 10 STUDENTS; ie, ELECTIVES WOULD NOT BE REDUCED.</i></p>									

Both districts have a solid program in the core areas of English, math, science, and social studies for districts of their size. Two English Honors courses and one Advanced Placement course in English are available in St. Johnsville. A significant number of elective courses are available in the core areas in both districts although most of them have small enrollments. Spanish is the only foreign language offered. It is offered in both districts with Oppenheim-Ephratah offering three years and St. Johnsville offering four.

The business area has a limited number of offerings with Oppenheim-Ephratah offering Money Management and St. Johnsville offering Accounting and Business Math. Both districts offer courses related to the use of computers in their technology offerings.

Oppenheim-Ephratah offers courses as part of their high school curriculum that some students take for college credit through the “College Now” program from Herkimer County Community College. Some of the students in each of the following courses are receiving college credit with the number indicated in (). These students are already identified in the Table 5.24, the high school curriculum offerings for 2010-11.

English I (9)

English II (9)

Pre-Calculus (9)

American History I (8)

American History II (8)

Sociology (3)

Social Problems (3)

Introduction to Macroeconomics (8)

State & Local Government (8)

In addition to the College Now program, Oppenheim-Ephratah as well as St. Johnsville, also offers high school courses through Accelerate U. Accelerate U is an on-line, computer-based program that is offered through the Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES. Students can access their course materials at any time and then proceed through the course

at their own pace. Assessments are also a part of this learning opportunity and, when successfully completed, students receive high school credit from their high school. Table 5.25 which follows shows the number of O-E students participating in Accelerate U courses in 2010-11. No St. Johnsville students are currently participating in Accelerate U.

Table 5.25 Accelerate-U Courses in Oppenheim-Ephratah-2010-11	
Courses	Student Enrollment
US History	2
English 11	1
Physical Education	1
Economics	3
Participation in Government	3
Health	2
Forensic Science	1
Psychology	1
Sociology	1

Research on merged school districts has consistently found that academic opportunities for students increase after the merger. Such would also be the case here. A merger would significantly enhance the high school offerings that are currently available to the students of these two districts. In addition, a larger high school would allow more college credit bearing courses, more electives, more Honors courses, and more Advanced Placement courses to be available for the students.

The extent of the academic program that would be available in a merged high school would have to be decided by the board of education of the merged district. However, a merger would provide the potential for a greater number of options than would otherwise exist in either of the two individual high schools.

In addition to the courses listed in Table 5.25, high school students from both districts have access to a wide array of Career and Technical Education courses from their individual BOCES. Oppenheim-Ephratah is a member of the Herkimer BOCES and St. Johnsville is a member of the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES. Table 5.26 which follows shows the number of students from each districts who are currently taking CTE courses at their BOCES:

Table 5.26 Enrollment in BOCES Career & Technical Education Courses-2009-10		
	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
Junior Class		
No. of Students in Class	36	34
No. of students in BOCES CTE	9	5
Senior Class		
No. of Students in Class	33	33
No. of Students in BOCES CTE	12	4
No. of Juniors and Seniors in BOCES CTE Courses	21 of 69	9 of 67
% of Juniors & Seniors in BOCES CTE Courses	30.4%	13.4%

As with the elementary school and middle school student performance summaries, we now turn to examine high school student performance on New York State Regents examinations. The following table provides this data for all students.

**Table 5.27
High School Regents Exam Performance**

Regents Examination	Year	No. Tested		% at or above 55%		% at or above 65%		% at or above 85%	
		STJ	OE	STJ	OE	STJ	OE	STJ	OE
English	07-08	25	32	100	91	96	88	40	28
	08-09	30	29	97	97	93	97	20	41
	09-10	26	31	92	90	92	90	39	42
Math A	07-08	39	26	97	100	90	100	15	19
	08-09	5	2	100	0	40	0	0	0
	09-10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Math B	07-08	15	12	73	33	53	8	7	0
	08-09	14	14	79	50	50	29	21	0
	09-10	4	2	50	100	25	100	0	0
Algebra	07-08	11	29	100	93	100	76	9	3
	08-09	38	48	92	96	84	83	3	6
	09-10	25	21	96	86	92	81	0	0
Algebra 2/ Trigonometry	07-08	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	08-09	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	09-10	6	10	100	70	83	50	33	0
Geometry	07-08	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	08-09	11	22	100	59	55	45	9	9
	09-10	18	13	94	100	78	79	6	0
Global History	07-08	40	44	90	84	70	66	13	11
	08-09	41	39	80	79	76	56	12	8
	09-10	37	47	84	77	65	66	22	11
US History	07-08	28	25	100	100	96	100	50	24
	08-09	31	29	97	90	77	86	26	21
	09-10	29	31	93	94	79	77	28	26
Living Environment	07-08	47	34	98	97	89	85	28	35
	08-09	31	37	97	92	84	86	32	32
	09-10	27	45	100	98	93	96	44	44
Earth Science	07-08	21	28	86	89	71	79	10	14
	08-09	13	39	92	87	69	77	15	21
	09-10	28	6	96	100	86	100	25	0
Chemistry	07-08	16	3	94	0	81	0	0	0
	08-09	9	10	67	100	22	70	0	10
	09-10	15	1	80	100	73	100	13	0
Physics	07-08	2	11	0	64	0	55	0	18
	08-09	10	1	100	0	90	0	20	0
	09-10	NA	12	NA	100	NA	75	NA	

Spanish	07-08	10	10	90	100	80	100	40	30
	08-09	7	14	100	100	100	100	29	43
	09-10	10	8	100	100	100	100	40	50

At this point in the report, we have examined student performance on elementary, middle, and high school assessments. Like in the elementary school and in the middle school, comparing student performance results across both districts yields very similar results. Again, there are exams in various years where students in Oppenheim-Ephratah outscored their counterparts in St. Johnsville. However, in other years and with other exams, the opposite is true. In short, student performance on high school Regents examinations should not be an issue should the high schools decide to merge.

Finally, we examine the types of diplomas that graduates of each high school receive. Table 5.28 that follows looks at those graduates.

Table 5.28 Types of Diplomas Received By Graduates			
Year	Diploma Type	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
2008	Advanced Regents	4	11
	Regents	13	17
	Local	4	5
	IEP	3	5
	GED	1	0
2009	Advanced Regents	3	4
	Regents	22	16
	Local	2	4
	IEP	3	3
	GED	1	0
2010	Advanced Regents	4	5
	Regents	18	18
	Local	5	5
	IEP	1	2

Similar to the conclusions which we have drawn with respect to other types of academic achievement comparisons, the types of diplomas received by graduation seniors in the two study districts is very similar.

An important aspect of any student’s high school education is the availability of opportunities to offer a well-rounded education. Consequently, we now turn to student athletic and extra-curricular opportunities and participation rates in both of the study districts during the 2009-10 academic year.

For many years, Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville have been experiencing a decline in the number of students who are participating in their inter-scholastic athletic teams. As a result, three years ago, the two districts began sharing athletic teams. Table 5.28 which follows shows the combined athletic teams that the districts sponsored in the 2009-10 school year, the participation from each district, and the total number of students participating on each team.

Table 5.29 Sports with Combined St. Johnsville/Oppenheim-Ephratah Participation-2009-10			
Sport	No. of STJ Students	No. of O-E Students	Total Participation
Varsity Boys Soccer	7	8	15
JV Boys Soccer	8	9	17
Varsity Girls Soccer	10	6	16
JV Girls Soccer	10	6	16
Varsity Baseball	9	6	15
JV Baseball	8	3	11
Varsity Softball	8	2	10
JV Softball	10	3	13

Of the sixteen athletic teams that were sponsored by Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville during the 2009-10 school year, eight (50%) of the teams were shared between the two districts.

Not all of the athletic teams for the districts were shared. Table 5.29 that follows shows the athletic teams that were offered by each district individually along with each district’s participation for each sport.

Table 5.30 Athletic Participation-Non Shared Sports-2009-10		
Sport	STJ Participation	O-E Participation
Varsity Boys Basketball	7	10
JV Boys Basketball	8	9*
Modified Boys Basketball	12	8
Varsity Girls Basketball	7	
JV Girls Basketball	7	
Varsity Volleyball		8
JV Volleyball		6
Cheerleading	8	8
*O-E has 1 girl on the team		

Athletic teams in a high school are often a great sense of pride for a community and often times, districts are highly protective of their teams. However, the boards of education in Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville should be commended on their initiative to combine athletic teams as participation numbers have declined. By their actions, they have made student participation and opportunity the most important factors in inter-scholastic athletics. In examining the participation rates in the previous table, it is clear that, as enrollments in Oppenheim-Ephratah decline and enrollments in St. Johnsville remain relatively flat, continued sharing of teams would be necessary if the students in these two districts were going to continue to have opportunities to play. Should a merger of the two school districts occur, there would be little impact on the participation of students in the inter-scholastic athletic teams since so many of the teams are already shared. It is also highly likely that even if the districts do not merge, continued combined student teams will be the norm rather than the exception.

Table 5.30, which follows, presents a summary of the clubs and extracurricular activities offered by each district's high school in 2009-10.

Table 5.31 Clubs/Extra-Curricular Activities-2009-10		
Activity	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
Art Club	8	12
Color Guard	13	
Drama Club	6	11
Drumline	12	
Elementary History Club	15	
Envirothon	16	
FBLA		4
FFA	10	36
Foreign Language Club	15	22
Garden Club	9	
Honor Ensemble	12	
Junior Honor Society	12	
Senior Honor Society	36	19
Jazz Band	26	
Library Club	11	
Math Club	15	
OE Singers	14	
Odyssey of the Mind	30	
Drug Quiz Team	12	
SADD	21	
Select Choir	14	
Science Club	20	5
Ski Club	30	24
Instrumental Ensemble	14	
Student Council	10	22
Yearbook	30	5

In analyzing the table above regarding clubs and other extra-curricular activities, it is apparent that Oppenheim-Ephratah provides more opportunities for its students than does St. Johnsville. Most districts are usually willing to start any club in which there is sufficient student interest and a faculty advisor can be secured. Districts find clubs much more affordable than inter-scholastic athletics and much easier to administer. Should a merger of the districts occur, students, faculty, and the board will determine which clubs will or will not continue. It is safe to assume, however, that students in the merged high school would have access to all of the clubs that currently exist in either high school. It can also be predicted that having more students in the middle school and in the high

school in a merged district will create more opportunities for students to participate in clubs and other extra-curricular activities.

Special Education

Finally, it is important to have an understanding of the special education program in each school district. Table 5.31 that follows summarizes, by disability, the number of special needs students in Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville for the past two academic years. A considerable amount of information can be gleaned from studying this table. For example, New York State typically has a goal for school districts to have no more than 12% of their total student population identified as in need of special education services. While this may be a laudable state goal, the identification of students with special needs is a process that varies greatly from district to district for a variety of reasons, one of which may be family income level. Both of the study districts are above 12% of their total student population classified as in need of special education services, with St. Johnsville having a somewhat greater percentage of students in special education programs than Oppenheim-Ephratah. As all districts, Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville's special needs students are predominantly classified as learning disabled. Neither district has an inordinately large percentage of severely disabled students.

**Table 5.32
Special Education Students by Disability
2008-09 and 2009-10**

Disability	Oppenheim- Ephratah 2008-09	St. Johnsville 2008-09	Oppenheim- Ephratah 2009-10	St. Johnsville 2009-10
Autism	1	3	1	2
Emotional Disturbance	3	5	2	3
Learning Disability	20	54	23	54
Mental Retardation	5	4	5	4
Deafness	0	0	0	0
Hearing Impairment	0	1	0	1
Speech Impairment	3	5	1	5
Visual Impairment	0	0	0	0
Orthopedic Impairment	0	0	0	0
Other Health Impairment	17	16	17	14
Multiple Disabilities	7	6	6	3
Deaf-Blindness	0	0	0	0
Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0	0	0
Totals	56	94	55	86
% of Total Students	14.2%	20.8%	15.2%	18.7%

In addition to the number of students with special needs it is interesting to note the delivery of programs to meet those needs. As is true with the delivery of regular instruction in the two districts, there are instances of similarity and instances of difference. Both districts have self-contained classrooms and both use the consultant teacher model. Overall, there is greater similarity than difference. The following tables outline the delivery of programs for both districts.

Table 5.33					
Delivery of Special Education Programs/Services by Study Districts, 2010-11					
Elementary Schools					
Oppenheim-Ephratah					
Program/Service	Type	Grade(s)	Students	Min./Cycle	Provider
Self-Contained	Pull out	K	1	1500	Teacher, Asst.
ELA Resource	Pull out/ Direct Consultant	2	1	200	Teacher
ELA Resource	Pull out	2-3	2,2,1	200	Teacher
Self-Contained	15:1	4	1	600	Teacher
Resource		4	1	120	Aide
Direct Instruction		4-5	2	1500	Assistant
Direct Instruction		4	1	600	Assistant
ELA Direct Consultant		4,6	2,2	200	Assistant, Aide
Social Studies Direct Consultant		4,6	2,1	200	Assistant, Aide
Science Direct Consultant		4,6	1,2	200	Asst., Aide
Resource		6	3	200	Assistant
St. Johnsville					
Program/Service	Type	Grade(s)	Students	Min./Cycle	Provider
Self-Contained	12:1:1	K-3		1800	Teacher
Self-Contained	12:1:1	4-6		1800	Teacher
Resource Room	5:1	4-6		240	Teacher
Spec. Class Reading	12:1	4-6		240	Teacher
Spec. Class Reading	12:1	K-2		240	Teacher
Spec. Class Math	12:1	4-6		240	Teacher
Class Support Writing	20:1	K-3		120	Assistant
Classroom Support Social Studies	20:1	K-3		120	Assistant
Classroom Support Science	20:1	K-3		120	Assistant
Classroom Support Social Studies	20:1	4-6		120	Assistant
Classroom Support Science	20:1	4-6		120	Assistant
Classroom Support Writing	20:1	4-6		80	Assistant
Classroom Support ELA	20:1	4-6		120	Assistant

**Table 5.34
Delivery of Special Education Programs/Services by Study Districts, 2010-11
Middle Schools**

Oppenheim-Ephratah					
Program/Service	Type	Grade(s)	Students	Min./ Cycle	Provider
Self-Contained Math	15:1	7-8	4	200	Teacher
Self-Contained ELA	15:1	8-9	2	200	Teacher
Skills Resource		7	1	300	
Skills Resource		8	2	280	Teacher
Skills Resource		7-8	1,1	200	Assistant
Skills Resource		7	1	80	
Science Direct Consultant 2 Sections		7-8	4,3	200	Assistant
Social Studies Direct Consultant 2 Sections		7-8	4,3	200	Assistant
English Direct Consultant 2 Sections		7-8	4,2	200	Assistant
Math Direct Consultant 2 Sections		7-8	4,2	200	Teacher, Assistant
St. Johnsville					
Program/Service	Type	Grade(s)	Students	Min./ Cycle	Provider
Resource Room	5:1	7-8		756	Teacher
Special Class ELA	15:1	7-8		252	Teacher
Special Class Math	15:1	7-8		252	Teacher
Consultant Teacher Direct Science	20:1	7-8		252	Teacher
Consultant Teacher Direct English	20:1	7-8		252	Teacher
Consultant Teacher Direct Math	20:1	7-8		252	Teacher
Classroom Support Social Studies	20:1	7-8		252	Assistant
Classroom Support ELA	20:1	7-8		252	Assistant
Classroom Support Science	20:1	7-8		252	Assistant
Classroom Support Math	20:1	7-8		252	Assistant
Classroom Support Electives	20:1	7-8		252	Assistant

Table 5.35 Delivery of Special Education Programs/Services by Study Districts, 2010-11 High Schools					
Oppenheim-Ephratah					
Program/Service	Type	Grade(s)	Students	Min./ Cycle	Provider
Self-Contained ELA	15:1	9-12	5	200	Teacher
Skills Resource		11	1	80	
Skills Resource		11-12	3,1	100	Assistant
Skills Resource		9-11	3	200	
Subject Resource		9-12	8,3,3	200	Teacher
Global Studies Direct Consultant		9	5	200	Assistant
ELA Direct Consultant		9	4	200	Assistant
US History Direct Consultant		11		200	Teacher
Biology Direct Consultant		9-10	6	200	Teacher
Biology Lab Direct Consultant		9	5	100	Assistant
Math Direct Consultant		9-10	5	200	Teacher, Asst.
St. Johnsville					
Program/Service	Type	Grade(s)	Students	Min./ Cycle	Provider
Resource Room	5:1	9-12		1512	Teacher
Spec. Class ELA	15:1	9-12		252	Teacher
Spec. Class Math	15:1	9-12		252	Teacher
Spec. Class Social Studies	15:1	9-12		252	Teacher
Consultant Teacher Science	20:1	9-12		504	Teacher
Consultant Teacher English	20:1	9-12		126	Teacher
Consultant Teacher Social Studies	20:1	9-12		126	Teacher
Consultant Teacher Math	20:1	9-12		126	Teacher
Classroom Support Math	20:1	9-12		504	Assistant
Classroom Support Social Studies	20:1	9-12		252	Assistant
Classroom Support Science	20:1	9-12		252	Assistant
Classroom Support ELA	20:1	9-12		252	Assistant
Classroom Support Electives	20:1	9-12		252	Assistant
Classroom Support Science Lab	20:1	9-12		252	Assistant

Upon examination of these four tables, it does not appear that there will be a major philosophical shift in identification and placement of students with special needs if the two districts merge.

This concludes the overview of each district's instructional program. The following section will explore the finances of Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville and the impact of a possible merger on their finances.

Chapter 6

Fiscal Condition of the Districts

In addition to enhancing educational opportunities for students, a second major consideration in any discussion of possible district consolidation involves finances. Therefore, this section of the report provides an overview of the financial condition of each study district and offer insight into the potential financial ramifications should a merger occur.

As Table 6.1 below illustrates, the residents of both Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville consistently support annual spending plans put forth by their respective boards of education.

Table 6.1 Budget Vote History									
	St. Johnsville					Oppenheim-Ephratah			
Year	YES	NO	Total	% YES		YES	NO	Total	% YES
2000-01	149	114	263	56.6		203	104	307	66.1
2001-02	187	77	264	70.8		181	165	346	52.3
2002-03	104	28	132	78.8		128	75	203	63.1
2003-04	133	31	164	81.1		191	176	367	52.0
2004-05	101	70	171	59.1		148	97	245	60.4
2005-06	249	81	330	75.5		192	118	310	61.9
2006-07	156	69	225	69.3		138	106	244	56.6
2007-08	170	58	228	74.6		154	73	227	67.8
2008-09	184	50	234	78.6		119	69	188	63.3
2009-10	194	166	360	53.9		106	97	203	52.2
2010-11	147	22	169	87.0		139	69	208	66.8

Over the past eleven years the budget vote has passed in both districts every year.

In addition to the support shown for budget votes, similar community support has been shown for the purpose of purchasing school buses in St. Johnsville. In 2007, voters approved the purchase of one school bus by a vote of 142 to 100. In 2010, the voters

approved the purchase of two school buses by a vote of 117 to 42. It should be noted that this is a relatively small number of referenda for the purpose of purchasing buses. However, St. Johnsville owns very few buses because it contracts with a private vendor for transportation. Oppenheim-Ephratah, on the other hand, purchases its school buses from the regular school budget and does not conduct separate referenda on these bus purchases.

While further discussion will be undertaken with respect to the school facilities in a later chapter, it should also be noted that community support for capital projects has also been fairly strong in both districts. Additions and renovations to the Oppenheim-Ephratah school facilities were approved in 2000, 2006, 2008, and 2010. A building renovation vote was defeated in 2005 by a vote of 227 to 160. While a \$9.8 million project was soundly defeated by the residents of St. Johnsville in 2008, previous attempts to improve the school facilities were met with positive voter support in 1992, 1994, and 2001. Finally it should be noted that in 2010, Oppenheim-Ephratah passed a resolution for the establishment of a capital reserve fund by a vote of 105 to 71. St. Johnsville has had a capital reserve account for a number of years.

Examination of each district's general fund balance sheets (Table 6.2) shows that both districts had healthy fund balances on June 30, 2010 (Oppenheim-Ephratah, \$4,655,322; St. Johnsville, \$5,493,572). Each district has been able to create and fund reserve accounts for specific purposes such as retirement payments, capital spending, and employee benefit liabilities. In terms of undesignated fund balances, Oppenheim-Ephratah had \$1,664,083 at year's end while St. Johnsville's undesignated fund balance was \$1,478,035. When comparing these undesignated fund balances with the 2010-11 budget for each district, we find that Oppenheim-Ephratah's fund balance represents 19.6% of the 2010-11 budget while the undesignated fund balance in St. Johnsville represents 15.7% of its 2010-11 budget.

Table 6.2			
Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville General Fund Balance Sheets, June 30, 2010			
	O-E	STJ	If Combined
ASSETS:			
Cash - Unrestricted	\$1,986,789	\$2,813,991	\$4,800,780
Cash - Restricted	\$1,973,314	\$2,239,124	\$4,212,438
Due from other Funds	\$466,687	\$291,766	\$758,453
Due from Fiduciary Funds		\$21,259	\$21,259
Due from State and Federal	\$488,034	\$538,641	\$1,026,675
Other Receivables		\$156,556	\$156,556
Deferred Expenses			
Total Assets	\$4,914,824	\$6,061,337	\$10,976,161
LIABILITIES:			
Accounts Payable	\$20,066	\$35,574	\$55,640
Accrued Liabilities		\$140,723	\$140,723
Due to Other Funds		\$151	\$151
Due to Other Governments			
Due to Retirement Systems	\$239,436	\$221,647	\$461,083
Deferred Revenues		\$169,670	\$169,670
Total Liabilities	\$259,502	\$567,765	\$827,267
FUND EQUITY:			
Reserved for:			
Encumbrances		\$8,694	\$8,694
Retirement Contribution Reserve			
Unemployment Insurance	\$30,884	\$56,773	\$87,657
Insurance			
Capital Reserve	\$1,450,765	\$2,013,750	\$3,464,515
Capital Reserve - Buses Liability		\$221,017	\$221,017
Tax Certiorari	\$300,000	\$11,641	\$311,641
Workers' Compensation		\$1,072	\$1,072
Repairs		\$4,357	\$4,357
Employee Benefit Liability	\$200,000	\$393,848	\$593,848
Debt Service	\$522,549	\$711,637	\$1,234,186
Reserved Fund Balance	\$2,504,198	\$3,422,789	\$5,926,987
Unreserved:			
Designated for subsequent year's expenditures	\$487,041	\$1,304,385	\$1,791,426
Undesignated	\$1,664,083	\$1,478,035	\$3,142,118
Unreserved Fund Balance	\$2,151,124	\$2,782,420	\$4,933,544
Total Fund Equity	\$4,655,322	\$6,205,209	\$10,860,531
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE	\$4,914,824	\$6,061,337	\$10,976,161

Other observations should be made about the balance sheet shown above in Table 6.2. In terms of future capital project initiatives, both districts have funded capital reserve accounts, Oppenheim-Ephratah at \$1,450,765 and St. Johnsville at \$2,013,750. The debt service reserve for St. Johnsville represents a consolidation of the debt service fund and the general fund. Should a merger occur, a total of \$3,464,515 would reside in the capital reserve account. *(On May 17, 2011, the St. Johnsville voters authorized a capital project in the amount of \$1,550,000 to be financed through the capital reserve fund. Money has since been transferred from the capital reserve fund to the project, thereby reducing the capital reserve fund).* In addition, St. Johnsville has a capital reserve account for the purchase of school buses of \$221,017.

Oppenheim-Ephratah has funded a tax certiorari account in the amount of \$300,000. This is to protect the district from ongoing assessment challenges from National Grid. Employee benefit liability reserves have also been created in both districts with Oppenheim-Ephratah having \$200,000 and St. Johnsville having \$393,848. Should a merger occur, there would be \$593,848 in the employee benefit reserve account. Finally, it is important to note that Oppenheim-Ephratah has a debt service reserve of \$522,549 and St. Johnsville has a similar reserve of \$711,637 that could be used to pay down future capital debt.

Regional Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) provides services to school districts within their geographic region. Herkimer BOCES serves Oppenheim-Ephratah while the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES serves St. Johnsville. Services include educational programs such as Career and Technical Education (CTE), alternative education and special education. Administrative support services and professional development are also provided by BOCES on a cooperative basis.

Both BOCES provide CTE programs that are often referred to as occupational education. For the 2009-2010 school year the original contract cost for the services were \$8,000 per student at Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES and \$7,278 at Herkimer BOCES.

Alternative Education services are not provided by Herkimer BOCES. In 2009-2010 Oppenheim-Ephratah contracted with Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES to provide this service. The contract reflects that 4.9 full time equivalent students were served during the 2009-2010 school year. The cost per student was \$11,745.

Special education services are delivered using different instructional models. Making comparisons from classroom to classroom is difficult. A simple review of the 2009-2010 contracts shows that both BOCES ran a 12:1:1 program that has a maximum enrollment of twelve students with one teacher and one teaching assistant. The base cost of the Herkimer BOCES program was \$24,377. The base cost for the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES was \$22,838.

Both BOCES charge an administrative expense to the schools for the operation of the BOCES. Data from Component School District BOCES Aid Report (CMP) shows that there is a significant difference between the administrative expenditures allocated to the component districts. Oppenheim-Ephratah's charge was \$100,519 for the 2009-2010 school year, while St. Johnsville's charge was \$36,160 for the same school year.

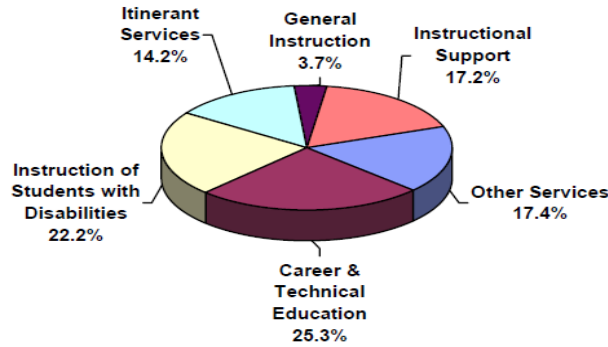
The difference between the two charges led researchers to review total expenditures per BOCES by using the BOCES Report Card for the 2008-2009 school year that is available on the New York State Education website as a resource. There seems to be a significant reporting difference that causes the variance in the numbers. The Herkimer BOCES reports post retirement benefits in the administrative portion of the budget while the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES does not. This would account for a significant portion of the difference in the BOCES administrative charges for these two districts.

Herkimer BOCES Data:

2008-2009 Expenses

Data Source: SA111, schedule 2A

Administrative Expenses (Excluding Supplemental Retirement & Other Post Retirement Benefits)	\$1,350,845.00
Supplemental Retirement & Other Post Retirement Benefits.....	\$1,465,885.00
Capital Expenses.....	\$403,186.00
Total Program Expenses.....	\$16,609,032.00



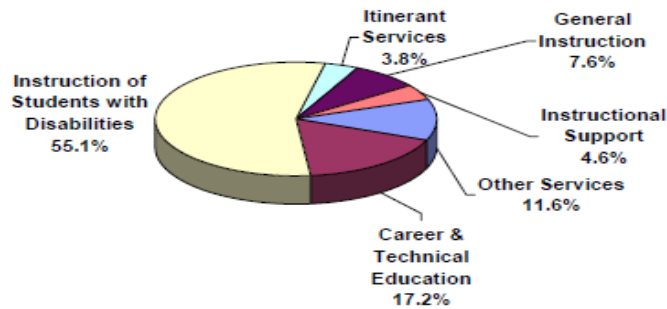
Total Expenses.....	\$19,828,948.00
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Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES Data

2008-2009 Expenses

Data Source: SA111, schedule 2A

Administrative Expenses (Excluding Supplemental Retirement & Other Post Retirement Benefits)	\$ 1,266,073.67
Supplemental Retirement & Other Post Retirement Benefits.....	\$ 0.00
Capital Expenses.....	\$ 1,957,251.50
Total Program Expenses.....	\$ 24,171,904.77



Total Expenses.....	\$ 27,395,229.94
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The administrative charges are similar when the supplemental retirement and other post retirement benefits are separated.

It is the responsibility of the Commissioner of Education to make a decision about the location of a merged school district when a merger occurs and the two original districts were located in two different BOCES regions. The Commissioner's decision is based on how to best serve the educational interests of the students in the proposed new district as well as how to promote effective and efficient delivery of BOCES services on a regional basis. The staff of the State Education Department prepared a study to assist the Commissioner in his deliberations. The Commissioner's decision is to locate the new district, if established, in the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES.

The matter of facilities debt was researched as part of the study that was completed by Education Department staff because of the capital construction undertaken by each BOCES, particularly in Herkimer BOCES with the New York State Dormitory Authority. If the centralization takes place, it has been determined that there would be no indebtedness between Oppenheim-Ephratah and the Herkimer BOCES for the building project. The reorganized district would begin paying its share of the payment of the facility in the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES.

Currently Oppenheim-Ephratah receives instructional and administrative technology services from the Regional Information Center (RIC) at the Madison-Oneida BOCES in Verona while St. Johnsville receives their services from the RIC at the Capital Region BOCES in Colonie. If the districts reorganize, the Capital Region BOCES would be providing services, but both RIC's would work together with the Education Department to be sure the services continue without difficulties.

H-F-M BOCES would provide all other services but we encourage the new board to establish cross contracts with Herkimer BOCES when appropriate, especially for CTE and special education students from the former Oppenheim-Ephratah district, to ensure an effective transition.

Table 6.3 which follows shows the history of each district's total fund balance over the past several years. This too is a measure of a district's overall fiscal health. If the fund balance has remained stable or increased in subsequent years, it typically means that there has been prudent fiscal management. Both districts' fund balances have increased substantially to ensure the fiscal health of the district as challenging fiscal years approach. Oppenheim-Ephratah's fund balance has increased by 71.6% over the past five years while the fund balance in St. Johnsville has increased by 98.5% over the same five-year period.

Table 6.3		
History of Total Fund Balance for Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville		
June 30th of Fiscal Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
2005-2006	\$2,713,054	\$2,767,551
2006-2007	\$2,521,070	\$3,506,212
2007-2008	\$2,762,168	\$4,220,303
2008-2009	\$3,788,415	\$4,652,169
2009-2010	\$4,655,322	\$5,493,572

We have also reviewed the report of the independent auditor for the school year ending June 30, 2010. Both districts use West & Company for conducting the required annual audit. West & Company has offices in Gloversville and Saratoga Springs and is a firm that has had significant experience in conducting school district audits. These audits examine the financial health of the districts as well as the practices that the school districts employ to securely manage their funds.

The audit report in Oppenheim-Ephratah observes the following:

1. For at least the past two years, the undesignated fund balance has exceeded 4% of the subsequent year's budget. Real property tax law states that this undesignated fund balance should not exceed 4%. It is recommended that the board take the necessary steps to reduce the fund balance.

2. *For at least the past two years, some documentation was missing from some extra-classroom activity funds. It is recommended that the treasurer oversee the collection of all required documentation.*
3. *For at least the past two years, there did not exist proper segregation of duties with certain extra-classroom and scholarship accounts. It is recommended that the business office properly segregate duties.*
4. *There were some minor issues cited with respect to sales tax, receipts, and account balances in some of the extra-classroom activity funds. It is recommended that the district correct these conditions.*
5. *In payroll testing, there were a few instances where Form I-9 regarding proof of citizenship was not properly executed. It is recommended that the district ensure that all new employees complete the I-9 form at the same time other payroll forms are executed.*

The audit report in St. Johnsville observes the following:

1. *For at least the past two years, some extra-classroom activity clubs are not preparing the required profit and loss statements. While this has improved, it is recommended that all clubs be required to complete the required financial documentation.*
2. *For at least the past two years, the undesignated fund balance has exceeded 4% of the subsequent year's budget. Real property tax law states that this undesignated fund balance should not exceed 4%. It is recommended that the board take the necessary steps to reduce the fund balance.*
3. *For at least the past two years, there did not exist proper segregation of duties with certain extra-classroom and scholarship accounts. It is recommended that the business office properly segregate duties.*
4. *The district has a whistle blower policy but it is not appropriately communicated to the staff. It is recommended that the whistle blower policy be included in the employee handbook and be distributed to all employees.*

5. Some extra-classroom clubs had no activity. It is recommended that dormant clubs be reviewed by the board of education and, if appropriate, closed with the cash balances distributed in accordance with board policy.

The audits from both school districts reflect only minor issues in the management letters. Both districts have undesignated fund balances that exceed the 4% limit. While this is legally an issue, it is understandable that school districts would have larger fund balances given the financial challenges they will be facing in the upcoming years. However, section 1318 of the real property tax law caps school district undesignated fund balances at 4% of the subsequent year's budget.

The exceptions that were noted in the audits of both districts with respect to extra-classroom activity funds are common in many school district audits. These exceptions often address sales tax and receipt issues with student clubs that might be selling candy bars for \$1.00. Again, we are not suggesting that these issues should not be addressed.

Given the data we have reviewed, these two districts have planned well for the challenging fiscal times ahead. However, school districts have never faced the types of financial challenges that they now confront. State aid to education is being drastically cut. Programs are being eliminated. Fund balances are being eaten up to finance recurring expenses without being replenished. Studies across the state are projecting the year in which school districts will run out of money. School districts in New York State are now fighting for their financial survival. These are the very real challenges that are facing Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville. While they have managed their money well and are in a sound fiscal condition today, the future is very bleak.

One measure of a district's fiscal condition and its financial commitment to provide a high quality education for its students is the amount of money spent annually. Table 6.4 examines the total approved operating expenses for both districts for the past five years. Approved Operating Expenses are those expenses used for the day-to-day operation of the school, excluding certain expenses. Not included are: capital outlay and debt service for building construction, transportation of pupils, expenditures made to purchase services from a BOCES, or tuition payments to other districts. Monies received

as federal aid revenue and State aid for special programs are also deducted from total annual expenditures when computing Approved Operating Expenses. It is important to note that this amount spent is affected by a number of variables such as regional costs, unique equipment purchases, bus purchases, capital debt, etc.

Table 6.4			
Total Approved Operating Expenses			
Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville	If Combined
2005-06	\$5,087,687	\$5,440,385	\$10,528,072
2006-07	\$5,466,482	\$5,469,565	\$10,936,047
2007-08	\$5,358,623	\$5,833,230	\$11,191,853
2008-09	\$5,337,337	\$5,997,883	\$11,335,220
2009-10	\$5,163,958	\$5,810,407	\$10,974,365

This table shows that both districts have essentially maintained their operating expenses at a relatively constant level for each of the previous five years up to 2009-10. In this five-year period, the approved operating expenses in Oppenheim-Ephratah have increased by a total of 1.5% and in St. Johnsville by a total of 6.8%. This pattern of limited increased spending is admirable for both districts given the steady rate at which salaries, fringe benefits, and utility costs have increased for school districts across New York State.

In order to compare school spending between the two districts in a more equitable fashion, Table 6.5 is presented to examine the operating expenses per student.

Table 6.5			
Total Operating Expenses Per Student			
Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville	If Combined
2006	\$11,236	\$12,491	\$11,909
2007	\$12,122	\$11,287	\$11,662
2008	\$13,495	\$10,784	\$11,997
2009	\$13,910	\$12,101	\$12,942
2010	\$15,554	\$12,048	\$13,592
2011	\$16,226	\$12,370	\$14,053

As the table shows, over the past five years, Oppenheim-Ephratah has outspent St. Johnsville on a per student basis from its operating budget in every year since 2006. It is not at all unusual to find a smaller district having higher per student costs than a larger district simply because of economies of scale. Note too that, if merged in the past five years, the spending per student would have declined for Oppenheim-Ephratah but increased for St. Johnsville. Given this analysis, however, with the range of operating expenses per pupil in school districts across the state, the spending levels of these two districts are very similar.

Theoretically, state aid to education in New York is supposed to help less wealthy districts derive more fiscal equity with those districts that have greater fiscal capacity. To some degree this occurs. However, the system is not perfect. In fact, small rural school districts are not able to spend the same amount of money on the education of their children as many other districts in the state. It is important however to examine how much state support each district receives since most small, rural districts are highly dependent on fiscal support from the state. The table below illustrates the state aid that Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville have received over the past six years. The years cited are for the year of expense.

Table 6.6			
Total State Aid			
Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville	If Combined
2004-05	\$4,763,880	\$5,808,426	\$10,572,306
2005-06	\$4,087,687	\$5,440,385	\$9,528,072
2006-07	\$4,466,482	\$5,469,565	\$9,936,047
2007-08	\$4,990,504	\$5,702,351	\$10,692,855
2008-09	\$5,429,334	\$5,979,532	\$11,408,866
2009-10	\$5,491,232	\$5,769,598	\$11,260,830
2010-11	\$5,458,049	\$5,504,740	\$10,962,789

As can be seen from Table 6.6, over the seven-year period studied, state aid for Oppenheim-Ephratah increased by 14.6% and for St. Johnsville by 3.7%.

Once again, it is important to examine the amount of state aid received per student in order to get a more accurate comparison between the two districts. Table 6.7 provides this data.

Table 6.7			
State Aid Per Enrolled Student			
Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville	If Combined
2006	\$11,706	\$10,555	\$11,088
2007	\$12,350	\$11,663	\$11,971
2008	\$13,237	\$12,237	\$12,684
2009	\$13,815	\$13,229	\$13,502
2010	\$15,378	\$13,175	\$14,145
2011	\$16,620	\$13,062	\$14,615

Once again, we see a familiar pattern. State aid per student increased in each of the past six years for Oppenheim-Ephratah. St. Johnsville, on the other hand, remained relatively constant for the six-year period. Again, however, this state aid per student is relatively similar for these two school districts.

State foundation aid to schools is driven by the amount of property wealth in a district and the amount of personal income behind each student as compared with the state average. These wealth indices are weighted equally and are shown as the Combined Wealth Ratio. The average district in the state has a Combined Wealth Ratio of 1.0. The Combined Wealth Ratio for Oppenheim-Ephratah is 0.429 and for St. Johnsville, it is 0.470. Being less than the average of 1.0 means that both districts have less wealth than the average school district in the state. However, while they are less wealthy than the average school district in the state, they are very similar to each other.

For purposes of this study, we will examine the property wealth of the two districts and illustrate that information in Table 6.8 as follows:

Table 6.8			
Full Value Property Wealth			
Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville	If Combined
2005	\$111,653,906	\$106,553,272	\$218,207,178
2006	\$123,917,256	\$111,391,285	\$235,308,541
2007	\$140,615,813	\$123,742,239	\$264,358,052
2008	\$151,757,399	\$131,151,794	\$282,909,193
2009	\$147,745,807	\$133,190,366	\$280,936,173
2010	\$144,221,266	\$131,643,811	\$275,865,077

As is the case with every other financial comparison that has been made, we find the two districts to be very similar when comparing the full value property wealth. This is one of the major reasons why the state aid to the two school districts is also fairly similar.

We now look at the property value per enrolled student in the following Table 6.9.

Table 6.9			
Property Value Per Enrolled Student			
Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville	If Combined
2006	\$277,746	\$229,147	\$251,681
2007	\$315,311	\$231,102	\$268,924
2008	\$372,986	\$265,541	\$313,592
2009	\$386,151	\$290,159	\$334,804
2010	\$408,138	\$289,544	\$341,772
2011	\$415,623	\$293,848	\$347,000

Table 6.9 shows that there is more property wealth per student in Oppenheim-Ephratah than in St. Johnsville. This is partly a function of the size of the districts. There are fewer students enrolled in Oppenheim-Ephratah causing the property value per student to be higher. However, again this difference is fairly insignificant.

We now look at the property tax levy for each of the districts in the following, Table 6.10.

Table 6.10			
Total Property Tax Levy			
Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville	If Combined
2005-06	\$2,226,950	\$2,256,522	\$4,483,472
2006-07	\$2,282,624	\$2,286,039	\$4,568,663
2007-08	\$2,323,000	\$2,286,039	\$4,609,039
2008-09	\$2,360,954	\$2,286,039	\$4,646,993
2009-10	\$2,395,502	\$2,329,059	\$4,724,561
2010-11	\$2,395,502	\$2,329,059	\$4,724,561

It is interesting to note that the levy in Oppenheim-Ephratah has gone up for each of the past five years prior to 2010-11, albeit by very small amounts. In St. Johnsville, on the other hand, the Board of Education held the levy constant from 2006-07 to 2007-08 to 2008-09 and again from 2009-10 to 2010-11.

Table 6.11 shows the tax levy per student for the two districts.

Table 6.11			
Property Tax Levy Per Enrolled Student			
Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville	If Combined
2006	\$5,540	\$4,853	\$5,171
2007	\$5,808	\$4,743	\$5,221
2008	\$6,162	\$4,906	\$5,467
2009	\$6,008	\$5,058	\$5,499
2010	\$6,617	\$5,063	\$5,748
2011	\$6,903	\$5,199	\$5,943

In looking at the tax levy per student, we notice that both districts have increased but that the rate of increase in St. Johnsville has been slower than in Oppenheim-Ephratah. Over the six-year period studied, the levy per student has increased by 24.6% in Oppenheim-Ephratah and by 7.1% in St. Johnsville.

Finally, with respect to taxes, we examine the true value tax rates of both districts in the following Table 6.12. True value tax rates are the only way to compare one district with another because of assessment practices. These tax rates are not the same rates that a

property owner would see on a school tax bill in either district. However, true tax rates are valid for comparison purposes.

Table 6.12			
Tax Rates on True Value			
Year	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville	If Combined
2006	\$19.95	\$21.18	\$20.56
2007	\$18.42	\$20.52	\$19.42
2008	\$16.52	\$18.47	\$17.43
2009	\$15.56	\$18.37	\$16.82
2010	\$16.21	\$17.49	\$16.82
2011	\$16.61	\$17.69	\$17.13

As can be seen from the table above, both districts have reduced their true value tax rate over the past six years. The tax rate in Oppenheim-Ephratah has gone down by 16.7% while St. Johnsville has reduced its tax rate by 16.5%. Once again, in comparing financial information on the two study districts, we find that the true tax rates are very similar.

It is important for each district to know the extent of debt the other district would bring to a merger if it were to occur. The following tables (6.13 and 6.14) show the schedule of indebtedness each of the districts currently holds. Oppenheim-Ephratah has \$10,505,441 in principal and interest (P+I) payments due over the next 14 years while St. Johnsville’s capital debt is \$7,167,881 and will be retired in 2019.

**Table 6.13
Oppenheim-Ephratah Building Debt**

Year Ending June 30	Principal	Interest	Annual Total P+I	Amortized Building Aid	Estimated Local Share	2010-11 Full Value Tax Rate Impact
2011	\$605,000	\$418,384	\$1,023,384	\$911,708	\$111,676	\$0.00077
2012	\$695,000	\$326,426	\$1,021,426	\$913,405	\$108,021	\$0.00075
2013	\$725,000	\$301,039	\$1,026,039	\$911,695	\$114,344	\$0.00079
2014	\$760,000	\$268,333	\$1,028,333	\$912,573	\$115,760	\$0.00080
2015	\$515,000	\$234,739	\$749,739	\$666,302	\$83,437	\$0.00058
2016	\$540,000	\$213,226	\$753,226	\$666,209	\$87,017	\$0.00060
2017	\$560,000	\$189,901	\$749,901	\$664,754	\$85,147	\$0.00059
2018	\$585,000	\$165,181	\$750,181	\$666,833	\$83,348	\$0.00058
2019	\$515,000	\$141,181	\$656,181	\$665,308	(\$9,127)	\$(0.00006)
2020	\$430,000	\$117,306	\$547,306	\$665,770	(\$118,464)	\$(0.00082)
2021	\$455,000	\$96,056	\$551,056	\$665,308	(\$114,252)	\$(0.00079)
2022	\$480,000	\$73,619	\$553,619	\$668,542	(\$114,923)	\$(0.00080)
2023	\$500,000	\$49,900	\$549,900	\$666,001	(\$116,101)	\$(0.00081)
2024	\$520,000	\$25,150	\$545,150	\$667,156	(\$122,006)	\$(0.00085)
	\$7,885,000	\$2,620,441	\$10,505,441	\$10,311,564	\$193,877	\$0.00134

Table 6.14 St. Johnsville Building Debt						
Year Ending June 30	Principal	Interest	Annual Total P+I	Amortized Building Aid	Estimated Local Share	2010-11 Full Value Tax Rate Impact
2011	\$720,000	\$236,900	\$956,900	\$886,252	\$70,648	\$0.00054
2012	\$750,000	\$209,450	\$959,450	\$886,730	\$72,720	\$0.00055
2013	\$780,000	\$180,850	\$960,850	\$891,249	\$69,601	\$0.00053
2014	\$810,000	\$150,756	\$960,756	\$890,646	\$70,110	\$0.00053
2015	\$840,000	\$119,500	\$959,500	\$889,728	\$69,772	\$0.00053
2016	\$870,000	\$87,081	\$957,081	\$888,495	\$68,586	\$0.00052
2017	\$905,000	\$52,138	\$957,138	\$886,947	\$70,191	\$0.00053
2018	\$285,000	\$15,769	\$300,769	\$832,944	(\$532,175)	(\$0.00404)
2019	\$150,000	\$5,438	\$155,438	\$706,651	(\$551,214)	(\$0.00419)
	\$6,110,000	\$1,057,881	\$7,167,881	\$7,759,642	(\$591,761)	(\$0.00450)

Tables 6.13 and 6.14 show the debt service schedules for both districts. As can be seen from these tables, because of the manner in which the state amortizes building aid, there is a point at which both districts will actually generate more building aid than they will owe in principal and interest payments. In addition, it is apparent from these tables that the impact on the local tax levy/rate from capital debt is fairly insignificant for both districts.

The current building aid ratio for Oppenheim-Ephratah is 91.2% while the building aid ratio for St. Johnsville is 96.2%. This means that the state reimburses Oppenheim-Ephratah \$0.912 and St. Johnsville \$0.962 on every dollar spent for approved building project expenses. When school districts merge, two state financial incentives exist for capital construction costs. For new construction, the state will enhance the higher of the

former districts' building aid ratio by an additional 30%, up to a maximum of 95% of all approved capital costs or up to 98% for high needs districts. Both Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville are high needs districts so that if they were to merge and undertake any new capital projects, the state would reimburse the district 98% of approved capital costs. The local taxpayer would assume 2% of the costs. This incentive exists for a period of ten years from the official date of the merger. In addition, as noted earlier in this chapter, should the merged district undertake a new capital project, a capital reserve account in the amount of \$3,464,515 would also exist.

The second financial incentive that the state provides for merged districts pertains to existing capital debt. In this situation, the state will determine the total capital debt of the merged district and will pay state aid at the higher of the two previous districts' building aid ratios. This would mean that the capital debt that the state is now aiding at Oppenheim-Ephratah's current building aid ratio of 91.2% would be aided at St. Johnsville's current building aid rate of 96.2% if the two districts merged. This would mean an added \$390,294 savings in capital debt service for the Oppenheim-Ephratah piece of the merged district's capital debt over the period of 2012-13 to 2023-24.

As mentioned frequently in this report, New York State provides significant financial incentives for school districts that merge. In addition to the building aid incentives mentioned above, the state also provides reorganization incentive operating aid. This reorganization incentive operating aid formula is based on the 2006-07 operating aid for each district. For Oppenheim-Ephratah, this operating aid is \$1,680,551 and for St. Johnsville the 2006-07 operating aid is \$1,984,849. In calculating the incentive operating aid, the state adds the operating aids of the two districts together (\$3,665,400) and then increases this aid by 40% for each of the first five years after the merger. Starting in year six, the incentive operating aid decreases by 4% a year for the next nine years until year 15 when the incentive operating aid runs out. Table 6.15 that follows shows the incentive operating aid that would be paid to the merged district. As can be seen from this table, a merged district of Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville would generate nearly \$14 million in additional state aid over the next fourteen years.

Table 6.15 Incentive Operating Aid for Merged District			
Year of Merger	Combined Operating Aid	Incentive	Incentive Operating
2012-13 (1)	\$3,665,400	40%	\$1,466,160
2013-14 (2)	\$3,665,400	40%	\$1,466,160
2014-15 (3)	\$3,665,400	40%	\$1,466,160
2015-16 (4)	\$3,665,400	40%	\$1,466,160
2016-17 (5)	\$3,665,400	40%	\$1,466,160
2017-18 (6)	\$3,665,400	36%	\$1,319,544
2018-19 (7)	\$3,665,400	32%	\$1,172,928
2019-20 (8)	\$3,665,400	28%	\$1,026,312
2020-21 (9)	\$3,665,400	24%	\$879,696
2021-22 (10)	\$3,665,400	20%	\$733,080
2022-23 (11)	\$3,665,400	16%	\$586,464
2023-24 (12)	\$3,665,400	12%	\$439,848
2024-25 (13)	\$3,665,400	8%	\$293,232
2025-26 (14)	\$3,665,400	4%	\$146,616
2026-27 (15)	\$3,665,400	0%	\$0
TOTAL INCENTIVE OPERATING AID			\$13,928,520

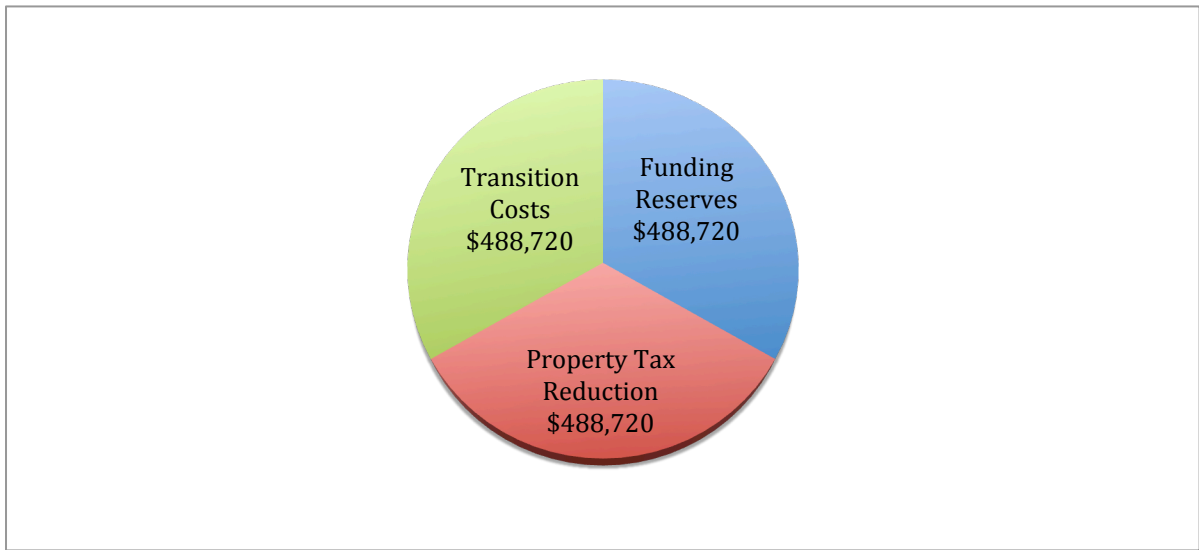
While decisions about the allocation of resources are left solely to the discretion of the new board of education, it is not unusual for boards to divide the incentive operating aid into three relatively equal priorities. These priorities are:

1. Using incentive operating aid to pay for transition costs and starting up new programs; there are always costs that exist when two school districts merge. These costs may include new academic programs for literacy, enhancing academic support and talent development, starting new extra-curricular programs, adjusting salaries, buying new uniforms, developing a new policy manual, etc.
2. Using incentive operating aid to fund reserves to ensure the long-term fiscal stability of the merged district; \$488,720 would be available in each of the first five years for developing a long-term financial strategy to fund reserves in a way that would provide long-term stability of the district's finances. The incentive operating aid from the state decreases by 4% starting in year six and for each year

thereafter for the next nine years. If prudent planning has not been done in advance, this reduction in incentive operating aid will result in significant tax increases for the residents.

3. Using incentive operating aid to reduce taxes.

This allocation of resources can be shown by the following graph that also identifies the funds that would annually be available for the first five years of the merger.



In the event that the merged school district decided to allocate the incentive operating aid in the manner described in the chart above, 1/3 of the incentive operating aid would be used to reduce taxes. This would mean that in the first five years of the merger, \$488,720 would be used to reduce the local tax levy. Starting in year six, this amount would decrease as described above. Table 6.16 that follows shows the effect of applying 1/3 of the incentive operating aid to reduce local taxes.

**Table 6.16
Impact of 1/3 Incentive Operating Aid (IOA) on True Tax Rate**

Year of Merger	Full Value Property Wealth	Tax Levy without 1/3 IOA	True Tax Rate w/o IOA	1/3 Incentive Operating Aid	Tax Levy with 1/3 IOA	True Tax Rate with 1/3 IOA	Change in Tax Rates
12-13 (1)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$488,720	\$4,235,841	\$15.35	-\$1.78
13-14 (2)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$488,720	\$4,235,841	\$15.35	-\$1.78
14-15 (3)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$488,720	\$4,235,841	\$15.35	-\$1.78
15-16 (4)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$488,720	\$4,235,841	\$15.35	-\$1.78
16-17 (5)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$488,720	\$4,235,841	\$15.35	-\$1.78
17-18 (6)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$439,848	\$4,284,713	\$15.53	-\$1.60
18-19 (7)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$390,976	\$4,333,585	\$15.71	-\$1.42
19-20 (8)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$342,104	\$4,382,457	\$15.89	-\$1.24
20-21 (9)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$293,232	\$4,431,329	\$16.06	-\$1.07
21-22 (10)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$244,360	\$4,480,201	\$16.24	-\$0.89
22-23 (11)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$195,488	\$4,529,073	\$16.42	-\$0.71
23-24 (12)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$146,616	\$4,577,945	\$16.59	-\$0.54
24-25 (13)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$97,744	\$4,626,817	\$16.77	-\$0.36
25-26 (14)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$48,872	\$4,675,689	\$16.95	-\$0.18
26-27 (15)	\$275,865,077	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	\$0	\$4,724,561	\$17.13	-\$0

Leveling up, a fairly common practice, is the term that is used when staff from the lower paying district in a merger is compensated on the salary schedule of the higher paying school district in the merger. It should be clearly understood that there is no requirement that this leveling up process to occur nor that the process, if implemented, occurs in one year. Often times, however, using a portion of the incentive operating aid funds the process of leveling up salaries.

One of the biggest decisions that the board of education of the merged district would have to make is how money will be spent. While there will be hundreds of financial decisions to be made, there are four major factors that will most significantly affect financial planning. In this chapter, we have discussed incentive operating aid and incentive building aid. Chapter nine on staffing identifies the other two key factors, the cost to level up teacher salaries and the potential savings to be realized from reducing administrative staff. For the first five years after the merger, these financial factors are as

follows:

- 1/3 incentive operating aid = \$488,720
- incentive building aid = \$36,643 (average)
- cost to level up teacher salaries = \$481,150
- savings due to administrative reductions = \$265,500

If the new board of education implements the 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 structure described in this chapter, they would find themselves in the following position for each of the first five years after the merger:

a. Transition Costs: new revenues = \$790,863 (\$488,720 + \$36,643 + \$265,500)

new expenses = \$481,150

NET FOR PROGRAMS, etc. = \$309,713

b. Incentive operating aid for reserves = \$488,720

c. Incentive operating aid to reduce taxes = \$488,720

Here is where the financial options come to light for the new board of education. While it is impossible to predict what the board will do, the following options exist in compared to the scenario in the previous paragraph:

- a. If the board wants to stabilize taxes instead of reducing taxes, there would be more money to add programs or increase reserves;
- b. If the board uses the districts' current reserves and uses less incentive operating aid for reserves, there would be more money to add programs or reduce/stabilize taxes;
- c. If the board wants to level up salaries over a period of years, there would be more money to add programs, fund reserves, and reduce taxes.

Obviously, the new board of education will have numerous options. Never will the board have more financial options than in the first five years of the merger. The board must never lose sight of the fact that the state's incentive operating aid will begin to decrease by 4% in year six and will be gone by year fifteen. The balanced consideration

of revenues and expenditures will be even more important as time passes. What will happen to state aid? Will there be additional requirements for students to meet? With all of the uncertainties that exist, one could reasonably predict that costs will increase at a rate that is greater than the amount of state aid the district will receive. On the other hand, if the district chooses to only reduce teaching and support staff through attrition, such attrition should be much more prevalent by the sixth year of the merger and will provide additional opportunities for savings at a time when the incentive operating aid begins to decline.

Summary of Financial Findings

Throughout numerous sections of this report, there are factors that impact the financial condition of the merged school district. At this time, we analyze those factors together to give an overview of the key financial factors should the districts decide to merge.

Earlier in this chapter, the incentive operating aid and the incentive building aid to be received by the merged district were reviewed. In Chapter 9 on Staffing, the cost of leveling up teacher salaries will be shown to be approximately \$481,150 per year. Also in Chapter 9, it will be shown that it is reasonable to expect that approximately \$256,500 can be saved annually by restructuring administrative positions in the merged district. Looking at all of these financial factors yields the following Table 6.17.

Table 6.17 Financial Analysis for Merged District					
Year	Incentive Operating Aid	Adjusted Building Aid	Administrative Efficiency	Leveling Up of Teacher Salaries and Benefits	Total
2012-13	1,466,160	39,137	256,500	-481,150	1,280,647
2013-14	1,466,160	39,137	256,500	-481,150	1,280,647
2014-15	1,466,160	33,306	256,500	-481,150	1,274,816
2015-16	1,466,160	33,306	256,500	-481,150	1,274,816
2016-17	1,466,160	33,306	256,500	-481,150	1,274,816
2017-18	1,319,544	33,306	256,500	-481,150	1,128,200
2018-19	1,172,928	29,842	256,500	-481,150	978,120
2019-20	1,026,312	29,842	256,500	-481,150	831,504
2020-21	879,696	29,842	256,500	-481,150	684,888
2021-22	733,080	29,842	256,500	-481,150	538,272
2022-23	586,464	29,842	256,500	-481,150	391,656
2023-24	439,848	29,586	256,500	-481,150	244,784
2024-25	293,232	-	256,500	-481,150	68,582
2025-26	146,616	-	256,500	-481,150	(78,034)
2026-27	0	-	256,500	-481,150	(224,650)
	13,928,520	390,294	3,847,500	-7,217,250	10,949,064

As can be seen from Table 6.17, the major financial factors would result in the merged district generating nearly \$11 million in the next fifteen years. It is equally important to understand that the factors in the table above vary greatly from one year to another. For this reason, it is imperative that the board of education of the merged district develops a comprehensive, long-range financial plan for the district. Failure to properly plan and faithfully execute that plan will result in the district facing grave financial consequences as the amount of state aid decreases and then disappears.

In addition to the direct financial savings that accrue to the merged district, there is great potential for efficiencies to emerge. One of the main areas for immediate and long-term financial savings is in the area of the high school curriculum offerings. As the high school populations come together, small class sections can be combined resulting in somewhat larger class sizes and fewer sections of high school courses. Should the two school districts merge, it would be reasonable to assume that 39.5 sections of courses

could be freed up at the high school level, 30.5 in the core academic areas of English, social studies, math, science, and foreign language and 9 in the related areas of business, technology, art, and health. This does not mean that class sizes would be unreasonable or that electives would be reduced. No class would have more than 25 students, the standard defined in the St. Johnsville teacher contract, and no electives have been eliminated. Also, given these changes, there would still be 23 sections of courses offered in the high school with fewer than 10 students so electives with small enrollments are still being anticipated.

Given the reduction in the number of high school class sections noted above, the board of education and administration have choices. They can either decide to use some of the time that is saved by the reduction in course sections to offer a broader range of curriculum opportunities for their students. They may also decide to reduce the number of teaching staff as the number of classes to be staffed is reduced. It is estimated that the elimination of one teaching position saves the school district approximately \$75,000. This is based on an average teaching salary of \$55,000 plus 35% in related fringe benefits. Whether the board decides to reduce teaching staff in the short term or realize reductions only through attrition, the potential for significant savings from teaching positions could be quite significant.

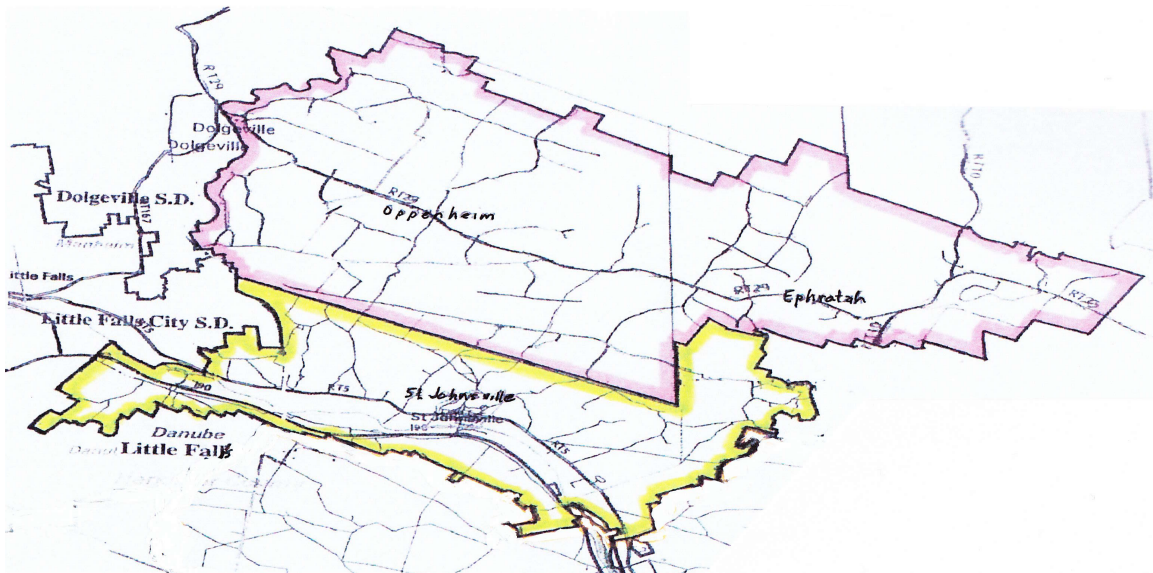
Chapter 7

Student Transportation

As two school districts that are considering merger, Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville are geographically adjacent, as shown in the map below. Oppenheim-Ephratah is immediately north of St. Johnsville. Geographically, both are longer east to west than north to south, with the northeastern sector of St. Johnsville wrapping around the southeastern sector of Oppenheim-Ephratah.

Oppenheim-Ephratah encompasses 83.8 square miles, with a student population density of 4.2 students per square mile. St. Johnsville is a more compact district, and encompasses 34.0 square miles with 13.2 students per square mile. With a more compact district, a significantly greater student population density, and a large number of students who walk to village schools, St. Johnsville's transportation needs are much less than those of Oppenheim-Ephratah.

With greater need, Oppenheim-Ephratah operates its own transportation system, while St. Johnsville maintains a small fleet of vehicles and uses a private bus contractor for its regular pickup and delivery of students.



Oppenheim-Ephratah

The district employs a transportation supervisor, one mechanic, eight full-time drivers, ten part-time drivers, and two bus aides that operate out of the bus garage on the same campus as the school. The table below shows the current transportation fleet of ten 65-passenger buses and several smaller vehicles.

The district has a guideline of 100,000 to 125,000 miles before replacement and a bus replacement schedule that calls for the purchase of at least one bus every year. This permits the district to keep its fleet in good condition and, with careful maintenance, regularly receive a 98% passage rate by the Department of Transportation. This year a request will be made for replacement of bus 61.

Table 7.1 Transportation Fleet for Oppenheim-Ephratah 2010-11					
Bus No.	Year	Condition	Capacity	Model	Current Mileage
52*	1991			International	104,197
60	2000	Good	65	International	79,834
61	2000	Good	65	International	124,415
64	2002	Good	65	International	66,394
65	2002	Good	6	Chrysler	90,340
66	2003	Good	65	International	82,757
67	2005	Good	30	Ford	73,054
68	2005	Good	65	International	59,166
69	2005	Good	65	International	46,703
70	2006	Good	65	International	43,267
71	2006	Good	23	Chevrolet	25,697
72	2006	Good	65	Chevrolet	41,479
73	2007	Good	28	Chevrolet	41,400
74	2007	Good	28	Dodge	31,897
75	2010	Good	28	Chevrolet	23,119
76	2009	Good	6	Dodge	15,081
77	2010	Good	65	International	13,013
78	2012	Good	65	International	4,000
	2006	Good	Pickup Truck	Ford	

*Note: Bus 52 is used for transporting equipment and government surplus food.

Oppenheim-Ephratah transports all PreK-12 students on one run in the morning and two runs in the afternoon. In the morning, 8 buses leave the bus garage between 6:55 and 7:00 and return to school at 7:50. In the afternoon, 8 buses leave the building at 2:35 to deliver students home. At 3:20, 4 buses pick up BOCES afternoon career and technical education students and students who stayed after school for additional help at the high school and deliver them home.

It should be noted that with declining enrollment for the 2011-12 school year, the number of regular morning and afternoon runs may decrease from 8 to 7, thereby reducing the number of 60 – 65 passenger buses by one.

In addition, one bus delivers morning career and technical education students to the Herkimer BOCES in Herkimer. It leaves the high school at 8:00 and remains at BOCES until 11:25 when it returns those students to the school at 11:50. For afternoon career and technical education students, another bus leaves the high school at 11:20, delivers the students to the BOCES center in Herkimer, remains there, and then returns the students to the high school at 3:10.

The district also has a run for special needs students which leaves the bus garage at 6:40 in the morning, picks up students, delivers some students to the Gloversville Middle School, then Mayfield Elementary School, then Gloversville Boulevard School, and lastly to the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES center in Johnstown. It returns to the district at 9:15. In the afternoon it leaves at 1:00 to pick these students up and return them at 3:15.

For transportation to athletic contests, the district reserves one bus, which others augment after their regular afternoon runs. It also provides four late buses Monday through Thursday, and two on Friday.

St. Johnsville

For several years, St. Johnsville has contracted most of its transportation services with the Little Falls Fonda Bus Corporation, 7893 State Highway 5, St. Johnsville. Although previous contracts had a two-year duration, the current contract is one-year for \$208,253 and expires June 30, 2011. The contract requires the private contractor to provide four 65/66-passenger buses, two with a two-hour am/pm guarantee and two with a three-hour am/pm guarantee for routes determined by the district.

In addition, the district has contracts with the Fort Plain School District, one for routine repairs and maintenance of the St. Johnsville buses and another for transporting students to educational programs or athletic contests. The estimated annual cost for both these contracted services is \$8-12,000.

The district also maintains its own small fleet of buses, as shown in the following table.

Table 7.2 Transportation Fleet for St. Johnsville 2010-11					
Bus No.	Year	Condition	Capacity	Model	Current Mileage
10*	2002	N/A	65	International	168,115
11	2008	Good	65	International	77,535
9	2011	Good	65	International	3,712
12	2011	Good	65	International	8,264
4	2003	Good	8	Chevrolet	116,083
	2003		Dump Truck	Chevrolet	
	1999		Pickup Truck	Dodge	

*Although listed as a 2010-11 district vehicle, bus 10 was taken out of service in early February 2011 because the cost of repairs could not be justified.

The district employs one full-time driver, who helps coordinate routes and trips, and two substitute drivers.

Except for special education students, all students in the village of St. Johnsville walk to school. Through its private contractor, the district transports students on four regular bus runs each day. In the morning, students, kindergarten through twelfth grade, are picked up and delivered first to the Junior-Senior High School at 7:45 and then to Robbins Elementary School at 7:55. In the afternoon, the same pattern is repeated. Students leave the Junior-Senior High School at 2:47 and Robbins Elementary School at 2:55. Walkers at Robbins Elementary School leave at 3:00.

In addition, the district provides a special education run for five students with morning delivery to both the elementary school and junior-senior high school, and return in the afternoon. The district also has a special education bus that picks up five students at their homes and transports them to Johnstown and Mayfield, and returns them in the afternoon. This route covers 147 miles per day, and requires a bus aide in addition to the driver.

Another bus route provides service from the high school to the Fort Plain High School, where students transfer to a Fort Plain bus for delivery to the BOCES Career and Technical Education Center in Johnstown. The district bus then continues to the Canajoharie Elementary School for delivery of a student for a special education program, after which it returns to St. Johnsville. At 11:00, the bus picks up the afternoon BOCES career and technical education students at the High School, delivers one student to the Nathan Littauer Hospital in Gloversville, and then delivers the other students to the BOCES Career and Technical Education Center at Johnstown. It then picks up the morning career and technical education students and returns them to the High School. At 1:45 p.m. the bus returns to the Center to pick up the afternoon students and return them to St. Johnsville.

The district provides transportation to athletic contests using its district vehicles based on their availability. To accomplish special needs, career and technical education, and athletic contest transportation it uses its own vehicles, including the two 65 passenger buses purchased this year.

The district provides transportation to athletic contest using its district vehicles based on their availability.

The district provides late bus service on an ad hoc, case-by-case basis. The district provides no private school transportation.

Overview of Student Transportation Should the Districts Merge

As we have throughout this study, we are assuming for transportation analysis a merged school district with a K-5, 6-8, 9-12 grade configuration. We are also assuming that the Robbins Elementary School would operate as a K-5 elementary school for St. Johnsville area students, the current Oppenheim-Ephratah building would serve as a K-5 elementary school for the Oppenheim-Ephratah area as well as the district-wide 6-8 middle school. The current St. Johnsville Junior-Senior High School would become the district-wide 9-12 high school.

This description of student transportation that follows has two qualifications. First, until the district is formed, any description of student transportation must be considered tentative. Subsequent to merger, the board of education and administrative staff would devote substantial time to developing and specifying the transportation system.

The second qualification relates to the student day in individual school buildings. This outline of a transportation system in a merged district assumes a K-5 student day of approximately 8:00 to 3:00, a 6-8 school day of approximately 8:15 to 2:40, and a 9-12 school day of approximately 8:10 to 2:40. Again, these school times would be determined after merger occurs, once the board of education and staff have had sufficient time to thoroughly consider all dimensions of the student day.

Given these assumptions, student transportation of the merged school district is described by the bus schedules of K-5, 6-8, 9-12 students by geographic areas (Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville). A key factor is a 12-minute bus travel time between the Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville High School campuses. In good

weather the actual travel time may be less, and in inclement weather is may be slightly greater than 12 minutes.

The following table provides a description of the transportation system of the merged school district, based on a K-5, 6-8, 9-12 grade configuration. It does not include times for the academic day or for class bell schedules---only approximated student transportation times.

Table 7.3 Student Transportation for Merged District By Campus and Grade Level	
Attendance Area and Grade Level	Transportation Times: 12 minute travel time between O-E and HS campuses
Morning	
O-E K-5	Arrive O-E 7:45
O-E 6-8	Arrive O-E 7:45
O-E 9-12	Arrive O-E 7:45, leave O-E 7:50, arrive HS 8:02
St. J K-5	Arrive Robbins 7:45
St. J 6-8	Arrive Robbins 7:45, arrive HS 7:55, leave HS 7:58, arrive O-E 8:10
St. J 9-12	Arrive Robbins 7:45, arrive HS 7:55
BOCES CTE	One bus leaves O-E at 7:50, another bus leaves St. J at 8:00
Afternoon	
O-E K-5	Leave O-E 3:00
O-E 6-8	Leave O-E 3:00
O-E 9-12	Leave HS 2:43, arrive O-E 2:55, leave O-E 3:00
St. J K-5	Leave Robbins 2:50, arrive HS 2:55, leave HS 3:00
St. J 6-8	Leave O-E 2:43, arrive HS 2:55, leave HS 3:00
St. J 9-12	Leave HS 3:00
BOCES CTE	Buses will return to O-E and St. J by 2:55
Note:	Transportation to and from BOCES would be assessed, and adjusted as appropriate, as the first school year unfolded.

Should the two districts merge, the afore-described transportation schedule could be accomplished by one of two methods. The first would utilize the current bus fleets of the two districts and continuation of a contractual arrangement with a private bus

company for four morning and afternoon runs. These runs could continue as St. Johnsville area runs, or they could be assigned elsewhere in the merged district.

A second option would discontinue an arrangement with a private contractor for the four runs, merge the two current fleets under the aegis of the current Oppenheim-Ephratah transportation system, and purchase two additional buses 65 passenger buses. The four runs currently provided by the private contractor would be accomplished using the two new St. Johnsville buses and the two additional 65 passenger buses. The transportation of the special needs students from the St. Johnsville area could be met with the smaller vehicles in the combined fleet.

The estimated cost for purchasing the two new buses is \$221,600. The following table compares the estimated K-5, 6-8, 9-12 grade configuration transportation costs in a merged district with current transportation costs. It assumes the discontinuance of the contract with the private bus company and purchase of two additional 65-passenger buses.

Table 7.4					
Estimated Costs, Student Transportation with Merged District					
Assuming an O-E Based Transportation System					
Without Considering State Aid for Transportation Expenditures					
Category	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Expenditure Additions					
Purchase of 2 buses	\$221,600				
4 drivers, regular runs	\$100,400	\$100,400	\$100,400	\$100,400	\$100,400
Fuel cost 4 runs	\$ 21,100	\$ 21,100	\$ 21,100	\$ 21,100	\$ 21,100
1 additional mechanic	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000
Sub-Total	\$388,100	\$166,500	\$166,500	\$166,500	\$166,500
Expenditure Reductions					
Contract for 4 runs	\$208,250	\$208,250	\$208,250	\$208,250	\$208,250
Contract for maintenance	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
3 St. Johnsville drivers	\$ 65,600	\$ 65,600	\$ 65,600	\$ 65,600	\$ 65,600
Sub-Total	\$283,850	\$283,850	\$283,850	\$283,850	\$283,850
Total	\$104,250	-\$117,350	-\$117,350	-\$117,350	-\$117,350

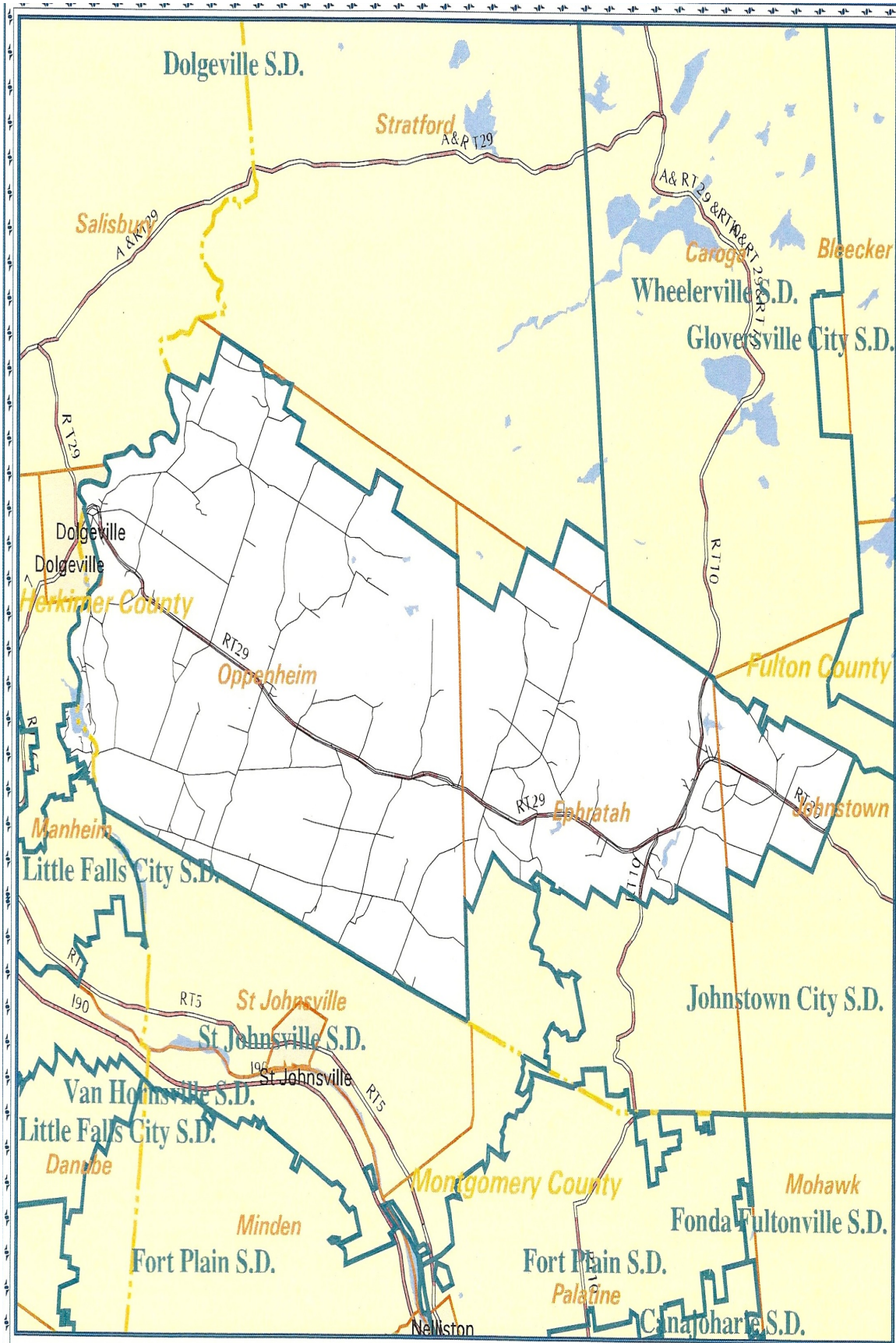
Based on these estimates, an overall expenditure increase of \$104,250 would occur in the first year of merger. This expenditure would be reduced substantially since it is eligible for state aid. Transportation aid for both Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville is 90% in 2010-11. Assuming no legislated school aid changes, the aid ratio would apply to nearly all of the categories in the previous table.

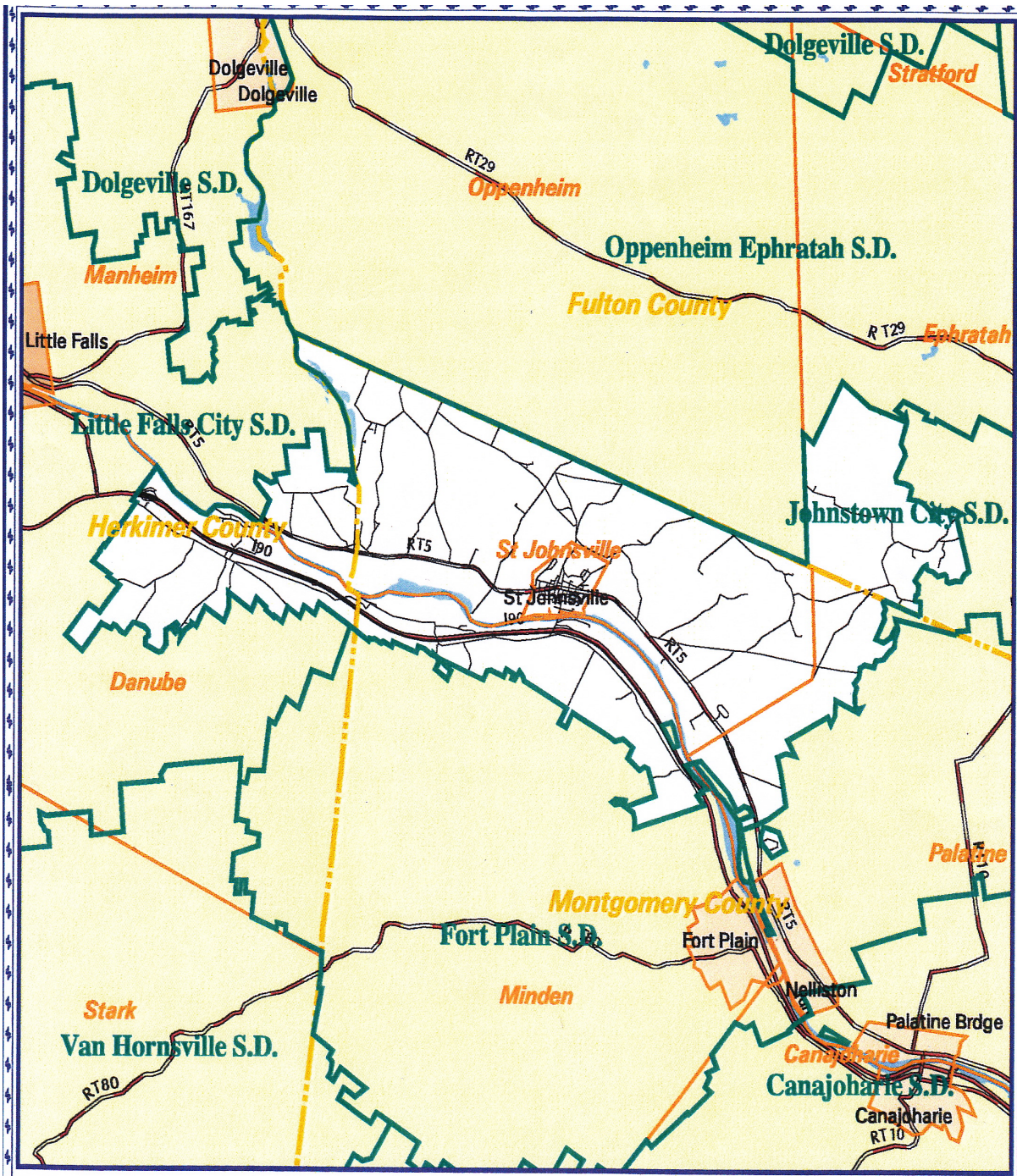
In each of the subsequent four years there would be a net decrease in expenditure. Accordingly, over a five-year span the average cost for transportation for the categories in the previous table would in actuality constitute a reduction.

The increased expenditure of \$104,250 in year 1 also assumes that the full cost of the bus purchases are accounted for only in the first year. If the cost of the bus purchases was amortized over a number of years, the financial analysis shown above would be different.

Finally, we recognize that this estimate of costs is made with the assumption that the merged district maintains its own bus fleet and bus garage. One of the decisions that the new board of education will have to make is whether to maintain the transportation system that is currently in place in Oppenheim-Ephratah and expand it to cover the merged district or to develop a contract with a private vendor to transport students in the merged district.

The pages that follow show the district maps for Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville.





Chapter 8

Facilities

The construction, maintenance, and enhancement of educational facilities are extremely important functions of school administration. Capital costs to construct school facilities are significant. Housing children in safe and healthy facilities that are conducive to learning is an ongoing challenge for school leaders. Maintaining school buildings and grounds present constant challenges. The physical structures in school districts have a great deal to do with the way that grades are aligned and program is delivered. This section of the report provides an overview of the current facilities that each of the study districts owns, how they are used, a general analysis of their conditions, and facilities implications should a merger occur.

Instructional space in the two study districts is provided primarily in three school buildings; the Oppenheim-Ephratah school, the D. H. Robbins Elementary School in St. Johnsville and the St. Johnsville Junior-Senior High School. The districts own all of these facilities. Table 8.1 that follows details the major aspects of these instructional facilities. Data for this table was taken from the Building Condition Surveys that were completed for all three buildings in 2010.

Table 8.1 Overview of Instructional School Buildings			
	Oppenheim- Ephratah	St. Johnsville/ DH Robbins Elementary	St. Johnsville Junior/Senior High
Address	6486 State Hwy 29 St. Johnsville, NY	651 Monroe Street St. Johnsville, NY	44 Center Street St. Johnsville, NY
Year of Original Building	1948	1949	1925
Sq. Ft. in Current Building	89,262	54,624	99,650
Number of Floors	2	2	3
Grades Housed	Pre K-12	Pre K-6	7-12
Other Programs	-	Head Start	-
Students Served in 2009	434	253	205
No. of Instructional Classrooms	24	15	17
Square Feet of Instructional Classrooms	20,000	11,550	13,090
Architect	King & King Manlius, NY	BCK Binghamton, NY	BCK Binghamton, NY

In addition to the instructional buildings described in the table above, Oppenheim-Ephratah also owns a bus garage that is located on the same site as the instructional building. Built in 1984, this 9,744 square foot facility is used to house and maintain the school bus fleet owned by the district.

It should be noted that community support for capital projects has also been fairly strong in both districts. Additions and renovations to the Oppenheim-Ephratah school facilities were approved in 2000, 2006, 2008, and 2010. The residents of St. Johnsville supported capital project improvements in 1992, 1994, and 2001. Also, as mentioned earlier, in 2010 Oppenheim-Ephratah passed a resolution for the establishment of a capital reserve fund by a vote of 105 to 71.

In December 2010, the St. Johnsville board of education adopted a five-year facilities plan. This plan was developed in conjunction with their architect after reviewing their building condition surveys and building walk-throughs. The district goals for both facilities are to address the issues identified in the building condition survey and to maintain or improve the buildings. Over the five-year period of the plan, the district would spend \$11,903,000 to accomplish the following major activities, all of which cost \$100,000 or more:

Junior-Senior High School

- Replace roof around gymnasium
- Reconstruct gymnasium floor
- Replace telephone system
- Technology upgrades including wireless networks
- Science suite and reconfigure third floor
- Renovate soccer and softball fields
- Improve access road and parking lot
- Replace existing gymnasium windows

D. H. Robbins Elementary School

- Address playground issues
- Replace roof
- Upgrade HVAC system

- Remediate crawl space moisture issues
- Replace gymnasium wood floor
- Upgrade control system
- Pad mount electric transformers

St. Johnsville has a softball field and a practice soccer field on campus at the junior-senior high school. Their biggest field is the cemetery field, where varsity and modified soccer games are played. Varsity and modified baseball games are played at the field in the village of St. Johnsville. Oppenheim-Ephratah has a varsity soccer field, a modified soccer field, a softball field, and a baseball field all located on its school campus.

Should the districts decide to merge, one of the critical issues to be addressed will be where to house the students of the merged district. The economies of scale that have been discussed in this report can only occur if consolidations of functions are made. This means that, in our opinion, there should only be one district office, one middle school and one high school. In analyzing the facilities and the functional units to be accommodated, it is our recommendation that the following grade level configurations would be put in place for the merged district:

- PreK-5 elementary school at the DH Robbins Elementary School
- Pre-K-5 elementary school in Oppenheim-Ephratah
- Grades 6-8 middle school in Oppenheim-Ephratah
- Grades 9-12 high school at the current St. Johnsville Junior-Senior High School
- District office in Oppenheim-Ephratah

We make this recommendation based on the program needs of the students, the instructional spaces available, and the transportation routes that would best serve the children and the district.

In this chapter, we have described the school facilities of the study districts. It is clear from this analysis that both districts are providing facilities that are currently safe for their students. At the same time, an examination of the building condition surveys and the desire to meet the facility demands of providing an ever changing instructional program, it is clear that any future board of education may choose to undertake and implement a capital improvement plan. Should a merger of these two school districts

occur, the following financial conditions would exist with respect to the district's facilities.

- 1. Oppenheim-Ephratah would bring \$10,505,441 in principal and interest payments for debt service that would be due over the next 14 years.*
- 2. St. Johnsville would bring \$7,167,881 in principal and interest payments for debt service that would be paid off in 2019.*
- 3. The existing debt service described in #1 and #2 above would all be state aided at the higher of the current two districts' building aid ratios, that being 96.2%. The debt service in Oppenheim-Ephratah is currently being aided at 91.2%.*
- 4. Subsequent to the merger, all approved capital expenditures for new construction would be state aided at 98% for a period of ten years after the merger.*
- 5. A capital reserve account of \$3,464,515 would exist in the merged district.*

Given the condition of the current buildings and the state of the finances for the merged district, the new board of education could choose any of the following options:

1. Do nothing.
2. Implement the five-year capital improvement plan currently in place for St. Johnsville at a cost of \$11,903,000. Assuming that all of this cost would be state approved, 98% of the cost would be paid by the state leaving \$238,060 as the local share. This local share could be more than offset by the existing capital reserve account of \$3,464,515.
3. Implement the five-year capital improvement plan currently in place for St. Johnsville at a cost of \$11,903,000 and the remaining work outlined by the Oppenheim-Ephratah building condition survey at an estimated cost of \$1,000,000. This total project cost of \$12,903,000, again assuming state approval, would be aided by the state at 98%. This would leave a local share of \$258,060 that could be more than offset by the existing capital reserve account.
4. Implement a significantly larger capital initiative. With a capital reserve account of \$3,464,515 and all approved capital expenditures being state aided at 98%, all areas of all facilities could be significantly improved without raising local taxes.

The second major consideration with respect to facilities is where the students will attend school. In consideration of this question, we provide an overview of the classroom space availability for a K-5, 6-8, 9-12 grade configuration. For purposes of this overview, the K-5, 6-8, 9-12 configuration assumes that the current boundary between Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville would remain approximately the same in the merged district. This boundary may be altered over time once the merged district is operational.

Beginning with the K-5 grades, the Oppenheim-Ephratah school building currently houses its K-5 student population, and would continue to do so in the merged district with no impact on classroom space utilization. The D. H. Robbins Elementary School in St. Johnsville currently houses grades K-6, thus would easily accommodate grades K-5, with classroom space left over.

In examining the manner in which the Oppenheim-Ephratah building could accommodate grades 6-8 for the entire merged district, we start by noting that the building currently houses 347 students K-12. Of that number, 199 are students currently in grades 6-12. The projected number of students in grades 6-8 in the merged district varies from 162 to 187 over the next five years. Accordingly, the building can accommodate a district-wide grades 6-8 student population.

Moving on to grades 9-12, the current student population for grades 7-12 in the St. Johnsville Junior-Senior High School is 204. The projected student population for the next five years for grades 9-12 in the merged district varies from 232 to 248, and from 213 to 226 in the interval six to ten years out from 2010-11. In its current usage with 204 students the building has at least five classrooms that could be made available for classroom instruction. Thus the capacity of the building is at least 300 students, assuming 20-25 students per classroom. Accordingly, the St. Johnsville Junior-Senior High School could easily become the site for a combined grades 9-12 high school population in the merged district.

Chapter 9

Staffing

Education is a labor-intensive business. School districts routinely spend 70% of their operating budgets on salaries and benefits for the people who work in their schools. As school districts contemplate a merger, consideration of the staffing needs of the merged district is important. This chapter of the report examines the current staffing in both districts as well as the staffing implications should a merger occur. This analysis examines teaching, administrative, and support staff.

In a school district merger by centralization, as opposed to an annexation, a new board of education is elected to serve the newly created school district. One of the functions of the new board of education would be to recognize newly configured bargaining units and an appropriate bargaining agent to represent the instructional and support staff in the district. The board and the unions would bargain new collective bargaining agreements which would set forth the terms and conditions of employment for the employees of the consolidated school district. The existing contracts would remain in place until a successor agreement is negotiated.

The teacher contracts from both districts have been analyzed. The Oppenheim-Ephratah contract “expired” on June 30, 2010. While the “expiration date” on the contract is June 30, 2010, the district is obligated to maintain the terms and conditions of employment spelled out in the contract so that staff continues to receive the salaries and benefits that were in place prior to June 30, 2010. The St. Johnsville teacher contract expires on June 30, 2011.

Aside from the salary schedules, the teacher contracts are fairly similar. The composition of the bargaining units, the grievance procedures, the leave articles, the insurance provisions, and the financial arrangements with retirees for termination payments and payments for health insurance in retirement are much more alike than different.

The table that follows is a comparison of the major provisions in the teacher contracts. Not every clause was compared. This analysis looked only at the major provisions in the contracts. In providing this review of the collective bargaining agreements and noting their many similarities, we recognize that there are important differences in these contract provisions. However, it is our opinion that negotiation of these matters for the successor agreement in the new school district could be accomplished without major difficulty. Table 9.1 comparing some of the major contract provisions follows.

Table 9.1		
Teacher Contract Comparison-2009-10		
Item	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
Duration	2006-2010	2010-2011
Recognition	Teaching and teaching assistant personnel including the school social worker, speech teacher, and school psychologist	All certified staff except administrators, guidance counselor, CSE & CPSE Chairperson, Director of Physical Education and Athletics, and substitutes
Grievance Procedure	Binding arbitration	Binding arbitration
Health Insurance	90%-Individual 90%-Family	85%-Individual 85%-Family
Health Insurance Buyout	\$1,500-Family	\$750-Individual \$1,500-Family or 2 Person
Dental Insurance	95% of premium	85% of premium
Optical Insurance	-	85% of premium
Sick Leave	12 days/year with unlimited accumulation	12 days/year with unlimited accumulation
Personal Leave	4 days/year; unused days accumulate to sick leave	5 days/year; unused days accumulate to sick leave
Sick Leave Bank	Yes	No
Association Business	6 days per year	8 days per year
Work Day	7 hours & 15 minutes; 6 hours & 35 minutes on the last day of the work week	7 hours
Work Year	180 days	182 days

Teaching Load	7-12 teachers not normally assigned more than 7 student contact periods consisting of 5 teaching and 2 non-teaching supervisory assignments	Normally not more than 30 periods per week in a 9 period schedule; teachers agreeing to teach more than 30 periods per week get paid 1/30 th of the teacher's annual salary/period
Class Size	-	Under normal conditions, the following are optimum: K-1----20-22 2-6----20-25 Jr Hi----20-25 Sr Hi----20-25
Just Cause	-	No tenured teacher shall be disciplined, reprimanded, reduced in rank or compensation, discharged or deprived of any professional advantage without just cause
Termination Payments	Staff with 10 years of service in O-E prior to 7.1.95-\$20 per day of unused sick leave up to a maximum of 180 days; Staff with 15 years of service in O-E-\$30 per day of unused sick leave up to a maximum of 200 days. <i>Also, if a teacher has at least 150 sick days and retires in their 1st year of retirement eligibility, they get \$30,000; in the 2nd year of eligibility- \$6,000; in the 3rd year of eligibility-\$4,000; and in the 4th year of eligibility-\$2,000. (Sunsets 6.30.10)</i>	Must retire from the district-1/2 of the current substitute per diem rate times the teacher's number of accumulated sick leave days up to a maximum of 250 days
Retiree Health Insurance	60%-I and 45%-F if the employee was employed in the district for 10 full years	60%-I and 60%-F if the employee has at least 10 years service just before retirement

With respect to the comparison of salary schedules, an analysis was completed at various points on the schedules. Table 9.2 shows those comparisons for the 2009-10 school year.

Table 9.2 Teacher Salary Schedule Comparisons (2009-10)		
	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
B-Step 1	\$31,925	\$37,464
B-Step 5	\$35,725	\$42,953
B-Step 10	\$40,675	\$48,952
B-Step 15	\$45,675	\$56,738
B-Step 20	\$54,225	\$63,447
B-Top Step	\$57,435 (21)	\$68,086 (23)
M-Step 1	\$34,005	\$41,284
M-Step 5	\$37,805	\$46,642
M-Step 10	\$42,755	\$52,595
M-Step 15	\$47,755	\$60,028
M-Step 20	\$56,305	\$67,022
M-Top Step	\$59,515 (21)	\$73,203 (24)
M+30-Step 1	\$35,685	\$42,959
M+30-Step 5	\$39,485	\$48,319
M+30-Step 10	\$44,435	\$54,263
M+30-Step 15	\$49,435	\$61,808
M+30-Step 20	\$57,985	\$68,682
M+30-Top Step	\$61,195 (21)	\$74,861 (24)

() = Number of years to reach the top step

As can be seen from the table above, the teacher salary schedule in St. Johnsville is higher at every step and in every column, Bachelors Degree, Masters Degree, and Masters plus 30 graduate hours. In addition, not only are the top steps higher in every column in St. Johnsville but it also takes the St. Johnsville teachers fewer years to reach the top step than it does the teachers in Oppenheim-Ephratah.

There is no state statute or regulation that determines the level at which the successor teacher agreement must be negotiated with respect to salary. Labor and management are free to negotiate a salary schedule that is similar to, higher than, or

lower than the existing salary schedules. However, in districts that have merged in New York State, there has traditionally been a “leveling up” process that takes place with regard to salary and benefits. That is, teachers in the lower paying of the merged districts have their salaries “leveled up” to the higher district salary schedule. In some cases this happens in the first year of the new contract. In other cases, this salary and benefit “leveling up” happens over a period of years.

Beyond the analysis of the teacher salary schedules, further analysis was performed by examining each teacher’s salary from both districts. In making this analysis, the assumption was made that teacher salaries would be “leveled up.” Because St. Johnsville has the higher salary schedule, this analysis assumes that the Oppenheim-Ephratah teachers would be leveled up to the St. Johnsville salary schedule. Analyzing the payrolls results in the following teacher salary comparison table.

Table 9.3 Teacher Salary Comparisons-2009-10		
	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
No. of FTE Teachers	40.3	40.5
Teacher Payroll	\$1,974,980*	\$2,388,976
Average Teacher Salary	\$49,007	\$58,987

* Excludes longevity payments

The average teacher salary does not always indicate the richer salary schedule because the years of experience and degrees that the teachers possess may influence the average salary as much or more than the schedule itself. However, in this comparison, it is clear that the schedule in St. Johnsville is the higher of the two schedules.

In analyzing the cost of leveling up the Oppenheim-Ephratah teachers, the step and degree level was determined for each Oppenheim-Ephratah teacher. Using this information, each teacher was then placed on the St. Johnsville salary schedule according to that step and education level. In-service hours and longevity payments, minor adjustments in salaries, were not included in the analysis. The result was that moving the Oppenheim-Ephratah teaching staff to the St. Johnsville salary schedule would result in a payroll of \$2,382,734. This is \$407,754 higher than Oppenheim-Ephratah’s existing payroll of \$1,974,980. In addition to the salary impact, we have estimated the increase in

fringe benefits due to leveling up to be approximately 18%, using 8% for retirement, 8% for social security, and 2% for workers compensation. This adds another \$73,396 for increased fringe benefit costs. As a result, the total cost of salaries and benefits for leveling up the Oppenheim-Ephratah teachers to the St. Johnsville salary schedule is \$481,150.

Stipends for coaches were next examined. Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville have developed a history of sharing sports teams. As a result of this sharing arrangement, the two districts have negotiated stipends for these shared teams with their teachers associations. Table 9.4 shows the stipends for the coaches of shared teams.

Table 9.4 Coaching Stipends for Shared Teams-2009-10	
<i>Shared Sport</i>	<i>Stipend</i>
Varsity Soccer	\$2,800
JV Soccer	\$2,500
Modified Soccer	\$2,200
Modified Basketball	\$2,200
Modified Volleyball	\$2,200
Varsity Baseball/Softball	\$2,800
JV Baseball/Softball	\$2,500
Modified Baseball/Softball	\$2,200

In addition to those sports that are shared between the two districts, each district is maintaining some of its own athletic teams. Table 9.5 which follows shows the stipends that each district paid its coaches during the 2009-10 school year.

Table 9.5 Coaching Stipends-2009-10		
Sport	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
Varsity Basketball	\$3,300	\$3,550
JV Basketball	\$2,500	\$2,825
Varsity/JV Cheerleading	\$2,300	\$1,300

Based on the information paid to coaches in Tables 9.4 and 9.5, it is apparent that many of the sports are already shared and both districts have already agreed on the stipends to be paid to the coaches of those teams. The stipends paid to coaches of non-

shared sports are similar enough and of little enough consequence that we believe that, should the districts merge, negotiating coaching stipends would not present a major obstacle.

In addition to interscholastic athletics, we also examined the other extra-curricular activities available to students of both districts and have developed Table 9.6 as follows to show the stipends paid to the club advisors in 2009-10:

Table 9.6		
Stipends for Clubs/Extra-Curricular Activities-2009-10		
Activity	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
Art Club	\$718	
Color Guard	\$878	
Drama Club	\$718	\$1,000/event
Drumline	\$878	
Envirothon	\$718	
Foreign Language Club	\$718	
Junior Honor Society	\$718	
Senior Honor Society	\$718	
Jazz Band	\$878	
Math Club	\$718	
OE Singers	\$718	
Drug Quiz Team	\$718	
SADD	\$718	
Student Council	\$718	
Yearbook	\$1,357	\$1,600
Clubs-Unspecified		\$200
Advisers-Unspecified		\$275

Given the large and complex nature of a school district, the stipends paid to advisors of clubs and other extra-curricular activities is a fairly insignificant amount of money. While there are some differences paid in the above table, we believe that, should a merger occur, negotiating equitable stipends for advisors of extra-curricular activities would not be terribly difficult to accomplish.

We now turn to the analysis of the administrators currently employed by both districts. Both of the superintendents have individual employment contracts with their districts. The Oppenheim-Ephratah superintendent's contract expires on June 30, 2015.

The superintendent in St. Johnsville is in an interim status, having replaced Christine Battisti who retired as superintendent on June 30, 2010. This interim superintendent contract is for a maximum of 200 days of work (unless additional days are authorized by the board) and expires on June 30, 2011. If a merger were to occur between Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville, it would not occur prior to July 1, 2012. In such an instance, the St. Johnsville board of education will have to make some type of employment arrangement with a superintendent from July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012.

When two school districts merge, the new board of education is obligated to honor the terms of the superintendent contracts that are in place at the time of the merger. Obviously, the merged district will have only one superintendent. This new superintendent may be one of the existing superintendents or it might be another individual. While there is no obligation for the new board of education to hire either of the currently sitting superintendents, often a new board will offer the position to one of the incumbents. In this case, the second superintendent often serves as the assistant superintendent upon the merger of the districts, finds a position in another district, or retires. However, regardless of who is chosen for the position and what changes in title may occur, the terms of each of the current superintendent's contracts who are employed at the time of the merger must be honored for as long as the merged district employs the two individuals.

Currently, each district has a superintendent and a district treasurer in the district office. At the building level, Oppenheim-Ephratah has a principal who covers grades Pre-K through 12 while St. Johnsville has an elementary school principal and a junior/senior high school principal. Salaries for these positions are shown in Table 9.7

Table 9.7 Administrative Salaries and Benefits-2010-11			
	Oppenheim- Ephratah	St. Johnsville	Total
Number of Administrators	3	4	7
Total Administrative Salaries	\$278,149	\$345,879	\$624,028
Cost of fringe benefits estimated @ 35%	\$97,352	\$121,058	\$218,410
Total cost of administrative salaries and fringe benefits	\$375,501	\$466,937	\$842,438

Administrative staffing for a merged district would be at the discretion of the new board of education. However, it is reasonable to assume that fewer administrators would be needed in a merged district. In considering how many administrators might be hired by the board in the merged district, we examined the administrative staffing patterns in other school districts of approximately 800 students. Given this comparison, and for purposes of this study only, we assume that the following administrative staffing would exist in a merged district:

- 1 Superintendent
- 1 Business Official
- 1 Elementary Principal
- 1 Elementary/Middle School Principal
- 1 High School Principal

This would make a total of five administrators compared with the current number of seven. This means that one superintendent position and one business official position could be eliminated. Using the average salaries from the incumbents in these positions and estimating fringe benefits at 35%, we estimate the potential savings from these reductions to be \$256,500 for salaries and fringe benefits.

There are a number of administrative/non-union employees in both districts. Administrative staff is not formally recognized for the purpose of collective bargaining in either district. In Oppenheim-Ephratah, the positions of principal, district treasurer, computer technician, and superintendent's secretary/district clerk are non-union positions. These employees have individual contracts with the district. They receive

twenty vacation days, have 90% of their health insurance premiums paid by the district and are eligible for health insurance coverage in retirement if they have served at least fifteen years in the district. In St. Johnsville, the equivalent non-union positions to those in Oppenheim-Ephratah receive very similar salaries and benefits except that the St. Johnsville staff is not offered health insurance coverage in retirement except for the treasurer. Should a merger occur, it is our belief that for purposes of salaries and fringe benefits, merging the two administrative/non-union staffs would not present a major problem.

With respect to support staff, Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville each have one recognized bargaining unit. The Oppenheim-Ephratah contract with the Non-Instructional Employees expires on June 30, 2011. The St. Johnsville contract with CSEA will also expire on June 30, 2011. Table 9.8 which follows compares the major provisions of these contracts.

Table 9.8		
Support Staff Contract Comparison-2010-11		
Item	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
Duration	2008-2011	2010-2011
Recognition	All non-instructional employees	All non-teaching personnel
Grievance Procedure	Final decision is with the superintendent	Final step is binding arbitration
Health Insurance	91.25%-Individual 91.25%-Family	93%-Individual 93%-Family
Health Insurance Buyout	\$1,500/year	\$1,000-Individual \$2,000-Family
Dental Insurance	91.25%-Individual	93%-Individual 93%-Family
Retiree Health Insurance	60%-Individual 45%-Family	60%-Individual 60%-Family
Sick Leave	1 day/month worked, cumulative to 200 days	13 days/year without limit for accumulation
Personal Leave	4 days/year	4 days/year; unused days accumulate with sick leave
Sick Leave Bank	Yes	No
Sick Leave Buy Back		For retirees after at least 5 years of service with the district, \$18/day for half of the employee's accumulated sick days

Holidays	13	14
Vacation	1 week after 1 year 2 weeks after 2 years 3 weeks after 7 years 1 day/year more for each year after 10 up to 4 weeks	1 week after 6 months 2 weeks after 1 year 3 weeks after 5 years 4 weeks after 12 years
Retirement Plan	Effective 6/28/94-75i Also, 41-j, 60-b and 75-c	75i, Article 14 and Article 15

Once again, we find that there are differences in the collective bargaining agreements with the two support staff unions. However, from the big picture perspective, there do not seem to be any differences that are so significant that concern should be raised. We believe that if a merger were to occur, a single collective bargaining agreement could be negotiated without major difficulties that would cover all support staff in the merged district.

We next attempted to compare salaries paid for support staff in Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville. However, we found very little similarity between the support staff titles in the two districts. Oppenheim-Ephratah has a senior mechanic and ten bus drivers but St. Johnsville has none of these titles because it contracts its student transportation with a private vendor. In the clerical area, Oppenheim-Ephratah has typists while St. Johnsville has an account clerk/typist, a senior typist II and a senior steno II. In the few cases where the districts do have similar titles, we can gather the following observations:

- Salaries for custodians in St. Johnsville are higher than they are in Oppenheim-Ephratah. In St. Johnsville, the range of custodian salaries is \$29,716 to \$37,772 in 21 steps. Oppenheim-Ephratah does not have support staff schedules but its three custodians earn between \$20,810 and 27,771.

- Food service helper salaries are comparable. In St. Johnsville, the range of food service helper salaries is \$15,665 to \$19,828 in 21 steps. The salary of the food service helper in Oppenheim-Ephratah is \$19,989.

- Salaries for teacher aides are also comparable. In St. Johnsville, the teacher aide salary schedule goes from \$15,432 to \$20,464 in 21 steps. The salaries for teacher aides in Oppenheim-Ephratah range from \$12,816 to \$19,452.

While it is clearly difficult to make exact comparisons between the salaries for support staff, it is clear that there are not huge discrepancies in the wages paid. In addition, unlike the teaching staff, there are not enough support staff employees to impact the financial condition of the district should a merger occur. Whatever adjustments might be made in a merged district would be of much lesser impact than those adjustments that would be made in the teaching staff salaries or in positions that might be eliminated as a result of the merger.

The next table (9.9) shows the complete staffing for the two districts. This table provides information that will also be valuable to the new board of education regarding the staffing level for the merged district. Again, the level of staffing is completely up to the board. Often, a board of education commits to maintaining all staff currently employed in both districts. When employees leave the district, however, the board may decide to fill or not to fill that position. In looking at the table, when the board feels the time to be appropriate, it would be reasonable to assume that some positions/responsibilities may be combined or eliminated in a merged district. On a cautionary note, however, unlike positions in a larger district that might be more specialized, staff in small school districts often carries multiple responsibilities within a single job title. Where an individual has multiple responsibilities, it might be more difficult to realize significant salary savings through the elimination of support positions. So while there may be some opportunities to reduce the number of positions in clerical and teaching positions, the degree to which positions are reduced and when these reductions might occur will be completely at the discretion of the new board of education.

**Table 9.9
Staffing for 2010-11**

Positions	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
Account Clerk	1	1.8
Athletic Director	1 (P/T)	1 (P/T)
Bus Driver	8	2
Bus Driver/Custodian	3	
Auto Mechanic	1	
Bus Aide	1 (P/T)	1
Clerk	1 (P/T)	
Clerk/Typist		2
Cleaner		2.5
Computer Technician	1	
Cook		1
CSE Chairperson	1	1
Custodian	2	2
Head Custodian		1
Director of Facilities	1	
Food Service Helper	2.5	4 (P/T)
Food Service Manager	1 (P/T)	1
Micro Computer Coordinator		1
Nurse	1	2
Principal	1	2
Psychologist	.5	
Senior Custodian	1	
Senior Mechanic	1	
Superintendent	1	1
Superintendent's Secretary	1	1
Teacher	37.5	42
Teacher Aide	5	4+4 (P/T)
Teaching Assistant	6	5
Technician		
Therapists-Occupational		1 (P/T)
Treasurer	1	1
Typist	1.5	2
Total Staff	82	84.3

The major fringe benefit cost in Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville is for health insurance. The table that follows (9.10) compares the health insurance costs for the two districts.

Table 9.10					
Health Insurance Costs for 2010-11-Oppenheim-Ephratah*					
Plan	Option	Annual Premium	District Contribution	Number of Staff	Annual District Cost
Teachers-GHI Emblem	Individual	\$6,781	\$6,103	14	\$85,442
	Employee/Child	\$13,168	\$11,860	2	\$23,720
	Employee/Spouse	\$14,554	\$13,129	9	\$118,161
	Family	\$20,791	\$18,841	14	\$263,774
Support Staff-MVP HSA	Individual	\$4,796	\$4,376	3	\$13,128
	Employee/Child	\$9,313	\$8,498	1	\$8,498
	Employee/Spouse	\$10,293	\$9,392	10	\$93,920
	Family	\$14,704	\$13,418	9	\$120,762
Retirees-55-64	MVP-Individual	\$4,796	\$2,878	10	\$28,780
	GHI-Individual	\$6,781	\$4,069	3	\$12,207
Retirees Over 65-Medicare	BS-Individual	\$3,647	\$2,188	11	\$24,068
	MVP-Individual	\$2,309	\$1,385	11	\$15,235
<i>Total Health Insurance Costs=\$789,695</i>					

* The district also pays the deductible for the MVP HSA accounts:

- Individual=\$1,500
- Employee/Child=\$3,000
- Employee/Spouse=\$3,000
- Family=\$3,000

Table 9.11 Health Insurance Costs for 2010-11-St. Johnsville*					
Plan	Option	Annual Premium	District Contribution	Number of Staff	Annual District Cost
Teachers-BC/BS	Single	\$7,516	\$6,389	8	\$51,112
	Family	\$16,928	\$14,389	22	\$316,558
Support Staff-BC/BS	Single	\$7,531	\$7,004	5	\$35,020
	Family	\$16,963	\$15,776	11	\$173,536
Teachers-MVP	Single	\$6,873	\$5,842	2	\$11,684
	Family	\$17,496	\$14,872	10	\$148,720
Support Staff-MVP	Single	\$6,889	\$6,407	0	\$0
	Family	\$17,531	\$16,304	8	\$130,432
Retired Teachers-BC/BS	Single	\$7,516	\$4,510	13	\$58,630
	Family	\$16,928	\$10,157	5	\$50,785
	Med. Sup.	\$6,176	\$3,706	25	\$92,900
	Med. Sup.	\$6,115	\$3,669	4	\$14,676
Retired Support Staff-BC/BS	Single	\$7,531	\$4,519	2	\$9,038
	Family	\$16,963	\$10,177	5	\$20,354
	Med. Sup.	\$6,216	\$3,730	12	\$44,760
	Med. Sup.	\$6,155	\$3,693	2	\$7,386
<i>Total Health Insurance Costs=\$1,165,591</i>					

*District health insurance program also includes vision insurance

Oppenheim-Ephratah carries its own health insurance program while St. Johnsville participates in the Capital Area School Health Insurance Consortium. In both districts, the board pays nearly all the premium for most employees as shown in the following table.

Table 9.12 Percentage of Health Insurance Premiums Paid by Study Districts-2010-11		
	Oppenheim-Ephratah	St. Johnsville
Teachers	90%	85%
Support Staff	91.25%	93%
Retirees	60%	60%

Once again, we find great similarity in the way that health insurance coverage is administered in both districts and believe that, in a merged district, negotiating a plan and premium contribution rates could be accomplished without major difficulty.

Chapter 10

Key Findings and Recommendations

It is not within the purpose of this study to recommend whether Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville should merge their two districts into one. However, it is important that following this in-depth investigation, key findings and related recommendations are offered to a new board of education should residents of both districts vote to merge the districts into a new single school system. It should also be understood that our recommendations are not binding on a board of education should a merger occur, but rather offer a starting point for discussion and policymaking.

Finding 1: A merged St. Johnsville/Oppenheim-Ephratah school district will experience a slight enrollment decline for two years, then a gradual increase thereafter (p. 16).

Recommendation 1: The newly merged district should annually update its enrollment projections so that sound decisions can be made about staffing, facility use, and programs.

Finding 2: In 2009-10, 76 students from Oppenheim-Ephratah attended other school districts in the area including 5 at St. Johnsville; 24 St. Johnsville students attended other area districts including 3 at Oppenheim-Ephratah (p. 17).

Recommendation 2: The newly merged district should closely monitor the number of district students attending other area school districts.

Finding 3: 21 non-resident students currently attend St. Johnsville while 30 non-resident students attend Oppenheim-Ephratah (p. 18).

Recommendation 3: The newly merged district should closely monitor the number of non-resident students attending the merged school district.

Finding 4: The two current districts have different grade configurations (p. 21).

***Recommendation 4:** If the districts decide to merge, the resulting school district should establish a K-5 elementary, 6-8 middle, and 9-12 high school grade configuration. A K-5 elementary school program should be maintained in each community. In the Oppenheim-Ephratah community, the K-5 program should be housed in the current building and in St. Johnsville it should be housed in the D. H. Robbins Elementary School. A district-wide grades 6-8 middle school program should be housed in the current Oppenheim-Ephratah building, and a district-wide grades 9-12 high school should be housed in the current St. Johnsville Junior-Senior High School building.*

Finding 5: The student and teacher days in the two current districts have different configurations (p. 22, 31, 37).

***Recommendation 5:** In the merged district, the K-5 elementary school student day for the two buildings should be reasonably consistent. The student day for the 6-8 middle school and 9-12 high school students should be established taking into account the travel time between the two buildings. Once the student days are established the teacher day for each level should be established.*

Finding 6: Elementary class sizes are comparable by grade level in the current districts (p. 23).

***Recommendation 6:** The new district should make every effort to keep the class section sizes in-line with those currently existing.*

Finding 7: Despite somewhat comparable student achievement, there are considerable curricular differences between Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville K-12 programs at present (p. 25).

Recommendation 7: *In the short-term, current curricular programs should be maintained in each respective K-5 elementary school. However, a committee of teachers and administrators should be formed immediately after the reorganization vote to study and recommend common curricula for grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The need for common curricula for the new middle and high schools is time sensitive, while common curricula for the elementary schools should be phased in as soon as practicable.*

Finding 8: There are some differences in the amount of special area time (art, music, library, physical education, and A.I.S. reading and math) that elementary school students in the two districts now experience (p. 26, 33).

Recommendation 8: *The same curriculum committee described in recommendation 7 should also take up the task of finding a common intensity of these special area classes for grades K-5.*

Finding 9: The performance of Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville students on the New York State assessments in English/Language Arts and Mathematics is quite similar in grades 3-5 from 2006-07 through 2009. (pgs. 28-30) However, on comparable assessments for grades 6-8, the performance of students at St. Johnsville is usually higher than the performance of students at Oppenheim-Ephratah (p. 34-37).

Recommendation 9: *The board of education and school staff should continue to monitor student achievement on state assessments to ensure a quality education for all students in the merged district.*

Finding 10: The performance of Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville high school students on Regents examinations has been quite similar from 2007-08 to 2009-10 (p. 46-47).

Recommendation 10: *The board of education and school staff of the merged district should continue to monitor student performance on Regents examinations to ensure a quality education for all students.*

Finding 11: Oppenheim-Ephratah sends students to Herkimer BOCES for career and technical education courses, while St. Johnsville sends its students to the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES. Should the merger occur the State Education Department has determined that the merged district will be a component of the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES (p. 45).

Recommendation 11: *Should the merger occur the State Education Department the new Board of Education is encouraged to establish cross contracts with Herkimer BOCES when appropriate, especially for CTE and special education students from the former Oppenheim-Ephratah district.*

Finding 12: For many years, Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville have been experiencing a decline in the number of students who are participating in their interscholastic athletic teams. As a result, three years ago, the two districts began sharing athletic teams. Merging high schools would increase the number of athletic opportunities for students while increasing competition for participation (p. 48-49).

Recommendation 12: *The athletic opportunities for middle school and high school students should include all the existing offerings after a merger. Each year these activities should be evaluated based on student interest and participation.*

Finding 13: Oppenheim-Ephratah provides more club and extra-curricular opportunities for its students than does St. Johnsville (p. 50-51).

Recommendation 13: *Initially, all clubs and extracurricular activities currently offered to students in both districts should be available in the new high school. As student*

interest dictates, adjustments in these activities can be made with some discontinued and some added.

Finding 14: While instructional delivery of services to special need students may vary between the two districts, a similar philosophy appears to exist regarding identification, programming for, and placement of special needs students in both (p. 52 - 56).

Recommendation 14: *Immediately following the merger, the new Committee on Special Education and Committee on Pre-School Special Education should be comprised of members from each of the previous districts' committees to ensure familiarity of students from both districts and their programs.*

Finding 15: The communities of both current districts consistently demonstrate support for the school spending plans (p. 57).

Recommendation 15: *The newly merged district should give its best effort to continuing to increase reserves to help offset potential future loss of revenue.*

Finding 16: Both districts have current outstanding capital debt to be repaid. The current building aid ratio for Oppenheim-Ephratah is 91.2% while the building aid ratio for St. Johnsville is 96.2%. Should the districts merge the state will reimburse the total capital debt of the merged district and will pay state aid at the higher of the two previous districts' building aid ratios. Thus the capital debt that the state is now aiding at Oppenheim-Ephratah's current building aid ratio of 91.2% would be aided at St. Johnsville's current building aid rate of 96.2% if the districts merged. This would result in a savings of \$390,294 to the residents of the merged district. If the districts merge and undertake any new capital projects, the state would reimburse the district 98% of approved capital costs (p. 72 - 74).

Recommendation 16: *The new district should continue to augment its capital reserve to offset future capital projects.*

Finding 17: The merged district will be eligible for approximately \$13,928,520 of incentive operating aid (p. 76).

***Recommendation 17:** The new district should determine the appropriate percentages of distribution of this incentive operating aid to (a) enhance the education program for students, (b) stabilize local school taxes, and (c) plan for the loss of the incentive aid over time by continuing to fund district reserves.*

Finding 18: Should the districts merge, additional state aid, efficiencies, and potential costs will fundamentally affect the financial condition of the district. (p. 81).

***Recommendation 18:** The district should develop and execute a long-range financial plan to ensure the long-term fiscal health of the district.*

Finding 19: St. Johnsville contracts its regular morning and afternoon student transportation to Little Falls Fonda Bus Corporation. The district maintains its own small fleet of vehicles for transportation of special needs and career and technical education students to various locations daily, and for transportation to athletic contests. Oppenheim-Ephratah conducts its own school bus operation (p. 84 - 88).

***Recommendation 19:** As soon as possible after July 1, 2012, the district should terminate the contract with Little Falls Fonda Bus Corporation and assign the district-wide transportation operation to the current Oppenheim-Ephratah system.*

Finding 20: Given the location of the school building, nearly all students in Oppenheim-Ephratah are transported to school. At St. Johnsville, students, with the exception of special needs students, who reside in the village walk to school. St. Johnsville students residing outside the village receive bus transportation (p. 85 - 88).

Recommendation 20: *The current policies for transporting students to and from school should remain in effect immediately after the merger and should be reviewed during the first year of operation. A transportation schedule should be developed that will ensure the safe and timely delivery of all students to the newly configured school district.*

Finding 21: Oppenheim-Ephratah provides last bus service to students every day of the week (four buses Monday through Thursday and two buses on Friday). St. Johnsville provides late buses on an ad hoc, case-by-case basis (p. 85, 88)

Recommendation 21: *With the increased distance between home and school for middle school (grades 6-8) students from the St. Johnsville area and for high school (grades 9-12) students from the Oppenheim-Ephratah area, the board of education and administrative staff of the merged district should establish an initial late bus practice for implementation in September of the first year of operation, and review it periodically.*

Finding 22: Both Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville have maintained their physical plants through regular maintenance and capital construction. However, need for improvement exists in both districts (p. 94 - 96).

Recommendation 22: *The merged district should immediately consider renovations and improvements to its buildings and proceed with a referendum for authorization from residents.*

Finding 23: With a capital reserve account of \$3,464,515 and a state building aid ratio of 98% for all new capital construction, the opportunity to improve the facilities of the merged district will be affordable (p. 96-98).

Recommendation 23: *A long-term, prioritized capital improvement plan should be developed for the merged district.*

Finding 24: While there are many similarities, there are also a number of differences in the teacher contracts in the two study districts. The most significant difference is in teacher salaries, with St. Johnsville salaries higher than Oppenheim-Ephratah's. The estimated cost of leveling up teacher salaries and benefits could be approximately \$481,150 (p. 103 - 104).

***Recommendation 24:** A new teacher agreement should be negotiated as soon as possible after a merger occurs.*

Finding 25: There are seven administrators in the two study districts currently, three in Oppenheim-Ephratah and four in St. Johnsville. The position of superintendent at St. Johnsville is being filled currently on an interim basis (p. 105 - 107).

***Recommendation 25:** Two administrative positions could be eliminated through attrition following the merger, leaving a superintendent, a business official, one elementary school principal, one elementary/middle school principal, and one high school principal. Reducing these two administrative positions will save the merged district approximately \$256,500.*

Finding 26: The salaries paid to administrative staff in Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville are similar (p. 107 - 108).

***Recommendation 26:** Following a merger, the new board of education should determine an administrative staffing structure and either set salaries or recognize an administrative bargaining unit.*

Finding 27: Salaries and benefits paid to support staff in Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville are similar (p. 108 - 109).

***Recommendation 27:** Following a merger, the new board of education should determine a support staff structure and recognize a bargaining unit to negotiate terms and conditions of employment.*

Finding 28: The sizes of staffs in the two districts are comparable (p. 110 - 111).

***Recommendation 28:** All support staff from the two districts should be offered positions in the merged district and as attrition occurs, filling each position should be evaluated.*

Finding 29: Health insurance plans and contribution rates, the most costly fringe benefit provided to employees, are similar in the two districts (p. 112 - 113).

***Recommendation 29:** After the merger, health insurance plans and premium contribution rates should be negotiated with all employee groups.*