

# Staffing Study for the *Tonawanda City School District*

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## Introduction

Earlier this school year, the Tonawanda Board of Education entered into an agreement with the Western New York Educational Service for a K-12 certified staffing study. Broadly speaking, the study was to analyze current staffing and develop three different analyses for 2007-08: 1) current building configuration, 2) closing Highland Elementary and 3) closing Fletcher Elementary.

In order to gather accurate information regarding current staffing and program, the consultant had multiple meetings with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, and Principals. The number of certified staff serving in each area (i.e., grade level, subject, etc.) and enrollment (current and projected) were provided by the District. Guidelines pertaining to the number of daily assignments for elementary special area teachers and class sizes/daily teacher loads (i.e., number of students) for secondary teachers were provided by the consultant at the request of the Superintendent.

While this study will provide observations and recommendations regarding staffing, it does not contain an in-depth review of the following variables that can affect staffing: 1) scheduling of electives, 2) scheduling of science labs, 3) special education/pupil services, 4) music, 5) value of the current courses/programs, 6) extracurricular activities and interscholastic sports and 6) assignments of Teaching Assistants. Such a review might be worthwhile, but that was not the focus of this staffing study.

## Elementary Schools

**Classroom** – Consistent Class Size Guidelines – Current (2006-07) average class size ceilings are:

**Kindergarten** – up to 19

**Grades 1, 2 & 3** – up to 21

**Grades 4 & 5** – up to 25

The consultant was asked by the Superintendent to recommend class size guidelines that: 1) are reflective of class sizes in other Erie County suburban school districts, and 2) would not result in a significant number of new positions regardless of building configuration. Looking at projected staffing under three different scenarios, the consultant recommends the following average class size ceilings:

**Kindergarten** – up to 22

**Grades 1-5** – up to 24

Note: Given the relatively small student population within each school, class size ceilings are more meaningful than class size ranges.

In developing staffing projections that involve the closing of an elementary school (Fletcher or Highland), the consultant evenly distributed the students who would have attended the school that is closed. How the District might go about redistricting the students in the attendance area of the school that would be closed could affect these projections. Also, for purposes of this study, any time projected average class sizes were less than one student from the ceiling, an additional section was added for planning purposes, e.g., if the class size ceiling was 24 and the projected average class size was 23.4, an additional section was added. A summary of the projected total K-5 sections is shown below.

<u>2006-07</u>	<u>All Four Schools Remain Open</u>	<u>Close Highland</u>	<u>Close Fletcher</u>
47	48 (+1)	45 (-2)	46 (-1)

**Assignment of Special Area Teachers** – Generally speaking, two requirements affect the number of special area (Art, Vocal Music, Physical Education and Library) teachers assigned to an elementary school: 1) SED requirements for instruction in these areas and 2) commitments for planning time/minimum staffing levels contained in the collective bargaining agreement. Based on these two variables, most districts typically attempt to schedule special area teachers for up to 30 periods a week. Travel time for teachers shared by two or more schools and other variables can reduce the number of assigned periods.

A review of the scheduling of special area teachers in Tonawanda indicates that, despite the fact that many teachers travel, they are being deployed efficiently. With the closing of one elementary school, one Library-media Specialist (LMS) position could be eliminated. If a school is closed, it may also be possible to more efficiently schedule some of the other special area teachers (due to reduced travel time), but an overall reduction in staff would likely be less than one teacher in Art, Music and Physical Education.

<u>2006-07</u>	<u>All Four Schools Remain Open</u>	<u>Close Highland</u>	<u>Close Fletcher</u>
12.4	N/C	-1 LMS	-1 LMS

**Summary** – Generally speaking, large elementary schools can be staffed more efficiently than small elementary schools. With large elementary schools, narrow class size ranges can be established while travel for special area teachers can be reduced or eliminated. Based on the number of available classrooms, none of Tonawanda’s elementary schools can be categorized as large. Nonetheless, closing one of four elementary schools would slightly reduce the number of sections/teachers required.

## Total K-5 Staff Projections

<u>All Four Schools Remain Open</u> + 1 FTE	<u>Close Highland</u> -3 FTE	<u>Close Fletcher</u> -2 FTE
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(1) Should a school be closed, costs/savings do not include savings from salaries and benefits for administrative and school related personnel.

(2) A comprehensive redistricting study, prepared by a group including parents, should precede any final decision to close a school.

(3) The number of teachers/sections required could be reduced significantly if all K-5 students were housed in one or two buildings. However, some research indicates that small elementary schools promote higher student achievement.

## Middle School

**Determinants for Staffing** – In middle schools, three variables tend to impact staffing: 1) student enrollment, 2) program and 3) class size and teacher load guidelines.

**Program** – This study does not contemplate any significant changes to program.

**Enrollment** – 2007-08 projected enrollment is 61 students less than 2006-07 actual enrollment.

	<u>Grade 6</u>	<u>Grade 7</u>	<u>Grade 8</u>	<u>Total</u>	
2006-07	149	161	195		505
2007-08	134 (-15)	149 (-12)	161 (-34)	444 (-61)	

This decrease will have a significant impact on staffing.

**Class Size and Teacher Load Guidelines** – Current class sizes and teacher loads (i.e., the number of students a teacher has over a 5-6 period day) in academic subject areas are relatively low and should be increased. The actual versus consultant's recommendations for average teacher load are shown below. Average class sizes are in parentheses.

<u>Grade/Subject</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>2007-08</u>
6 <sup>th</sup> grade	22-26 (24.8)	22-26 (22.3)
English, Social Studies, Science, Math and Foreign Language	89 (17.8)	120 (24)
Art, Technology, Home and Careers and Music (vocal)	79-126 (15.8-25.1)	110 (22)

<u>Grade/Subject</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>2007-08</u>
Physical Education and Health	126 (25.1)	125 (25)
Guidance	252	275

Strictly applying these guidelines to English, Math, Science and Social Studies could result in the loss of one full time position in each subject area as well as the reduction of one full time position to part-time status in 2007-08. However, the administration is exploring the reassignment of one teacher in each area to Academic Intervention Services (AIS) two periods a day, resulting in only one less position in each area. For example, one social studies position would be eliminated while the teacher in one of the three remaining social studies positions would be assigned to AIS two periods each day.

**Summary** – A decrease in student enrollment and proposed increases in teacher loads would reduce the number of teachers needed at the Middle School in 2007-08. For a more detailed analysis, see Attachment 2.

<u>Grade/Subject</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>2007-08</u>
6 <sup>th</sup> grade	6	6
English, Social Studies, Science, and Math	4 ea.	3 ea. (-4.0)
Art (-.4)	1.4	1
Technology Home and Careers	1.6 1	1.6 1
Physical Education and Health	3	3
Guidance	2	1.7 (-.3)*
Teaching Assistant	5	4.5 (-.5)
<b>Total</b>		<b>-5.2</b>

\* Given the proximity of the Middle and High School guidance offices, the District may wish to consider combining the staff into a single, comprehensive grades 6-12 guidance department. Doing so could lead to the elimination of one-half a position (.5 FTE).

### High School

**Determinants for Staffing** – As with the Middle School, three variables tend to impact staffing at the High School: 1) student enrollment, 2) class size and teacher load guidelines and 3) program. Because of the many variables and nuances related to

programs, staffing recommendations are less precise than similar recommendations for elementary and middle schools.

**Enrollment** – The projected enrollment for 2007-08 is the same as 2006-07 enrollment, 761. Enrollments in specific subject areas are projected by multiplying total projected enrollment by the percentage of students in the subject area in 2006-07. For example, this year 88% of the total population is currently enrolled in a Math course. Multiplying next year’s projected enrollment by .88 produces the number of students expected to enroll in a math course in 2007-08.

**Program** - This study does not contemplate any significant changes to program. However, the District may wish to more closely examine programs within subject areas. For example, if the District decides to continue a program that provides science labs for each student every other day, it may want to assign all science teachers to six teaching periods and no supervisory period. It may be possible to send students in Level 1 French and Spanish (14 total) to Level 1 classes in the Middle School. The District could also consider:

- Implementing clear guidelines with regard to minimum class size (15?);
- Reviewing academic standards for electives;
- Introducing Project Lead the Way;
- Recruiting more students for French or looking at another language; and
- Adding more college credit and Advanced Placement courses.

**Class Size and Teacher Load Guidelines** – Because of the variety of electives, labs and the sequence of courses needed for a Regents Diploma, teacher loads in the academic subjects may be less than the teacher loads for the same subjects at the Middle School. The actual versus the consultant’s recommendations for average teacher loads are shown below. Average class sizes are in parentheses.

<u>Grade/Subject</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>2007-08</u>	<u>FTE's</u>
English	116.4 (23.3)	115 (23)	7 (n/c)
Math	111.8 (22.4)	115 (23)	6 (n/c)
Science (including labs)	98.9 (19.8)	105 (21)	9 (-.6) <b>a</b>
Social Studies	114 (22.8)	115 (23)	7 (n/c)
Foreign Language	86 (17.2)	115 (23)	2.6 (-.4) <b>b</b>
Art	88.2 (17.6)	110 (22)	2.2 (-.6) <b>c</b>
Business	110.3 (22.1)	110 (22)	3 (n/c)
Technology	95 (19)	110 (22)	1.4 (n/c) <b>d</b>
Physical Education	118.9 (23.8)	125 (25)	3 (n/c)

Health	122.5 (24.5)	125 (25)	.8 (n/c)
Guidance	190	275	3.8 (-.2) <b>e</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>-1.8</b>

**a** – The administration indicates that student enrollment in Science for the 07-08 school year has increased and a reduction in staff is not possible. It is suggested that the 9-12 Science enrollment (by course), program, scheduling and the overall minimum class size be reviewed prior to making a final determination.

**b** – While a .4 reduction in Foreign Language is recommended, the administration suggests reassigning this .4 position to ESL. (A Foreign Language teacher is certified to teach ESL.) Students in Level 1 French and Level 1 Spanish would take these courses in the Middle School.

**c** – Actual reduction may be slightly less due to course requests.

**d** – While it is possible to reduce one full time technology teacher to part-time, this is not recommended because staffing a part-time position in technology with a high quality teacher will likely be problematic.

**e** – Combining the Middle and High School guidance offices into one grades 6-12 office could lead to the reduction of a one-half counselor and improve service to students. Also, one additional counselor at the High School is assigned as a ‘counselor/social worker.’

**Summary** – A few areas in the High School appear to be somewhat overstaffed. However, if the District chooses to continue to offer the same programs/courses and operate sections with fewer than 15 students, staffing for 07-08 will be about the same as staffing for 06-07. For a more detailed analysis, see Attachment 3.

**Special Education, Speech, Pupil Services, Academic Intervention Services, Structured Suspension, and Life Skills** – Because staffing for these areas is dependent on variables beyond the scope of this study, it is generally not possible to make staffing recommendations. Nonetheless, the number of students assigned to some speech teachers at the elementary level is unusually low and a reduction in staff may be possible.

**“If-Needed” Positions**

Because of enrollment changes that can occur between now and September 1, it is recommended that up to two additional positions be included in the staffing/budget plan. These resources would be used to address changes in enrollment that cannot be addressed through a reallocation of existing resources.

**Executive Summary** – In most any school district in New York, personnel costs (salaries and benefits) account for nearly eighty percent of total expenditures. In Tonawanda, a single teacher, near the entry level of the salary schedule, costs about \$50,000. A cost-effective staffing model, aligned with District goals and effective programs, is critical in helping students achieve success. The model must take into consideration the program provided to students at each level and, by applying reasonable Teacher Load and Class Size Guidelines, provide staffing for each school.

- Continuing to operate four elementary schools is, from a staffing/cost perspective, inefficient. (Two or even a single elementary school, perhaps with a K-2 and 3-5 structure, would lead to reductions in staff without affecting class size ceilings.) However, before a school is closed, capacity for the remaining buildings must be precisely determined and a comprehensive redistricting plan developed with input from parents. If a school is closed, it would be possible to abolish 2-3 teaching positions as well as one principal's position and some support staff positions. However, as the 2005 Long Range Plan notes, closing a school "...would have an impact on instruction, specifically special areas of music and art (in the remaining three schools, p. 30)."
- With declining enrollment and the relatively low class sizes that are currently operating in the Middle School, staff cuts are not only possible but probably unavoidable. Projections show that as many as 5.2 positions could be eliminated. Note: Many teachers working in the Middle School have tenure rights in the subject area for grades 7-12. Therefore, abolishing Middle School positions could result in Middle School teachers "bumping" High School teachers serving in the same tenure area.
- As was noted above, the nuances and variables in a High School program/schedule result in less precise staffing predictions and recommendations. However, staffing based on subject area enrollment projections and the creation of a 6-12 guidance office could result in the reduction of 1.8 positions. It is recommended that the administration continue to carefully examine programs, scheduling of teachers and the practice of operating courses/sections with less than 15 students in order to determine if resources are being used effectively and efficiently.
- Finally, today's schools are under pressure to create better opportunities for more students to achieve academic success. The changing job market, international economic competition and social change all require a higher level of education and achievement for today's graduates. While this study presents some options for reducing staff, the District should also consider reallocating resources in order to create new or enhanced opportunities that will support higher levels of student achievement.

- 2007-08 Staffing Recommendations

- Elementary

- Add 1 classroom teacher
    - Examine number of students assigned to speech teachers in order to determine if a reduction in staff is required

- Middle School

- Reduce 1 position in each of the following – English, Math, Science and Social Studies
    - Assign one (each) English, Math, Science and Social Studies teacher to two periods of AIS daily and monitor results
    - Between the Middle School and High School, reduce 1 art position
    - Combine Middle School and High School guidance offices into a single 6-12 office, possibly reducing one full time Counselor to part-time (.5)
    - Reduce one of five Teaching Assistants to part-time (.5)

- High School

- The reduction of some full time positions to part-time status seems, “on paper,” to be feasible. However, this will require further analysis of schedules, student course requests, minimum class sizes and teacher assignments.

- “If Needed”

- For budgeting purposes, include up to two positions to accommodate increases in grade level and subject area enrollment that may occur before school opens in September