



OSSINING UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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March 17, 2008

Dear Colleagues, Parents, Guardians, Families, Students, and Community Residents:

Please consider this letter an invitation to attend our upcoming Board of Education meeting on March 26, 2008 and an update regarding our Ossining School District Goal to create a Facilities Improvement Plan. We wish to update you on our progress as well as to inform you about what will be happening in the coming months.

Last September we shared with you that we have engaged the services of a consultant firm, School Leadership, LLC, to facilitate the planning process, to study our facilities, and to speak with staff, students, parents, and community residents to determine the assets, needs, and limitations of our buildings. A major goal of our facilities improvement effort is to ensure the best learning environment for our students and staff while simultaneously being respectful of our community. To date, the consultants' study has included building tours, interviews, and extensive efforts to engage the community to gather many views on our schools facilities needs.

Through careful study of our facilities and discussions with individuals, community members, and groups, a number of areas to address emerged. Our Anne M. Dorner (AMD) Middle School built in 1965 is the only school in the District that has not been renovated in any way. Currently our challenges at AMD include science labs in need of major renovation, aging lockers many of which are in disrepair, extremely limited cultural arts spaces, and a building design not conducive to current educational practices. At Ossining High School (OHS) our facilities challenges include inadequate and insufficient cultural arts facilities, limited indoor physical education facilities, and various other outdated facilities. One major challenge at OHS is the auditorium, which has inadequate electrical service, outdated lighting and sound equipment, and seats in disrepair. At Park School, we have immediate space needs for our students and staff. The Park School addition of 1995 was designed to accommodate first grade and only a half day kindergarten program. Since that time the District has implemented a full day kindergarten program. Our current enrollments at Park School have outpaced classroom space.

The Board of Education had requested that School Leadership, LLC gather community input with regard to our facilities needs. We extended invitations to more than 52 community groups as well as invitations to the entire community through a widescale mailing to participate in focus groups and open community forums. In late January, our consultants heard directly from more than 250 individuals who vocalized several consistent themes. One overarching theme was a firm commitment to maintain the current "Ossining Plan" which places entire grades of students together at each of our school buildings. Another theme was the need to maintain our pledge to small class size. Additionally, the community input strongly affirmed many of the space needs that have already been identified.

On February 6th the School Leadership consultants presented their findings to the Board of Education. Based upon the report and community input, the Board of Education and Superintendent unanimously chose to affirm our commitment to maintaining the "Ossining Plan." Additionally, the Board reaffirmed our class size policy. The Board and Superintendent appreciated all of the thoughtful input gleaned from the community meetings. We encourage everyone to continue to participate in the process in the months ahead.

We have asked our consultants, School Leadership, LLC, to return to gather additional input from the community in the spring. During the next phase of the process, we expect that the consultants will present various options for us to consider with regard to our facilities. We encourage you to share your opinions as it is important to the Board of Education to gain as much information from the community as we can in our effort to include you in the Facilities Improvement Planning process.

We have shared this Facilities Improvement Planning update letter to provide you with additional understanding of the status of our planning process and invite you to continue our partnership. While our Board of Education and Superintendent consider our facilities needs as quite important, we consider our partnership with parents, families, staff, and community residents as essential. We value our partnership as primary in supporting both student success and promoting community pride. We look forward to continuing a strong partnership with you as we move forward in this process.

As always, please visit our District Web site at www.ossiningufsd.org for information regarding our Facilities Improvement Planning initiative. Please click on the link for Facilities Improvement Planning or the icon Progress Through Partnership. We hope to see you at our upcoming Board of Education meeting at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 26, 2008. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Ms. Alice Joselow
President, Board of Education

Dr. Phyllis Glassman
Superintendent of Schools