

**Grade Level Structure
in the
Greece Central School District
1980 – Present**

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March, 2007**

Over the past quarter century, the Greece Central School District has undergone significant change in the way it structures its schools by grade level. These changes were made in an attempt to address the following concerns:

- Fluctuations in the overall student population
- Shifts in student populations among the various “attendance boundary areas”
- Provide parents and students some choice as to the schools attended by their children.

To accomplish this, the Board of Education has changed attendance boundaries, reopened a closed elementary building, restructured the grade level assignments, purchased a closed Catholic high school, built two new schools, provided “Secondary Option,” “Schools of Choice,” and “Signature Schools” as a means of giving parents choice and to balance student populations, built additions on many school buildings, and closed the District’s oldest existing elementary school – all within the last twenty-five years.

The purpose of this report is simply to provide a history of where we were twenty-five years ago, where we’ve come, and how we got here. It does not offer opinions as to whether decisions made were “right” or “wrong,” but it will hopefully lay a historical foundation with which the Board of Education, the Administration, and other stakeholders of the Greece Central School District may make decisions as to what course of action the near future holds for the District in terms of school structure. In order to truly understand the difficulties that Boards of Education experienced at the time, one needs to read through the various appendices, many of which include detailed Board minutes.

Pre-1980

The first significant period of change in the Greece Central School District occurred following World War II, just as it did all across America. At that time, the District consisted of a few K–6 elementary buildings and a junior high school on Hoover Drive. High school students attended school in the Rochester City schools. In 1960, Olympia High School opened as the District’s first high school. The “Baby Boom” was in full force and the Town of Greece’s population grew rapidly. Several new elementary buildings were built along with Athena Junior/Senior High School and Arcadia High School. Arcadia High was paired with Britton Road Junior High School which was located at the corner of Britton Road and Dewey Avenue. During the 1960’s and 70’s, the District’s grade level structure consisted of K–6 elementary schools, grades 7–8 junior high schools, and grades 9–12 senior high schools.

1980 – Elementary Structure is Changed

During the late 1970’s, the Board of Education and administration studied building utilization and grade level organization. The growing and shifting student population required yearly boundary changes and resulted in significant classroom teacher-to-student ratio imbalances. The study showed that there would be an average of 49 classes each

year with 30–40 students per class under the K–6 structure, and an average of 23 classes each year under a K–3, 4–6 structure.

(See Appendix B, Board of Education Minutes, March 5, 1980)

On March 19, 1980, faced with the reality of massive boundary changes, a great imbalance in class sizes, and annual school boundary changes, the Board of Education approved a restructuring of the elementary schools to a K–3, 4–6 configuration. Primary and intermediate schools were paired by geographic proximity. Consideration was also given to transportation distances, the need for a cafeteria at intermediate schools, and rooms for band, orchestra, and chorus at the intermediate level.

(See Appendix C, Board of Education Minutes, March 19, 1980)

1970's – 1980's – Fluctuating Student Populations

The 1980's was a period of time in District history unlike any other. A dramatic drop in enrollment occurred during the 1970's and early 1980's. The elementary (K-6) student population peaked at 7,595 students in 1969-70, then experienced a steady decline to 5,197 students in September, 1984. Between 1978-79 and 1984-85, the elementary population shrank by 20.7% (1,359 students). The smaller student population allowed the District to close West Ridge Elementary School and turn it into a Professional Development Center. Britton Road Junior High School was converted to the District's "Alternative High School." It was soon closed and sold. In the early 1980's, serious consideration was given to either closing Arcadia High School altogether, or converting it to a middle school.

What could not be predicted was the abrupt shift from declining enrollment to rapidly increasing enrollments. In 1985, the District predicted a slight five-year increase in the elementary population, and a continued decrease in the secondary population. In fact what occurred was a dramatic housing boom in the second half of the decade that left District officials scrambling to accommodate the rapidly increasing student population. To make matters worse, most of the population increase was due to a major housing boom in the western section of town, while nearly all of the District's schools were located in the eastern section.

It is clear that in the 1986–87 and 1987–88 school years, the Board of Education was struggling with major issues caused by the fluctuating and shifting student populations. The Board had adopted the recommendations in the "Pairings and Boundaries Report" which called for massive boundary changes and a shift to a K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12 grade level structure. Board minutes from January, 1987 indicate that the detailed "Space Utilization Implementation Plan" developed in 1985 be suspended for further review. In the following months, the Board detailed how they planned to deal with the ever shifting student population. These plans included such concepts as:

- Adopting some sort of open enrollment policy at the secondary school level
- Using a "feeder path" as a way of grouping schools to maintain school identity
- Using West Ridge as a "safety valve" for K – 5 enrollments

(See Appendix D, Board of Education Minutes, January 13, 1987, February 10, 1987, March 3, 1987, October 27, 1987, and “Report of the District Wide Space Utilization Study Committee, June 1985, pages 1-3, 10-11)

In early 1988, the Board resolved to put up for a vote a \$30,615,000 bond issue which would have paid for a new middle school added to Olympia High School and a smaller addition to Arcadia High School which would have become a new Arcadia Middle School. At the same meeting, the Board once again redrew boundaries affecting a number of map grids and switching students from Olympia to Athena. The bond vote was held in March, 1988 and was not supported by the majority of those who voted. The following September, the District placed a long “train” of relocatable classrooms strung out behind Arcadia High, which comprised a temporary Arcadia Middle School.

(See Appendix E, Board of Education Minutes, January 26, 1988 and April 25, 1989)

1989 - Cardinal Mooney Closes Offering a Much Less Expensive Option

In the spring of 1989, the Board adopted a resolution to put out a smaller \$23,669,000 bond proposition to build two smaller middle schools at Arcadia and Olympia, convert Hoover Drive to a District-wide middle school of choice, and reopen West Ridge Elementary School. Then, in 1989, Cardinal Mooney High School was closed and sold. An obvious solution to the looming secondary school population problems became available. The Board of Education put forth a smaller bond issue to the voters which would allow for the purchase and renovation of Cardinal Mooney and the construction of a new Arcadia Middle School. On _____, 19--, the voters approved the \$ _____ bond issue.

(See Appendix F, Board of Education Minutes, _____, 19--)

September, 1990 – West Ridge Elementary School Opened as the District’s First “School of Choice”

As the student population continued to grow and shift, the Board of Education looked to the Space Utilization Study plans adopted by them in 1987. As a means of balancing elementary school populations and evening out class size imbalances, the District reopened West Ridge Elementary School as a “School of Choice.” The Board designated a number of residences surrounding the West Ridge property as “top priority geographic preference,” meaning that students living at those residences would be accepted to West Ridge if they applied.

(See Appendix G, Board of Education Minutes, June 12, 1990 and map of the West Ridge Priority Zone)

In October, 1990, the Board of Education adopted a set of procedures for enrollment at West Ridge. These enrollment procedures provided for the following priorities:

- Siblings of current West Ridge students
- Children living in the “priority area” established by Board resolution in June, 1990
- Applicants chosen by “lot” up to the primary school attendance targets

- Any remaining openings filled by random “lot”

These procedures were intended to recognize the desire to accommodate siblings of students already accepted into West Ridge and those living in the priority area. They also provided for a method to enroll more students from the more over-crowded elementary buildings. After the first year, the “weighted” lottery (which apparently was accomplished by PTA Presidents publicly drawing numbers out of a hat!) was replaced by a random computer lottery.

(See Appendix H, Board of Education Minutes, October 9, 1990 and “West Ridge Enrollment Procedures” Memorandum dated October 1, 1990)

It should be noted that when West Ridge first opened, a partnership between the school and the IBM Corporation was created which was used as the vehicle for stimulating interest in applying to the school. West Ridge was considered “technology rich” with five new IBM computers in each classroom.

Early 1990’s – A new Apollo Middle School, new Arcadia Middle School, new “Odyssey at Hoover Drive” Secondary School of Choice, and a new elementary school – Pine Brook

In the late 1980’s, enrollment projections indicated that the District would need to open a new secondary school and adjust school boundaries, or resort to a more desperate solution – double sessions. The availability of Cardinal Mooney was a near perfect solution. Mooney opened as a middle school, housing mainly Arcadia Middle School students, while the new middle school was being built on the Arcadia site. This also freed up the many relocatable classrooms at Arcadia for use at the elementary schools, where space was still very tight. Once the new Arcadia Middle School building was completed, the entire faculty and student body moved from the former Cardinal Mooney facility. The staff and student body from Hoover Drive Middle School moved into the Cardinal Mooney facility, now named “Apollo Middle School.”

The Board of Education decided to convert the former grade 6–8 Hoover Drive Middle School to a 6–12 secondary “School of Choice” named “Odyssey at Hoover Drive.” The Board of Education adopted the same enrollment procedures used at West Ridge. In establishing the priority attendance area, the Board included all residences within the one mile walking zone. Enrollment at Odyssey at Hoover Drive was accomplished in the same order as West Ridge; siblings first, those living in the priority attendance zone, second, and all others by random computer lottery.

(See Appendix I, “Odyssey at Hoover Drive Enrollment Procedure,” and “Hoover Drive Walk Zone at One Mile”)

In September, 1993, a new K–5 elementary building named Pine Brook Elementary School was opened on English Road in the northwest section of the District. The Board of Education determined that Pine Brook would become the second elementary “School of Choice,” and that the same enrollment procedures used at West Ridge and Odyssey be

used to fill Pine Brook. A very small attendance priority area was established consisting of fewer than 50 residences immediately adjacent to the Pine Brook property. The Board further determined that the District be divided into two attendance areas for the elementary schools of choice. West Ridge Elementary School would draw from the Apollo/Olympia attendance area, while Pine Brook Elementary would draw from the Athena Middle/High School and Arcadia Middle/High School attendance areas. *(See Appendix J, Board of Education Minutes, November 10, 1992, and map of Pine Brook Priority Zone)*

1993 – One Last Boundary Change

Despite the continuance of the “Secondary Option Program” and the opening of Odyssey as a secondary “School of Choice,” Athena Middle and High Schools continued to be above capacity and Apollo Middle School and Olympia High School remained below capacity. To correct this, the Board of Education made what appears to be one last boundary change. Four map grids (200, 201, 202, and 203) were moved from the Athena Middle/High School to the Apollo/Olympia attendance areas. This followed a “School Attendance Boundaries Committee Report given the Board in November, 1993. *(See Appendix K, Board of Education Minutes, December 14, 1993 and “School Attendance Boundaries Committee Report,” November 1993)*

A Significant Change in Transportation Policy

When the “Secondary Option Program” was first adopted by the Board of Education, the policy provided that the parents of students accepted to a different school had to provide their own transportation to the school or to an existing bus stop that served the new school. This policy remained in place for many years. Not long after Odyssey at Hoover Drive opened, a group of secondary option parents challenged the policy (exact date unknown) claiming it was unfair that Odyssey students were provided transportation and secondary option students were not. The District’s legal counsel concurred, and the Board then changed the policy to provide secondary option students with bus transportation.

Signature Schools – Expanding Parents’ Choices

West Ridge and Pine Brook Elementary Schools were opened as “Schools of Choice” with the intent to balance school populations and address imbalanced classroom student to teacher ratios. It appears that this has succeeded, for the most part, since the Board has not had to make any boundary changes for years, and class sizes have been relatively stable. However, school populations have crept up in some schools and dropped in others. By the year 2000, Parkland and Brookside had several vacant classrooms in each building. Then Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Schools, Dr. Thomas Elliott, introduced the concept of “Signature Schools” whereby each pair of elementary schools would develop their own unique “Signature.” This form of “open enrollment” allows parents to apply to send their elementary child to a school other than the one that serves their home attendance boundary area. Like the Secondary Option Program, acceptance to a Signature School is based on a “space available basis.”

All elementary schools must follow the District's curriculum designed to meet each New York State standards areas. The "Signature" simply emphasizes techniques, methods, interests, or approaches to teaching throughout the curriculum, hopefully in all subjects.

In September, 2001, Parkland opened as the "Signature School for Math, Science, and Technology." Its partner school, Brookside, followed in September, 2002. The Signature School concept has enabled parents some level of choice based upon their child's interests and strengths, and at the same time has allowed the District to further balance school populations and maximize building capacities. All paired elementary buildings and all K-5 buildings, with the exception of Longridge Elementary School, have developed their "Signatures" and accept students from throughout the District. Included in Appendix L are documents which give a detailed explanation about the Signature School Concept.

(See Appendix L, Signature School Brochure for a description of each school's signature, Superintendent's Staff Open Agenda Item from November 2002, and Parkland-Brookside Signature School Proposal)

2000 – The Capital Improvement Project

In June, 2000, the voters of the Greece Central School District passed a historic \$119,000,000 bond issue which provided for renovations, repairs, and improvements at every school. For the purpose of this report, the most notable expenditures allowed elementary schools that were still using the old Arcadia Middle School relocatables as classrooms to replace them with "brick and mortar" classrooms, build a large addition to Longridge Elementary School, allowing it to become the District's third K – 5 building, and convert the 80-year old Barnard Elementary School from instructional use to ancillary use.

The past twenty-five years have seen much change in the student population in the Greece Central School District. As a result, Boards of Education have struggled with the problems this change has caused, and have had to develop creative solutions to solve these problems. During the 1980's, spurred by many boundary changes and growing unhappiness among parents, many committees were formed that devoted numerous hours to studying the issues and developing recommendations for the Boards of Education. Their work can be found in several reports, which are too large to include in this brief summary. However, the reports can be viewed in the District's Office of Student Services by those who wish to learn the detail of these studies.

Appendices

Appendix A	Timeline – Greece Central School District Grade Level Structure Changes
Appendix B	Board of Education Minutes, March 5, 1980
Appendix C	Board of Education Minutes, March 19, 1980
Appendix D	Board of Education Minutes, January 13, 1987 Board of Education Minutes, February 10, 1987 Board of Education Minutes March 3, 1987 Board of Education Minutes October 27, 1987 “Report of the District Wide Space Utilization Study Committee, June 1985, pages 1-3, 10-11
Appendix E	Board of Education Minutes, January 26, 1988 Board of Education Minutes, April 25, 1989
Appendix F	Board of Education Minutes, _____, 19--
Appendix G	Board of Education Minutes, June 12, 1990 Map of the West Ridge Priority Zone
Appendix H	Board of Education Minutes, October 9, 1990 “West Ridge Enrollment Procedures” Memorandum, October 1, 1990
Appendix I	“Odyssey at Hoover Drive Enrollment Procedure” “Hoover Drive Walk Zone at One Mile”
Appendix J	Board of Education Minutes, November 10, 1992 Map of Pine Brook Priority Zone
Appendix K	Board of Education Minutes, December 14, 1993 “School Attendance Boundaries Committee Report,” November 1993
Appendix L	Signature School Brochures – Description of each school’s signature Superintendent’s Staff Open Agenda Item, November 2002 Parkland-Brookside Signature School Proposal