

# Strategic Planning for George F. Baker High School

A Report to Tuxedo Union Free School District

---

9/8/18

## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SECTION 1: METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SECTION 2: TUXEDO UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT – ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>SECTION 3: GEORGE F. BAKER HIGH SCHOOL’S ACADEMIC PROGRAM AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: AN OVERVIEW AND COMPARISON WITH NEARBY SCHOOLS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SECTION 4: FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF SENDING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OUT OF DISTRICT .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>SECTION 5: COMMUNITY SENTIMENT ABOUT THE FUTURE OF GFBHS .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>SECTION 6: RESEARCH FINDINGS ON STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN SMALL SCHOOLS.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>SECTION 7: KEY FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Appendix A: A Few Other Things We Learned Along the Way .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Appendix B: Detailed Cost Savings and Increases .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Appendix C: Core and Elective Course Comparison.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Appendix D: Study Informants and Community Input.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Appendix E: Survey Results .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Appendix E: Resources and References.....</b>	<b>52</b>

## INTRODUCTION

Tuxedo Union Free School District (TUFSD) is located at the southernmost point of Orange County, New York. The town is largely state park land (75-80%), and the number of households located within district boundaries—approximately 1600—has remained relatively stable for decades. The district operates two schools: George Grant Mason Elementary School (GGM), which educates students in grades K-6<sup>th</sup>, and George F. Baker High School (GFBHS), serving students in 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades. The district’s administrative offices are also located in the high school building. Total enrollment in the district for the 2017-18 school year was 256 students.

In 1981, TUFSD began serving approximately 300 high school students from neighboring Greenwood Lake Union Free School District (GL), which does not operate its own high school. Every five years, as per state requirements, the TUFSD and GL school boards renegotiated the tuition agreement for Greenwood Lake students to attend George F. Baker High School. According to a report prepared by E. Axelrod Associates in 1998<sup>1</sup>, the two districts explored the option of consolidation but concluded that combining the two districts would have a negative impact on state aid and negative financial consequences for both districts. The relationship with Greenwood Lake lasted until 2015, when GL began sending its students to several other nearby districts.

Without students from Greenwood Lake, high school enrollment at GFBHS is hovering around 125 students. TUFSD is continuing to seek additional non-resident students, and in 2017-18, seven students who live outside of Tuxedo paid tuition to attend GFBHS. For the 2018-19 school year, the district is likely to add several more non-resident paying students but not enough to change enrollment in a significant way.

A new planned development within the TUFSD boundary, Tuxedo Farms, has the potential to add many students to the district rolls. Based on uncertainties about if or when construction might start, it is unlikely that Tuxedo Farms will provide any significant increase in high school students within the next five years.

Faced with the reality of continued low enrollment, the Tuxedo Union Free School District is exploring options to continue to provide its high school students with an excellent education. In 2018, TUFSD hired FourPoint Education Partners to collect and analyze data needed to support strategic planning for GFBHS. Through information provided in a community survey, at two community meetings and many stakeholder interviews, three overarching themes became very clear.

---

<sup>1</sup> E. Axelrod Associates. January 1998. Greenwood Lake Union Free School District and Tuxedo Union Free School District. Feasibility Study: Final Report. Document provided by TUFSD.

- Since GL stopped sending students to GFBHS, there is a **“looming cloud of uncertainty”** about the future of the high school. Students, parents, teachers, and community members all indicated that this uncertainty about whether the school board will close GFBHS negatively affects morale and creates stress all around. In fact, 68 percent of survey respondents indicated that “uncertainty about whether the school will remain open” was their top concern about the high school. Students expressed concern about transferring to a new, large high school and not graduating from GFBHS, where most felt happy and secure. Parents and community members expressed similar concerns also focusing on what might happen to property values and community vitality should the district decide to close the high school.
  - **“There is great frustration with this holding pattern – kids want to know that if they start high school here, they will graduate from here.”**
    - **“Give us an exact time frame that we have so we can focus on building our educational program, keeping our children here...”**
    - **“There are kids leaving because of the instability; there are kids who want to come but don’t because of the instability/unpredictability...”**
- **There is a lack of clear information** available to the community to inform decision-making about the best way for the district to educate its high school students. In many instances, community members developed opinions based on incomplete or erroneous information related to the high school program of studies, extracurricular activities, and the costs associated with closing the high school and sending students to school in another district. During the community meeting, lack of sound information was cited by many as a key challenge in deciding how to best serve high school students (see table 8, below).
  - **“There’s so much misinformation out there. We need to know what the facts are, what the options are, what the costs of each are, what the potential impacts are.”**
    - **“We don’t know that if the school closes that taxes will go down. Some are claiming that, but we don’t know.”**
    - **“A group of folks from Tuxedo Park told us they have no idea what’s going on with the high school. They wanted to know what’s so bad about the high school?”**

- **Uncertainty about the future of the Tuxedo Farms development**, which has been in the works for more than 20 years, has intensified the first two concerns. As originally conceived, Tuxedo Farms would have brought many new families to TUFSD and certainly would have brought more students to GFBHS, but exactly how many new families and students has never been clear and depends upon final plans to be negotiated with the eventual builder. In recent years, with the loss of GL students, the developer has gone on record saying that he could not find a residential builder because the high school was so small that it was not attractive to potential new residents. The developer provided no data to support this statement. Many residents expressed a concern that the developer might sell the land to a buyer who would hold different views about how to use community resources. The developer is now looking more broadly for buyers and considering commercial as well as residential sales, and a variety of options appear to be on the table.
  - “The developer is claiming that if the high school were to close, they would start building tomorrow.”
  - “At full build-out, which would be over 10 years or so, there would be another 120 high school age students – that’s the projection that the town used.”
  - “We are being blackmailed by the developer. The developer has been working against the school the whole time.”
  - “The idea of bringing in this new group of students with the development is great. That was supposed to be the saving grace to the stability of the high school, and now it’s almost the opposite of that. Now they’re our adversaries, and now they’re stirring the pot and saying they’re not going to build until we close the high school.”

This report is designed to **set the record straight** by providing needed facts and figures to address these three issues and by identifying the benefits, risks, and uncertainties of alternative strategies to providing high school students with an excellent education in a fiscally responsible manner. The report is structured to answer the following questions:

- **Section 1. Methodology:** What methodology did this study utilize?
- **Section 2. Enrollment Projections:** What are the enrollment projections for TUFSD?
- **Section 3. Program Comparison:** How do the academic program and extracurricular activities at GFBHS stack up against other nearby high schools?

- **Section 4. Alternative Models:** What are the financial and operational implications of sending high school students out of district?
- **Section 5. Value of GFBHS:** What value does a high school bring to the community? What strengths and challenges does the community see with regard to GFBHS?
- **Section 6. Small Schools Research:** What does education research tell us about student experiences in small schools?
- **Section 7. Key Findings:** What are the key findings and considerations for TUFSD leaders?

## SECTION 1: METHODOLOGY

To provide a clear and accurate picture of TUFSD’s options for providing high school students with an excellent education—and the costs and benefits associated with each of these options—we set out to determine:

- If and how GFBHS enrollment is likely to change over the coming years
- How the academic and extracurricular programs at GFBHS compare with neighboring high schools
- How the costs to send high school students out of district compare with the costs of operating GFBHS
- What value GFBHS brings to the Tuxedo community and how closing the school might impact real estate values
- What impact school size has on student achievement, costs, and its community

We used a number of methods to answer these questions:

**Surveys and Focus Groups.** Surveys and focus groups were designed to provide a clear picture of the student and family experience at GFBHS and to determine the perceived value of the high school within the Tuxedo community.

**Landscape Review.** We examined an array of local factors that have the potential to affect student enrollment in the high school.

**High School Program Review.** We ran a comparison of GFBHS’s academic and extracurricular programs to those of neighboring high schools.

**Budget Analysis.** We conducted a budget analysis to determine what costs could be cut if the high school were to close and what additional costs the district would incur if it sends its high school students out of district.

**Review of State Laws and Funding Formulas.** We reviewed state laws and state funding formulas to determine the relative financial impact of maintaining a local high school versus sending students to neighboring districts.

**Literature Review.** We reviewed established research on how school size affects student achievement, costs, and local communities.

**SECTION 2: TUXEDO UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT – ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS**

In the 2017-18 school year, TUFSD served 236 students in its two schools—George Grant Mason Elementary (GGM) with 130 students and George F. Baker High School (GFBHS) with 106 students. Without an influx of students, either from new families moving to the district or from non-resident students tuitioning in, high school enrollment is likely to continue to decline slightly or, at best, to remain stable.

Class sizes in the district are as follows:

**Table 1. TUFSD Student Enrollments**

STUDENT ENROLLMENTS														
September 2017														
	GGM Elementary School (n=130)							GFB High School (n=106)						
GRADE	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
STUDENTS	14	19	22	8	26	19	22	14	17	14	15	17	29	236

Source: TUFSD

As Table 1 shows, enrollments are low across all grades and fluctuate from a high of 29 students in the graduating class of 2018 to a low of 8 students in the third grade. The district sends an additional 20 or so students out of district to receive special education services; these students are not included in the counts in Table 1.

In addition, some students who live within the TUFSD boundaries attend nearby private or parochial high schools. In 2017-18, approximately 75 students attended other schools, including about 20 high-school-age students<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, there are about 100 students who reside in Tuxedo’s northern neighborhood who attend Monroe-Woodbury Central School District (MWCSO) under an agreement dating back at least 75 years that zones that portion of the city to MWCSO. Lastly, five students in grades K-8 are home schooled.

Starting in 2015, the district has been seeking to increase enrollments by offering an option for families residing in nearby districts to pay tuition to attend GFBHS. During the 2017-18 school year, the district had 7 high school students paying tuition to attend GFBHS at a tuition rate of

<sup>2</sup> Data provided by the district.

\$14,312. For the 2018-19 school year, the district is projecting that 8-10 non-resident students will pay tuition to attend GFBHS.

Data on student mobility—those leaving and entering the district—for grades 5-12 were also reviewed. Table 2, below, summarizes mobility data for the current year and the past three years.

**Table 2. TUFSD Student Mobility, Grades 5-12**

TUFSD STUDENT MOBILITY, GRADES 5-12				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
<b>Net Change in Enrollment</b>	<b>-6</b> Lost 7 Added 1	<b>-1</b> Lost 8 Added 7	<b>-2</b> Lost 8 Added 6	<b>-5</b> Lost 8 Added 3
<b>Moved out of district</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Students leaving for private or other public schools</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>New resident students</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>New non-resident (paying) students added</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b> (including one foreign exchange student)

Source: TUFSD

The mobility data show that, in each of the last three years, the number of students leaving the district outpaced new students. As Table 2 shows, in each year the district has had a net loss of students. The table also shows that the district loses seven or eight students per year in grades 5-12. About one-third of exiting students move out of district, and about two-thirds leave for private schools or public schools in other districts. Among students leaving for other schools, most leave in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Several informants were under the impression that “there was a regular drop in enrollment during the middle grades,” but the data do not bear this out.

The district is also getting new students each year from new families moving into the district and from tuition-paying students choosing to attend GFBHS. For the last several years, the addition of non-resident, paying students has helped to stabilize enrollments.

### Potential Opportunities to Attract More Students to Tuxedo

For the past several years, the district has been actively marketing GFBHS to area families. Informants raised the following additional ideas for attracting more students to GFBHS.

- **Create a program for foreign students.** Informants indicated that some of the local, private schools have incentives for foreign students in which their families pay tuition but could receive a subsidy. Some thought foreign students might be able to

live with local families. Before investing in such a program, TUFSD would need to understand the rules for foreign students to receive visas and how long they can stay in the country. Many of these programs bring students for only one year.

- **Create a Special Education program** for students offering opportunities for a combined program in which students who do not need a restrictive environment are mainstreamed for part of the day and have other SPED services built in. Informants believed this type of program would be attractive locally, such as in Orange County, where SPED services are more limited and where the population in the northern part of the county are far from the BOCES. A related suggestion was to offer a “twice exceptional” program for children who need SPED but are also academically gifted. Informants believed that “this isn’t something a lot of districts offer and that a lot of those twice exceptional students are drawn to STEM, as well.”
- **Focus marketing around the school’s unique qualities** as “the only small public school in the area” with “open access to all extracurricular activities” to attract students who did not “make the cut” for a sports team or a musical group at their home schools.

### SECTION 3: GEORGE F. BAKER HIGH SCHOOL’S ACADEMIC PROGRAM AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: AN OVERVIEW AND COMPARISON WITH NEARBY SCHOOLS

This section describes GFBHS’s program of studies and how it stacks up against other nearby high schools across several important dimensions. To help put the information provided about GFBHS into perspective, TUFSD district leaders have identified four nearby districts/high schools to act as a comparison group for this study. Table 3, below, shows the comparison districts and their overall sizes as well as the sizes of their high schools. It also indicates their distance from GFBHS.

Table 3. Comparison Schools

COMPARISON SCHOOLS				
District	Number of Students	High School	Number of HS Students	Distance from Tuxedo
<b>Tuxedo, NY</b>	236	GFBHS	106	N/A
Monroe Central, NY	6815	MWB High	2318	12 miles
Suffern Central, NY	4279	Suffern High	1494	10 miles
Ramsey, NJ	2700	Ramsey High	870	11 miles
Northern Highlands Regional, NJ	1334	Northern Highlands Regional High School	1334	12 miles

Sources: <https://www.mw.k12.ny.us/about/>; <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/new-york/ramapo-central-school-district-suffern-/3628320-school-district>; <https://www.ramsey.k12.nj.us/Domain/8>

The analysis revealed that GFBHS provides a similar academic program and set of elective opportunities for its students when assessed against comparison schools.

When it comes to extracurricular activities, while GFBHS offers many options, larger schools tend to have even more extracurricular options. But while larger schools offer more extracurricular options, students often must compete for access (e.g. trying out for places on sports teams or in theater productions.)

The data show that across many dimensions GFBHS is a high-performing and innovative school.

**Student Achievement:** By all measures, students at GFBHS are high achieving. The 2017 graduation rate was 100 percent compared to 80 percent in the state, and 56 percent of students graduate with an advanced Regents degree compared with 33 percent statewide<sup>3</sup>. In 2016, eighty-eight percent of TUFSD’s students went to college; 6 percent went to the military and the last 6 percent went directly to work.

**Schedule:** The district also has one of the longest school days—6 hours 48 minutes—compared to the state requirement for high school of 5 hours and 30 minutes, providing additional instructional time for all students. With a longer day, the school has been able to create a 10-period schedule that provides additional time for electives and more time for project-based learning.

**STEM Focus:** In 2012, TUFSD adopted a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) focus, establishing STEM academies at both the high school and elementary school and investing in 1:1 technology so that every high school student gets a chrome book, which provides additional flexibility in accessing instructional materials and coursework. The STEM theme is woven throughout core coursework and electives.

**Core Classes:** As described below, GFBHS offers the following core courses. The core course offerings at GFBHS closely align with core course offerings at the four nearby comparison high schools (see Appendix C for complete core course listings by school).

- History: Global I, Global II, US History, US History Honors, Gov/Economics, Social Studies 7-8, Social Studies 8 honors, AP Euro History, AP Government
- English: English 7-12, English Honors 8 and 10, AP Literature, AP Language
- Math: Algebra, Algebra II, Geometry, AP Stat, AP Calculus, Intro to Calc, Math 7-8/honors, Math Applications
- Science 7,8/Honors, Living Environment, Earth Science, AP Biology, AP Physics, Chemistry

---

3

[https://data.nysed.gov/comparison.php?type=gradrate&comparison\[\]=800000040172\\_2017\\_School&comparison\[\]=800000081568\\_2017\\_State&report=](https://data.nysed.gov/comparison.php?type=gradrate&comparison[]=800000040172_2017_School&comparison[]=800000081568_2017_State&report=)

- STEM 7,8
- CAPSTONE

**Electives:** For students at GFBHS, electives are provided on a 2- or 3-year cycle depending on student interest. As appropriate, electives are open to multiple grades, which allows more options for students and creates larger classes for each offering. At GFBHS, electives are offered in English, Math/Business, Social Studies, Science, World Languages, Art, Theater, Music, Computer Education, Engineering and Architecture, Family and Consumer Science, and Physical Education.

To a large extent, Tuxedo is able to offer its students a similar slate of elective options to those offered by the larger area schools. There are a handful of exceptions: Tuxedo does not offer any accounting or financial literacy courses, marketing or other business courses, woodworking, or fashion or interior design, all of which are offered at the four other high schools. Tuxedo also regularly offers only one traditional foreign language option – Spanish– while the other comparison high schools offer three or more (adding French, Italian, German, Latin, and/or American Sign Language). TUFSD does, however, have the capacity to provide a range of world languages through on-line learning. Appendix C provides a course-by-course comparison of electives offered at GFBHS and the four comparison schools.

GFBHS, like all four peer schools, also offers:

- Dual enrollment options so students can earn college credit at Rockland Community College (RCC) while they are still in high school. In the 2017-18 school year, 5 seniors took classes at RCC. Most of these students also took classes at GFBHS, and all of the students continue to participate in high school activities, including performing arts and sports.
- Virtual high school courses to expand course offerings. For the past several years, GFBHS has offered online courses for its students. In the 2017-18 school year, only one student enrolled in a virtual course. School leaders believe that the high level of self-management required to successfully complete a virtual course makes them very challenging, and less attractive, to students.
- Special Education (SPED) supports, including self-contained and collaborative classrooms.

**Extra-Curricular Activities:** Many informants raised questions about the depth and breadth of extracurricular activities available to students in GFBHS. The following activities are offered to GFBHS students. The district reported that 80 percent of students participated in at least one extracurricular activity.

- **Clubs:** Drama, Jr. & National Honor Society, Art, Production Team, Homework, Engineering, GGM & HS Yearbook, Problem Solving, GGM & HS Student Council, GGM Basketball, Intramural Club, Fitness Club, Art Club & Garden Club

- **Sports:** Modified & Varsity – Soccer, Basketball, Volleyball, Baseball, Softball & Cross Country; Alternative Athletic Program with Chester High School for Varsity Football, Modified A Football, Boys/Girls Basketball, JV Softball, and Varsity Wrestling

A recurring theme raised by many informants was the ability of GFBHS students to access and participate in a broad set of clubs and activities. Data comparing extracurricular activities for GFBHS and its larger peers do show that larger schools tend to offer more extracurricular activities. This is true for sports programs where bigger schools have feeder sports programs (freshman, junior varsity, and varsity teams). It is also true that larger schools offer a wider variety of clubs (arts, music, dance, etc.) and teams (debate, moot court, etc.).

Informants felt, and research shows, that while larger schools may have more sports teams and other extracurricular activities, gaining access to the most desirable activities was far more competitive; in most schools, spots on sports teams and in musical groups and parts in theater productions are awarded on a competitive basis. That is not the case at GFBHS where, for the most part, students participate in any and every activity in which they are interested.

#### **SECTION 4: FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF SENDING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OUT OF DISTRICT**

Due to its very small size, TUFSD has a higher-than-average per-pupil expenditure compared with other districts in New York. The district has created operational efficiencies by integrating systems across its two schools as a means for controlling costs. Using a conservative estimate, the district would save between \$750,000 and \$1.6 million (6% to 12% of the total district budget) by closing the high school and sending its high school students to another district. The lowest-end savings figure—\$750,000—is based on the maximum allowable charge (Seneca Falls Rate) for the most expensive school in the comparison group. By using this rate, the uncertainty of large tuition increases in future years is eliminated as the state, not the district, determines the cap (Seneca Falls rate).

On the operational side, if the high school is closed, the district is likely to see many staffing changes. Veteran high school teachers are likely to leave for other districts as full-time positions would be reduced to part-time when high school classes are eliminated. Hiring new, part-time teachers is expensive (due to search costs) and challenging. There also are likely to be some reductions in specialty subjects, such as music, for K-8 students, as the number of specialty teachers—who work across the schools—is reduced. Finally, shared services, which make sense for two small schools, will present logistical challenges when all students are consolidated into one building. For instance, younger students are currently housed in the school that contains the cafeteria and gym. If the schools were consolidated, the younger students would need to travel to the GGM building for PE, which takes more time, especially in the winter months.

**TUFSD Budget:** In 2018, TUFSD passed a budget of \$13,181,372. This includes all educational costs for students, district administration, and special education students with out-of-district placements. The majority of these resources are raised locally; only about \$1 million are provided by the state.

The district operates its two schools in a very integrated manner, sharing resources to create efficiencies whenever possible. The district has integrated systems for administration, staff, transportation, and facilities. For instance, the district has one full-time principal and one full-time assistant principal that support both schools; a bus system that has one route for all K-12 students; and some shared facilities, including one multipurpose room, one gym, and one auditorium. The schools also share some staff across buildings, including the custodial staff and the school nurse.

**Per-pupil Expenditures:** New York State estimates the district per-pupil expenditure (PPE) in TUFSD at \$47,900 for school year 2015-16. This figure includes expenditures for classroom instruction as well as expenditures for transportation, debt service, community service, and district-wide administration.

Table 4, below, summarizes financial expenditure data reported by the states (NY and NJ) for each of the comparison districts. (Neither state reports PPE by school.) Each state also calculates a per-pupil expenditure based only on instructional expenses. Table 4 shows the full PPE and the instructional PPE for TUFSD, for each of the comparison districts, and for New York state. It shows that TUFSD has a much higher PPE than any of the comparison districts. Even looking only at instructional expenditures, which eliminates many of the fixed costs in a district, TUFSD still has a much higher PPE. The gap between Tuxedo and the comparison districts is much less, though it is still significant, when only instructional costs are considered.

**Table 4. Per-Pupil Expenditures by District SY 2015-16**

Per-Pupil Expenditures by District SY 2015-16						
	NY State Average	TUFSD	Suffern	Monroe-Woodbury	Ramsey	Northern Highlands
Number of students		236	4279	6815	2700	1334
PPE (all costs)	\$23,300	\$47,900	\$28,700	\$23,200	\$21,800	\$25,000
PPE (instructional only)	\$14,700	\$19,700	\$15,800	\$12,100	\$10,500	\$18,100

Source: <https://data.nysed.gov/fiscal.php?year=2017&instid=800000040171>

<https://www.nj.gov/cgi-bin/education/csg/16/csg2.pl>

[https://www.nj.com/education/2017/04/how\\_much\\_new\\_jersey\\_schools\\_spend\\_per\\_student.html](https://www.nj.com/education/2017/04/how_much_new_jersey_schools_spend_per_student.html)

Note: PPE differences may not be exact comparisons since they reflect calculations developed by two different states: NY and NJ.

These findings are not surprising and, in fact, were expected. The high per-pupil expenditures in Tuxedo are largely due to the small size of the district. Table 4 shows that:

- In general, larger districts tend to have lower PPEs. In larger districts, fixed costs are spread over more students, so the per-pupil expenditure is lower. For instance, expenditures for heating a classroom are the same whether there are 10 or 25 students in the room, but the per-pupil expenditure will be higher for 10 students compared to 25.
- Factors other than number of students affect PPEs. For instance, the PPE in Suffern is higher than in Ramsey even though Suffern has more students. Factors that contribute to these differences include state and local choices about how much to spend on schools, staffing requirements, and the cost of school inputs – labor (salaries), transportation, etc.
- Instructional PPEs give a good sense of how much is being spent directly on teaching and support services for students. Here, too, we see significant variation in instructional PPEs from a high of \$19,700 for TUFSD to a low of \$10,500 in Ramsey. Again, these variations are likely due to state and local factors and educational requirements.

**Cost Savings from Closing George F. Baker High School:** FourPoint examined the budget for TUFSD and calculated costs directly related to supporting the high school and determined that closing the school would save **between \$750,000 and \$1.6 million. This range represents a range of 6 to 12 percent of TUFSD’s total budget.** This includes instructional and non-instructional costs for students in grades 9-12, facilities and operations, transportation, and a portion of the costs for district administration. It also reflects the resulting changes in state aid from educating fewer students within the district.

Following is a brief explanation of the various cost elements and expected changes. Table 7, at the end of this section, summarizes all cost changes—both savings and increases—related to closing GFBHS and sending students in 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades to school in another district. A detailed analysis of costs and cost savings can be found in Appendix B.

- **Salaries and Benefits:** Cost savings included reductions for instructional and non-instructional salaries and benefits totaled \$1,600,000. This includes reductions in salaries and benefits for core and elective teachers, the school librarian, and other student support staff. Salaries were reduced by the amount of time dedicated to high school classes (some staff also support 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, and those portions of their salaries remain).
- **Other Costs:** A variety of “other” costs associated with students in 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades were also reduced. These include costs for interscholastic athletic staff and all costs associated with high-school activities (field trips, testing materials, etc.), which totaled \$650,000.
- **Administration:** It is likely that the district could restructure its administrative staff and save some additional resources if it no longer needed to manage the high school. For the purpose

of these cost estimates, we reduced administrative staff by one full-time person at approximately \$220,000, inclusive of salary and benefits.

- **Facilities and Maintenance:** Facilities and maintenance costs will be reduced should the district choose to close GFBHS. The district would still maintain both school buildings (GGM and GFBHS). Instruction for all students in grades K-8 school will be consolidated into what is now the high school building; the GGM building is not large enough to house all K-8 students. The district will move its central offices into the GGM building and will continue to use the multipurpose room at GGM for Board of Education meetings. This is the most cost-effective option for the district given that the GGM building has been deeded, rent free, to TUFSD for as long as it serves an education function. Under the deed, the only costs to the districts for GGM are to support operations and maintenance. The district estimated that savings from consolidating operations into the GFBHS building would be \$230,000, or about 2% of the total district budget. The district would also explore options for renting out some of the space in the GGM building to bring in some additional revenues. Estimates for additional revenues are were not included in this analysis.
- **Transportation:** Should the district choose to close the high school, transportation costs will rise by about \$62,500, because the district will need to transport high school students to their new school. Currently, the ES and HS have the same starting time, and all students in grades K-12 ride the same buses to school. The district estimates that if it sends students in 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades to another school, the number of buses required to transport the remaining K-8 students to and from campus would not change, but additional runs would be required.

**State Aid:** If the high school closes, state aid will decline by approximately \$100,000, largely due to reductions unrelated to the foundation formula. State aid is allocated to districts in several categories. The largest portion of state aid comes through the foundation formula. Data from the state education agency for school year 2017-18 show that Tuxedo received a total of \$1,023,000 in state aid of which \$580,000 was from foundation aid, and that portion is likely to remain unchanged. In New York State, the foundation aid formula is based on the number of students in a district and the wealth of the district. The formula favors low-wealth districts; aid amounts are inversely proportional to a district's ability to raise local revenue<sup>4</sup>. As a relatively affluent district, Tuxedo receives less foundation aid than many other districts in NY. However, New York State has also chosen to hold districts harmless when student enrollment declines. To do this, instead of recalculating the foundation portion of the

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://stateaid.nysed.gov/generalinfo/>  
<https://eservices.nysed.gov/publicsams/reports.do?rid=31&ts=1535774400000&ed=1498924802000&fy=40&eid=800000040171&snm=09/01/2018%2012:00%20AM> (building aid)  
<https://eservices.nysed.gov/publicsams/reports.do#stay>

formula each year, the state provides each district with a cost-of-living increase based on the previous year's allocation. This practice has three important implications for Tuxedo:

1. Because of the hold harmless provision, Tuxedo **will not lose** foundation aid if students attend another school.
2. Other districts in New York, where Tuxedo might send high school students, **will not receive** additional state aid for additional students; their foundation funding is also locked at the current level.
3. The amount of foundation aid that Tuxedo is receiving is currently based on a formula that was last recalculated when Greenwood Lake students were attending GFBHS. If the state ever updates the foundation formula, the amount of formula aid that Tuxedo receives will go down significantly. This is also true for more than 400 other districts in New York that have had enrollment declines over the past decade.

Anticipated reductions to state aid come from the other aid categories, which are still tied to pupil counts and are estimated to be about \$100,000.

- **Tuition Costs for Sending Students Out of District:** One of the biggest questions in the decision to maintain or close GFBHS is “how much would it cost to send students to school in another district?” FourPoint estimates these costs to range from \$900,000 to \$1,700,000 depending on the price negotiated between districts. The answer to this question is influenced by several factors, including the rules and regulations established by New York State; the cost of educating students in other districts; and the uncertainty of how costs might change over time.

**New York State's rules for sending students to another district.** The NYS Department of Education (NYSED) provides districts with the option of operating their own schools or paying for students to be educated in other districts or in an adjoining state. Any district seeking to close a school and send its students out of district must complete a careful study that shows how sending students to another district is better for students and more cost effective. A district seeking to send students to another district (or multiple districts), rather than run its own schools, enters into a formal agreement with the receiving district that must be approved by its local school board. The receiving district also must gain approval from its school board. Once both boards have given their approval, the state must also approve the agreement. Under New York state law, districts can create a contract for **up to 5 years**. If the agreement is for no more than two years, the local school board has the authority to execute the agreement. For agreements longer than two years, local voters must create and approve a contract.<sup>5</sup> In New Jersey, districts can enter into contracts **for up to 10 years**. New Jersey

---

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/faq/docs/non-resident\\_tuition\\_charges.html](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/faq/docs/non-resident_tuition_charges.html)

also requires districts to update/renew contracts three years before they expire (e.g. year 7 on a 10- year contract).

### New York State's rules for determining costs to send

**students to another district.** The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has established a maximum rate, sometimes referred to as the "Seneca Falls Rate," that one district can charge another district for tuition. The Seneca Falls formula was implemented to ensure that the receiving district does not take advantage of the sending district by charging a tuition rate that exceeds the actual cost of educating a student in the district. The cap, which is calculated for each individual district, considers many factors, including the wealth of the district, the size of the district, the district's state aid, transportation costs, and teacher salaries. Separate rates are calculated for grades K-6 and 7-12 and for general education and special education.<sup>6</sup> The Seneca Falls Rate is inclusive of state aid and, as such, is the maximum "out-of-pocket" cost that one district can charge another. Districts can choose to charge **up to** the Seneca Falls rate. Many districts, including TUFSD in its past arrangement with GL, charged less than the maximum allowable rate for students tuitioning into the district.<sup>7</sup> NYS rules also state that if the district does not operate a high school, it is responsible for the cost of transporting students to an alternative school.

*In addition to arrangements between districts, both NY and NJ also allow districts to charge tuition, much like a private school would, for individual, non-resident students to attend their schools. Rates for individual, non-resident students are determined through a separate process.*

Table 5, below, shows the maximum rate (Seneca Falls) for the New York comparison districts as of July 2018. The rate for Ramsey High School is its full per-pupil cost. The rate for Northern Highlands Regional high school is the rate that the district charges for all non-resident students.

---

<sup>6</sup>IBID

<sup>7</sup><https://www.nyssba.org/news/2017/07/20/on-board-online-july-24-2017/districts-welcome-tuition-paying-students/>  
[https://govt.westlaw.com/nycrr/Document/I09a7793bc22211dda1bb852bdc84e3be?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=\(sc.Default\)](https://govt.westlaw.com/nycrr/Document/I09a7793bc22211dda1bb852bdc84e3be?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default))

Table 5. Rate for Non-Resident Tuition in Comparison Districts

RATE FOR NON-RESIDENT TUITION IN COMPARISON DISTRICTS GRADES 7-12 GENERAL EDUCATION JULY 2018		
State	District	Rate
NY	MWB High	\$15,086 (Seneca Falls)
NY	Suffern High	\$20,240 (Seneca Falls)
NJ	Ramsey High	\$12,000 (Non-resident Tuition)
NJ	Northern Highlands Regional High School	\$14,500 (Non-resident Tuition)

Sources: [https://eservices.nysed.gov/publicsams.reports\\_for\\_Seneca\\_Falls\\_Rates](https://eservices.nysed.gov/publicsams.reports_for_Seneca_Falls_Rates)

Ramesy rate: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160304064945/http://www.northjersey.com/news/tuition-to-rise-219-under-new-contract-1.995702>. Information on NHRHS was provided by district.

Based on this information, the following tuition estimates for sending students to other districts were developed. The following assumptions were used to generate these estimates.

- The number of students that would require a tuition payment range from a low of 75 to a high of 85. The low-range estimate (75 students) is based on the number of students currently at GFBHS in grades 9-12, excluding any non-resident, tuition-paying students. The upper-bound student estimate (85 students) assumes that half of the 20 high-school-aged students who reside in TUFSD and currently attend a private or out-of-district public school will return to the district, and the district would then need to pay tuition for these students.
- Tuition estimates use the maximum allowable state rates (Seneca Falls) for Suffern as the maximum possible tuition. Suffern has the highest capped rate in NY and also has the highest rate of the comparison group; no other scenario would yield higher costs. The lowest rate of \$12,000 is based on the published negotiated rate in Ramsey (based on their arrangements with Saddle River students), which is the lowest rate in the peer group. Also included in Scenario 3 is a mid-range figure of \$16,000, as it is likely that some amount between the highest rate and the lowest rate would be negotiated with the receiving district. Table 6, below, provides three tuition scenarios based on 75 and 85 students.
  - Scenario 1 is based on the maximum possible tuition (the Seneca Falls rate for Suffern).
  - Scenario 2 is based on a mid-range rate.
  - Scenario 3 is based on the lowest possible rate.

Table 6. Non-Resident Tuition Estimates for GFBHS Students

NON-RESIDENT TUITION ESTIMATES FOR GFBHS STUDENTS		
	75 Students	85 Students
<b>Scenario 1:</b> Highest Tuition \$20,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,700,000
<b>Scenario 2:</b> Mid-range Tuition \$16,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,360,000
<b>Scenario 3:</b> Lowest Tuition \$12,000	\$900,000	\$1,020,000

Table 7, below, summarizes all cost savings and additional costs and calculates the overall cost savings of closing GFBHS and sending students to school in another district.

Table 7. Cost Savings Estimates for Closing GFBHS

Cost Savings Estimates for Closing GFBHS				
Cost Element	Best Case		Worst Case	
	Increases	Savings	Increases	Savings
Salaries and Benefits		\$1,600,000		\$1,600,000
Administration Costs		\$220,000		\$220,000
Facilities and Maintenance		\$230,000		\$230,000
Transportation	\$62,000		\$62,000	
Other Costs		\$650,000		\$650,000
Reduced State Aid to TUFSD	\$100,000		\$100,000	
Reduced Tuition from Current Non-resident Students	\$100,000		\$100,000	
Non-resident Tuition Paid to Other Districts (see tuition scenarios below)	\$800,000		\$1,700,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>+\$1,062,000</b>	<b>-\$2,700,000</b>	<b>+\$1,962,000</b>	<b>-\$2,700,000</b>
<b>Total Savings</b>	<b>-1,638,000</b>		<b>-738,000</b>	
<b>% Reduction in Annual School Budget</b>	<b>12%</b>		<b>6%</b>	

Issues and uncertainties related to closing GFBHS and sending students to another district:

- One of the clear downsides to sending students to another district is that the community loses control over the management and financing of the school. Non-residents do not get to vote in local school board elections, as they take place in another jurisdiction. Some districts have negotiated a “non-voting” seat on the receiving school board for a representative from the home district. This happens on a case-by-case basis, and there is no state requirement to include representatives or gather input from families of students tuitioning into a district.
- Closing GFBHS also has implications for staffing the new K-8 school. The district now has full-time teachers for each core subject who are teaching grades 7-12 (e.g., one math teacher that covers all grades.) Supporting a K-8 school means that the district would need only part-time (.4 FTE) teachers for core subjects for 7th and 8th grades. In general, it is hard to find part-time teachers, and at .4 FTE a part-time teacher would not receive health benefits, making these positions even less attractive. This shift is likely to cause some of the current high school subject area teachers to look for full-time employment in other districts. Over the long term, the district could create a more traditional middle school model in which teachers are certified to teach grades that include 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>. But this cannot be done quickly, as it takes time for current teachers to get the necessary credentialing, and it would require additional costs, at least in the short run, to make this transition.
- Some changes are also likely to affect the program of studies for younger students. For instance, the current configuration of music teachers allows for an elementary school band and regular music time for all kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. Closing the high school would mean eliminating a full-time music teacher. As a result, elementary band would be eliminated, and music specials in the lower grades would need to be reduced to meet state music requirements for 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- Consolidating all K-8 students into the high school building also creates some logistical challenges, most notably around use of the gym, which is attached to the GGM building. Currently, older students transition to GGM to use the gym. This is largely done independently and in a timely manner. For elementary students, especially the younger ones, this is more challenging and more time consuming, especially during the winter months when students would need help to get into outdoor clothing before going outside.
- When the contract period is up, districts can renegotiate the price or any of the other terms of the contract. In New York, there are no provisions for capping tuition-rate increases when contracts expire, except that any new rate must be less than the

maximum rate allowable under state law (Seneca Falls Rate). The upper bound estimate (based on Suffern’s Seneca Falls rate), in addition to showing the highest possible charge for tuition, also eliminates the possibility of large rate increases, since the amount is at the state-set cap. In addition, all districts – both those sending and those receiving students – desire long-term stability for their students. While it may appear that the receiving district would have an advantage in future contract negotiations, there are also significant financial and organizational incentives for the receiving district to maintain a relationship with the sending district. This mutual benefit is another check on future tuition rate negotiations.

- Should the school population in Tuxedo increase significantly, the district could reopen the school. According to officials in the NYSED, the state has a clear process for opening/re-opening a school and that, each year, they approve the opening of new schools.<sup>8</sup> See Appendix A for more information.

## SECTION 5: COMMUNITY SENTIMENT ABOUT THE FUTURE OF GFBHS

Through interviews, community meetings, and the community survey, TUFSD residents voiced a diverse set of issues related to the future of the high school. It was clear that the community placed a high value

*Informants felt that the size of the high school is its greatest strength and its greatest challenge.*

on the individualized attention available to students at GFBHS. The sense of safety and security at GFBHS were also highly prized. Many also felt it very important for the community to retain its high school and that it was a vital part of the community. On the other hand, community members voiced concerns about the viability of the high school without an influx of new students and the limited social opportunities available to students due to GFBHS’s small size.

More detailed information about community perceptions of strengths and challenges to maintaining GFBHS follow:

### Strengths:

- Universally, informants felt GFBHS was a safe and nurturing environment.
  - “When I went to a different school for practice, we had to walk through metal detectors and realizing that’s what other kids live with every day gave me great relief that I don’t have to deal with that every day.”
  - “The kids are so nice to each other... I don’t see any cliques here.”
  - “You’re not just a number at Tuxedo. You feel very welcomed.”

- “I feel like it’s a lesson in tolerance, because you have to deal with people you wouldn’t have to deal with in a larger school. You might not like everyone, but you still have to be nice to them.”
- Students felt well connected to other students and staff; staff felt connected to students and parents.
  - “Tuxedo is a small, tight-knit community. Everybody knows everybody. It’s a public school, but it’s so small it’s almost like it’s being taught like a private school.”
  - “I really like how it’s really small. The teachers seem passionate about what they teach.”
- Students get a lot of individualized attention and a high-quality education.
  - [At GFBHS] “the classes are smaller. Average students get lost in the shuffle with larger classes. Here, the kids get what they need. It’s better to have smaller classes where kids can get more individual attention.”
    - “Here they get one-on-one help, they get it every day if they want it.... The students are really well taken care of academically.”
  - “It’s changed over the years when we lost GL ... but there’s still no place like this. As a parent, it’s a solid program. Well-prepared, diverse, good academically.”
- Students had many opportunities to participate in clubs and activities.
  - “Kids who want to do an activity can – they’re not competing with so many students. When it’s a larger school population, you’re competing for those slots with a lot more students.”
  - “We have opportunities that you don’t have in other schools. You can do a bunch of activities at once.”
  - “The baseball team just won sectionals. None of those kids would be on the baseball team if they went to Suffern or Warwick.”
    - “Everyone is saying there’s not a lot of choices because it’s a small school, but I’ve heard from my friends at other schools that you can’t just get into a class because they have it. You have to be one of the first to sign up. Or for a sports team you have to try out ... And then you can’t try new things.”
- Staff reported a very high level of satisfaction. School staff reported that they operated as “a well-oiled machine.” Most of the teachers teach multiple subjects and indicated that they are

never bored. In fact, several indicated that teaching multiple courses makes them better teachers. Uniformly, teachers indicated that smaller class sizes allow them to provide individual attention to all students. Many, many informants indicated that “no one falls through the cracks.” Teachers who came to GFBHS from other districts reported a level of flexibility and the ability to provide individual attention that they have never experienced at another school.

- “We have school district nirvana here. I come to work every day knowing that even if I’m having a crappy day, everyone in this building supports me down to the kids.”
  - “I teach a whole line [all courses in a subject sequence], and nobody does that in other schools. This also helps students in terms of continuity.”
  - “People take on numerous roles, so there’s a better understanding of what the other guy does, so you can step in and help when needed.”
  - “I find that the Special Education kids are really successful here. We can tailor the curriculum to their needs... so they are successful and interested.”
- Community members felt connected to and welcome at the school.
    - There are people here who have been here for so long who have come through the district and are now teaching in the district... there’s such a sense of community.”
    - “Teachers reach out to parents if they see issues with students. Where else does that happen?”
      - “I can call anyone in the district; the superintendent returns my calls.”

### Challenges:

- It was very clear that the small size of the school limited social interactions and activities; everyone thought it would be better if the school was bigger. Both students and staff thought the size of the school when GL students were in the building was ideal. It was also clear that not having a wide range of sports team was a big issue for some students and parents.
  - “I like this school, but there are no kids, so it’s frustrating when you walk down the hall.”
  - “If you’re a sports kid, if you want to play football, if you want the big pep rally, you’re not going to get there here.”
    - “We don’t even have enough kids for a prom.”

- “At a small school, everyone knows your business. I just don’t like it here at all.”
  - “For electives, they might fill up at a different school, but here we don’t even have the option.”
- Students had mixed opinions of the quality of the learning environment.
  - “I’m glad we do focus on STEM and at least some common ground of our other interests... Most of what I have to learn like music and programming I learn on my own... We should survey people and ask what they’re interested in and have electives tailored to that.”
  - “Kids get put in elective classes that they have no interest in, and they have to take them in order to graduate.”
  - “I don’t think the education is that great here. I’m in some advanced classes and some regular classes, and I feel... you do not get a private school education here. As seniors we’ve had one year with the GLers. No one else knows what it was like. “
    - “I think it’s a good learning environment”
- Community members worried about losing control if they sent students to another district, both in terms of having a say in the education of their children and in terms of controlling education costs over the long run.
  - “If your kid goes to Suffern, you completely lose your influence... You’re not walking into the building on a moment’s notice to talk to someone. You’re not going to be represented on the school board.”
  - “The short-term impact of tuitioning out students is blatantly cheaper... Taxes would go down immediately and some people would say that would be better for real estate. Yes, short-term, we would benefit... but that’s going to shift the population going south to buy these houses. They will not invest in this town, socialize in this town or shop here ... It will divide this town like a guillotine.”
- Some felt that education costs, and their property taxes, were too high.
  - “People think our budget is too high for the size of our district, and I agree with that to a certain extent.”
  - “School staff report that when it comes to revenues “we have tighter restraints than ever before.”
- Others worried that closing the school would negatively affect property values.

- “I think people want to know that they have a school in their community.”
- “When people move somewhere, they want to know what the school is like and where their child is going to go to school. They will not want to be at the whim of another school district in a town where they’re not going to buy. They’ll say we don’t know what the future of the town is.”
- “Lots of people coming here are just weekenders, and they’re just looking at what their taxes are and their property values. If they could be convinced that investing in the high school would be good for property values, they would support it. If they’re convinced closing would be better for their pockets they’ll support that.”

Across the two community meetings, over 90 participants created a list of strengths and challenges related to GFBHS. Participants then voted (with dots) to indicate the issues they felt were most important (each participant got three votes). Table 8 summarizes the themes that emerged from these community forums. It includes responses that received 3 or more votes. A longer table that shows all responses is included in appendix D. To a very large extent these findings reinforce the information that was captured during the interviews and focus groups and from the survey.

**Table 8. Community Forum Key Themes**

Community Forum Key Themes (Voting/Dotocracy Results)			
Strengths of GHBHS	Total Votes	Challenges to Maintaining GHBHS	Total Votes
Attention to individual needs/ Teachers know kids	59	Limited peer pool /social interactions	18
Smaller class sizes	20	Lack of information	16
Safety and security	13	Uncertainty about staying open	12
Strong academic program	11	Negative perception of size affect property values	9
Lowest taxes	9	Cost of current program vs. alternatives	7
Continuity	7	Lack of academic competition	6
School is heart of community /pride	6	Less diverse academic program	3
		Too few extracurriculars/sports	3

*Source: FourPoint community meeting data*

When it comes to the strengths of the current school, it was clear the community highly valued the individual attention students receive at GHBHS. The next two most cited benefits are small class sizes and school safety. The strength of the academic program was also highly valued.

Likewise, the key challenges identified by community members were the limited peer pool and social interactions for students, lack of information, and uncertainty about the school remaining open.

The community survey further reinforced these ideas. Like community forum attendees, survey respondents felt that the greatest benefits to retaining the high school were the personal attention from teachers and other staff, the quality of education, the sense of community, the small class sizes, and the continuity it brings from elementary through high school.

**Table 9. Survey Results: Benefits to Maintaining GFBHS**

Benefits to Maintaining GFBHS		
Benefits	Count	Percentage
Personal attention from teachers and other staff	140	54%
Quality of education	130	51%
Creates a sense of community	123	48%
Small class sizes	120	47%
Provides continuity from elementary through high school	113	44%
Local property taxes are low compared with other districts	101	39%
Academic opportunities	100	39%
Maintains local control for grades 9-12	96	37%
School safety/security	91	35%
Extracurricular opportunities	50	19%
Development of Tuxedo Farms	48	19%

Current, former, and future Tuxedo parents reported more benefits to maintaining the high school compared with community members who did not have direct experience with the school. These same parents also reported far more benefits than parents who send their children to other schools.

Table 10. Survey Results: Benefits to Maintaining GFBHS by Respondent Type

Benefits to Maintaining GFBHS by Respondent Type				
Benefits	Tuxedo Parent n = 115	Non-Tuxedo Parent n = 32	Community Member n = 110	All n = 257
Personal attention from teachers and other staff	65%	6%	57%	54%
Quality of education	59%	13%	53%	51%
Creates a sense of community	50%	22%	53%	48%
Small class sizes	51%	6%	54%	47%
Provides continuity from elementary through high school	49%	19%	46%	44%
Local property taxes are low compared with other districts	43%	0%	46%	39%
Academic opportunities	47%	9%	39%	39%
Maintains local control in grades 9-12	43%	9%	39%	37%
School safety/security	40%	6%	39%	35%
Extracurricular opportunities	22%	13%	19%	19%
Development of Tuxedo Farms	17%	9%	24%	19%

As might be expected, the vast majority of **parents who send their children to other schools saw few to no benefits to maintaining the high school**. More than half of these respondents (53%) saw no benefits at all.

However, among parents and other community members (who comprise the majority of survey respondents), **only 16 percent reported that they did not see any benefits to maintaining the high school**. Two thirds (66%) reported a number of benefits (3 or more) to maintaining the high school.

Meanwhile, nearly all respondents reported at least one drawback or challenge to maintaining the high school. Only 5% of respondents did not see any drawbacks or challenges to maintaining the high school. However, the primary drawback/challenge cited by Tuxedo parents and the top concern among community members is uncertainty about whether the school will remain open.

Table 11. Drawbacks/Challenges to Maintaining GFBHS

Survey Results: Drawbacks/Challenges to Maintaining GFBHS		
Drawbacks and Challenges	Count	Percentage
Uncertainty about whether school will remain open	175	68%
Ability to attract new residents, especially families, to a district with a very small high school	147	57%
Concern that negative perception of school size could affect property values	137	53%
Extracurricular opportunities	118	46%
Peer pool/social opportunities for students	108	42%
Development of Tuxedo Farms	83	32%
Quality of education	66	26%
Academic opportunities	65	25%

Again, it is primarily parents who send their children to other schools who saw many drawbacks to maintaining the high school. **The majority of Tuxedo parents and other community members (who, again, comprise the majority of survey respondents) saw few drawbacks or challenges to maintaining the high school** (more than half reported zero to two drawbacks), while 72% of parents who send their children to other schools saw many drawbacks to maintaining GFBHS.

Table 12. Survey Results: Drawbacks/Challenges to Maintaining GFBHS by Respondent Type

Survey Results: Drawbacks/Challenges to Maintaining GFBHS by Respondent Type				
Drawbacks and Challenges	Tuxedo Parent n = 115	Non-Tuxedo Parent n = 32	Community Member n = 110	All n = 257
Uncertainty about whether school will remain open	71%	47%	71%	68%
Ability to attract new residents, especially families, to a district with a very small high school	49%	75%	61%	57%
Concern that negative perception of school size could affect property values	46%	81%	53%	53%
Extracurricular opportunities	46%	72%	38%	46%
Peer pool/social opportunities for students	50%	66%	27%	42%
Development of Tuxedo Farms	28%	25%	39%	32%
Quality of education	23%	56%	20%	26%
Academic opportunities	27%	56%	15%	25%

Many of the parents who send their children to other schools also reported in their comments that **their primary concern about maintaining the high school is how it would affect their property taxes** and hoped closing the high school would result in significant tax savings. Some reported that they resent paying taxes to support a local school that their children did not attend.

- “Many high value homes are owned as second homes with families whose children attend school in NYC. Despite that, the school board looks at these homeowners as their personal piggy bank.”
- “An undersized school like Baker cheats students and taxpayers alike.”

Current and former students and parents were also surveyed about what they liked and disliked about their experience at GFBHS. **60 percent of respondents reported that they liked the personal attention and relationships with teachers.** About half liked the small class sizes, school safety, and quality of education.

**Table 13. Survey Results: The GFBHS Experience - What Parents and Students Like**

Survey Results: The GFBHS Experience What Parents and Students Like		
What they liked	Count	Percentage
Personal attention	84	64%
Relationships with teachers	83	63%
Small class sizes	76	58%
Quality of education	68	52%
School safety	68	52%
Academic opportunities	50	38%
Number of students	40	30%
Extracurricular opportunities	30	23%
Social opportunities	22	17%

Meanwhile, **nearly half of respondents reported that they did not like the extracurricular opportunities**, and more than 40 percent did not like the number of students and social opportunities.

Table 14. Survey Results: The GFBHS Experience - What Parents and Students Did Not Like

Survey Results: The GFBHS Experience What Parents and Students Did Not Like		
What they did not like	Count	Percentage
Extracurricular opportunities	63	48%
Number of students	58	44%
Social opportunities	57	43%
Academic opportunities	34	26%
Quality of education	20	15%
Small class sizes	12	9%
Personal attention	5	4%
Relationships with teachers	4	3%
School safety	3	2%

Interestingly, **dissatisfaction with the extracurricular options is much stronger among parents than among students.** While 51 percent of parents reported that they did not like the extracurricular opportunities and only 18 percent of parents reported that they liked them, only 33 percent of *students* reported that they did not like the extracurricular options; **46 percent of students cited its extracurricular opportunities as something they liked about GFBHS.**

On other hand, students were far more likely to report that the social opportunities at GFBHS are a drawback or challenge than were parents; while **63 percent of students reported that the social opportunities are a drawback**, only 39 percent of parents agreed.

## SECTION 6: RESEARCH FINDINGS ON STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN SMALL SCHOOLS

The research literature related to small schools provides several important findings relevant to this study. These findings comport with information provided by stakeholders during interviews and community meetings indicating that Tuxedo students are benefitting from many of the strengths of small schools in terms of student achievement, school climate, and connectedness. The value of close connections between families and the school were also noted by many informants and touted in the literature as well. Lastly, the findings related to the costs of educating students in GFBHS also align with education finance research that shows why small schools like GFBHS cannot generate operating efficiencies in the same way as larger schools.

The literature review shows:

- **Student outcomes in small schools:** Studies consistently show that smaller schools tend to have better outcomes for students. Smaller schools also graduate a higher percentage of

students, and more students who graduate from small schools go on to post-secondary education than do their counterparts who graduate from large schools.<sup>9</sup>

- **School climate and social factors:** Research on smaller schools shows that students are and feel safer; are better connected to other students; have relationships with adults who know them and who they trust; and come to school more often. Likewise, teachers in small schools report greater job satisfaction compared with those in large schools. The literature also shows that in smaller high schools, students have more opportunities to participate in electives and extra-curricular activities.<sup>10</sup> Some of these studies also show that, while large schools offer a broader range of potential friends, students in larger schools tend to seek friends who they are comfortable with and who are similar to themselves, which means students end up interacting with a limited group.<sup>11</sup>
- **The optimal size of a high school:** A variety of studies looked at school size and student outcomes and have concluded that high schools of 300 or so, with approximately 75 students per grade, provide an ideal learning environment. At this size, schools can provide enough diversity in courses and extra-curricular activities while still retaining close relationships among students, between students and staff, and among staff, all of which are key to student success. In fact, studies have shown that “the relationship between school size and curricular diversity begins to decrease with school enrollments above about 400 students, leading researchers to suggest that “relatively small high schools may provide as diverse a curriculum as much larger schools.”<sup>12</sup>
- **The costs of educating students in small schools:** Conventional wisdom assumes that larger schools must be more cost efficient to operate due to economies of scale. Numerous studies, however, show that this is not always the case. What appears to be true is that small schools do experience more inefficiencies than larger schools, but as school size approaches 1,000 students, inefficiencies also increase. Studies also show that larger schools tend to spend more on coordination, administration and overall management. Like the studies focusing on outcomes, cost studies also show that mid-sized high schools (600-900 students) appear to be the most cost efficient.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Dollars and Sense: The Cost Effectiveness of Small Schools, Knowledge Works Foundation 2002  
[http://www.ruraledu.org/user\\_uploads/file/Dollars\\_and\\_Sense.pdf](http://www.ruraledu.org/user_uploads/file/Dollars_and_Sense.pdf); <https://medium.com/communityworksjournal/small-schools-the-myths-reality-and-potential-of-small-schools-76a566c42f6e>

<sup>10</sup> New small learning communities: Findings from recent literature. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Retrieved January 15, 2002. <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/nslc.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://medium.com/communityworksjournal/small-schools-the-myths-reality-and-potential-of-small-schools-76a566c42f6e/sites.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/PEPG05-05Hylden.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Dollars and Sense: The Cost Effectiveness of Small Schools, Knowledge Works Foundation 2002

<sup>13</sup> Stiefel, L., Iatarola, P., Fruchter, N., & Bernie, R. (1998, April). The effects of size of student body on school costs and performance in New York City high schools. New York: New York University Institute for Education and Social Policy.). Dollars and Sense and Andrews, M., Duncombe, W., & Yinger, J. (2002).<sup>13</sup> Revisiting economies of size in American education: are we any closer to a consensus? *Economics of Education Review*, 21(3), 245-262.)

- **Connections to parents and community:** Here, too, the research is clear and compelling; in smaller schools, parents feel closer to teachers and administrators, and there are higher levels of parent involvement, all of which are tied to greater student success. The research also shows that schools contribute to the vitality of local economies and can be an essential contributor to a community's long-term economic health and development.<sup>14</sup>

When considering the relevance of the research literature to GFBHS, it is worth noting that GFBHS is considerably smaller than the optimal size established in the literature (of about 75 students per class). The literature on schools as small as GFBHS, and the effects on student social life and interaction, is scant, and what does exist is drawn from very rural communities where other options for students do not exist.

## SECTION 7: KEY FINDINGS

The goal of this report is to provide district leaders and community members with the information needed to make a fully informed decision about the best way to educate Tuxedo's high school students. Our conversations with district leaders, students, and community members made clear, first and foremost, that many people had questions about cost of operating the high school and how an education at GFBHS is similar to or different from what is offered in other districts. There was also continued worry about how long the school would remain in operation and confusion about if/when the long-planned Tuxedo Farms housing community would be built.

Following are answers to the key questions the report set out to answer:

1. **What do enrollment projections for TUFSD reveal?** Enrollment at George F. Baker High School (GFBHS) is about 100 students (grades 7-12). Based on enrollment at the lower school and without an influx of new students from families moving to the district or from non-resident students tuitioning in, high school enrollment is likely to continue to decline slightly each year or, at best, to remain stable for the foreseeable future. Many residents expressed hope that Tuxedo Farms could change the enrollment trajectory but at this writing, with continued uncertainty about development, that does not seem likely, especially in the next five years. In fact, the developer is now exploring commercial as well as residential options for the property.
2. **How do the academic program and extracurricular activities at GFBHS stack up against other nearby high schools?** By every standard measure, students at GFBHS are getting a high-quality education, with a very similar course of study (core classes and electives) to students in nearby, larger schools. In addition, students are benefitting from individualized attention made possible by the very small class sizes and the safety, security, and connectedness of a small school. The one area in which other schools

---

<sup>14</sup> Thorildsen and Stein 1998

outshine GFBHS is extracurricular activities; while GFBHS offers many options, larger schools tend to offer even more choice for students. But, while larger schools offer more extracurricular options, students often must compete for access to these activities. Survey results show that students (46%) appear to be more satisfied with extracurricular activities available at GFBHS compared to parents (18%).

3. **What are the financial and operational implications of sending high school students out of district?** Due to its very small size, TUFSD has a higher-than-average per-pupil expenditure compared with other districts in New York. The district has created operational efficiencies by integrating systems across its two schools as a means for controlling costs. Using a conservative estimate, the district would save between \$750,000 and \$1.6 million (6% to 12% of the total district budget) by closing the high school and sending its high school students to another district. The lowest-end savings figure—\$750,000—is based on the maximum allowable charge (Seneca Falls rate) for the most expensive school in the comparison group. By using this rate, the uncertainty of large tuition increases in future years is eliminated as the state, not the district, determines the cap (Seneca Falls rate). Closing the school would create several operational challenges including finding part-time staff for core subjects in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade and moving younger students back and forth between buildings to use the gym and other shared services.
4. **What value does a high school bring to the community? What strengths and challenges does the community see with regard to GFBHS?**

Community members had many questions and concerns about the future of the high school. It was clear that the community placed a high value on the individualized attention available to students at GFBHS. The sense of safety and

*Across the board, community members felt that the size of the high school is its greatest strength and greatest challenge.*

security at GFBHS was also highly prized, as was access for all students to a range of activities. Many also felt it very important for the community to retain its high school and that it was a vital part of the community, although there is a small (but very vocal) faction, comprised mostly of parents who send their children to other schools, who do not share this view. Community members were also concerned about losing control of their schools; as non-residents they would no longer have a say in the financing or operation of the school their children attend. On the other hand, community members voiced concerns about the viability of the high school with a shrinking population and the limited social opportunities available to students. Issues about property values and taxes also came up, but there is no evidence that maintaining GFBHS is negatively affecting

property values or that closing the high school would significantly reduce Tuxedo's comparatively low local taxes.

##### 5. What does education research tell us about student experiences in small schools?

Research on small schools shows a long list of benefits and makes a compelling case for operating small schools. In fact, many districts are looking for ways to create smaller schools out of larger ones based on the strength of this research. Many of the positive features of small schools highlighted in the literature were noted by informants as strengths of GFBHS, including individualized attention, high student achievement, a positive school climate and connectedness with peers and adults. The value of close connections between families and the school were also noted by many informants and are well established in the literature as an important contributor to student success. Finally, the findings related to the costs of educating students in GFBHS also align with education finance research showing why very small schools like GFBHS do not generate operating efficiencies and thus have a very high per-pupil cost.

Community members now have clear information about cost savings associated with closing the school and how GFBHS stacks up against other area schools with regard to its academic program and extracurricular activities. It is also clear that, for now, enrollments at GFBHS will be stable or will decline slightly depending on how many out-of-district students can be enticed to enroll. Where it once seemed important to "wait and see what will happen with Tuxedo Farms," the developer is now considering a wide range of commercial and residential options. Either way, decisions made about the property seem unlikely to affect the school population over the next several years.

The information provided in this report makes clear the challenges facing district leaders in choosing a course for high school students. On one hand, GFBHS is a high-performing school with all the benefits that come from being small. It provides students with a high-quality education comparable to many nearby schools and enjoys a lot of the support from the community, especially those families that have had direct experience with the school. GFBHS could easily continue to operate as-is and would well serve Tuxedo student and families. The community would retain local control over the education of its high school students, and the school would continue as an important asset to the town.

On the other hand, enrollments are stable at best, and closing the school would reduce the school budget from 6 to 12 percent depending upon the final costs of sending students out of district. There are several nearby high schools that could accommodate Tuxedo's high school students and provide them with a high-quality education, albeit in a much larger school.

It is also clear that if the district chooses to keep the school open, it will need the full support and embrace of the community. In this event, the district should undertake a new strategic

planning process to focus on further enhancing its program of study and how best to take full advantage of its small size. There are also several suggestions included in the report (see Text Box on page 8) for growing enrollment over time that the district could explore. The authors also offer two other ideas for consideration:

- Explore options for creating a tuition-free exchange program with other local high schools. This may provide some GFBHS students who would prefer to attend a large high school the opportunity to do so while some students at larger high schools could benefit from the smaller nature of GFBHS. As long as the exchange is one-for-one, everyone is better off. A secondary benefit of this is creating demand for spaces at GFBHS.
- Establishing a “low-cost” tuition option to attract additional students. Right now, taking on additional students costs GFBHS very little, as no new staff would be needed. In addition, it would bring additional funding that could support new projects to the school. For instance, if the district were to make slots available to 10 students at \$5,000 per student, it could increase enrollment significantly with very little extra in expenses. This additional funding (from tuition less any associated expenses for the students) would provide flexible funds that could be used to enhance extracurricular activities. While some might argue that it is not fair for some families to pay less than the amount residents are paying to attend GFBHS, there is no harm to this strategy. This strategy helps the district to reach the goal of increasing enrollment in a cost-effective way without adding any further burden to taxpayers.

Finally, as part of the research for this report, the study team spoke with leaders from several nearby districts who, unprompted, mentioned the possibility of consolidation; with shifting demographics in Rockland and Orange Counties, options that may not have been viable in the past may be emerging.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: A Few Other Things We Learned Along the Way

#### *Can the state force districts to consolidate?*

Yes, but it does not do this. According to NYSED information, while the state has the authority to consolidate districts by creating a new central district, it has, in practice, left the decision to seek consolidation to the affected districts. As per the state handbook on consolidation, while “[the] Commissioner of Education may ‘lay out’ a central district at any time he/she determines it educationally desirable to do so, in practice this power is exercised only after extensive study, evidence of support in the respective districts and upon recommendation of the respective boards of education and/or the District Superintendent.” So it does not appear that the State Education Department will force the TUFSD to merge with a nearby district.

Source: **NYSED Guide to the Reorganization of School Districts in New York State**

[http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/sch\\_dist\\_org/GuideToReorganizationOfSchoolDistricts.htm#CONSOLIDATIONOFUNIONFREEANDORCOMMON](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/sch_dist_org/GuideToReorganizationOfSchoolDistricts.htm#CONSOLIDATIONOFUNIONFREEANDORCOMMON)

#### *Can a school be reopened once it is closed for several years?*

Yes. New York State has policies and procedures in place both for closing and opening schools. Many informants expressed concern that once a school has been closed it will be very difficult to reopen the school at a later date. Information provided by the NYSED indicates that this is not the case. The state both opens and closes schools each year. This can be confirmed via the Public School Registration website link below.

It is also true that size is not a limiting factor in reopening a school. One example of this is the Holland Middle School, which was closed in 2012 and reopened this year (it did require a new BEDS Code.) Information on Holland Middle School can be found at the link below.

Finally, if a district wants to close a school, it must submit an application to the state by March 1 for the following school year.

Sources: **NYSED Guide Office of Public Accountability - Public School Registration**

<http://p12.nysed.gov/accountability/PublicSchoolRegistrationAPA.html>

**NYSED SEDREF - Core Information on SED Institutions**

[https://portal.nysed.gov/pls/sedrefpublic/SED.sed\\_inst\\_qry\\_vw\\$.startup](https://portal.nysed.gov/pls/sedrefpublic/SED.sed_inst_qry_vw$.startup)

#### *Why did GFBHS lose its U.S. News and World Report Top School Rating?*

Based on several email exchanges with U.S. News, the reason GFBHS lost its rating is due to a change in test scores that is magnified by its small sample size. Just one or two students scoring a bit lower could be enough to change the district’s composite score, which was just shy of the cutoff for consideration.

### *Would peer school districts be amenable to taking Tuxedo's high school students?*

Yes. Informal conversations with two districts, Suffern and Northern Highlands Regional High School, indicated a willingness to explore the option of tuitioning in Tuxedo's high school students. Northern Highlands indicated that they have room for about 100 more students. Suffern is facing a declining student population, and it, too, has room for more students. Other districts may also be interested, but these were the only districts the study team spoke with directly about this issue.

### *What impact does maintaining the high school have on real estate values?*

The answer to this is not clear. To understand the impact on real estate values, the study team interviewed a group of local realtors and reviewed data on sales prices and trends within the TUFSD boundaries. The realtors indicated two things. First, it was their sense from working with many clients that most people looking to purchase a home prefer having a high school in the district. The realtors also felt that the uncertainty about the future of the high school was souring some potential buyers. Overall, data on home sales in Tuxedo mirrored national trends showing home values recovering from the recent recession, but for higher-priced homes, the recovery is much slower. So while higher-priced homes are selling more slowly, it is not clear how much, if any of this, can be attributed to issues with the high school versus larger general economic trends.

Appendix B: Detailed Cost Savings and Increases

Table 15. Cost Reductions from Closing GFBHS

Budget Item	Savings
<b>Administrative Costs</b>	<b>\$219,426</b>
Administrative Salaries	\$181,609
Administrative Benefits	\$37,817
<b>Staff Costs</b>	<b>\$1,622,615</b>
Instructional Salaries	\$1,145,244
Employee Benefits	\$466,601
Substitute Salaries	\$10,769
<b>Facilities Costs</b>	<b>\$229,244</b>
Utilities	\$37,396
O&M	\$154,976
O&M Supplies	\$36,872
<b>Other Costs</b>	<b>\$655,748</b>
Graduation Expenses	\$3,000
High School Textbooks	\$4,233
Boces Services - Teaching - Regular School	\$42,094
High School Supplies	\$6,540
Testing Materials	\$1,200
Paper	\$2,000
Boces Services - SPED	\$518,462
Library Books-Magazines-Periodicals	\$846
Technology Licensing/Contracts	\$3,750
Software for Computer-Assisted Instruction	\$776
Boces Services - Computer Assisted Instruction	\$23,415
Supplies for Computer-Assisted Instruction	\$6,375
Student Competition	\$1,275
Plays/Musicals	\$4,250
Supplies for Co-Curricular Activities	\$850
Non-Inst. Salaries Coaches	\$8,282
Contractual-Tournament Fees	\$1,200
Conference & Travel for Interscholastic Athletics	\$800
Officials for Interscholastic Athletics	\$400
Boces Services - Interscholastic Activities	\$21,600
Awards for Interscholastic Athletics	\$400
Athletic Supplies	\$2,800
Uniforms	\$1,200
<b>Total Savings</b>	<b>\$2,727,033</b>

## Transportation Cost Detail

Transporting high school students to another school would add an estimated additional cost of \$62,500 based on the following assumptions:

- Two new high school routes would be added in the morning. Buses would transport high school students and then pick up K-8 students, who would keep the current schedule.
- The afternoon route would be adjusted to pick up the HS students, then stop at the Tuxedo UFSD campus to pick up the K-8 students. Drop-offs would then follow the current schedule.
- The additional cost for drivers, for the extra hour in the morning on 2 routes, is estimated to be \$16,500.
- Fuel and wear and tear on the 2 buses for the additional drive time is estimated to be \$27,000.
- An additional late bus would need to be added to pick up HS students from afterschool activities (clubs, sports, etc.). The driving time for this is estimated to be 1.5 hours. The additional costs associated with the late bus would be \$5,000 for a driver and \$13,500 for fuel and bus costs.

Appendix C: Core and Elective Course Comparison

Table 16. Peer School Course Comparison

Peer School Course Comparison					
Courses	Tuxedo	Suffern	Ramsey	Northern Highlands	Monroe-Woodbury
<b>English Electives</b>					
Creative Writing		✓	✓	✓	✓
Journalism	✓		✓	✓	✓
Public Speaking/Debate	✓	✓			✓
Other*					✓
<b>Math/Business Electives</b>					
Accounting		✓	✓	✓	✓
Financial Literacy/ Personal Finance		✓	✓	✓	
Other*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Social Studies Electives</b>					
Sociology	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Psychology	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Film History/Film Studies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other*		✓	✓		✓
<b>Science Electives</b>					
Forensic Science	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Astronomy	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Environmental Science	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Anatomy and Physiology		✓	✓	✓	
Oceanography	✓		✓	✓	
Other*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>World Languages</b>					
Spanish	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
French		✓	✓	✓	✓
Chinese		✓	✓	✓	
Italian		✓		✓	✓
Other*	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Art</b>					
Intro to Art/Art Experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Studio/Visual Art	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ceramics/Sculpture/Pottery	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Photography	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Computer Graphics/ Graphic Design		✓	✓	✓	✓
Art History		✓		✓	✓
Drawing and Painting	✓	✓		✓	✓
Digital Film/Media Arts/ Cinematography	✓	✓		✓	✓
Video Production	✓			✓	✓
Other*	✓	✓		✓	✓
<b>Theatre</b>					
Acting			✓	✓	✓
Other*			✓	✓	✓
<b>Music</b>					
Music Theory	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Symphonic Band/ Symphonic Orchestra	✓	✓		✓	✓
Chorus/ Choir/Voice Ensemble	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Concert Band/ Concert Orchestra/ Wind Ensemble	✓	✓		✓	✓
Other*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Computer Education</b>					
Computer Science		✓	✓	✓	✓
Web Design/ Computer Programming	✓		✓	✓	✓
Other*	✓		✓		✓
<b>Business/Marketing</b>					
Marketing/Sports Marketing		✓	✓	✓	✓
Other*			✓	✓	✓
<b>Engineering and Architecture</b>					
Engineering	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advanced/Civil Engineering/ Engineering Design	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Woodworking		✓	✓	✓	✓
Architectural Drawing/Design		✓	✓	✓	
Design Drawing/ Technical Drawing	✓	✓	✓		✓
Other*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

<b>Family and Consumer Science</b>					
Fashion Design/Textiles		✓	✓	✓	✓
Interior Design		✓	✓		✓
Food and Nutrition/ Food Science	✓	✓		✓	✓
Culinary Arts	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Intro to Education/ECE/ Child Development		✓	✓	✓	✓
Other *	✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Health/Physical Education</b>					
First Aid/CPR/ Other Health/PE	✓	✓		✓	✓

*\*If no more than 2 high schools offer a course, it is included in the "Other" category for a subject area.*

## Appendix D: Study Informants and Community Input

The study team spoke with a wide range of informants, conducting:

- Focus groups with TUFSD teachers, administrators, support staff, school board members, and students
- Interviews with the Town Supervisor, Tuxedo Farms developer, and local real estate agents
- Community Meetings attended by 90 people, including parents and students of GFBHS and other community members who do not have children in the high school
- Phone interviews with state officials in:
  - The State Aid Office
  - The State Aid Payment Unit
- Interviews with representatives from Suffern and Northern Highlands Regional High Schools

Table 17. Community Forum Key Themes

Community Forum Key Themes (Voting/Dotocracy Results)			
Strengths of GHBHS	Total Votes	Challenges to Maintaining GHBHS	Total Votes
Attention to individual needs/ Teachers know kids	59	Limited peer pool /social interactions	18
Smaller class sizes	20	Lack of information	16
Safety and security	13	Uncertainty about staying open	12
Strong academic program	11	Negative perception of size affect property values	9
Lowest taxes	9	Cost of current program vs. alternatives	7
Continuity	7	Lack of academic competition	6
School is heart of community /pride	6	Less diverse academic program	3
		Too few extracurriculars/sports	3
Other strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Self determination (2)</li> <li>▪ STEM and connect to local business (2)</li> <li>▪ C-tech connection</li> <li>▪ Opportunities for leadership (2)</li> <li>▪ Special education (2)</li> <li>▪ Access to admin (2)</li> <li>▪ Beautiful building</li> <li>▪ Theater program (2)</li> <li>▪ Community involvement/parents know each other (2)</li> <li>▪ Music program (1)</li> <li>▪ Small size mean flexibility (1)</li> <li>▪ Kids can participate in multiple activities (0)</li> <li>▪ Top test scores (0)</li> <li>▪ Tenured teachers (0)</li> <li>▪ Space to handle more students (0)</li> <li>▪ Personal assistance with college apps (0)</li> <li>▪ Conveniently located (0)</li> </ul>		Other challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 7th and 8th with HS (2)</li> <li>▪ Distance learning does not work for all (1)</li> <li>▪ Fewer Opps (0)</li> <li>▪ Held at ransom by developer (0)</li> <li>▪ loss of academic ranking (0)/Not STEM accredited (0)/diversity (0)</li> <li>▪ Sustainable pipeline of students (0)</li> <li>▪ Needs better marketing (0)</li> <li>▪ HS start time (0)</li> <li>▪ Time between classes (0)</li> </ul>	

## Appendix E: Survey Results

This survey was intended to provide a clear picture of the student and family experience at GFBHS and to determine the perceived value of the high school within the Tuxedo community.

Parents and other community members were surveyed about the benefits and drawbacks or challenges to maintaining GFBHS. Parent respondents included current, former, and future Tuxedo UFSD parents as well as Tuxedo parents who send their children to schools outside the district.

Tuxedo residents in the portion of the district zoned for Monroe-Woodbury Central School District were surveyed for their feelings about Tuxedo UFSD: were they happy to be zoned for MWCSD or did they wish they were zoned for Tuxedo?

Those with direct experience with GFBHS – current and former parents and students – were also surveyed about their experience: what did they like and what did they not like about GFBHS?

376 surveys were submitted. Of these, 19 were not completed (respondent type was selected, but no other questions were answered). Another 42 were duplicate surveys (completed from the same IP address with consecutive time stamps, the same respondent type and  $\geq 80\%$  identical responses), which sometimes occur when respondents are unsure whether they submitted their previous response. Duplicate surveys were excluded from this analysis.

Survey Overview		
Response Type	Count	Percentage
Completed Survey	315	84%
Incomplete Survey	19	5%
Duplicate Survey	42	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>100%</b>

315 surveys were complete, non-duplicate surveys. The analysis that follows was conducted on these 315 surveys.

## Respondent Overview

The majority of survey respondents live within Tuxedo UFSD.

Residency		
I am a resident of ...	Count	Percentage
The town of Tuxedo – within Tuxedo UFSD	264	84%
The town of Tuxedo – within Monroe-Woodbury Central School District	36	11%
Non-resident Tuxedo property owner	6	2%
Parent of child who tuitions into GFBHS	6	2%
Other (please specify)*	3	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>100%</b>

*\*Includes 2 former students who no longer live in Tuxedo and a Tuxedo business owner who lives outside Tuxedo UFSD.*

Just over 10% of respondents live in the town of Tuxedo but within Monroe-Woodbury Central School District. While the bulk of the survey targeted Tuxedo school district residents, Tuxedo town/MWCSD respondents were surveyed for their feelings towards Tuxedo UFSD. Asked whether they were happy to be zoned for MWCSD or whether they wish they were zoned for Tuxedo UFSD, they were evenly divided.

Tuxedo Town/MWCSD Residents		
Monroe-Woodbury District Residents	Count	Percentage
I am happy my residence is in the Monroe-Woodbury Central School District.	18	50%
I wish my residence were districted for Tuxedo UFSD schools.	18	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100%</b>

Roughly one third of respondents reported that they are Tuxedo parents, and another third identified themselves as community members. 11% are Monroe-Woodbury Central School District residents. Parents of school-age children who do not currently attend Tuxedo UFSD comprised another 10% of respondents, and current and recent Tuxedo students collectively comprised another 8%. Those who selected “other” included 7 respondents who reported that they are future Tuxedo parents, and 4 described themselves as “taxpayers.”

Respondent Type		
I am taking this survey as a ...	Count	Percentage
Community member	106	34%
Parent of one or more children who attend Tuxedo UFSD	89	28%
Monroe-Woodbury District Resident	34	11%
Parent of school-age children who do not currently attend Tuxedo UFSD	32	10%
Parent of a recent Tuxedo UFSD student (within the last 5 years)	19	6%
Recent Tuxedo UFSD student (within the last 5 years)	15	5%
Current Tuxedo UFSD student	8	3%
Other (please specify)*	12	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Includes 7 respondents who reported that they are parents of future Tuxedo students, 4 who described themselves as "taxpayers" and one who indicated that he or she is a former student.

Respondents fell into five main categories: Tuxedo parents (current, former, and future), Tuxedo students (current and former), Parents whose children do not attend Tuxedo UFSD, Tuxedo town/MWCSD residents, and Tuxedo community members (including both residents and non-resident "taxpayers").

Respondent Type Category		
Respondent Summary	Count	Percentage
Parent of current, recent, and/or future TUFSD student(s)	115	37%
Community member or non-resident taxpayer	110	35%
Monroe-Woodbury District Resident	34	11%
Parent of school-age children who do not currently attend Tuxedo UFSD	32	10%
Current or recent Tuxedo UFSD student	24	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>100%</b>

### The George F. Baker Parent and Student Experience

Current and former parents and students were surveyed about the George F. Baker High School experience: what did they like and what did they dislike?

60% of respondents reported that they like(d) the personal attention and relationships with teachers. About half liked the small class sizes, the quality of education and the school safety. More than a third liked the academic opportunities.

Less popular were the number of students (29%), the extracurricular opportunities (22%) and the social opportunities (16%).

<b>The GFBHS Experience: What parents and students like(d)</b>		
<b>What they liked:</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Personal attention	84	64%
Relationships with teachers	83	63%
Small class sizes	76	58%
Quality of education	68	52%
School safety	68	52%
Academic opportunities	50	38%
Number of students	40	30%
Extracurricular opportunities	30	23%
Social opportunities	22	17%

More than 40% of respondents reported that they did not like the extracurricular opportunities, the number of students, or the social opportunities. Nearly a quarter (24%) didn't like the academic opportunities, and 14% didn't like the quality of education.

<b>The GFBHS Experience: What parents and students dislike(d)</b>		
<b>What they didn't like:</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Extracurricular opportunities	63	48%
Number of students	58	44%
Social opportunities	57	43%
Academic opportunities	34	26%
Quality of education	20	15%
Small class sizes	12	9%
Personal attention	5	4%
Relationships with teachers	4	3%
School safety	3	2%

The top issue that respondents did not like was the extracurricular opportunities. This is mostly driven by parent responses; current and former students were much happier with the extracurricular opportunities than were current and former parents. While 51% of parents reported that they did not like the extracurricular opportunities and only 18% reported that they liked them, only 33% of students reported that they did not; 46% of students reported that they did like the extracurricular opportunities.

On the issue of social opportunities, students were far more likely to report this as a negative than parents. 63% of students reported that they did not like the social opportunities at GFBH, while only 39% of parents did not like the social opportunities.

Overall, 51% of parents reported that they were happy with the quality of education GFBH provides, while only 13% reported that they were not. 54% of students were also happy with the quality of education, while a quarter were not.

[Benefits and Drawbacks/Challenges]

All Tuxedo USFD parents (both those with Tuxedo students and those who send their students to school elsewhere) and community members (as well as non-resident home owners) were asked what they consider the benefits and drawbacks to keeping GFBHS open.

Respondents felt that the greatest benefits to retaining the high school were personal attention from teachers and other staff, the quality of education, the sense of community, the small class sizes, and the continuity it brings from elementary through high school.

Benefits to Maintaining the High School		
Benefits	Count	Percentage
Personal attention from teachers and other staff	140	54%
Quality of education	130	51%
Creates a sense of community	123	48%
Small class sizes	120	47%
Provides continuity from elementary through high school	113	44%
Local property taxes are low compared with other districts	101	39%
Academic opportunities	100	39%
Maintains local control for grades 9-12	96	37%
School safety/security	91	35%
Extracurricular opportunities	50	19%
Development of Tuxedo Farms	48	19%

Current, former, and future Tuxedo parents reported more benefits to maintaining the high school compared with those who reported that they were taking the survey as community members, and far more than those who reported that they were taking the survey as parents who send their children to other schools. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the vast majority of parents who send their children to other schools saw few to no benefits to maintaining the high school. More than half (53%) saw no benefits at all. Among parents and other community members, however, only 16% reported that they did not see any benefits to maintaining the high school. Two thirds (66%) reported a number of benefits (3 or more) to maintaining the high school. Overall, 21% of respondents did not see any benefits to maintaining the high school.

<b>Benefits to Maintaining the High School by Respondent Type (Percentage)</b>				
Benefits	Tuxedo Parent n = 115	Non-Tuxedo Parent n = 32	Community Member n = 110	All n = 257
Personal attention from teachers and other staff	65%	6%	57%	54%
Quality of education	59%	13%	53%	51%
Creates a sense of community	50%	22%	53%	48%
Small class sizes	51%	6%	54%	47%
Provides continuity from elementary through high school	49%	19%	46%	44%
Local property taxes are low compared with other districts	43%	0%	46%	39%
Academic opportunities	47%	9%	39%	39%
Maintains local control for grades 9-12	43%	9%	39%	37%
School safety/security	40%	6%	39%	35%
Extracurricular opportunities	22%	13%	19%	19%
Development of Tuxedo Farms	17%	9%	24%	19%

In contrast, nearly all respondents reported at least one drawback to maintaining the high school. Only 5% of respondents did not see any drawbacks to maintaining the high school.

<b>Drawbacks/Challenges to Maintaining the High School</b>		
Drawbacks	Count	Percentage
Uncertainty about whether school will remain open	175	68%
Ability to attract new residents, especially families, to a district with a very small high school	147	57%
Concern that negative perception of school size could affect property values	137	53%
Extracurricular opportunities	118	46%
Peer pool/social opportunities for students	108	42%
Development of Tuxedo Farms	83	32%
Quality of education	66	26%
Academic opportunities	65	25%

However, the primary drawback among Tuxedo parents and the top concern among community members is uncertainty about whether the school will remain open. Again, it is primarily parents who send their children to other schools saw many drawbacks to maintaining the high school. The majority of Tuxedo parents and other community members saw few drawbacks to maintaining the high school (more than half reported zero to two drawbacks), while 72% of parents who send their children to other schools saw many drawbacks to maintaining GFBHS.

Drawbacks/Challenges to Maintaining the High School by Type (Percentage)				
Drawbacks	Tuxedo Parent n = 115	Non-Tuxedo Parent n = 32	Community Member n = 110	All n = 257
Uncertainty about whether school will remain open	71%	47%	71%	68%
Ability to attract new residents, especially families, to a district with a very small high school	49%	75%	61%	57%
Concern that negative perception of school size could affect property values	46%	81%	53%	53%
Extracurricular opportunities	46%	72%	38%	46%
Peer pool/social opportunities for students	50%	66%	27%	42%
Development of Tuxedo Farms	28%	25%	39%	32%
Quality of education	23%	56%	20%	26%
Academic opportunities	27%	56%	15%	25%

Many of the parents who send their children to other schools also reported in their comments that their primary concern about maintaining the high school is how it would affect their property taxes and hoped closing the high school would result in significant tax savings. Some reported that they resent paying taxes to support a local school that their children did not attend.

## Appendix F: Resources and References

### Nonresident Tuition Information

#### Computation of Tuition Charges for Nonresident Pupils

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/lawsregs/174-2.html>

#### Districts Welcome Tuition-paying Students

*An article describing several districts, including Tuxedo UFSD, and how they are attracting non-resident students.*

<https://www.nyssba.org/news/2017/07/20/on-board-online-july-24-2017/districts-welcome-tuition-paying-students/>

### State Aid Information

#### 2018-19 State Aid Handbook: Formula Aids and Entitlements for Schools in New York State as Amended by Chapters of the Laws of 2018

[https://stateaid.nysed.gov/publications/handbooks/handbook\\_2018.pdf](https://stateaid.nysed.gov/publications/handbooks/handbook_2018.pdf)

#### 2018-19 State Aid Calculations

<https://stateaid.nysed.gov/publications/saavgs19.htm>

#### 2018-19 Executive Budget Recommended Formula-Based School Aid

*State Aid Formula by District*

<https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/archive/fy19/exec/fy19local/school/1819schoolformula.pdf>

### Small Schools Study

#### Smaller, Safer, Saner Successful Schools

*Examples of small schools and how they organized for success.*

<http://centerforschoolchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/saneschools.pdf>